

Cotton and the Community:
Exploring Changing Concepts of Identity and Community
on
Lancashire's Cotton Frontier
c.1890-1950

By

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STUDENT DECLARATION FORM

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the evolution of identity and community within north east Lancashire during a period when the area gained regional and national prominence through its involvement in the cotton industry. It examines how the overarching shared culture of the area could evolve under altering economic conditions, and how expressions of identity fluctuated through the cotton industry's peak and decline. In effect, it explores how local populations could shape and be shaped by the cotton industry.

By focusing on a compact area with diverse settlements, this thesis contributes to the wider understanding of what it was to live in an area dominated by a single industry. The complex legacy that the cotton industry's decline has had is explored through a range of settlement types, from large town to small village. A key focus is therefore on the role of the locality in ordinary life.

By utilizing a case study approach to highlight how conceptions of community and identity varied, this thesis draws together empirical sources with the voices of the people involved, bridging the gap between academic and local histories. It shifts the focus of many previous studies from economic and technical aspects of the cotton industry to one on the communities it dominated. It gives context to the role of the mill within people's lives, allowing for the distinctive story of certain sites to be studied within the context of the wider region.

The thesis considers how a dynamic industry generated a confidence amongst operatives, and how this manifested itself through the area's development, both in terms of urbanisation and a blossoming of social and leisure opportunities. It then contrasts these developments with how in a declining industry, the very same people reacted in the face of social upheaval, as settlements actively tried to banish the image of 'cotton towns'.

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ABBREVIATIONS

General terms

Amalgamated Association of Operative Cotton Spinners and Twiners	ASA
Amalgamated Weavers' Association	AWA
Burnley Weavers' Association	BWA
Cotton Spinners' and Manufacturers' Association	CSMA
Independent Labour Party	ILP
Industrial Transference Board	ITB
Labour Representation Committee	LRC
Lancashire Industrial Development Committee	LIDC
Nelson Weavers' Association	NWA
SDF/ NSP	Social Democratic Federation / National Socialist Party
United Textile Factory Workers Association	UTFWA

Archives

Labour History Archive, Salford	LHA
Lancashire Record Office / Lancashire Archives. Preston	LRO
National Archives, Kew	NA

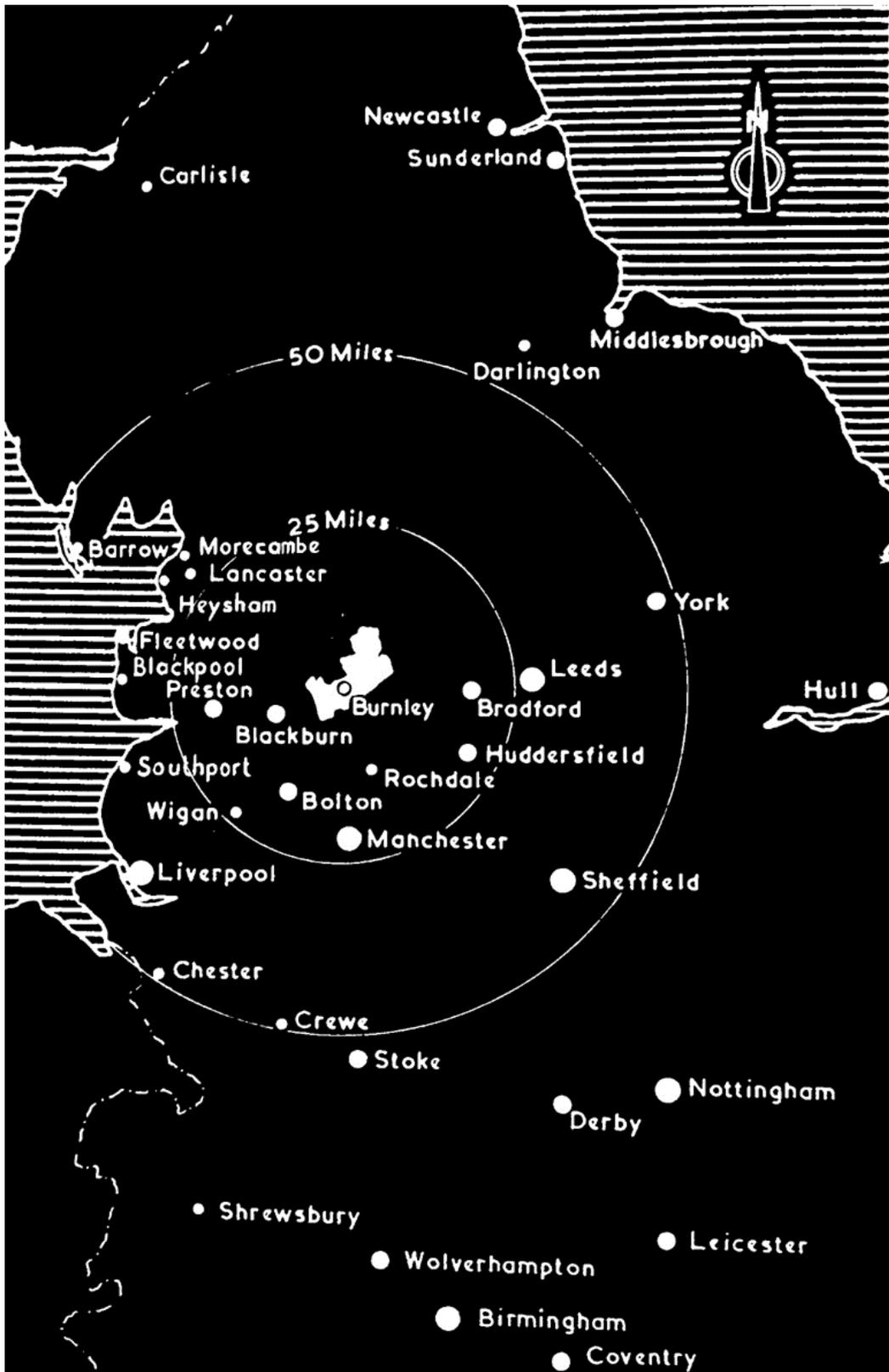


Figure 1: The Location of the Subject Area. Source: 'North East Lancashire: A Place to Live and Work', (Burnley: NELDA, 1958)

INTRODUCTION

The Lancashire cotton industry occupies a difficult position in the psyche of modern Britain. From one perspective it was 'that key driver of the industrial revolution in North-West England'.¹ Yet, in the public consciousness the industry is too often associated with 'dark satanic mills', or, as the writer Russell Jenkins termed 'The ruthless reign of king cotton'. As he continues:

Nowhere is this image - conjured up by Charles Dickens in his sulphurous description of Coketown in *Hard Times* - more graphic than in the cotton mills of Lancashire, where the chimneys, towering over communities to this day, remain a potent symbol of the power and influence of the owners over the lives of ordinary people.²

Jenkins' perception is one embedded in an overwhelmingly negative wider public narrative, and is part of an image based upon what Seabrook defines as the 'abuses of poverty and overwork ... the ghosts of country people once driven from impoverished villages into the squalid towns of Lancashire'.³ Yet, in a post-industrial setting it is often overlooked how symbiotic the relationship between many cotton operatives and their workplace- socially, in some cases economically, and often emotionally- was. Seabrook also highlights in the same piece, albeit inadvertently, the complex and contradictory relationship that existed between the cotton industry and the areas of Lancashire it dominated. For example, while he writes of 'the thousand looms ... leaving a whole generation to lip read ... children crawling under looms to fix them ... room and power mills rented by manufacturers so they could dismiss operatives as soon as trade slackened', he also shows that elderly operatives remembered a strong community feeling within mill environments and how they 'tried everything to keep the mills open'.⁴ As Singleton described on his tour of the area in the 1950s: 'these towns inspire in their people passionate loyalties both among those who stay and those who travel afield. They can inspire also passionate hatreds, generally in those who long to go but are compelled to stay'.⁵ It is this complexity, free from either ideological attachment or rose-tinted nostalgia that this thesis seeks to explore.

The reputation of the Lancashire cotton industry has been influenced both by external narratives, linked to notions of 'Englishness', and internally by the impact its collapse had on many towns. The former, based on images of extreme poverty and social deprivation, has been a recurrent theme in the portrayal of the wider north, both as an 'other', usually a negative entity, and as Russell stated, part of the 'genealogy of Northern stereotyping'.⁶ Yet, even internally, in the face of economic decline, a desire to move away from the cotton industry created a conscious attempt to portray an attractive, idealised Lancashire. As promotional material from 1960s Burnley declared, the future was to be, 'a far cry from the lingering image of East Lancashire as a grubby, grimy, depressing conglomeration of "Coronation Streets"'.⁷

The result of the attempts to re-define former cotton towns has created a paradoxical situation.

¹ A. Rice, *Creating Memorials, Building Identities*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), p. 82.

² *The Times*, August 8, 1997.

³ J. Seabrook, '10,000 Memories in Nelson, Lancashire', *New Statesman*, November 27, 1998.

⁴ Seabrook, '10,000 Memories'.

⁵ F. Singleton, *Lancashire and The Pennines: A Survey Of Lancashire, and Parts Of Northumberland, Durham, Cumberland, Westmorland and Yorkshire*, (Lancashire: Batsford, 1952), p. 22.

⁶ D. Russell, *Looking North: Northern England and the National Imagination* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 33.

⁷ 'New Fields For Industry', (Burnley: North West Development Council, 1968).

Seabrook is correct to describe many elderly operatives as having a 'curious estrangement from their earlier selves- as though they had died and been reincarnated.'⁸ Yet, his approach is largely superficial, for it fails to convey just how central industry was to everyday lives. As Strangleman discusses in the post-Second World War environment:

There is, I think, a transparency about British industrial communities ... People were aware of what others did; there was knowledge about the things made and the men and women who made them. We get a visceral sense ... of the nature of industrial districts and how they created an anticipatory socialization into industrial work and its concomitant identities largely absent in modern life.⁹

A clearer starting point would thus be Asa Briggs description of industrial Lancashire as:

Not merely a land of slag heaps and dark satanic mills; it was a land of chapels and clubs, of co-operative and friendly societies... of small but energetic social and religious groups, of intense and variegated loyalties.¹⁰

The approach and scope of the thesis

This thesis is not concentrating on the cotton industry itself but the people within and around it, and how their roles changed as forms of local autonomy, and their voice in the balance of work and social life was modified. It is, more specifically, an exploration of communities and identities through the paradigm of culture.

Culture is a contested term, with a great deal of definitions.¹¹ A useful definition is offered by Barker, who explains the concept as a 'continual hybridization of meaningful practices or performances ... a whole and a part ... the global and the local' that 'does not represent a fixed entity in an independent object world but is best thought of as a mobile signifier that denotes different ways of talking about human activity with divergent uses and purposes.'¹² To further clarify the concept, Griswold defined culture as society's 'way of life',¹³ and using the 'cultural diamond' explores different 'cultural objects'. Despite the phraseology, these 'objects' are not wholly physical, and are evidenced through 'shared significance embodied in form ... a set of denotations and connotations, emotions and memories.' Indeed the use of this approach is to view culture as a means of understanding 'the social arrangements prevailing.'¹⁴ Perhaps more pertinent to this study is what Griswold defines as regional culture: experiences and institutions. Griswold studies these from 'the local up', and further explains the parameters as 'the sum of cultural objects – customs, ideas, cuisine, poems, handcrafts, song, beliefs, art, religious practices, dialects – associated with a particular place,' although for the purposes of this thesis, the sub-local is a key component of the study.¹⁵

The thesis examines the period c.1890 - 1950s, covering the peak and decline of cotton and, thereafter,

⁸ Seabrook, '10,000 memories'.

⁹ T. Strangleman, 'Remembering Working-Class Life: History, Sociology and Working-Class Studies', *Sociology*, 48, 6 (2014), pp. 1232–1237.

¹⁰ A. Briggs, *Victorian People, A Reassessment of Persons and Themes 1851-67*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 205.

¹¹ In 1952 Kroeber and Kluckhohn compiled a list of 164 different definitions. See A.L. Kroeber and C. Kluckhohn, *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*, (London: Greenwood Press, 1999).

¹² C. Barker, *Making Sense of Cultural Studies*, (London: Sage, 2002), pp. 80-85.

¹³ W. Griswold, *Cultures and Societies in a Changing World*, (California: Pine Forge Press, 1994)

¹⁴ W. Griswold, *Renaissance Revivals*, (London: Chicago University Press, 1986), pp. 4-6.

¹⁵ W. Griswold and J. Brown Saracino (2004), 'Do Some Places Really Have More Than There?: The Persistence and Variation of Regional Culture in the Heartland', *Conference Papers, American Sociological Association*. Annual Meeting, San Francisco, p. 2.

north east Lancashire's attempt to diversify. It is divided into two parts, separated by the First World War. The first half concentrates on the period when the cotton industry peaked, c.1890-1914, highlighting the individual patterns of development within the area. It then explores the confidence that general economic and industrial stability bred, signified through different expressions of identity and the adaptation of the dominant culture. The second half explores how this general confidence was broken after the war, and how people in the area adapted to the decline of an industry that was once central to their lives and their community. The underlying theme throughout the thesis is how communities involved in the cotton industry acted, reacted, saw themselves, and how this was manifested in different ways.

Most studies of industrial Lancashire are generalised, and take little account of the reality of experiences felt by the people themselves. There was obviously diversity in experiences, but too much previously has represented the more negative aspects as the everyday.

Some general accounts in British history also overlook the separate story of industrial Lancashire and how it contributes to wider national narratives. For example, works like those of Thom present a women's history that fails to account for the societal structure in mill towns.¹⁶ One newspaper report describing the popularity of hockey in 1914 highlights the differences between the young female workers of Burnley and London:

Hockey has first of all the prime advantage of being cheap ... the Lancashire lass is not poor as girls go. To say that hockey is cheap would seem a mockery to a London factory hand. A set of London jam or match factory girls could not hope to play such a game unless they were subsidised by kind ladies. Besides it would make them too hungry. The Lancashire girl can, if she will, organise and run a hockey club without charitable aid.¹⁷

Insights into life in cotton towns reinforces the aims of this thesis, in examining the subject area on its own terms rather than from a pre-set theoretical angle, like the Marxist approach of Foster. His study of Oldham was considered a cornerstone of social history until being challenged by Winstanley, who emphasizes wider community consensus over class conflict.¹⁸ It is the vibrancy and difference in the local experiences of average people that this thesis aims to highlight, taking their own testimony and actions around their lives seriously, avoiding the portrayal of a 'social totality'.¹⁹ People were well aware of their actions, of rules and regulations, and were prepared to act within, and at times outside of (or at least to the edge of) them. When for example, in 1930, operatives in several towns were found to be widely undercutting shopkeepers by trading wholesale goods inside mills, mill owners faced genuine difficulty in stopping a practice many felt was their right to engage in, even at the threat of reprisals.²⁰

Conceptualising community

The concept of community is, like culture, a contentious issue. Calhoun summarised it as 'a matter of long

¹⁶ See D. Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls: Women Workers in World War 1*, (London: I.B. Taurus, 1998).

¹⁷ *Burnley Express*, February 14, 1914.

¹⁸ See J. Foster, *Class Struggle in the Industrial Revolution*, (London: Weidenfield & Nicholson, 1974), G. McLennan (1976), 'Ideology and Consciousness: Some Problems in Marxist Historiography', *Stenciled Occasional Papers*, Birmingham University, and M. Winstanley, 'Oldham Radicalism and the Origins of Popular Liberalism, 1830-52', *Historical Journal*, 36, 3 (1993), pp. 619-643.

¹⁹ For a comprehensive discussion of the main theoretical problems of Marxist history, see G. McLennan, 'Ideology and Consciousness'.

²⁰ *Burnley Express*, August 9, 1930.

term cooperation ... members of communities often desire that benefits should accrue to large social units with which they identify – kinship and descent groups for example.²¹ Moore further distinguishes between ‘face-to-face’ or ‘deference’ communities and ‘the ideological’ or ‘interest’ communities. The former, Moore suggests, were found ‘amongst enclosed agricultural estates ... shops, mills and railway companies’, and their defining feature was that ‘irrespective of class, the well-being of every man associated ... was dependent on the well-being of the shop owner or mill owner.’ The latter type of community, ‘composed of men who were bound together not by the ties of a single estate or shop, but by somewhat less tangible ties of common political, economic, social, and religious interests.’²² This thesis explores both types of community from the local to the regional level, highlighting the shared interests across the multiple intersections from village to county.

The communities of industrial Lancashire were for a long period renowned for being (on the whole) especially close knit and based around familial ties, which included factory owners as well as workers. Even when avoiding the sanctification of community or becoming nostalgic over it, the closeness of families was seen as a particular ‘Lancashire trait’ into the 1930s.²³ The importance of studying community for historical purposes is to ‘penetrate beneath such simple categories as city, village, town, and country, to see a variable of social relations,’²⁴ and as Newby has rightly argued, often community is formed, and is strongest when it has to be. Sometimes community is a necessity, and thus could be what he refers to as a ‘mutuality of the oppressed’, in the sense of shared poverty, etc.²⁵ In basic terms it can be when under strain or some kind of threat that the true nature of communities are revealed. The period covered by this thesis allows for the examination of this concept of community at a time when a particular area, north east Lancashire, experienced considerable transformation.

The variability of community has often resulted in a narrow representation of cotton operatives as agents or victims of a somehow inevitable ‘radical’ change. In a wider context, studies of cotton communities have demonstrated a great deal of complexity in social structures that challenge the old Marxist consensus such as the aforementioned Foster. Smout argues in relation to Scotland’s textile industry that ‘to speak of a “working class” suggests ... an underlying unity’,²⁶ and as he shows through the differences in trade unions, this was certainly not the case.²⁷ Indeed, even into the 1950s, the variation across north east Lancashire was widely acknowledged. As a profile of the area in the build up to the 1950 election discussed:

The north east corner of Lancashire is made up of three divisions: Clitheroe, Burnley, and Nelson and Colne. All three are predominantly weaving constituencies, with the distinctive social and political traditions peculiar to the Lancashire

²¹ C.J. Calhoun, ‘Community: Toward A Variable Conceptualisation For Comparative Research’, *Social History*, 5, 1 (1980), pp. 105-129.

²² D.C. Moore, ‘Concession or Cure: the Sociological Premises of the First Reform Act’, *The Historical Journal*, 9, 1, (1966), p. 56. , See also P.F. Clarke, ‘Electoral Sociology in Modern Britain’, *History*, 57, 189 (1972), pp. 31–55.

²³ *Manchester Guardian*, February 11, 1931.

²⁴ C.J. Calhoun, ‘Community’.

²⁵ Newby, ‘Urbanisation and Rural Class Structure; Reflection on a Case Study’, *British Journal of Sociology*, 30, 4 (1979), pp. 475-499.

²⁶ T.C. Smout, *A History of The Scottish People, 1560-1830*, (Scotland: Fontana, 1970), p. 413.

²⁷ A similar pitfall is as argued by Al-Messiri in relation to the local elements of the Egyptian cotton industry, where the intellectual baggage of historians attached from dominant theoretical perspectives has led to studies that, ‘focus mainly on institutional issues, isolating the worker from his community and dealing with him in the context of his place of work.’ See S. El-Messiri (1980), *Class and Community in an Egyptian Textile Town*, PhD Thesis, University of Hull, p. 5.

weaver. All three are now defended by Labour. There, for electoral purposes, the similarity between them ends.²⁸

The reality here is a society with different needs, changing ideas, and groups of people who superficially may have been a unified body, but to themselves and their communities were multifaceted. It is how and why these differences developed, continued and were radically altered in different localities, rather than theoretical concepts of 'class war' that forms the backbone of this study.

The subject area

The area under examination in this thesis is not one defined rigidly by long lasting institutional boundaries. Rather, it emerges consistently over a long period as a coherent cultural unit, and is referred to throughout the thesis as north east Lancashire. Regarded as being generally 'remote', with less access to the main transport links, and interspersed by moor and hills, the area can be seen as the frontier of the cotton industry.²⁹ The boundaries and titles for this region are fluid within narrow bounds and have been formalized effectively for local government purposes. Thus, they frequently change, but this thesis focuses on the areas to the north and northeast of Burnley, its largest settlement. The problem of many previous studies has been that of generalization, much like Singleton warned in his guide to the Lancastrian Pennines in the 1950s:

The relief one feels on having broken up the area into manageable portions, is succeeded by despair before the challenge to generalise about the area as a whole. How generalise, indeed, even about Lancashire itself? The late Haslam Mills, the author of the charge that Lancashire gave itself the airs of a continent, pointed out that disparity, contrast, variation, are the most striking characteristics of the country throughout town and countryside.³⁰

North east Lancashire is, however, a recurring grouping, with the towns and villages flanking what is now the Burnley, Brierfield, Nelson and Colne linear conurbation, stretching to (and at times crossing) the Yorkshire border, bounded by Pendle Hill, the Pennine hills and the upland areas of Rossendale.³¹ Its importance to the cotton industry cannot be overstated. Burnley in this period was regarded as the largest cotton-weaving town in the world, and the centre of powerloom-making, and at its peak it contributed along with the other settlements of the area to shared regional pride built upon its national importance.³² At various times places like Rawtenstall and Haslingden, and Accrington and Blackburn were joined with this area as a wider sub division of Lancashire under titles like Pennine Lancashire, Pendle Lancashire, and north east Lancashire. In reality they belong to their own respective sub divisions, which was an argument made by the Development Area board in the 1950s.

As a grouping, north east Lancashire was overwhelmingly reliant economically on the cotton weaving industry, and it clung to it longer than any other area. Even into the 1950s, employment figures of people still working within textiles were reported as generally higher than the rest of Lancashire (and the

²⁸ *Manchester Guardian*, February 17, 1950.

²⁹ As late as 1973, the lack of transport links to the area was a source of great concern. The Accrington MP Arthur Davidson described how once past Preston 'one runs into difficulties. It takes almost as long to travel the 20 miles from Preston to Accrington as it does to travel from London to Preston ... The services are dreary and depressing.' North-East Lancashire HC Deb, October 19, 1973, 861, cc653-64.

³⁰ Singleton, *Lancashire and the Pennines*, p. 3.

³¹ Some settlements such as Earby and Barnoldswick, although in Yorkshire, were widely regarded as part of the wider Nelson and Colne areas. Their geographical position was later recognised in the boundary changes of 1974 moving both to Lancashire.

³² R. Frost, *Burnley Through Time*, (Burnley: Amberley, 2010), p. 1.

hinterland), bar Glossop and Royton, that were not weaving focused.³³ Consequentially, tensions and local rivalries built over a long period despite, as Caunce demonstrates, being originally quite benign.³⁴ Settlements developed and grew their own sense of identity reflected in local working conditions and the effects of urbanisation - taxes, laws, health and living conditions - but increasingly grew towards each other geographically. Gradually local relationships became more antagonistic as economic resources diminished, and people crossed administrative borders. As local government borders shifted and were redrawn, centralisation and standardization became more desirable to certain bodies, and resulted in attempts to address and defend various facets of local life. For many areas the parish council and local authority was the dominant administrative body, and throughout the region both acted with certain degrees of autonomy. As such, no town really had an overall role as de-facto capital despite Burnley's dominance in population and production. Edsall, for an earlier period, has clearly shown this in the dispute regarding the formation of poor law unions in the 1830s, arguing the Burnley union itself should have been two separate entities, with the upper part of the area around Colne 'always resenting its inclusion in Burnley'.³⁵

Caunce has discussed the unusual geography of the Pennine region at length, but north east Lancashire has a distinctive pattern of development without an accepted focal point that makes it unique.³⁶ Alongside the larger settlements were smaller industrial villages, occupying a state somewhere between 'rural' and industrial. Many of these were called 'country' or 'out' districts. Within these country districts, much more localised forms of community-centred life flourished and developed with their own local intricacies, which, as will be explored throughout the thesis, offer contrasting visions to the rest of the county. The area's distinctiveness was reinforced through clear and valued links to a 'folk' past, and maintained through institutions like religion and kinship links. Issues such as politics and class show little semblance on the ground to the established versions of working-class history. Smaller settlements had different problems than those of the larger settlements and different expectations of local life, and at times a different relationship to the cotton industry, the exploration of which lies at the heart of this thesis.

³³ In larger towns, the figures of peoples still working in textiles were around 30 per cent in Burnley, 50 per cent in Nelson and 42 per cent in Colne. In some smaller towns like Padiham with 42 per cent and Todmorden with 44 per cent, the figures were equally as high. See R. Robson, *The Cotton Industry in Britain*, (Manchester: MacMillan, 1957), p. 44.

³⁴ S. Caunce, 'Northern English Industrial Towns: Rivals or Partners?', *Urban History*, 30, (2003), pp. 338-358.

³⁵ N. Edsall, *The Anti-Poor Law Movement 1834-1844*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971), p. 233.

³⁶ S. Caunce, 'Urban Systems, Identity and Development in Lancashire and Yorkshire: A Complex Question', in Kirk (ed.), *Northern Identities: Historical Interpretations of the North and Northernness*, (Michigan: Ashgate, 2000).



Figure 2: The settlements in north east Lancashire. Source: LFHSS, Pendle and Burnley Branch

The locality was the centre of most lives throughout this thesis's period of study. Although affinities were multifaceted and complex across street, village, town and parish, there were tangible local structures that, as will be explored, became increasingly at odds with growing levels of regional change, socially and administratively.

The interaction between towns and villages of differing sizes within such a small geographical area is concentrated enough to be manageable, whilst at the same time highlights enough diversity to explore different reactions to economic, social, and cultural change. In this, it is then possible to explore the nature, determinants and evolution of communities and identities. Such an approach is justified especially by Cole and Wolf, who in *The Hidden Frontier* explored the notions of identity within two geographically neighbouring but ethnically-distinct Alpine villages, both of which adapt to their

mountainous environment in different ways. It was their intention to study:

Two small villages ... two microcosms caught in the play of forces larger and more powerful than themselves ... to describe and explain this interplay between microcosm and macrocosm, between peasant settlement and expanding market, between community and more inclusive polity.³⁷

North east Lancashire also had a distinctive makeup in terms of the cotton industry. Each settlement had its own intricacies, but overall there were a higher number of older male weavers than other areas. This is demonstrated in Table 1. A direct result was to further shape the local culture. The family system extended from the home to work place, and to the way in which recruitment both for work, and with trade unionism later functioned through the network of the family and community. Within the workplace, the complex interlinking of local communities reinforced the sense of family in two ways. First, through whole family-units working together and training each other, such as when Burnley film maker Sam Hanna was taken to learn weaving from his mother.³⁸ Secondly, those that did not learn from their own families often conformed to a family structure through a type of surrogacy, so when Edith Holgate went into the mill, she learnt from a man and his wife.³⁹

Hanna and Holgate both reinforce how much the economy of north east Lancashire was embedded in the family wage. As shown in Figure 3, the importance of a combined income was an established principle amongst operatives. When Harris spoke of opportunities for upward mobility peaking in the 1870s, and ideas of profit sharing and cooperative schemes dying out post 1880s, she fails to account for the fact that the ideals behind this continued to flourish in north east Lancashire,⁴⁰ and that central to this was the ability for families to save and invest. Within this context, the subject area offers a fascinating study of towns and villages transformed by the industrial process and wholly reliant on a single industry.⁴¹ Yet, where industries such as mining have had a great deal of interest in the motivations and sense of identity the colliers had, the weaving operatives tend to suffer from superficial portrayals that lack the local nuances.

Table 1 Weaving employment of males in selected towns, 1901.

Town	% of Working Pop in cotton	% of Weavers who are male	% of weavers who are males over 25
Oldham	41.7	7.4	6.0
Bolton	35.4	13.3	9.2
Preston	40.8	30.7	17.0
Blackburn	52.1	30.7	17.0
Burnley	53.2	39.2	21.9

Adapted from M. Savage, *Women and Work in Cotton*, p. 207.

³⁷ J.W. Cole and E. R. Wolf, *The Hidden Frontier: Ecology and Ethnicity in an Alpine Valley*, (New York: University of California Press, 1974), p. 1.

³⁸ Hanna was 12 years old, and went into the mill as a half timer to learn from his mother to help add to the family wages. It took an error from him, with financial losses to the company for his mother to be advised that mill life 'not for him'. He subsequently became cabinetmaker and continued to contribute to the family wage, eventually becoming a teacher. S. Hanna, *Better Than Chalk And Talk*, (Burnley: Leumas and Trebur, 1993), p. 9.

³⁹ Interview with Edith Holgate, NWSA/1993.0044.

⁴⁰ J. Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: A Social History of Britain, 1870-1914*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 141.

⁴¹ The only parallel would be mining areas, or perhaps Stoke-on-Trent.

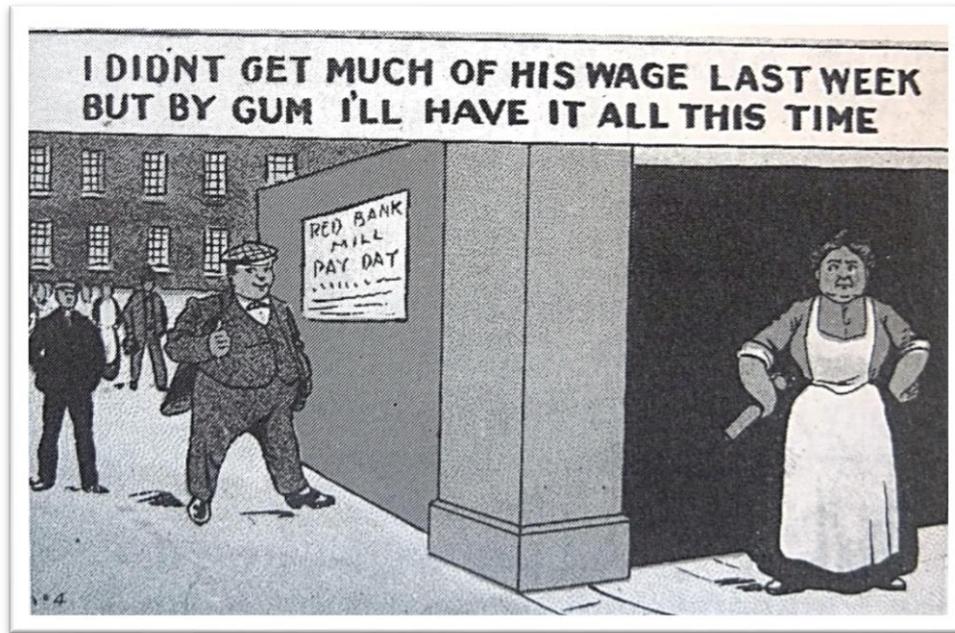


Figure 3: An example of the 'family wage'. Source: *Tacklers' Tales*, (1986)

Thesis overview

This thesis systematically explores a number of key themes throughout its chapters. Primarily it is concerned with how communities and identities adapted and defined themselves in relation to the cotton industry within north east Lancashire, but several other concepts are also considered; firstly, the differences between the experience of larger, more urbanized and smaller more 'rural' or 'country' settlements; secondly, how the concept of social mobility changed during this period; and thirdly, how the culture of the area changed, adapted and was redefined.

This thesis adopts a thematic case study approach for several reasons, but primarily so as to allow for various facets of the culture of north east Lancashire to be explored in different contexts. Indeed, as Ward has shown in *Britishness Since 1870*, the usefulness of this approach can give a more rounded overall result.⁴²

As previously discussed, the thesis is in two parts. The first half examines the cotton industry during the peak years of the 'Indian summer', from c.1890-c.1914.⁴³ Chapter 1 introduces the subject area in more detail by exploring the development of culture in north east Lancashire and serving as a background chapter. Chapter 2 then presents a case study of how the regional culture manifested in practice through the development of the Harle Syke village, built in the image of residents from nearby scattered settlements that in a relatively short period became regarded as especially affluent. Harle Syke offers an

⁴² P. Ward, *Britishness Since 1870*, (London: Routledge, 2004).

⁴³ Although widely used, various historians have defined the 'Indian summer' as lasting from the 1870s -1914 / 1917. As much of the real development of north east Lancashire dates from slightly later, the focus here does not begin until 1890. See M. Rose, *The Lancashire Cotton Industry: A History*, (Lancashire: Lancashire County Books, 1996) and J. Schwarzkopf, *Unpicking Gender*, (London: Ashgate, 2004).

alternative model for development and serves as a recurring contrast to other places throughout the thesis. Chapter 3 examines the political character of the area, focusing on the 1902 Clitheroe by-election. It offers an analysis of the emergence of the Labour movement in an overwhelmingly 'working-class' dominated area, culminating with the unopposed election of the fledgling Labour Party's third overall, and first northern English MP David Shackleton. The incident is a key episode in the history of industrial Lancashire, largely overlooked in broader narratives on the rise of labour (and Labour). Shackleton's position as an openly Liberal, respectable, self-made cotton trade union man saw him eventually losing by just one vote to Keir Hardie in the 1906 election for the Chairman of the Parliamentary Labour Party.⁴⁴ His election acts as a window to explore the concepts of ideology to the workers themselves. Chapter 4 explores the differences between urban and 'country' trade unionism. It builds on the previous chapters by continuing the themes of 'actual' labour politics, the different expressions of culture and challenges the orthodoxy that trade unionism was as dominant and all-encompassing as much of the previous literature would portray.

Part two of the thesis focuses on the post-First World War period until c.1950, examining how the area and the cotton industry tried to adapt to a new and increasingly challenging world. As shown by Colley, British identities have always been influenced by forces beyond it, and Chapter 5 offers an introduction to the period by discussing the changes within the industry, and how this influenced social conditions, and in turn, the expectations of locals in a new context.⁴⁵ Chapter 6 then discusses the more looms period of the early 1930s when attempts were made to rationalise the industry by increasing workloads and decreasing costs in the face of the dramatic decline of exports. It then aims to examine how this affected concepts of identity in the face of communities under pressure. Chapter 7 then follows the attempts of the industry itself to improve its image and reputation. It focuses first on the campaigns in the 1930s to promote national interest in Lancashire's cotton goods and then the export drive in the post Second World War period. It traces the use of the stereotypical Lancastrian character traits to present Lancashire workers as having a special position amongst other workers in Britain. Chapter 8 then concludes with the attempts of north east Lancashire to diversify and move away from the cotton industry and the impact this had on local communities.

Sources and methods

The initial conception of the project from which this thesis developed was the desire to understand the industrial sites of the Lancashire Museum Service (LMS). There exists in the majority of industrial museum sites a disconnection between presenting their significance in terms of the people and communities they were embedded in, and how this fits the wider general and national narratives. The LMS worked with external consultancy firm Metaphor, to help them to develop a 'story' to marry the two together, but the overall results reinforce the difficulty in approaching such an emotive project:

The rise and fall of the Industrial Revolution, in particular, the cotton industry feels like a relatively fresh wound and there is a feeling of disassociation with the region's industrial roots. For one thing, there is a surplus of great, but abandoned industrial buildings across the region, which in their present state, are unsightly and act as a sad reminder of

⁴⁴ See K. Jeffreys, *Leading Labour: From Keir Hardie to Tony Blair*, (London: I.B. Taurus, 1999), pp. 11-12.

⁴⁵ L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, (New York: Yale University Press, 1993), p. xi.

what used to be. Changing the negativity around the industrial 'stock' should be high on any redevelopment and new investment agenda.⁴⁶

Metaphor's approach, although visually appealing, failed to adequately explore both the uniqueness and shared experiences across the north east Lancashire textile industry. The aim of this thesis is to develop an academically rigorous argument that utilizes the previous work of the LMS and their sites to explore the communities who were so interlinked with the mills and to produce a piece of work that explains the significance of this. It was therefore a conscious decision to approach the thesis in a way that could result in transmission to multiple formats (website, museum display etc.). However there has been no input or influence (other than the initial funding) from the LMS in terms of the subject or overall argument. They have however provided a wealth of resources such as archival materials and collaborated on exhibitions, as well as mutually beneficial areas of research such as conducting oral interviews.

The thesis has aimed to rely as much as possible upon the voices of the local people involved. This has meant an extensive and critical use of oral testimony, contemporary interviews, and reportage. The basis for this is to address the significance of events to the people themselves, and the use of such materials is intended to represent the range of identities active within the region without any pre-set agenda or theoretical positioning.

The need to engage critically with theories in terms of identity and consciousness is addressed throughout the thesis, but the central aim here is to build a new, loose model, not to verify any existing ones. The oral work has been a combination of author conducted interviews, the collections of the North West Sound Archive, Lancashire Museums Services – especially the 'Hidden Histories' work, and the materials collected by Graham through the 'Lancashire Textile Project'. The *Manchester Guardian* has served as wider contemporary context due to its level of detail across the whole of Lancashire on the majority of issues addressed here, specifically within the cotton industry. The local newspapers for the Burnley region - the *Burnley Express*, the *Burnley News* and *Clitheroe Advertiser*, and *Burnley Gazette* - have supplemented this with the depth of local analysis that far surpasses modern examples. Various other newspapers have been used throughout, although the *Cotton Factory Times* has been used sparingly, despite its usefulness for contextual background reading due to its bias as the self-conscious mouthpiece of the cotton unions. Their own opinion comes from archival materials, notably correspondence and minute books where possible.

Due to the approach of the thesis, each chapter discusses some more specialist literature, and what is discussed here is a contextual survey. For general analysis of the state of both the cotton industry and social conditions, a combination of official statistics, newspaper statistics and various surveys, town development plans and reports have been utilised. These have also been supported by Robson's *The Cotton Industry in Great Britain*, Pope's *Unemployment and the Lancashire Weaving Areas*, and in terms of general union history from the employers' perspective, Jowitt and Mclvor, and from the operatives'

⁴⁶ 'Story Planning in the North West', Metaphor (2009).

Hopwood's *Lancashire Weavers' Story* and Bullen's *The Lancashire Weavers' Union*.⁴⁷ The latter two serve primarily as raw material, due to their natural positioning in presenting the history from the Amalgamated Weavers' Association (AWA) perspective. Both have been influential in subsequent studies of the industry, and many wider analyses have a (understandable) tendency to engage uncritically with some of the actions of the AWA. This is perhaps a similar, if minor criticism that can levelled at the work of Fowler, who provides several key texts on both the weaving and spinning sectors of the industry. His *Cotton Operatives and Work* is a key introduction covering several aspects from a 'labour' perspective, which, although generalized in places contributes along with his other work to some key foundations of study.⁴⁸ What Fowler does manage to include is some highly personal material, something lacking in general histories of the cotton industry and Lancashire's industrial workers. More general introductions from Aspin, Baines, Chapman, and Rose offer stronger economic-based histories which have long formed the backbone of the subject,⁴⁹ whilst perhaps the best starting point for any cotton related subject is Wyke and Rudyard's *Cotton: A Select Bibliography on Cotton in North West England*.⁵⁰

Indeed, it is generally from the more localized studies that one finds more intricate detail, but often these are narrow in outlook, and sometimes ill-informed on context. Thus, their use is mainly for raw material that would otherwise be unattainable. There are of course exceptions, and academics such as Timmins provide a balance between such detail and clear purpose. His *Four Centuries of Lancashire Cotton* serves as an accessible and concise history of the industry as a whole, whilst *The Last Shift*, helps to establish certain themes such as the importance of familial links in an earlier period, which used in conjunction with his other works contribute insight throughout the length of this thesis' study period.⁵¹ Similarly measured works by Firth on Burnley and north east Lancashire, and Trodd's thesis offers key insights into working class politics throughout the period, and provide crucial context for the subject area.⁵² It is however telling that both are unpublished, despite their use for wider stands of historical study. They serve to highlight just how overlooked north east Lancashire has been, and most other theses on this area aim to search and explore 'political elites', but suffer through ideological posturing, and thus

⁴⁷ R. Robson, *Cotton Industry*, R. Pope, *Unemployment and the Lancashire Weaving Area*, (Preston: University of Central Lancashire, 2000), J.A. Jowitt and A. McIvor, *Employers and Labour in the English Textile Industries: 1850-1939*, (London: Routledge, 1988), and also *Organised Capital: Employers' Associations and Industrial Relations in Northern England, 1880-1939*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), E. Hopwood, *The Lancashire Weavers Story*, (Lancashire: Co-Operative Press, 1969) and A. Bullen, *The Lancashire Weavers' Union: A Commemorative History*, (Rochdale: Textile Workers Union, 1984).

⁴⁸ A. Fowler (ed.), *Barefoot Aristocrats* (London: George Kelsall, 1987), *Cotton Operatives and Work*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 'Lancashire To Westminster: A Study Of Cotton Trade Union Officials And British Labour 1910-39', *Labour History Review*, 64, 1 (1999), pp. 1-22., *Mirth in the Mill: The Gradely World of Sam Fitton*, (Oldham: Oldham Education and Leisure Services, 1995), *The History of the Nelson Weavers' Association*, (Nelson: 1984), 'Trade Unions and Technical Change: The Automatic Loom Strike, 1908', *North West Group For the Study of Labour History Bulletin*, 6, (1977).

⁴⁹ C. Aspin, *The First Industrial Society: A Social History of Lancashire, 1750-1850*, (London: Carnegie, 1998), E. Baines, *History of Cotton Manufacture in Great Britain*, (Lancashire: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd, 1966), S.D. Chapman, *The Cotton Industry in the Industrial Revolution*, (London: Macmillan, 1972), and *The Lancashire Cotton Industry; A Study in Economic Development*, (Clifton: August M. Kelley, 1973), M. Rose, *The Lancashire Cotton Industry*.

⁵⁰ T. Wyke and N. Rudward, *Cotton: A Select Bibliography on Cotton in North West England*, (Manchester: Bibliography of North West England, 1997).

⁵¹ G. Timmins, *The Last Shift: The Decline of Handloom Weaving in Nineteenth-Century Lancashire*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), *Four Centuries of Lancashire Cotton*, (Lancashire: Lancashire County Books, 1996), *Made in Lancashire: A History of Regional Industrialisation*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), also *Making Sense of the Industrial Revolution: English Economy and Society 1700-1850*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001).

⁵² P. Firth, *Society, Politics and The Working Class In North East Lancashire, c; 1890 to 1920*, (Self-Published, 1994), and several subsequent pamphlets, and G. Trodd (1978), 'Political change and the working class in Blackburn and Burnley, 1880-1914', PhD Thesis. Lancaster University.

contribute little overall.⁵³ Nearby town based studies are shown by Beattie in Blackburn and Hill in Nelson, although a similarly concise yet accomplished account for Burnley is lacking, and the definitive history is still Bennett's four volumes.⁵⁴ The trend is thus to focus mostly on the larger settlements, or in the case of Nelson, the development of radically divergent politics. There is therefore a gulf between the more academic texts that focus on the larger settlements and those that are more accessible to the general public. The existing studies tend to be from anthropological positions, and need to be used sensibly, notably Frankenberg's *Communities in Britain* and for wider context, Birch's study of Glossop, *Small Town Politics*.⁵⁵ One exception is Griffiths' *The Lancashire Working Classes 1880-1930*, which, although predominantly spinning-centric offers a comparison with mining, and stands out in trying to find a realistic portrayal of working people.⁵⁶ Griffiths' decision to disregard the linguistic turn by focusing on actual events was an influential piece of background reading for this study and falls under what Kirk called 'liberal revisionism', which despite encompassing a range of perspectives, he believes attaches an importance to 'continuity', and an overall lack of class-consciousness. Kirk groups together disparate academics including Stedman-Jones, Joyce, Biagini and Reid along with Lawrence under this term, criticizing all of them from a Marxist perspective.⁵⁷ Despite being somewhat irreverent, Joyce's own criticism of the Marxian approach, classing them as 'dinosaurs', was part of a turning point, marking the end of that approach's dominance over social and labour histories. This ushered in the post-modern and post-structural movement he spearheaded with Stedman-Jones.⁵⁸ However, much of the work of this kind is prone to ideological hindrance. The 'linguistic turn' itself created issues, especially surrounding concepts such as class, or as Joyce defined his aims: 'one concerned with meaning and culture, in which the dimension of material things and processes, and their interaction with meanings, was left to another day.'⁵⁹

With a thesis of this type, 'class' is the 'elephant in the room'. Most pertinently such discussions are represented by questions over factory and industrial politics, notably through Joyce's *Work Society and Politics, and Visions of the People* as well as outlined in other works, alongside Stedman-Jones' *Languages of Class* and Savage's work.⁶⁰ Such an approach is disregarded here in favour of the principles underpinning the work of Griswold, who explores how social phenomena can operate in more general

⁵³ See R.P. Cook (1974), 'Political Elites and electoral Politics in Late 19th century Burnley', M.A. Dissertation, Lancaster University, and A. Russell (1976), 'Elites at the Local Level of Society: Social leadership in Burnley 1870-1900', M.A. Dissertation, Lancaster University.

⁵⁴ J. Hill, *Nelson: Politics, Economy, Community*, (Lancaster: Carnegie Press, 1997) D. Beattie, *A History of Blackburn*, (Blackburn: Carnegie Press, 2007) W. Bennett, *History of Burnley*; Vols. 1-4, (Burnley: Burnley Council, 1951).

⁵⁵ R. Frankenberg, *Communities in Britain*, (London: Penguin, 1970), *Village on the Border: A Social Study of Religion, Politics and Football in a North Wales Community*, (London: Waveband Press, 1989) and A. Birch, *Small Town Politics: A Study of Political Life in Glossop*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959).

⁵⁶ T. Griffiths, *The Lancashire Working Classes, 1880-1930*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁵⁷ N. Kirk, *Change, Continuity and Class: Labour in British Society, 1850-1920*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 9-11.

⁵⁸ See M. Perry especially chapter 7, *Marxism and History*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

⁵⁹ P. Joyce, 'More Secondary Modern than Postmodern', *Rethinking History*, 5, 3 (2001) pp. 367-382.

⁶⁰ P. Joyce, *Class*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), *Democratic Subjects: The Self and the Social in Nineteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class, 1840-1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), *Work, Society and Politics: Culture of the Factory in Later Victorian England*, (England: Harvester Press, 1982), G. Stedman-Jones, *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History 1832-1982*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), and M. Savage, *The Remaking of the British Working Class, 1840-1940*, (London: Routledge, 1994), *The Dynamics of Working-class Politics: The Labour Movement in Preston, 1880-1940*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

social processes and how social forces influence culture.⁶¹ Although some of the post-structuralist works have at times been referred to and discussed, they are used with caution, and their arguments do not dominate the undertaking of this study.

Where attempts to use memoirs and autobiographies from cotton operatives and people whose childhood occurred within the period of this thesis have been used, it is to add further context to the events themselves, and they are generally taken at face value rather than as concrete historical fact. Used in conjunction with more academic texts, both types of sources complement each other to reveal the realities of everyday life on a solid empirical grounding. This is especially apparent in the work of W.R. Mitchell, *Bridges' Threads of Lancashire Life*, *In and Out the Windows* by Blackburn, Pateman's *Dunshaw: A Lancashire Background*, Woodruff's *The Road to Nabb End*, and specifically in the areas this thesis focuses on, Howarth's *Figure's in a Bygone Landscape* and *Bright Morning*.⁶² The images they present are greatly at odds with the general discourse regarding the assumed or inferred mentality of the working classes in industrial Lancashire and are fuel for the analysis. This in turn means that a large percentage of work detailing the industrial experiences of the wider region and country as a whole does not correspond with the experiences in these books and with much oral testimony.

Secondary reading must therefore be selective. Indeed as argued by Newell in his distinctive book, *A Hillside View of Industrial History*, historical works often have difficulty 'finding that degree of agreement between local generally accepted history which might have been expected.'⁶³ His sentiments do still ring true despite being written in 1925: a number of histories written, especially involving Lancashire, fail to adequately address the intricacies of local life and the unique experiences people went through, and the lasting effect this has had on communities.

Some of those best trying to address the lack of understanding of local experiences are local history groups, typified by the Briercliffe Society and their archives. The resources such groups offer form a rich and valuable resource, as well as facilitating an active history group and on-line community.⁶⁴ In the case of the Briercliffe Society, many of the people involved are the descendants of the same families who built the Harle Syke village and helped develop Burnley, and it is testament to the intense pride of the local people in their history that so many fragments of their history remain. The combination of photographs, mill company files, and family resources mean that key primary evidence exists, often with a degree of local history attached to it. The work of Frost, Bythell and Stuttard reinforces this passion with all being local-born historians, and their series of works provide an extensive degree of background information which would have either faded from memory or become inaccessible, all based on assiduous and detailed

⁶¹ W. Griswold, *Culture and Societies in a Changing World*, (London: Sage, 2012), p. xiv.

⁶² W. R. Mitchell, *Lancashire Milltown Memories*, (North Yorks: Dalesman, 1987), *A Year with the Curlews: Life on the Northern Pennines*, (Giggleswick: Dalesman, 1967), *Yorkshire Mill Town Traditions*, (North Yorks: Dalesman, 1978), *Yorkshire Dales Folk*, (North Yorks: Dalesman, 1981), *Life in Lancashire Mill Town*, (North Yorks: Dalesman, 1987), W. Bridges, *Threads of Lancashire Life*, (Lancashire: Landy, 1997), E. Blackburn, *In and Out the Windows*, (Burnley: Unknown Publisher, 1979), T. W. Pateman, *Dunshaw: A Lancashire Background*, (Lancashire: Museum Press, 1948), W. Woodruff, *The Road to Nab End*, (London: Eland, 2000), D. Howarth, *Figures in a Bygone Landscape*, (London: Mandarin, 1987) and *Bright Morning*, (London: Meuthen, 1990).

⁶³ A. Newell, *A Hillside View of Industrial History*, (USA: Sentry Press, 1952), pp. 9-14.

⁶⁴ See www.briercliffesociety.co.uk/.

research few could rival in extent.⁶⁵

The image that is initially presented with the aid of such resources offers a complex vision of societal structure. McKibbin theorises in *Classes and Cultures* that the history of class in England is characterised by the difference between ‘working class’ and ‘middle class’ cultures – implying a clear divide-which is too simple an explanation.⁶⁶ The argument is addressed most comprehensively by McWilliam, but later reinforced by Roberts’ critique of such approaches countering ‘under-emphasis with over-emphasis.’⁶⁷ The areas discussed in this thesis offer a much more complex vision of working people with influences from the locality, work, and their own aspirations. The reality is that for much of this period the working classes were developing their own ideas of what they were in a wider and more publicised way, but that these were far from clear-cut, and could be several concepts at once. For example, there is a clear pattern of those seen on the ‘respectable’ left as ‘progressives’ and those seen as trouble makers being called at earlier periods ‘syndicalists’ and later ‘socialists’ then ‘communists’ and ‘Bolsheviks’. Even August’s view that ‘working class consciousness continued to coexist with other forms of identification. Respectability remained entrenched in late Victorian and Edwardian working-class culture’, fails to adequately address the situation, and as McDonough argues: ‘We cannot talk of the “working class” as some homogenous group anymore,’ if we ever could.⁶⁸

Cultural signifiers and recurring characteristics

The notions of respectability, community, kinship, independence, and self-help dominate the majority of the period of industrialisation, whilst a shift in this mentality becomes clear in the later periods, where manifestations of consumer culture and modernisation co-existed with economic stagnation and decline.⁶⁹ Throughout contemporary reports and later studies, certain cultural signifiers reoccur regarding the population of north east Lancashire. More modern interpretations of the region reinforce this shared identity by relating it to circumstance. When Wheeler wrote of ‘Pennine people, born and reared in bleak, isolated, moorland terrain’, having ‘the backbone of character to match their surroundings’,⁷⁰ she highlighted an emotive and resolute response to the perceptions of the area. The traits that did exist in reality have developed into a firm archetypal image. Shadwell observed of the industrial north in 1913 that: ‘it may not be anything to be proud of; I’m not sure whether it is or not, but the fact is worth noting that everybody is proud of it.’⁷¹ This notion of pride in an industrial setting is difficult to convey against the backdrop of negative stereotypes that dominate popular perceptions of the

⁶⁵ See R. Frost and D. Bythell, *A Lancashire Weaving Company and its Community: Harle Syke Mill 1856-1970* (Briercliffe: Briercliffe Society, 2009), R. Frost, *Burnley Through Time*, (Burnley: Amberley, 2010), *A Lancashire Township: Briercliffe with Extwistle*, (Burnley: Rieve Edge, 1982), *A History of The River Calder*, (Burnley, Amberley, 2014), J. Stuttard, *Briercliffe: A History Of The Township And Parish Of Briercliffe With Extwistle Within The County Palatine Of Lancaster Collected From Ecclesiastical And Civic Documents, Papers And Records*, (Briercliffe: Unknown Publisher, held at Burnley Local History Collection, Burnley Library, LE02 BRIERCLIFFE/STU, 1959).

⁶⁶ R. McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁶⁷ R. McWilliam, *Popular Politics in Nineteenth Century England*, (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 98-101, and M. Roberts, *Political Movements in Urban England, 1832-1914*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

⁶⁸ A. August, *The British Working Class; 1832-1940*, (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 146-147, and F. McDonough, ‘Class and Politics’, in Storry and Childs, *British Cultural Identities*, (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 191.

⁶⁹ For a concise overview of the whole industry’s rise and fall, see S. Toms, ‘Growth, Profits and Technological Choice, The Case of the Lancashire Cotton Textiles Industry’, *Journal of Industrial History*, (1998), pp. 35-55.

⁷⁰ H. Wheeler, *Pennine People*, (Lancashire: Sutton Publishing, 1994), p. 1.

⁷¹ Shadwell, *Industrial Efficiency: A Comparative Study Of Life In England, Germany and America*, (London: Longmans, 1913), p. 44.

industrial north. As Mitchell reiterates, this very identity was a product of ‘the rich community life of town’s local patriotism engendered by mill, street and place of worship.’⁷²

Therefore, notions of ‘thrift’ – being able to make and keep money - the importance of the family and the community as collectives, and the sense of active participation all contributed to the modes of life centred upon the cotton industry. Part of the shared culture across the region was built upon the stories that were passed on across generations. Lancashire maintains a strong tradition in folklore, and some of the most famous contributions to this originate in north east Lancashire. Wilkinson especially highlighted the strength of the area’s own folk culture, with the belief in witchcraft still surviving into the late 19th century.⁷³ As Levi-Strauss has argued, the blurring between mythology, folklore and history served the purpose of connecting different strands of everyday life and provided a shared understanding amongst groups of people.⁷⁴

The Lancashire cotton industry was an aspirational one based upon the inherited belief that through following a ‘good’ life, a person could achieve success. There are multiple examples of people in literature and reality who had made the journey from ‘poverty’ to affluence through hard work across the Pennine region. Mitchell again quotes a conversation with a Lancashire operative reinforcing this belief:

Any man who could tell or be taught the difference between heads and reeds, who could rake together a few hundreds of capital and rent some room and power and could also get a friend to show him the ropes on ‘Change (Manchester Cotton Exchange) was made. With ordinary care for a dozen years, he would be able to return to a mansion at Southport or a village on the Blackpool coast. Indeed, with a barest trifle more than squall luck, he might meet his ambition half way by living at St. Annes and being borne, godlike, each day to Manchester on a ‘club’ express which no ordinary mortal might enter.⁷⁵

As Marshall has shown in his examination of Yorkshire identity, the sense of pride of place and motifs like Chartism leading to an ‘El Dorado’ are seen in West Riding Literature.⁷⁶ When in 1915 the Harle Syke village resisted the attempts of unionisation to protect its own local culture, it equally was referred to as a ‘regular El Dorado’.⁷⁷ Many mill owners were proud of their ‘lowly’ roots. As Clarke highlights in a report from just before the First World War in what is almost certainly Burnley, ‘a well-known cotton manufacturing town’ with 100,000 inhabitants showed that 63 per cent of the bosses were first generation, whilst three-quarters of employers called themselves self-made men.⁷⁸ There was thus both a pride in being a ‘working’ man and a long undercurrent of enterprising spirit in the region, or as Mitchell described, the belief amongst people that weaving bosses were usually a man who had been a weaver himself and had made ‘good.’ Indeed, to be competent he usually had to have ‘experienced the noisy workings of the shed.’⁷⁹ Similar links to a sense of meritocracy are made within the rural sections, shown by Winstanley’s study of farming around the area, which further highlights these shared traits where ‘we

⁷² W. R. Mitchell, *Lancashire Milltown Memories*, (North Yorks: Dalesman, 1987), p. 8.

⁷³ T. Wilkinson and J. Harland, *Lancashire Folklore*, (1867), reproduced at Project Gutenberg, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/41148/41148-h/41148-h.htm>.

⁷⁴ Levi-Strauss differentiates between the two, using history in a modern sense. However, his arguments regarding mythology, that it was effectively used as an act of continuing certain societal practices can be used to relate to local shared histories. See C. Levi-Strauss, *Myth and Meaning*, (New York: Schocken, 1995), pp. 34-44.

⁷⁵ Mitchell, *Mill Town Traditions*, p. 21.

⁷⁶ W. Marshall (2011), ‘The Creation Of Yorkshireness: Cultural Identities In Yorkshire C.1850-1918’. PhD Thesis, University of Huddersfield, p. 152.

⁷⁷ *Burnley Express*, January 6, 1912.

⁷⁸ P.F. Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p. 83.

⁷⁹ Mitchell, *Milltown Memories*, p. 29.

should not consider them peasants, but as market-orientated entrepreneurs.⁸⁰

A key text in understanding the pride in work is Klaxon's 'Heather Mixture'.⁸¹ The fictional story, noted for its factual sporting knowledge,⁸² partially details a cross-class northern sporting hunt, and offers through the representation of one of the main characters, Chapman, insight into the mind-set of a working man 'made good'. Chapman details how he progressed from working in the mill, through self-education, to being rich enough to embark on hunting trips across the north, and highlights a social system quite alien to the novel's recently returned southern naval officer, Dicky. As well as explaining why he allows 'lowly' workers to socialise with him, he explains the mentality of mill owners in the Harle Syke area and the social structure in place:

We think those that have brass should keep it if they can... if we like a man we say so, whether he's a duke or a waiter... if we tried to put on airs they would laugh at us.⁸³

Chapman also explains in some detail his political outlook and the fluidity of terms in describing ideology. When questioned as to whether he is a socialist he replies:

I? No not in practice; I am in theory just as we all are. In Haggate and Harlsyke(sic) the lads are nearly all socialists, but they own most of the houses there and I don't notice them refusing to take rents for 'em either ... I've got t'mills and I get t'brass, and all my lads know they can get out of clogs and wear shoes like me if they get their chance on a good market ... they'll not call me "my lord" if I buy a title tomorrow. They judge on what a man can do, and not what he can buy l'Burnley.⁸⁴

Therefore, concepts of terms like socialism could mean different things to different people, even within the same area. Indeed the concept of what was or was not within a 'class' was likely to change.

The culture of wider industrial Lancashire was a self-perpetuating construct. The characteristics of the Lancashire cotton worker were, as will be explored, consciously promoted, and revelled in. A letter written by Mrs. Gaskell felt 'the pure-bred Lancashire man is a right down fine fellow; it is the admixture with Irish that pulls them down.'⁸⁵ However, the complexity of this identity offers a contradiction. Lancastrians were presented simultaneously as modern and forward thinking, whilst also being the last bastions of a dying, archaic 'folk' culture. This coincides with the cotton industry's own struggle with modernity, and is expressed through oral interviews with cotton operatives, where they often recount their desire and ability to adapt and use more modern machines, but maintain established methods, whilst the industry in many places from 1920 on relied on perceived near ancient machinery, and looked to implement modern working patterns. Many of these cotton operatives were influenced by personal or familial visits to America and Canada where the traditional Lancashire working methods had evolved after forming the basis of this new competition, especially articulated by William Woodruff in *The Road to Nab End* through conversations with his father.⁸⁶

⁸⁰ M. Winstanley, 'Industrialisation and the Small Farm: Family and Household Economy in Nineteenth-Century Lancashire', *Past and Present*, 152, 1 (1996), p. 171.

⁸¹ Klaxon, 'Heather Mixture', *Blackwoods Magazine*, (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1922).

⁸² *Cheltenham Chronicle*, June 3, 1922.

⁸³ 'Heather Mixture', p. 607.

⁸⁴ 'Heather Mixture', p. 599.

⁸⁵ J.A.V. Chapple and A. Pollard, *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 681.

⁸⁶ Woodruff, *The Road to Nab End*, pp. 75-87.

Maidment's *Music and Tradition in Early Industrial Lancashire 1780-1840* offers the best example of the link between identity and tradition. He uses Shills' concept regarding the role of tradition in the construction of identity:

Attachment to past things, persons, societies and practices, performance of actions practiced in the past and adherence to modes of perception, belief and appreciation received from those who observed them previously.⁸⁷

This notion forms the basis of analysis, with events such as the 'Cotton Queen' competitions, and at a community level, the activities within a village. Hobbs refers to both Jones' and Joyce's studies of the local press while discussing Preston, and shows how an assertive construction of identity gained prominence, and that crucially it came from the locality rather than being imposed.⁸⁸ Indeed the imagining and reimagining of idyllic pasts set in 'simple' times reiterated a shared history continued forward through dialect literature, songs, plays, and customs.

Studies such as Russell's *Looking North and Popular Music in England*, alongside the works of Counce, Ehland and Kirk offer a strong basis for the exploration of how 'northern' identities were viewed. The works of Ward and others regarding the construction of British and English identities also reinforces the importance of the subject. This thesis argues that such construction was successful in breeding a sense of pride into the cotton workers of Lancashire especially. The economic strength that the Industrial Revolution brought for many academics was a driving force behind the popularization of northern characteristics. Wales argues that 'Many of the current stereotypes of the north of England ... derive from the Industrial Revolution.'⁸⁹ Wales is correct in the sense that the external image of smoky towns and factories has a clear basis in the industrial period, but for the majority of towns in Lancashire, it was the fusing of a pre-existing culture to this new environment that formed this new identity. Hence, it was from this internal perspective, the sense of pride many northerners feel was born out of the success of the north through the same process.

Links to the past were underpinned in communities through speech patterns, resulting in a degree of bi and tri-lingualism.⁹⁰ Through dialect literature, song and workplace language, local dialect was kept alive and was a cornerstone of identity. Griswold has argued that readers of literature have a 'sense of place', and are able to recognise authors from the region that they live in and that these regions 'indoctrinate newcomers into the local literary traditions'.⁹¹ As one report in the *Manchester Guardian* observed: 'The dialect survives in districts; it flourishes more in hamlets than in towns and more in some towns than others. It is fairly common in the cotton towns.'⁹² Dialect was, however, not just an archaism. Indeed Amalgamated Weavers' Association representative Tom Shaw was known as the 'Foreign Secretary'

⁸⁷ B. Maidment, *Music and Tradition in Early Industrial Lancashire 1780-1840*, (London: Folklore Society, 1980), p. 111.

⁸⁸ A. Hobbs (2011), 'Reading The Local Paper: Social And Cultural Functions Of The Local Press In Preston, Lancashire, 1855-1900', PhD Thesis, University of Central Lancashire, p. 14.

⁸⁹ K. Wales, 'North and South: A Linguistic Divide?', *Reporter*, 439, 27 (1999).

⁹⁰ Numerous examples exist of people referring to a self-conscious switch between 'standard' English, 'Northern' English, and 'dialect'. See for example W. Woodruff *The Road to Nab End*, where the author several times refers to people speaking in dialect, and for a more modern study based upon the Wigan area, the documentary, 'howd thi din un cahr thi dehn', Wigan Borough Heritage Network.

⁹¹ W. Griswold, 'Cowbirds, Locals and the Dynamic Endurance of Regionalism', *American Journal of Sociology*, 109, 6 (2004), pp. 1411-1451.

⁹² *Manchester Guardian*, January 30, 1917.

because of his language skills, having knowledge of 'German, French, English, and the Dialect.'⁹³ The success in things like dialect writing and folk song, with a combination of rurality and the reality of industrialisation, was a continued element of local culture. As Joyce argues, 'dialect was about the generation of meanings with which to balance daily life.'⁹⁴ The most successful writers were from Lancashire's eastern fringes, and as shown by Dellheim, it was these borderlands with Yorkshire that writers felt was the 'true' Lancashire.⁹⁵ Edwin Waugh from Rochdale, Samuel Laycock born in Marsden, Yorkshire and raised in Stalybridge, Ben Brierley of Failsworth, and a concentration of writers known as the 'Bards of Blackburn'. The success in terms of sales for these publications shows they met a receptive audience with a strong affinity to the subject matters: for example, 'Th'Surat Weaver' sold 14,000 copies in broadsheet according to reports from 1873.⁹⁶

The use of dialect and the cartoons of Samuel Fitton were concurrently a reflection of the thoughts of average people,⁹⁷ and a tool for reinforcing established traits.⁹⁸ For example, Figure 4, Fitton's 'Fashions for the Factory' acted as a self-aware acknowledgment to certain characteristics based within reality. The use of dialect especially grounds commentary pieces (and wider dialect literature) in the realms of everyday life, revealing the concept of respectability as being prominent, but in a 'real' way, as opposed to being seen as 'airs and graces'. The significance of the authenticity that Lancashire writers held was especially shown in the introduction to Samuel Laycock's *Collected Writings*, where fellow writer and editor George Milner describes how Laycock:

Spoke from their very midst, and never affected to pass beyond the social lines of the labouring poor. Their trials and struggles, their sorrows and joys, their aspirations and their regrets were all his. For the fine gentleman and his fine ways he had no sympathy; respectability in its ordinary sense irritated him, and if ever he indulged in a touch of scorn, it was in relation to those who ape the manners of the class above them.⁹⁹

The economic success of Lancashire, and particularly the cotton industry, helped create, encourage, and reinforce a sense of pride in both the locality and work. The result was a larger scale shared culture, which in turn fed into the notion of northern stereotypes. However, the strength of the northern industrial culture also continued abroad. William Woodruff remarked how when his parents moved to the Fall River region, which was called 'the Blackburn of America', they 'talked Lancashire dialect to Lancashire people so much that they adopted few Americanisms.'¹⁰⁰ The strength of this is also shown in other examples of immigrants leaving the Pennine region,¹⁰¹ and a clear lineage can therefore be drawn to both of the cultures of the American cotton areas of the north and south, which as Blewett especially

⁹³ A. Fowler, 'Lancashire to Westminster: A Study of Cotton Trade Union Officials and British Labour 1910-39', *Labour History Review*, 64, 1, p. 11.

⁹⁴ P. Joyce, *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class, 1840-1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 266.

⁹⁵ See C. Dellheim, 'Imagining England: Victorian Views of the North', *Northern History*, 22, 1 (1986), pp. 216-230.

⁹⁶ See B. Hollingworth, *Songs of the People: Lancashire Dialect Poetry of the Industrial Revolution*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982), p. 145.

⁹⁷ See A. Fowler, *Mirth in the Mill: The Gradely World of Sam Fitton*, (Oldham: Oldham Education and Leisure Services, 1995) (With Terry Wyke).

⁹⁸ See P. Joyce, *Class*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 265.

⁹⁹ S. Laycock, *Collected Works*, (Manchester: John Heywood Ltd, 1908).

¹⁰⁰ W. Woodruff, *The Road to Nab End*, p. 92.

¹⁰¹ See for example M. Blewett's *The Yankee Yorkshireman* for a discussion of the difficulties in Boston due to their expectations of standards and practices. *The Yankee Yorkshireman: Migration Lived and Imagined*, (USA: University of Illinois Press, 2009), p. 72-75.

highlights, shows how 'They brought with them the customs and traditions of Lancashire.'¹⁰² The culture could then be expressed in several ways. As Cohen argues, the attempts to replicate the conditions of Lancashire led to a period of great unrest and disturbances in the Fall River area of Massachusetts,¹⁰³ whilst in the American South:

Southern mill people embraced a policy of reciprocity, which held that both workers and employers had rights as well as obligations and that workers protested in subtle but direct ways when employers did not meet their obligations ... these southerners brought to the mill a framework of beliefs that emphasized independence, self-respect, and the economic wellbeing of the family household.¹⁰⁴



Figure 4: 'Fashions For The Factory'. Source: *Cotton Factory Times*, December 5, 1912

The communities of the USA and the industrial Pennines both encompass the changing and adapting nature of culture. Such communities present an environment of competing ideas of past, present and future, something that north east Lancashire still wrestles with today. In Shrapnel's survey of Burnley

¹⁰² M. Blewett, 'Traditions and Customs of Lancashire Popular Radicalism in Late Nineteenth Century Industrial America', *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 42, (1992), pp. 5-19.

¹⁰³ See I. Cohen, 'American Management and British Labor: Lancashire Immigrant Spinners in Industrial New England', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 27, 04, (1985), pp. 608-650.

¹⁰⁴ J.M. Shirley, 'Yeoman Culture and Millworker Protest in Antebellum Salem, North Carolina', *Journal of Southern History*, 57, (1991), pp. 428-429.

from the 1950s, he reflected on a local town guide and observed that:

It's not easy for a town like Burnley to shed an old mill town image... (it is as) though past and future are eyeing each other in a suspicious truce, while the present had disappeared through some deep hole in-between.¹⁰⁵

The problem of shedding a milltown image was the strength of the local identity the cotton industry enabled. Therefore, the attachment to the local factory system amongst most communities was even more pertinent to those that could still remember the better years when cotton was 'king'. The most enlightening work in understanding the emotional attachment between people and places has been Rowles' work in Appalachia, which parallels this thesis in the discussion of industrial decline. For north east Lancashire, there was for a long period a high number of elderly people who felt isolated and lonely with the decline of the factory system and its concurrent sense of community rapidly eroding.¹⁰⁶ Dealing with elderly people in a rural environment, Rowles himself describes the situation:¹⁰⁷

Many of the elderly have spent their entire lives in the region, some of them in this very community. They have witnessed profound changes in their environment... The outcome is a contemporary setting presenting images of grime, abandonment and desolation. Yet, to the elderly who remain, this is far more than dilapidated homes, boarded up stores and bulldozed lots apparent to the outside.¹⁰⁸

Therefore, publically, preconceived notions of certain northern identities are rooted in what is effectively a textile image. Although many towns went through a period of trying to disown this heritage, and this is discussed in later chapters of this thesis, some have had a more fluctuating relationship. Burnley for example in 1968, actively encouraged an image detached from cotton (Figure 5), yet by the early 1990s, marketed itself to businesses with the slogan, 'Cotton on to Burnley.'¹⁰⁹

Lancashire was, and is a series of highly diverse, individual, yet crucially non-isolated settlements. There are a range of local differences linked through shared experience and history, which extend beyond borders, and mean that in some places, closer cultural similarities to areas of West Yorkshire than to Manchester or a south Lancashire town.¹¹⁰ Within the Pennine region, a distinct culture developed and continues to this day, one that at times is difficult to comprehend even within Lancashire. Indeed, as followers of football know, to clubs in Lancashire, the main taunt levelled at Burnley is of them being 'a small town in Yorkshire,' whilst one fan of Blackburn Rovers (Burnley's closest and fiercest rivals), noted the differences in accent: 'They don't even speak properly ... We say "turf", as in Turf Moor, they say "toff". What's that about?'¹¹¹ This duality, of being at the edge of Lancashire, (and at some points the edge of Yorkshire) is seen in a number of settlements that lay on the border. The recently restored statues at Todmorden Town Hall best signifying representing local traditional jobs - with three textile workers, a bookkeeper, a blacksmith, two corn harvesters and a shepherd, but more significantly, two matriarchs representing Yorkshire and Lancashire.¹¹² In other settlements of the region the same culture

¹⁰⁵ *Manchester Guardian*, July 18, 1977.

¹⁰⁶ *Manchester Guardian*, October 18, 1956.

¹⁰⁷ See specifically G. Rowles, 'Place and Personal Identity in Old Age: Observations from Appalachia', *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, (1983), pp. 299-313.

¹⁰⁸ Rowles, 'Place and Personal Identity', p. 300.

¹⁰⁹ See the Supplement 'Home and Industry', (Burnley: 1968), and the promotional pamphlet, 'Cotton On To Burnley', (1993).

¹¹⁰ S. Caunce, 'Industrialisation and the Calder Valley: Communities in a Unique Landscape', Presentation paper, (2014).

¹¹¹ A. Mitten, 'More Than a Game; Blackburn vs. Burnley', *FourFourTwo*, May 1, 2005.

¹¹² See the restoration project in the *Todmorden News*, April 6, 2015,

is adapted to fit the local character, with the clock in the centre of Barnoldswick, bearing both the Yorkshire and Lancashire roses.

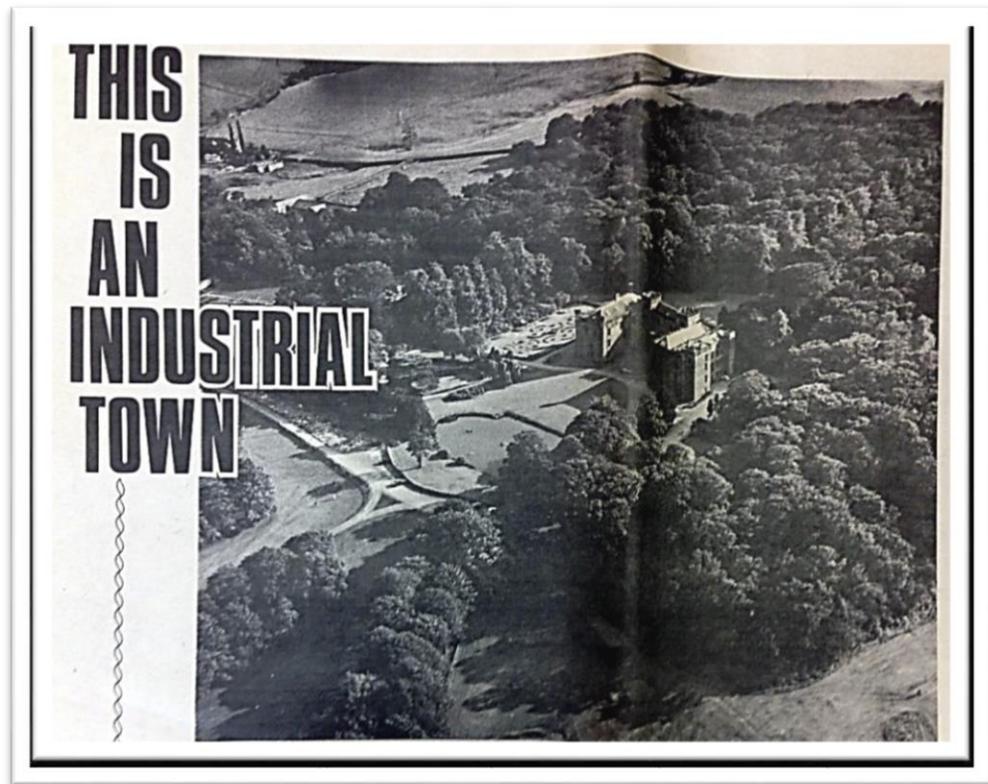


Figure 5: An attempt to re-define the area. Source: 'Home and Industry', (Burnley: Burnley Express, 1968)

1. THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURE IN NORTH EAST LANCASHIRE

In 1906, Arthur Shadwell, comparing the great industrial nations of Britain, Germany and the USA wrote of how 'manufacturing districts ... are born, not made'. He described from his tour of the north how 'Nowhere has the human race piled up so many great towns within the same area... But in spite of the pride inspired by their magnitude, they have a bad name and are shunned.'¹

The particular pride felt by those of the industrial north has both diminished and evolved with the decline of its industries. However, in some areas there still exists the collective memory of a time when the northern textile towns, and north east Lancashire especially as part of the 'Pennine Chain', was 'the backbone of England', built upon a shared belief in 'an indomitable spirit, laced with dry wit and a ready humour'.²

North east Lancashire was by the end of the nineteenth century an area of vital regional and national importance. The settlements of the area were usually referred to collectively as 'the great weaving belt', and developed a local economic system built around textiles and ancillary industries such as coal mining and textile-machinery-manufacture, which in turn produced a strong 'sense-of place'.³ The culture of the area was therefore grounded in the industrial process, and acted as the common characteristic, alongside geography in the development of different multi-layered identities across locality, workplace, religion and politics etc.

This chapter explores the impact of industrialisation and the development of what this thesis argues was a shared culture across the area. It adopts, as a model, the theory developed by Griswold for the formation of regional cultures. As she argues, there are multiple contributing factors to 'regional cultures'. Firstly, she discusses 'the authenticity of experience', where:

Human beings occupy a particular territory having particular geographical features or climate. Over time these people struggle to gain and maintain the advantages with respect to nature, to outsiders and to each other. Such struggles produce certain types of production, certain sets of societal relations, and certain traditions and symbols. The history of human activities within this territory generates a shared way of looking at things (which) ... when articulated becomes the regional voice.

Secondly Griswold outlines the notion that 'institutional arrangements and resources' – money and infrastructure - 'allow previously held sentiments to reach an effective level of organisation and efficiency' which results in the cultural expressions to be generated.⁴ Both the shared experiences, and evolution of north east Lancashire's economy, and 'infrastructure' are discussed here, as well as how the cultural grounding allowed for different identities to develop.

Central to the culture of north east Lancashire was the role of the family and the wider community. Both

¹ A. Shadwell, *Industrial Efficiency: Vol. 1*, (London: Longmans, 1906), p. 55.

² Wheeler discusses the whole Pennine Chain region, including Yorkshire and Lancashire, but her arguments are attributable here. H. Wheeler, *Pennine People*, (Worcester: Alan Sutton, 1994), p. 1.

³ D.M. Smith, *The North West*, (Devon: David and Charles, 1969), p. 204.

⁴ W. Griswold, 'History + Resources = A Sense of Place', *Maine Policy Review*, 11, 1 (2002), p. 77.

reinforced and maintained societal boundaries and were a driving force behind involvement in wider society, and the locality was of great importance. As Snell has so convincingly shown in his discussion of parish belonging, people's attachment to their local community led to local rivalries (what Snell calls a 'culture of local xenophobia'), and helped form differentials that remained embedded outside of changing 'official' administrative boundaries.⁵

The early development of north east Lancashire

Lancashire as a county has a long history of administrative fluidity. Such was its amorphous nature, Crosby suggests that even in pre-conquest times the whole county acted as 'a frontier zone with uncertain borders.'⁶ North east Lancashire typified this mutability, at points spilling into what was technically Yorkshire, and maintaining areas of 'remoteness'. Turner developed the frontier thesis in the American context, where he noted that:

The frontier had no need for standing armies, established churches, aristocrats or nobles, nor for landed gentry who controlled most of the land and charged heavy rents. Frontier land was free for the taking.⁷

For Turner, the frontier, was characterised partially by its 'continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, (which) furnish the forces dominating American character.'⁸ North east Lancashire's relative isolation and lack of population enabled its inhabitants to maintain a similar 'simplicity', but, also to develop a distinctive 'independent' character. Bagley traces the process back to the deforestation of the Pendle area during the reign of Henry VII, which resulted in the people, who were 'almost all yeoman and smallholders', being regarded as 'copyholders, free to use their land as they wished.'⁹ As a result, the expectation of basic societal norms locally became embedded in this same evolving character.

The development of trade and industry in north east Lancashire was, however, comparatively slow. While, as Swain has shown, the foundations of the cloth trade can be traced back as far as the thirteenth century, the population was severely affected by the bubonic plague that appeared in intervals throughout the north from the fourteenth until the seventeenth centuries. Consequently, as a result of population decline, the area became detached, and was not part of the textile 'boom' the Yorkshire area enjoyed during the fifteenth century.¹⁰ It therefore lacked any real urban development, and even in the seventeenth century only Colne with a population of a few hundred could be described as a town.¹¹ When textile manufacturing arrived, it was based on 'kersey' woollen – only produced in Colne, Burnley, Padiham, Blackburn and Preston – and small-scale linen,¹² with the supplies for the former coming from the West Riding of Yorkshire and the Pendle region itself.¹³ With the gradual development of related industries such as mining and quarrying, north east Lancashire developed an insularity based on the

⁵ K.D.M. Snell, 'Local Xenophobia', *Social History*, 28, 1 (2003), pp. 1-30.

⁶ A. Crosby, *A History of Lancashire*, (Lancashire: Phillimore and Co. 1998), p. 33.

⁷ F.J. Turner (1893), 'The Significance of the Frontier in American History', National Humanities Centre online, www.nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/gilded/empire/text1/turner.pdf.

⁸ Turner, 'American Frontier'.

⁹ J.J. Bagley, *A History of Lancashire*, (London: Phillimore, 1982), p. 158.

¹⁰ J. Swain, *Industry before the Industrial Revolution: North-east Lancashire c.1500-1640*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), p. 4.

¹¹ Swain, *Industry*, p. 4.

¹² Swain, *Industry*, pp. 116-120.

¹³ See N. Lowe, *The Lancashire Textile Industry in the Sixteenth Century*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1972), p. 7.

relatively close distance of resources to production. This later influenced village and town life to such an extent that it would dominate local business links for centuries.

The local economy was dominated by both farming and textiles through to the end of the sixteenth century. However, these were gradually replaced by textile manufacturing, especially after the fustians in and around East Anglia began to spread northwards.¹⁴ Swain highlights a general shift, from yeomen and husbandmen to an increased number of men described as 'clothiers' that owned little or no livestock, and drove forward the increasing division between agriculture and textiles.¹⁵ These men were the basis of the developing culture of the region becoming 'dominant', and as Jennings suggests in relation to the Colne valley, gave it 'Its distinctive religious and political outlook ... they did not have to look up to anyone ... (they) had a respected place as the driving forces of economic life and social organisation.'¹⁶

However, the population of north east Lancashire was still small compared to the levels of growth nationally, which it has been suggested was the result of 'crisis' years of disease and/or/ famine.¹⁷ For example, Swain estimates that there were 624 households across the large Colne chapelry in 1664,¹⁸ which only slowly increased through the seventeenth century.¹⁹ As late as 1801 Clitheroe only had 257 households and 1368 residents.²⁰ Indeed, Healy estimates that the population of Lancashire rose from 90,000 in 1563, to 190,000 in 1690, demonstrating the end of a period of stagnation to one of 'a long period of demographic growth to 300,000 in 1750.'²¹ However, the growth was predominantly focused on the south of the county.²² Nationally, and especially compared to London that developed as the driving force of the British economy, Lancashire, and the north in general, remained isolated.

By the mid-eighteenth century, wool was still the most important textile for the area. Yet, cotton would soon dominate, and its gradual introduction after 1750 provided the platform for Lancashire's industrial prosperity. In north east Lancashire the damp climate and abundance of soft water was well suited to the process of cotton weaving. Moreover, the area was uniquely suited to industrial development as the area enjoyed considerable freedom in terms of trade with settlements lacking Guild Incorporation. They were thus excluded from the Weaver's Act of 1558 and the Statute of Apprentices 1563 that limited the number of looms a weaver could own which had restricted commerce in some places.²³ This greatly benefited the evolution of the 'putting out' system, where clothiers supplied the raw goods that were woven by handloom weavers. So dominant did the system become, that in some cases it had the effect of

¹⁴ S. Chapman, *The Cotton Industry in the Industrial Revolution*, (London: Macmillan, 1972), p. 11.

¹⁵ Swain, *Industry*, p. 118.

¹⁶ B. Jennings (ed.), *Pennine Valley: History of Upper Calderdale*, (Yorkshire: Dalesman, 1992) p. 93.

¹⁷ C. B. Phillips and J. H. Smith, *Lancashire and Cheshire from AD 1540*, (London: Routledge, 1994) p.10.

¹⁸ The Colne Chapelry also included including parts of Burnley and Padiham, Marsden, Trawden, Foulridge, Barrowford, Barrowford Booth and Pendle Forest.

¹⁹ Swain, *Industry*, pp. 17-28.

²⁰ H. R. French, 'The Creation of a Pocket Borough in Clitheroe, Lancashire, 1693-1780: Honour and Odd Tricks', *Northern History*, 41, 2, 2006, p. 303.

²¹ J. Healey, *The First Century of Welfare: Poverty and Poor Relief in Lancashire, 1620-1730*, (London: Boydell Press, 2014)

²² J. Walton, *Lancashire: A Social History, 1558-1939*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), pp. 25-26.

²³ J. Clayton, *The Lancashire Witch Conspiracy*, (Lancashire: Barrowford Press, 2007), p. 49.

slowing down new innovations such as newer textiles or technologies.²⁴

The development of textiles after 1750 saw a boom in population in Lancashire, though the pace of such growth varied considerably within the county. In north east Lancashire, Burnley and Nelson had advantages in terms of geographical position as they were situated near vast deposits of water and coal, both crucial to the manufacturing process. Thus, Burnley, which was a small village before 1750, developed into a locally important market town with the woollen trade, before rapidly expanding after the introduction of cotton, mining and engineering. The earliest mills there were built along the banks of its arterial waterways at the start of the nineteenth century.

Nelson was originally a series of villages, the largest two being Little Marsden and Great Marsden that attracted people from the surrounding settlements with increasing number from around the 1840s. As Hill suggests, the development in the Marsden areas were in effect ‘overspill’ from the growth of Burnley.²⁵ Here, the development of cotton manufacturing encouraged the improvement of transport links, first through packhorse routes, then turnpike roads and canals before, most significantly, the railway. The importance of the latter was most evident in the naming of the town as Nelson, with the Midland Railway Company adopting the name of a local inn for its new station, which became officially acknowledged in 1864.²⁶ The development of Nelson thus epitomised the rapid development the area underwent, as settlements were made, and remade. As seen in Table 2, the population expanded rapidly in established places like Burnley. For the settlements that remained outside of the developing transport routes, such as Trawden, industrial development occurred later, and thus growth was much steadier.

Table 2: Population Figures across the subject area

	1801	1821	1881	1901	1911	1921	1928
Burnley C.B	3,305	6,378	28,744	97,043	106,322	103,157	100,700
Burnley R.D.	...	...	...	...	19,848	19,208	19,209
Colne M.B.	3,628	7,270	10,313	19,055	25,689	24,752	24,740
Brierfield U.D.	...	...	...	...	8,259	8,343	8,063
Nelson M.B.	...	...	...	32,816	39,479	40,690	39,560
Trawden U.D.	1,443	2,507	2,164	2,641	2,963	2,762	2,710
Padiham U.D	2,118	3,060	8,346	10,500	13,635	12,471	...
Blackburn C.B.	14,980	21,940	91,958	129,000	130,000	126,643	125,100
Accrington M.B.	3,077	5,370	31,435	42,122	45,029	44,480	42,940

*Municipal designations are shown in Figure 6. Based on North East Lancashire Regional Town Planning Report, (1929)

²⁴ Handloom weaving denotes the process of weaving cloth on the handloom, usually in the weaver’s home. For comprehensive accounts of handloom weaving in Lancashire, see G. Timmins, *The Last Shift*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), and D. Bythell, *The Handloom Weavers*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

²⁵ J. Hill, *Nelson: Politics, Economy, Community*, (Lancaster: Carnegie, 1997), p. 8.

²⁶ Hill, *Nelson*, p. 9.

Migration was an important characteristic of the population increases. The majority of migrants came from surrounding settlements, usually those in which handloom weaving had remained active for longer. In Burnley by 1851, 25.4 per cent of the total population had migrated from a distance not exceeding 8 miles, 8.4 per cent from the rest of Lancashire, 4.94 per cent from the Yorkshire dales, 5.08 per cent from Ireland, 4.05 per cent from the rest of Britain and 0.28 per cent from overseas.²⁷ Of the migrants from greater distances, the majority were less likely to move into textiles and those that did were less likely to stay in the industry long term.²⁸ Like Burnley, Nelson became 'a town of immigrants', causing great depopulation along the Lancashire-Yorkshire border. The figures from M.E.W. Brooker, which Hill quotes, suggest that in Nelson, 70 per cent of migrants in the 1860s had originated from destinations of five miles away or less.²⁹

Administrative changes and urban growth

To cope with the impact of industrialisation and such rapid population growth, changes occurred nationally to overhaul the local administrative system (Figure 6). Historically, the Whalley ecclesiastical parish and the Blackburn Hundred had covered the whole region.³⁰ However, due to its size – Whalley covered some 106,395 acres - local chapeltries were semi-autonomous and took responsibility for their own divisions, being further subdivided into townships. As Midwinter has shown regarding the administration of poor relief, the townships and parishes of north east Lancashire remained particularly de-centralised from the Burnley Union, revelling in their own sense of autonomy, and this spread across all aspects of local governance.³¹

Burnley was incorporated as a Municipal Borough in 1861 but was declared a County Borough in 1889 and was outside of the administrative control of Lancashire County Council that was created in the same year.³² The most significant attempt at regional reorganisation was the 1894 Local Government Act that aimed to reflect the different levels of urbanization. The multi-tiered levels of classification meant that sub-divisions fell under different authorities. The Burnley Rural District for example ultimately being under Lancashire County Council. Hasluck defines these other designations as thus:

The (municipal) boroughs represent towns of a large size; the urban district contain small towns, with often a ring of rural surroundings; the rural districts, as their name implies, represent collections of villages spread over areas the description of which presents notorious difficulties to the dipsomaniac.³³

The result of these classifications however meant differences in terms of local functions that, as Searle explains, were 'very complicated'.³⁴ The rural district, for example, inherited the facets of the old Poor Law Unions, reiterating the importance of the township. The rural district was the only level to be able to

²⁷ E. Higham (1972), 'An Investigation into the Migrant Population of Burnley in 1851', PGCE Dissertation, Chorley College.

²⁸ Higham, 'Migrant Population of Burnley in 1851', and P. Smith (1985), 'Migration to Burnley, 1851-81', BA Dissertation, University of Liverpool.

²⁹ Hill, *Nelson*, p. 11.

³⁰ Map of Whalley Parish provided in Appendix p.290.

³¹ E.C. Midwinter, *Social Administration in Lancashire, 1830-1860: Poor Law, Public Health and Policy*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1969).

³² Under the act, certain incorporated settlements were deemed too large to be under county council control, and were therefore granted the power to be separate entities.

³³ E. L. Hasluck, *Local Government in England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 135.

³⁴ G.R. Searle, *A New England? Peace and War, 1886-1918*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004) pp. 124-126.

elect new parish councils following subdivision into rural parishes, which, as Hasluck details, created 'artificial stimulation ... of some highly idealistic concepts about the restoration of the free village communities of Old England.'³⁵ A sense of local ownership and influence was therefore fostered within the rural district that helped create a strong sense of identity around the parish council.³⁶

The Briercliffe Parish Council (under the Burnley Rural District) formed in 1894 and took responsibility for street lighting, allotments, maintaining footpaths, bridleways and bridges, local monuments, the fire brigade, and acted as agent for the County Library. They also pursued improvements in sanitation and communications, and organised appointments to school posts. By 1902, the Council had regular meetings with ratepayers and individual Committees for various issues. Although the role of the local parish can seem trivial, such daily amenities mattered a great deal. Thus the Council determinedly pursued the acquisition of land for a recreation ground. When this eventually happened in 1900 they issued a bylaw of 27 points outlining the rules and regulations of its usage including the banning of farm animals and singing of 'any profane or obscene song or ballad', at the penalty of £5. Such was the scale of services that discussions were held between 1903 and 1910 about the possibility of becoming an Urban District. However, these plans were shelved due to the perceived advantage the settlement held by being the largest parish in terms of seats and therefore dominant member of the Burnley Rural District Council.³⁷

The Pennine region and wider industrial north was perhaps the most intense example of a national process in new industrial centres emerging through the nineteenth century.³⁸ Caunce terms the development as 'strictly pragmatic', demonstrating little evidence of planning, and a range of outcomes.³⁹ As Redfern suggests, the settlements of the Pennine region can be classified as variants of two models: 'nucleated', surrounding something - i.e. a church or green- and 'linear' developing along an important route.⁴⁰ Of north east Lancashire's main conurbation, Burnley more closely resembles the latter but was flanked by scattered settlements. The town sits at the intersection of the road from the north, south, west and south-east from Yorkshire, whilst Colne, is at the intersection of the main valley through the region. Smaller developments followed this nucleated pattern, building close to water and other resource access. Porter has further divided these settlements into different models based on their development: 'ancient villages' such as Slaidburn, 'forest hamlets' such as Wycoller, 'industrial villages' like Barrowford, 'market' and 'industrial towns' like Burnley and Nelson and 'industrial colonies',⁴¹ which were identified by Marshall and later revisited by Timmins.⁴² As Marshall argues the latter were brought into being through the 'dictates of simple necessity.'⁴³ As a result each town was a product of individual experience and thus developed an individual sense of character within the shared paradigm of the wider region.

³⁵ Hasluck, *Local Government*, p. 136.

³⁶ N. Rao, *Reviving Local Democracy: New Labour, New Politics?*, (London: Policy Press, 2000), p. 14.

³⁷ R. Frost, *A Lancashire Township*, (Lancashire: Rieve Edge Press, 1982), pp. 134-136.

³⁸ For comparison, E.G Power offers a discussion of the development of Belper, Derbyshire, which through the industrial process overtook nearby Duffield, previously the more important settlement. E.G Power, *A Textile Community in the Industrial Revolution*, (London: Longmans, 1969).

³⁹ S. Caunce, 'Northern English Industrial Towns: Rivals or Partners?', *Urban History*, 2003, 30, pp. 338-358.

⁴⁰ R. Redfern, *Portrait of the Pennines*, (London: Roger Hale, 1969), p. 148.

⁴¹ J. Porter, *The Making of the Central Pennines*, (Lancashire: Moorland Publishing, 1980), pp. 65-70.

⁴² See J. D. Marshall, 'Colonisation as a Factor in the Planting of Towns in North-West England', in H. J. Dyos (ed.), *The Study of Urban History*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1976), and G. Timmins, 'Textile Colonies and Settlement Growth in Lancashire, c.1780-1850', in J. F. Wilson (ed.), *King Cotton: A Tribute to Douglas A. Farnie*, (London: Crucible Books, 2009), pp. 280-304.

⁴³ Marshall, 'Colonisation', p. 215.

The individual but linked experiences of urban development created problems as settlements grew larger. Grimes explains in his present day examination of medical issues in north east Lancashire that the pattern of development had dramatically different effects across the area. He describes Burnley, Colne and Nelson as the first, second and third phases of industrialisation based on their years of development and notes how this therefore impacted upon the mentality of local people. Due to the different waves of development he argues, the populations of Burnley and Colne, with up to four generations more experience of the industrial process than the later developed Nelson, suffered worse problems. Nelson benefitted from later waves of migration originating in nearby rural communities who brought their own 'habits of cleanliness and thrift'. In addition to the ability to build better houses (there were only 52 back to back houses listed in Nelson by the end of the 19th century compared to 2371 in Burnley and 1000 in Colne), and these communities also had healthier populations as a result of wider streets and locations on higher, less damp land.⁴⁴

Developing a 'local' economy

Local customs manifested in the continuing evolution of textile manufacture. Despite the worldwide reach of cotton, much of the industry remained rooted in the locality. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, many handloom weavers in Nelson were employed in 'dandy shops',⁴⁵ an idea first developed in Burnley around 1787.⁴⁶ Yet, the Nelson and Colne areas became characterized by a high frequency of 'room and power' weaving. This entailed the construction of mill premises with the intention of renting room and access to power, and in many cases the looms themselves. Handloom weavers in Nelson first proposed a similar system in 1838, and although the concept ultimately failed due to lack of capital, the willingness to adapt and take risks stands out as characteristic in later generations.⁴⁷

The low overheads and flexibility of room and power meant that in many of the outlying districts it became a dominant form of textile manufacturing even up to the Second World War.⁴⁸ Similarly in the village of Harle Syke, joint stock companies - the purchasing of shares to finance a company with the incentive of dividend pay-outs - which were a long established concept in the Pennine region traditionally associated with the Irwell valley, became popular.⁴⁹ In Burnley, there was tendency for small family run concerns that came to dominate the local textile industry. There were however countless variations and a great deal of experimentation, in both financing and working mills.

⁴⁴ D.S. Grimes, *Vitamin D and Cholesterol: The Importance of the Sun*, (London: Tennison, 2009), pp. 553-556.

⁴⁵ The dandy shop was in effect a mill, using cast iron 'dandy' looms that were superior to the older wooden handloom.

⁴⁶ J. Clayton, *Lancashire Witch Conspiracy*, p. 51.

⁴⁷ S. Taylor (2000), 'Pendle Textile Mills', English Heritage Report, p. 8.

⁴⁸ For a detailed discussion of room and power in the area, see K. C. Jackson, 'The Room and Power System in the Cotton Weaving Industry of North-east Lancashire and West Craven', *Textile History*, 35, 1 (2004), pp. 68-89.

⁴⁹ See especially P. Hampson (2014), 'Working Class Capitalists: The Development and Financing of Worker Owned Companies in the Irwell Valley, 1849-1875', PhD Thesis. University of Central Lancashire.

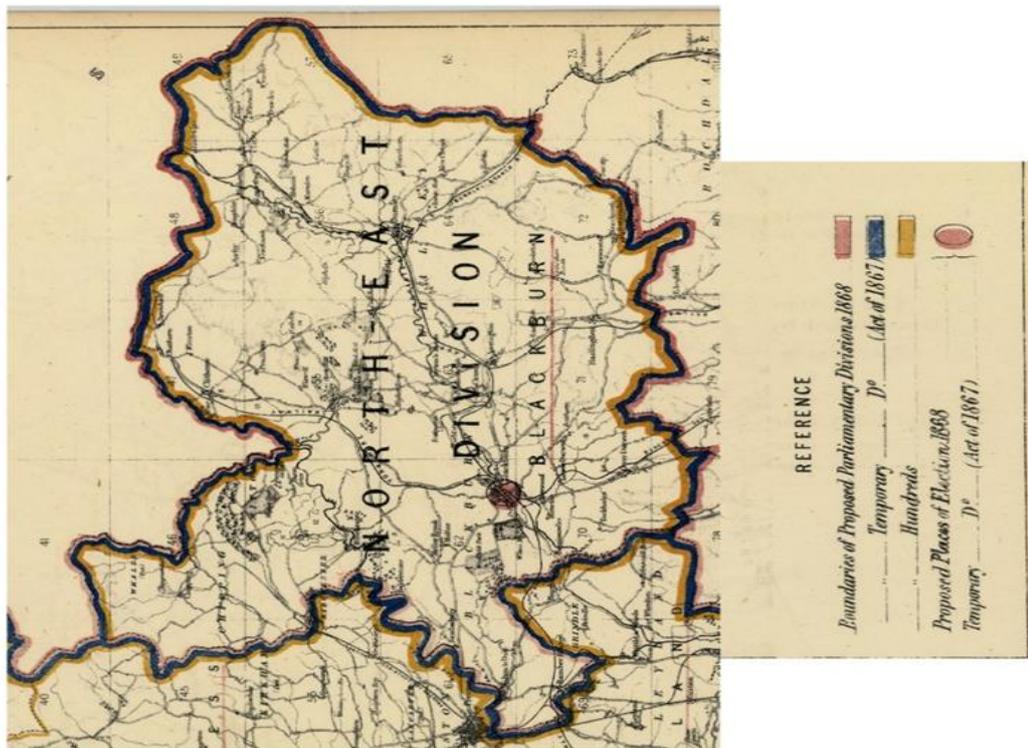
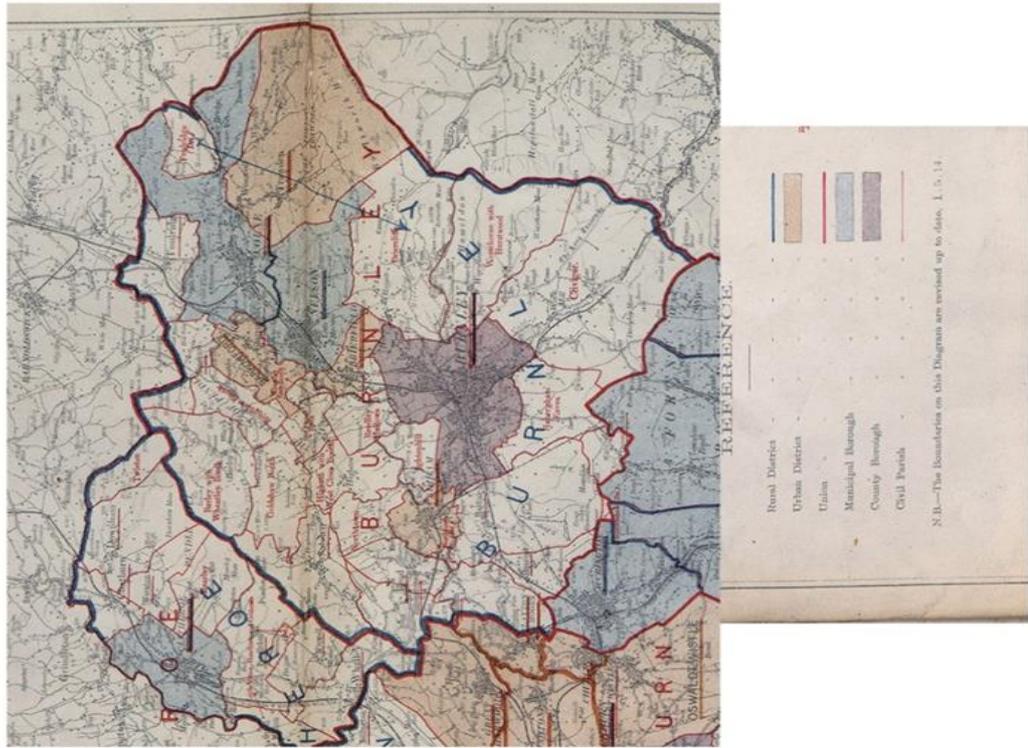


Figure 6. Administrative changes between 1868 and 1914. Source: Vision of Britain Map Archive

The working population of north east Lancashire developed an entrepreneurial spirit through the latter half of the nineteenth century. As Hill has argued, this was later reinvented with hindsight as 'Victorian values', but at the time was the utilisation of laissez-faire regulations, cheap land, and a growing demand for textiles.⁵⁰ Investment opportunities became abundant, and there are countless examples of ordinary people rising to become mill owners.

Much of north east Lancashire became characterised by the notion of investments providing the ability to 'make good' or at the least offer a low-risk form of savings. In the case of joint stock funded textile mills, the incentive of profit dividends, steady work and at least a small say in how things were run was an attractive proposition. Although some of the companies may have had some socialistic ideals, many were as concerned by the aspects of running a business which they developed and spread, or as Frost and Bythell argue that 'commercial realities and practical considerations blunted their idealism at an early stage.'⁵¹ Farnie also supports the same view and notes how 'they were cooperative only in name ... they sought primarily to make profits rather than reform society.'⁵² The likelihood is that the concept of shares opened up a new possibility to many average people.

The most significant innovation in the cotton industry for the wider area, according to Frost, was the invention in 1841 of an improved loom by Hornby, Kenworthy and Bullough in Blackburn that acted as a catalyst to push towards powerloom weaving.⁵³ Kenworthy himself started working at Hornby's as a mechanic and rose to be a partner, typifying the spirit of aspiration. His success was known to the wider public and served as an allegory to hard working operatives.⁵⁴ Alongside shares, the story of Kenworthy served as another example of 'getting on', and contrasts with the pitfalls of industrialisation explored through novels such as Dickens' *Hard Times* and Gaskell's *North and South*.⁵⁵

Aspiration was a recurring theme, which partly explains the traction cooperation gained in the area. At different points both Nelson and Burnley came close to 20 per cent of their population being members of the Cooperative when the national average was only around 5 per cent. The actual figure of Cooperative membership through families is almost certainly higher, as in many cases only one family member was allowed membership.⁵⁶

Several forms of cooperation existed in the area paralleling the famous Rochdale 'pioneers', but with foundations in a combination of native circumstance and local character. Barrowford, for example, established theirs in 1847, but had various forms of cooperative bodies before this, while in Todmorden, a society existed in 1832 as well as five different local pre-Rochdale variants.⁵⁷ However, the dominance

⁵⁰ Hill, *Nelson*, p. 22.

⁵¹ R. Frost and D. Bythell, *A Lancashire Weaving Company and its Community: Harle Syke Mill 1856-1970*, (Briercliffe: Briercliffe Society, 2009), p. 11.

⁵² D. Farnie, *The English Cotton Industry and the World Market; 1815-96*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976) p. 216.

⁵³ Frost, *A Lancashire Township*, p. 62.

⁵⁴ C. MacLeod, *Heroes of Invention: Technology, Liberalism and British Identity, 1750-1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 159.

⁵⁵ For detailed discussions See L. Thompson, 'The Industrial Social Novel: Fiction From Fact', and J. Murphy, 'Individualism And The Industrial Novel', *Aspects Of The Industrial Revolution Seminar Series*, University Of Massachusetts, Dartmouth.

⁵⁶ P. Firth, *Society, Politics and the Working Class in North East Lancashire, c. 1890 to 1920*, (Self-Published, 1993), p. 18.

⁵⁷ Jennings, *Pennine Valley*, p. 180.

of the Rochdale form of cooperation and rising interpretations of 'working classness' in some ways challenged the autonomy of these local systems. By 1895, a local ILP spokesman was damning the dividend system as 'an incentive to bourgeois acquisitiveness in what should be a pro-working class organisation', declaring it a system that panders 'to the craze of dividends.'⁵⁸ At one point, the Darwen branch stopped the practice of dividends for a similar reason.⁵⁹ Indeed, several local cooperatives split, and members went on to found new societies in neighbouring areas, sometimes following different approaches to the original ideals.⁶⁰ Despite this backlash, the success of cooperation across the region shows that a belief in saving, dividends and of paying fair prices for unadulterated foodstuffs proved popular with the public, there are therefore countless examples of profit-sharing schemes set up across a range of industries.

Alongside other initiatives such as mutual benefit societies and building societies, communities displayed levels of assertiveness in using the ability to finance initiatives to spur on local urban growth building houses and wider aspects of community life. If the village wanted something like a reading room, its inhabitants clubbed together and built one. It became a recurring local belief during the 1850s that 'the rich got richer, and the poor built houses.'⁶¹ A number of towns and villages, predominately those with parish councils, utilized the ability to direct urban planning to enact a great degree of security and stability through controlling access to basic amenities. Therefore, some places, particularly those adjacent to the larger industrial centres like Harle Syke and Great Harwood in north east Lancashire, were regarded as 'respectable' and 'affluent'.

The relationship between religion, politics and culture

The weakness of Anglicanism in north east Lancashire and the strength of Nonconformity greatly influenced the politics and culture of the region both explicitly and implicitly. In political terms, Joyce explains how 'the Liberalism that predominated was fired by the endemic Nonconformity of the region',⁶² whilst Thompson traces how the characteristics of early Methodism served as 'a shaping democratic spirit' as well as influencing concepts of union organisation and 'class meeting.'⁶³ Regardless of religious attendance figures, many of the principles of Nonconformity remained ingrained in local society and were adapted to different situations. Even by the 1930s, a review conducted by Smithies of the interests declared by 74 Burnley councillors showed how these principles remained popular (Table 3).⁶⁴

⁵⁸ Firth, *Society*, p. 19.

⁵⁹ Firth, *Society*, p. 20.

⁶⁰ Jennings, *Pennine Valley*, p. 180.

⁶¹ Breakell, *Caring and Sharing: How Pennine People Turned Want into Plenty, 1840-1914*, (Lancashire: Pennine Heritage Network, 1982), p. 2.

⁶² P. Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics: Culture of the Factory in Later Victorian England*, (England: Harvester Press, 1982), p. 13.

⁶³ E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, (London: Penguin, 2001), pp. 42-45.

⁶⁴ E.D. Smithies (1974), 'The Contrast Between North and South in England 1918-1939; A study of Economic, Social, and Political Problems with Particular reference to Experience of Burnley, Halifax, Ipswich and Luton', PhD Thesis, University of Leeds.

Table 3: Principal interests given by Burnley councillors, c.1930s

National Societies	2
Territorial Army	0
Rotary	2
Freemasons	6
Nonconformists Churches	25
Temperance	3
Golf Clubs	3
Other Sports	3
Church of England	9
Musical Clubs	4
Socialist and Radical Clubs	7
Trades Unions	20
Cooperatives	4
Chamber of Commerce	2
All other Local Clubs	7
Total Number of Local Clubs	97

Adapted from E.D. Smithies, *The Contrast Between North and South*, p. 308.

A key facet of Nonconformity was the adaptability of worship. Chapels were modest and often moved premises. They were also based within the community and demonstrated strong links to the methods of textile production previously discussed. Thus, when there were disagreements, there were options to create alternatives. For example, the Baptists in Briercliffe split into separate groups several times. The same group had no affiliation to any central body until applying to join the Scotch Baptists in the 1830s, yet Briercliffe had its first chapel constructed in 1767 in the village of Haggate by William Smith and a group of residents. Previously they had worshipped in a room above a local stable. Frost speculates that the introduction of Baptists came from Smith himself (who was a woollen manufacturer), and en-route to the Halifax Piece Hall would more than likely have visited Heptonstall, which had been holding Baptist meetings since 1704.⁶⁵

Briercliffe native Jeremiah Preston's account of the early nineteenth century noted how religious membership had declined over recent years but that there was an increase in the number of young men joining, many of whom became preachers themselves. Preston's evidence shows that some men rose to become prominent in the area, and there is a clear pattern of lineage from the families heavily involved in the local churches to those that maintained a significant role in the later development of the textile industry.⁶⁶ Indeed Howell has extensively shown the familial links between Burnley mill owners, these being overwhelmingly Nonconformist.⁶⁷ Moreover, such influence also permeated the shop floor as the following description from a native of Burnley demonstrates:

I went into the Oak Mount Mill ... I worked in the mill till I was 21. At Oak Mount there were many among the workers who belonged to Wesley chapel. The men were good, and the women great. Close around us were people like the Bradshaws, Farrers, the Spencers, Crossleys, and Crabtrees. They were saints on week-days as well as Sundays. The atmosphere of the place was saturated with their influence. I often hear terrible things about factory life, but I am glad to put on record, that in all the years from eight to 21, I have never heard or saw anything unworthy of the highest type

⁶⁵ Local legend again focuses on Smith introducing the religion, but from his meeting with 'Scotch Baptists' in Glasgow, where he had been trying to find new woollen market. See Frost, *A Lancashire Township*, p. 106.

⁶⁶ J. Preston, *I Well Remember; The Briercliffe and Burnley Reminiscences of Jeremiah Preston*, (Burnley: Rieve Edge Press, 1998), pp. 48-51,

⁶⁷ J. Howell, 'Burnley Cotton Manufacturers Personal Details, Cotton Mills and Cotton Mill Partnerships', Burnley Local History Library, LM31/HOW.

of character. The factory was worthy of the chapel.⁶⁸

Nonconformity was dominant across the whole of north east Lancashire, partially, as Whittaker shows, through an established history of multiple denominations maintaining a presence across the region, but also through the ability of members to adapt. He explains how the change in urban development through industrialisation resulted in two points of view. The first he describes as 'predominately evangelical' that would create 'a new responsible citizenship ... evident in the stewardship of talent, money and labour,' which created the 'Christian entrepreneur'. The second view was that there should be greater involvement in politics.⁶⁹ Both of these points of views combined through various denominations to increase working class involvement in economic and civil life.

Koss has examined the affinity between Nonconformists and the Liberal Party. He identifies the Liberal distrust of 'irresponsible power wielders and monopolies' as particularly appealing principles to people in north east Lancashire.⁷⁰ The status of Nonconformity as being independent and free-minded was helped especially by the battle for control of schools and a leader in Gladstone who, although Anglican himself, was respected for his devotion to faith as 'a servant of a common religious impulse.'⁷¹ Indeed, Nonconformist ideas in human progress were a natural fit to the Liberal cause, itself a coalition of different interest groups acting as the most receptive to outsiders. As late as 1868, those of Jewish faith outnumbered the Wesleyans, who had the greatest number of communicants of all the Nonconformist churches, in the House of Commons. Koss argues the franchise reforms of 1867 and 1884 were key:

That they no longer called themselves dissenters was itself indicative of their enhanced status: Nonconformist seemed to suggest a greater element of choice, and Free Church – which became common usage at the close of the century – implied even more positive attributes.⁷²

The same strain of independence was also apparent in the development of Chartism in the area in earlier decades, which suggests a combination of the wider national narrative interlaced with genuine local concerns.⁷³ So, although Walton details how 'to a considerable extent the Chartist tradition flowed into Liberalism',⁷⁴ Joyce offers a clearer interpretation of the situation in north east Lancashire:

The limitations of Chartism considered par excellence as a political theory of the artisan-ate — the validity of property, the individualist assumption, the sovereignty of the political — led to an affinity with much in Radical Liberalism, itself an ideology which stressed the classless union of individuals in the struggle not against industrial capital but against privilege.⁷⁵

On the Yorkshire side of the Pennine Chain a link between Chartism and Nonconformity can be seen from 1839 with the adaptation of organisational methods from Methodism. The groups here were broken into

⁶⁸ S. Chadwick, in J. Nuttall, *Burnley and District Worthies: Religious, Social, Literary and Musical*, (Burnley: Nuttall and Co., 1917), p. 79.

⁶⁹ G. Whittaker (1981), 'Nonconformity in North East Lancashire 1662 -1962', MA Dissertation, Durham University.

⁷⁰ S. Koss, *Nonconformity in Modern British Politics*, (London: Batsford, 1975), p. 16.

⁷¹ Koss, *Nonconformity*, p. 17.

⁷² Koss, *Nonconformity*, p. 19.

⁷³ For an analysis of the debate over the two main schools, see G. Timmins, *Four Centuries of Lancashire Cotton*, (Lancashire: Lancashire County Books, 1996).

⁷⁴ Walton, *Lancashire*, p. 33.

⁷⁵ Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics*, p. 315.

local federations, some with timetables of radical 'lecturers' similar to Methodist preachers' 'circuits'.⁷⁶

The Chartist ideas found a good deal of traction in the area. The failure of the movement in London reinforces how the isolation of the Pennines offered space to flourish.⁷⁷ Briercliffe housed a branch of the Radical Association, mentioned in the *Northern Star* as being a 'spirited place', and there is good evidence for the production of rudimentary weapons such as pikes in the township.⁷⁸

However, the Chartist movement could vary even across a small area. Turner summarises this best: 'Chartism varied from place to place. It had many causes, some of which cannot be properly understood if they are divorced from the local context.'⁷⁹ Brown argues that many historians have failed to account for this and suggests that 'while most in the Chartist movement saw themselves as "working people," many did not fit into the neat Marxist class category.'⁸⁰ Jeremiah Preston gives a fascinating insight into the reality of Chartism for small townships. Remembering hearing Henry Hunt and a procession march from Briercliffe to Padiham passing 'the fixed bayonets of the military' in Haggate. He described a meeting:

Working men were prohibited from holding political meetings, and whenever they met had to do so with closed doors, and no-one was allowed to enter who did not know the password. The Chartist movement was now to the front and had a number of adherents in Briercliffe. A number of working men contributed to the cause. Great meetings were held on Marsden Height, but always liable to be attacked by the soldiers. On one occasion it is related that an old woman was seen at a distance with a red cloak on. The cry was raised that the soldiers were coming and the men all ran away.⁸¹

Alternatively the riots and violent scenes in Colne in 1840 show how the issues could indeed amount to near chaos as a pro-corn law lawyer, a mill owner, and constable were all murdered as a mob wreaked havoc on the town over the course of a few days, dispersing whenever military forces from Burnley arrived.⁸² Indeed the riot itself was attributed by multiple sources as being in opposition to the police rather than any other issue.⁸³ However, the members of the 200 strong mob are referred to as both the Chartists and the 'rabble', implying some clear distinction.⁸⁴ Similarly, nearby Hebden Bridge saw a series of arrests made to prevent an apparent planned assault on three West Riding towns by Chartists containing different elements of the anti-poor law movement, the Ten Hours campaign, and parliamentary reformers.⁸⁵ Thus, it is no coincidence that Chartist activity coincided with a trade downturn and social upheaval in the area — for example, the power loom arrived in Briercliffe in 1848 whilst its population had dropped from 1,755 in 1831 to 1,498 in 1841.⁸⁶

The development of worker's organisations

The elements of Chartism that were successful in the area highlight the growing attempts of local workers to express concerns, and north east Lancashire became one of the most favourable areas to the idea of

⁷⁶ Jennings, *Pennine Valley*, p. 153.

⁷⁷ See, D. J. Rowe, 'The Failure of London Chartism', *Historical Journal*, 11, 3 (1968), pp. 472-487.

⁷⁸ Frost, *A Lancashire Township*, p. 56.

⁷⁹ M. Turner, 'Local Politics and the Nature of Chartism: The Case of Manchester'. *Northern History*, 45, 2 (2008), p. 323.

⁸⁰ R. Brown, *Chartism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 6.

⁸¹ Preston, *I Well Remember*, p. 26.

⁸² *Manchester Guardian*, August 12, 1840.

⁸³ *Manchester Guardian*, August 12, 1840.

⁸⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, August 12, 1840.

⁸⁵ Jennings, *Pennine Valley*, p. 153.

⁸⁶ See Frost, *Lancashire Township*, p. 26

trade unionism. In some respects the notion of solidifying and protecting conditions, rights and ultimately the local economy underwent a resurgence unseen since Chartism. Therefore, coinciding with trade unionism was a growing number of other forms of worker organisations to voice opinion: friendly societies, protection societies, the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon societies, temperance groups and, in Burnley, the Social and Moral League, all became prominent.⁸⁷ Moreover, Trades Councils formed in the 1880s and 1890s, many of which had close relationships to the local weaving unions.⁸⁸ Nelson in 1890 and Brierfield in 1892 were both products of local weaving association impetus, although in Burnley, the Trades' Council was a shared body with the Miners' Association.⁸⁹ Hence, there were a growing number of opportunities for working-class people to become involved in various aspects of society. The rise of and accessibility to these different groups is indicative of the effects that urban expansion had on the larger settlements.

Yet, as Turner highlights, it was from cotton unionism that many other workers' unions adapted ideas.⁹⁰ Joyce argues that trade unionism came to fill the void after the collapse of the Chartist movement. Interests of employers and operatives became more closely intertwined, and relations between them in the mill were based upon what Joyce terms 'deference', but which is perhaps better described as a mutual dependency. By the late nineteenth century, disputes were overwhelmingly rooted in the locality and often related to changes in working methods, rights, wages or ultimately a threat to reciprocity. So, although there were exceptions, most industrial action was conducted in good nature in recognition that both sides would eventually have to work together again at some point; thus bitter, drawn out disputes were of little use.⁹¹

Worker organisation came from within the community and remained embedded within it.⁹² For example, the rules for the Burnley Weavers in 1892 saw their overall goal as 'the socialisation of the means of production, distribution, and exchange, to be controlled by a democratic state in the interests of the entire community.'⁹³ The founding of other associations, although they were slow to fully adopt organised trade unionism, likewise took place within their respective localities. Various clubs and societies existed before the official formations of associations. The Padiham Weavers' Association formed in 1856, and in 1859 held a twenty-nine week strike over the adoption of the Blackburn list – an attempt to standardise weaving rates. The Clitheroe Weavers' Association had been in existence since before 1860 but met in secret on the outskirts of the town in fields or barns. The Nelson Weavers' Association was established in 1870, although the Nelson list of 1866 implies older foundations. The Nelson group were much like Clitheroe in that they were highly secretive, with Hopwood remarking 'weavers employed side by side were unacquainted as to the exact position in the trade union movement their fellow workers occupied,' and they played a major part in the lengthy strike of 1878-80. The Colne Weavers' Association was formed in 1879 although materials and evidence of a strike in 1861 similarly implies an older but

⁸⁷ Firth, *Society*, p. 46.

⁸⁸ See P. Firth (1994), *The Trades Council and Labour and Socialist Politics in Burnley, c.1910-1914*, (Self-Published), for a full analysis.

⁸⁹ Firth, *Trades Council*, p. 4.

⁹⁰ H.A. Turner, *Trade Union Growth, Structure and Policy*, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1962), see Chapters 2 - 4 specifically.

⁹¹ Even the subsequent riot in Burnley of 1818 can be understood as the attempts to break what were viewed as wrongly convicted people out of prison.

⁹² Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics*, p. 59.

⁹³ E. Hopwood, *The Lancashire Weavers Story*, (Lancashire: Co-Operative Press, 1969), p. 41.

secretive history. The Todmorden Weavers' Association formed in 1880 following a notice in 1878 of a reduction of wages with the primary focus to 'keep up our present rate of wages and prevent one employer paying less than another for the same amount and quality of work.'⁹⁴ The Burnley Weavers' Association (BWA) was established in 1870, and in 1892 declared their goal to be the formation of 'an Independent Socialist Party.' This fractured the organisation with liberal elements remaining and the more radical members forming a breakaway socialist union.⁹⁵ Thus each local union was based within its community and tied to the intricacies of these areas. The cotton unions were reorganised into amalgamations dependent on particular sections of the industry, and in 1884 they were further divided into local federations.⁹⁶ This system guaranteed a high level of autonomy for local unions that was to become a central principle. Although a pyramidal structure existed in terms of authority and influence, the local unions were the frontline for many operatives. With the establishment of the 'Colne List' for coloured goods in 1890 and the 'Uniform Wage List' for grey cloth in 1892, there existed a basis for negotiating within established parameters.

Crucially, the Uniform List led to some districts (overwhelmingly outside of the larger settlements) breaking away or remaining outside of attempts to amalgamate. Several local employers' federations mirrored this action by remaining outside of the Cotton Spinners' and Manufacturers' Association (CSMA). It also established the precedent for 'local disadvantages': the need to pay certain amounts below the established lists due to further costs incurred by being away from main transport links or having some other form of hindrance caused by an area's location. The position of mills operating with local disadvantages is discussed in detail in Chapter 4 but it is vital to establish that from the beginnings of established trade unionism, the area had its own forms of local, independent alternatives.

Uniformity in organisation and work practice was a complex issue. Several reasons are proposed for this: the amount of women and girls in the industry coupled with the suffrage question; the nature of employee shareholders in certain districts and the unique composition of certain towns. However, the continuation of bodies such as trades federations and chambers of commerce with working class and union leaders being involved in many ways demonstrates the reality of relationships in the area. Lib-Labism was therefore on the whole unsuccessful, even during its peak years at the end of the nineteenth century. None of the elected members were from the textile industry and there were few from the Pennine region - those Lancastrians being from south Lancashire and the only Yorkshire man was a miner from Kippax.⁹⁷ When Burnley did elect an official Lib-Lab MP it was the anti-socialist Fred Maddison of the Typographical Association in 1906, in an election that witnessed a 'sharp juxtaposition of Lib-Lab and

⁹⁴ Hopwood, *Lancashire Weavers*, pp. 45-46.

⁹⁵ Hopwood, *Lancashire Weavers*, p. 41.

⁹⁶ Throughout the thesis the Weavers' Amalgamation are referred to as the AWA, or Amalgamated Weavers' Association. Prior to 1884 there were in fact two separate Weavers' Amalgamations. The Northern Counties Amalgamated Association of Weavers, the 'second amalgamation', which subsumed the North East Lancashire Amalgamated Weavers' Association (established 1858). The two co-existed as rivals for a period of time.

⁹⁷ J. Shepherd, 'Labour and Parliament: the Lib-Labs as the first working class MPs, 1885-1906', in E. Biagini, and A. Reid (eds.), *Currents of Radicalism: Popular Radicalism, Organised Labour and Party Politics in Britain, 1850-1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 189.

socialist rhetoric.⁹⁸

In a sense, north east Lancashire formed its own form of Lib-Labism, one which was tied to localism. In part this was because of the diversity between the towns. In the case of Nelson, viewed as the more radical settlement, the local character is mostly attributed to the migration from the surrounding Yorkshire and Lancashire towns. The situation these people came from, like in the West Riding where men had been turned out of work in favour of women,⁹⁹ helped create distinct identities in Nelson and in Colne. The result was that the towns were two of only three cotton settlements where women did not outnumber men in the industry.¹⁰⁰

Conclusion

By 1890 there were a number of shared characteristics across north east Lancashire, yet each settlement within the area developed and maintained its own form of identity. As the area prospered economically, these identities formed and evolved whilst opening up possibilities for involvement outside of the workplace. Men and women experienced new threats but growing possibilities to engage in and influence their localities and thus the ability to shape society as they had and continued to do in the cotton industry. The vital principle for many was that as working people they had an active part in both cotton and society. They were not passive, or victims, but had expectations and aims. The development of new settlements, emerging from within existing settlements rather than outside, aided this self-belief and villages and towns were made in the images of the people that came to populate them. They were therefore unique, but at the same time shared a common culture with neighbouring towns and villages in the region

The backbone of the cotton industry was the sense of mutual dependency, both between manufacturer and operative, and across the community through families. The family wage was thus a central facet of ordinary life. But it was when this was threatened that unrest was apparent; hence, as Clarke speculates, there was a natural preference to the operatives' skills over their militancy across cotton districts.¹⁰¹ In smaller villages, the class divisions were even less marked, because this system combined close knit and kinship-based relationships. Therefore, unionism was weaker here or at least prone to less central authority than in larger settlements, giving local trade unions their own characteristics and due to the federal nature of both, the weavers and employers federations enjoyed a certain degree of independence.

Through religion, trade unionism and other blossoming opportunities, working people were able to engage in a range of social, cultural and political activities that shaped their local experiences. They also had new expectations in terms of what could and should happen, how things should be done and the structure of society. This was rooted in the makeup of local life but meant that a multiplicity of opinions

⁹⁸ D. Howell, 'Maddison, Fred (1856–1937)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2006 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/47375>, accessed 12/12/2015]

⁹⁹ Joyce, *Work Society and Politics*, p. 77.

¹⁰⁰ Hill, *Nelson*, p. 27.

¹⁰¹ P. F. Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 83.

began to develop, especially in the more urban areas. Coupled with this, the opportunity to save and invest money and purchase shares meant that the idea of social mobility (reinforced by examples and 'success stories') served as an aspirational goal that was achievable through a combination of hard work and good luck. This theme continues through to the following chapters, where the ability to earn and save money, to engage in and influence local life, to better oneself is a key principle of working life. In particular, the following chapter will explore how the established culture could diverge through the founding of the village of Harle Syke, and how the genesis of the whole area contributed to the identity of the village itself.

2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NORTH EAST LANCASHIRE WEAVING VILLAGE

For the majority of people at the turn of the twentieth century, life was grounded in the locality. For some, a sense of pride remained in being able to trace ancestors generationally back to the same village, yet for many migrants, the chance of a new opportunity through the cotton industry resulted in a meeting of old and new, where identities were adapted, strengthened and in some places created. As Snell has convincingly argued under the term 'local xenophobia', the marrying of natives and 'foreigners' or interlopers was complex, but the attachment to the locality amongst 'rural' populations could often stunt class development, in favour of a 'populist parochialism'.¹ The locality was thus a strong and prevailing feature of the wider regional culture.

The concepts of local and regional identity have often been used in a wider European context to denote an 'other'. Indeed, as Smith has argued they are often 'seen as representing a form of separation from the nation.'² However, in north east Lancashire and indeed a wider national context, the situation was much more complicated. For the weaving areas of Lancashire, local peculiarities - the sense of being an 'other' - existed alongside a notion of a shared north east Lancashire culture, a Lancastrian identity, a cotton identity, and 'Britishness'.³ The similar demographic nature of the settlements, with migration overwhelmingly from nearby surrounding areas, meant a far greater level of homogenisation than in other parts of the county as shown in the previous chapter. Yet, the attempts of towns and villages to imagine and reimagine themselves both internally and to external groups is a constant theme. Especially in the smaller country villages, many felt a distinct pride in the perceived individuality and in some cases uniqueness of their birthplace. Smith uses the term 'native-place identity' to denote the attachment of people to their ancestral home and as he suggests 'ties of kinship and native place were used ... to ease their interaction with strangers.' In turn this helped 'in negotiating the uncertainties of urban-industrial life.'⁴

Chapter 1 of this thesis discussed the formation of north east Lancashire's regional culture, and this chapter develops from that, to offer a case study of how the same culture could evolve, mutate and be reflected in the day-to-day life of ordinary people in a very specific context. It explores the realities of developing an industrial village, physically and mentally, how a local identity could be cultivated, and how this was reflected in the local institutions and customs. It offers a case study of the township of Briercliffe, focussing on the creation of the Harle Syke village, and its interaction with the older neighbouring settlements. By 1907, Harle Syke was noted as being 'different', yet the same people who developed the older settlements in Briercliffe and who were also a key component of the founding of the Burnley textile industry largely built the village. In many ways the reputation the village garnered, despite having a number of disadvantages (geographically speaking) gave it a position mentally and mirrored physically as

¹ See K. D. M. Snell, 'The Culture of Local Xenophobia', *Social History*, 28, 1 (2008), pp. 1-30.

² S. Smith, *Revolution and the People in Russia and China*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 37.

³ For a detailed discussion of British identity, see L. Colley, *Britons*, (London, Yale, 1992), and P. Ward, *Britishness*, (London: Routledge, 2004).

⁴ Smith, *Revolution*, p. 37.

being above Burnley from its foundation.⁵ In 1907, a letter to the *Burnley Express* highlighted the perceived mind-set of the 'Sykers':

The Harle Syke weavers' have done something to emancipate themselves from capitalist masters by becoming capitalists themselves. They are not going to wait until the earth is turned upside down. They have put their savings down like men determined to work out their own salvation, and not keep waiting for somebody else to do something for them that they could do for themselves ... imagine what the weavers of Burnley could have done this last 15 years ... it is not a question of what has been done, but what could be done by thrifty, industrious and sober men... why keep talking about the most impracticable scheme of Socialism. The idea of any man who has his sense waiting till the government takes over everything! I call that idea a screaming farce ... (previous writer) shudders to think about weavers building their own mills. I don't think Harle Syke weavers shudder at building mills when they can pay 100 per cent dividend. All they shudder at is because it is not 200 per cent. It would make the Socialists shudder if they had to see the Harle Syke weavers draw their cheques.⁶

The first section of this chapter discusses the role of Briercliffe's settlements in the founding of Harle Syke, and the culture that developed there. The second section then explores the development of Harle Syke itself, and the demographic influences upon the town. The third section then discusses how the particular experience of the industrial and urban process created a local identity, and how this was reflected in the image of the village externally.

The reputation of Briercliffe and the development of Harle Syke

Briercliffe holds a fairly common (but in terms of more general literature anomalous) place in the history of industrial Lancashire. As an area (fully Briercliffe-with-Exwistle in township form or Briercliffe in civil parish form) it was often referred to as a 'country' or 'out' district and after the local government reforms of 1894 was administratively under the Burnley Rural District. It occupied a place somewhere in between an industrialised town and a 'rural' community, bearing as many similarities to the latter as the former.⁷ Much like other small settlements on the periphery of larger towns, it developed in relative isolation that created an insularity reflected in village life.⁸ Thus, as previously discussed, bodies such as the parish council fostered both authority and accessibility amongst local people.

Briercliffe originally comprised of a series of scattered hamlets.⁹ Yet between 1881 and 1911, its population more than trebled and underwent a geographical shift south-westwards towards Burnley, which was itself expanding northwards. The first building of note in what was to be Harle Syke was the church, St James, completed in 1841 and followed by the vicarage in 1847. Around this there were merely farms and grazing areas until in 1855 with the building of Harle Syke Mill.¹⁰

The first mill of significance in the Briercliffe area was at Lane Bottom and was built around 1848. It was set up by William Smith, a cotton manufacturer, who had shares in several mills around the Colne area,

⁵ Harle Syke sits roughly 800 feet above sea-level overlooking Burnley, which is roughly at 400 feet above sea-level.

⁶ *Burnley Express*, May 1, 1907.

⁷ For a discussion of a rural Pennine community structure see A. Howkins, 'Peasants, Servants and Labourers: The Marginal Workforce in British Agriculture, c. 1870-1914', *Agricultural History Review*, 42, (1994), and S. Caunce, *Amongst Farm Horses*, (London: Sutton Publishing Ltd, 1991).

⁸ For comparison, Birch's description of Glossop was often also called an out-district, as a small settlement that 'is sufficiently isolated to have a distinct community life of its own.' A. Birch, *Small Town Politics: A Study of Political Life in Glossop*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959).

⁹ The early history of Briercliffe is covered in great depth by R. Frost in *A Lancashire Township*, (Burnley: Rieve Edge Press, 1983).

¹⁰ There are several etymologies for the name. The mill was powered by a local stream, called 'Harle Syke', and took its name from it, as did the village that was to grow up around it. It is also attributed to the name for a local farm. The former appears to multiple times in local reports, however, in modern times the official etymology has been given as deriving from the name of a person – Harle – and a local word meaning ditch, syke. Harle Syke and Briercliffe guide, Visit Lancashire.

near his own handloom weaving mill.¹¹ The preceding cotton mill in the Briercliffe area was a converted corn mill at Extwistle from around the 1820s.¹² However, the mill declined and changed hands several times (only ever being a small concern) and had closed by 1884 despite attempts to convert to room and power in 1881.¹³

The Smiths had been small-scale woollen manufacturers since the mid-1700s and owned a handloom factory in Lane Bottom. The family probably also supplied outwork to other locals and by 1851 had a workforce of 200 in the powerloom mill. Nearly half of these workers were under twenty, with the vast majority living directly in Lane Bottom, supplemented by a small number of people from Haggate.¹⁴ Handloom weaving using the domestic system continued with 317 families in the district containing a handloom weaver, for example there were 25 adult male handloom weavers in Haggate.¹⁵ Hill End Mill did not undergo any real expansion or staff turnover, in effect serving its own sub-community directly next to the mill itself.

As a generally isolated group of communities, the general economic welfare of Briercliffe's settlements was naturally dependent on the state of industry within the area. Thus in the years of economic hardship, the population dropped significantly and likewise increased with prosperity, as shown in Table 6 where the years between 1831 and 1881 serve as perhaps the clearest example.¹⁶ For those people that both survived and remained, such experiences were a key episode in a shared culture, whilst others looked to take advantage of blossoming opportunity away from their villages. The reality of this situation is highlighted by Bythell's history of his ancestor, John Simpson, born in Haggate in March 1824 to a family of handloom weavers. Simpson remained a handloom weaver into the period where the industry had become terminal and eventually, like many of those from the surrounding area migrated to Burnley in search of better opportunities. However, Simpson, like many others, maintained a close link to his native place and a gradual improvement of conditions allowed him to return to Briercliffe in 1856, where he used the money earned from the powerloom to become one of the founding members of the Haggate Joint Stock Company.¹⁷

Simpson does appear typical of a generation of people in Haggate. From around the 1840s a growing dynamism built within the area - marked by the coming of steam power and the powerloom - from a mixture of returning migrants and those who remained. Haggate thus came through the period of extreme poverty to one where it was regarded as a place that 'made' others, especially the cotton industry of Burnley.¹⁸ Indeed, as links between families in both Briercliffe and Burnley became further entwined, it was those of the former who took advantage of the economic conditions to build the

¹¹ Barrowford and Pendle History archive, available online at <http://www.barrowford.org/>.

¹² Frost, *Lancashire Township*, p. 60.

¹³ An advertisement in the *Burnley Gazette* lists low rent, portions of the mill with good light, as well as various bits of machinery for sale such as carding machines and the hard waste trade, *Burnley Gazette*, March 12, 1881.

¹⁴ Frost and Bythell, *Harle Syke Mill*, pp. 7-9.

¹⁵ Frost and Bythell, *Harle Syke Mill*, pp. 7-9.

¹⁶ For a general discussion of poverty in Briercliffe through the 1840s, see R. Watson, 'Poverty in North-East Lancashire in 1843: Evidence from Quaker Charity Records', *Local Population Studies*, 55, (1995), pp. 28-44.

¹⁷ D. Bythell (1982), 'The Life and Times of John Simpson', Lecture paper, Briercliffe Archives.

¹⁸ See Bythell, *The Handloom Weavers*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969) and Frost, *Lancashire Township*.

industry in both places.¹⁹

Much like Simpson, a similar example of the same process of poverty, migration and success is the story of the extended Emmott family. Robert Emmott was born into general poverty in Haggate. He had no education until he became an adult, attending local evening classes held by a manufacturer, J. Sutcliffe. He was a handloom weaver and moved to become a winder with the decline of handloom weaving and then a looser and twister, moving to Harle Syke as the village developed. Using his saved wages, he purchased shares in Harle Syke shed and following the dissolution of the company and rebirth as a room and power concern, took his looms to Burnley, where his success culminated in his building Stanley Mills.²⁰

Frost and Bythell's analysis of the census in 1851 also shows a wider cultural shift in the local population that facilitated a newfound entrepreneurial spirit. Demographically, the powerloom marked a move towards the younger generation, whilst also facilitating a geographical movement westerly, in turn supplying an impetus for urban development. Of 773 in the working population, 220 were powerloom weavers, compared with 154 handloom weavers; one third of the 317 households had a handloom weaver as head, of which 60 per cent were over the age of 30 and likely to be in the more rural settlements. Half of the powerloom weavers were under 20, almost equally men and women and usually not head of households.²¹ Jeremiah Preston detailed the coming of the mill:

I well recollect the Hill End Shed being built ... The change was very great from hand looms to steam looms, and created quite a flutter in the district. I well remember my father, sister and brother learning to weave ... the engines were put in by Landless of Nelson. Tacklers were got from Burnley ... The weavers came from Southfield, Catlow, Marsden Height, Marsden Chapel and Brierfield in addition to those from Holt Hill, Haggate, and Lane bottom, etc.²²

The impact of the powerloom created a snowball effect. The increasing dynamism required space to continue to grow, hence, plans for housing around the mill in Harle Syke (1858) began soon after it was up and running, primarily on Burnley Road. However, the most significant development was the introduction of the principle of shares. Frost recounts the local legend of the founding of the mill in Harle Syke and with it the Haggate Joint Stock Company:

The handloom industry, so the story goes, was dying in Haggate and wages were very poor. It was felt that there was no future in the traditional craft and therefore, a group of local men are said to have met at the Hare and Hounds in Haggate and resolved to build their own powerloom mill in a convenient place near to the village.²³

Although the Harle Syke Mill Company collapsed, it was reborn in 1865 as a room and power concern, spawning several new companies from the original families involved. By 1872 there was seven different firms housed in the mill.²⁴ The other mills that developed in Harle Syke were all in some way linked back to these families or were attempts to replicate and to an extent spread their principles. Primrose Mill was for the majority of its history related to the West family (and continued through marriages) with James

¹⁹ For the later links between the mill owning families of Burnley and Briercliffe, see J. Howell, 'Burnley Cotton Manufacturers Personal Details, Cotton Mills And Cotton Mill Partnerships', Burnley Library Archive, LM31/HOW.

²⁰ *Burnley Gazette*, February 20, 1897.

²¹ Frost and Bythell, *Harle Syke Mill*, pp. 8-9.

²² Jeremiah Preston, *I Well Remember*, p. 29.

²³ Frost, *Lancashire Township*, p. 41.

²⁴ These were: Wilkinson Altham and Co., Robert Emmott and Co., Hudson, Duerden and Co., Simpson and West, John Stuttard and Co., Hartley Taylor and Co., and James Thornton and Co.

Hargreaves, Herbert Crowther and Frank Atkinson, all West's sons-in-law's running their businesses when it was split in three. Similarly, King's Mill was originally run by Mason, West and Bather, where John Simpson West (son of William) was brother-in-law to both George Mason and Alf Bather, who had married another two of William West's daughters. Briercliffe Mill was a room and power concern, like in Harle Syke Mill whilst Walshaw Mill and Queen Street Mill were both owned by their namesake companies and operated forms of shareholder ownership. At the peak, there were eleven cotton manufacturing companies in the village, effectively all built and financed by Harle Syke people. Briercliffe also spawned companies outside of the township and across Lancashire.²⁵

Across Lancashire, the cotton industry was localised, and overwhelmingly came from within communities. As Timmins has shown in the earlier generations of handloom weaving, the strength of local relations helped to both form and maintain a local vested interest. In the case of handloom weaving allowing it to continue longer than many would expect.²⁶ As has previously been noted, the handloom continued in Briercliffe until relatively late and the move to powerloom was slow. Even in 1886, the 1,810 looms between the villages were tiny in comparison to even single areas of Burnley, however by 1908, the figure had risen to 6351, mirroring the rise in population.²⁷

Table 4: Population of Briercliffe 1311-1911

Year	Population		
1311	70	1851	1612
1600	450	1861	1470
1781	753	1871	1263
1801	956	1881	1184
1811	1220	1891	1647
1821	1470	1901	2324
1831	1755	1911	3042
1841	1498		

Figures from Frost, *Lancashire Township* (1983), p. 26, and Census Material

As the cotton industry continued to grow, there came further need for housing and with this a further opportunity for those with capital. Hence, as the level of loomage, and mills grew, there is a very clear 'boom' through 1880s in building into the vacant areas of Harle Syke (Tables 5 and 6). However, there was a certain degree of control over this process benefiting from such a late start to avoid the issues nearby Burnley had whilst maintaining a level of worker to match the level of industry.

The houses were built in groups between the following dates (Table 5) and were roughly the same sizes. The names of these roads also highlight the liberal leanings of the residents and show a degree of

²⁵ Jeremiah Preston lists several companies in his diaries directly from Harle Syke mill that he termed 'offshoots across Lancashire.' They were: Harle Syke Mill, James Thornton & Co., Haggate Weaving Co., Althams, Hill End Mfg Co. (Lanebottom), Walshaw Mill Co., Frank Atkinson, James Hargreaves, Herbert Crowther (the last three in Primrose Mill), Mason, West and Bather (King's Mill) and Queen Street Manufacturing Co. The list was later added to by Frost and Bythell and shows firms started from Briercliffe but having moved away, or directly owned by Briercliffe families. See Preston, *I Well Remember*, pp. 29-30, and Frost and Bythell, *Harle Syke Mill*, pp. 90-91.

²⁶ See G. Timmins, *The Last Shift: The Decline of Handloom Weaving in Nineteenth-Century Lancashire*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

²⁷ *Burnley Gazette*, October 28, 1908.

personalisation.

Table 5: Years of mill construction in Briercliffe

Mill Building	Year of Construction
Harle Syke Mill	1856
Briercliffe Mill	1880
Queen Street Mill	1894
Harle Syke Mill Extension (Siberia)	1904
Walshaw Mill	1905
Primrose Mill	1905
Kings Mill	1912
Hill End	C.1838
Extwistle Mill	C.1816

Source: Frost, *Lancashire Township* and Stuttard, *Briercliffe* (1959)

Table 6: Years of road construction in Briercliffe

Name	Year(s) Built
Granville	1890 and 1897
Queen	1891 and 1896
Church	1895, 1899, 1902
Duke	1895
Talbot	1897
King	1898
Cross	1900 and 1909
Kimberley	1900
Milton	1904
Extension of Duke, Cross and Townley	1905, 1906, 1907
Extension of Kimberley, North Street, Sutcliffe,	1905, 1906
Parker	1905, 1907
Cobden, Tennyson	1908
Extension of Harrison, Tennyson, Jubilee	1914

Source: Stuttard, *Briercliffe* (1959)

Stability and continuity

The effects of rapid industrialisation created a melding of old and new identities amongst the people of Briercliffe, primarily from the successful families of Haggate. These newly forged identities were reflected and expressed in the development of Harle Syke. The principles upon which the village was built were reinforced in several ways. Like many small industrial communities across Lancashire there was a high degree of inter-marriage within the village. Indeed, a great deal of research has been conducted on a number of the prominent families in Briercliffe, both by family genealogists and by Howarth in *North East Lancashire Family Pedigrees*, which shows the complexity of families merging over centuries.²⁸ The primary result was a guarantee of stability and continuity locally whilst creating a complex level of interlocking family units.

The familial structure was especially strong, and the idea of a shared wage remained important, whilst naturally facilitating a familial hierarchy. This system was reinforced by the practice of elder members in the community, mostly male, taking to weaving as a form of semi-retirement. Thus, both inside and outside of the workplace, a loosely patriarchal structure remained and became increasingly characteristic of 'country districts' like Harle Syke. As one example shows, when Mr and Mrs Tomblin celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary at a local cafe, it was remarked how Mr Tomblin was still weaving at the age of 72, having spent 20 years at Thomas Burrows Ltd and 32 years at Walshaw Mill Co. The latter of these he had worked on the looms next to his wife for a number of years.²⁹ When Mr and Mrs Pickles celebrated their Golden wedding anniversary it was recounted how Mr Charles Pickles met his wife after returning to Burnley having moved with his parents to Rishton as a child. As a weaver, he worked alongside his wife for 30 years until setting up a coal dealing and furniture carrying company with his sons in Harle Syke. When his sons were called up to serve in the war 20 years later, he returned to weaving in the village until his retirement.³⁰ Similarly, when the Starkie family moved to Tasmania because of the father Hartley's work for Cadbury's, the whole family moved. When they returned, the whole family moved as a unit to Harle Syke. Mr Starkie became a loomer and twister at South View Manufacturing Company working until his early seventies.³¹

Indeed, evidence suggests that allowing men to continue working into their seventies was far from a rarity and regarded as another expression of pride, as shown in Figure 8, a postcard from the nearby Hesandford Mill, which was founded by Briercliffe people.

²⁸ See C. Howarth, 'North East Lancashire Family Pedigrees', Lancashire Archives, LG2/ NOR.

²⁹ *Burnley Express*, April 6, 1940.

³⁰ *Burnley Express*, October 19, 1935.

³¹ *Burnley Express*, April 18, 1942.



Figure 8: A postcard of an elderly operative at the nearby Hesandford Mill. Source: Briercliffe Society Archives

Migrants supplemented the native population, but as was common, the majority of the incomers came from the surrounding areas with especially similar cultural backgrounds.³² In 1891, the total number of people born outside Briercliffe and Burnley was 418, roughly 25 per cent. The level increased to 681 in 1901, or roughly 29 per cent. Of these, 219 were female in 1891 and 362 in 1901. Focusing solely on the heads of households, by 1911 there were 105 out of 730 people born outside Lancashire, and their birth locations are shown in Table 7.³³

The majority of those born outside Briercliffe shared their road with someone else from outside the township, and in some cases the people shared similar origins (Table 8). A number of migrants originated in Yorkshire, as seen in Table 7. Briercliffe's proximity to the Lancashire/Yorkshire border, coupled with

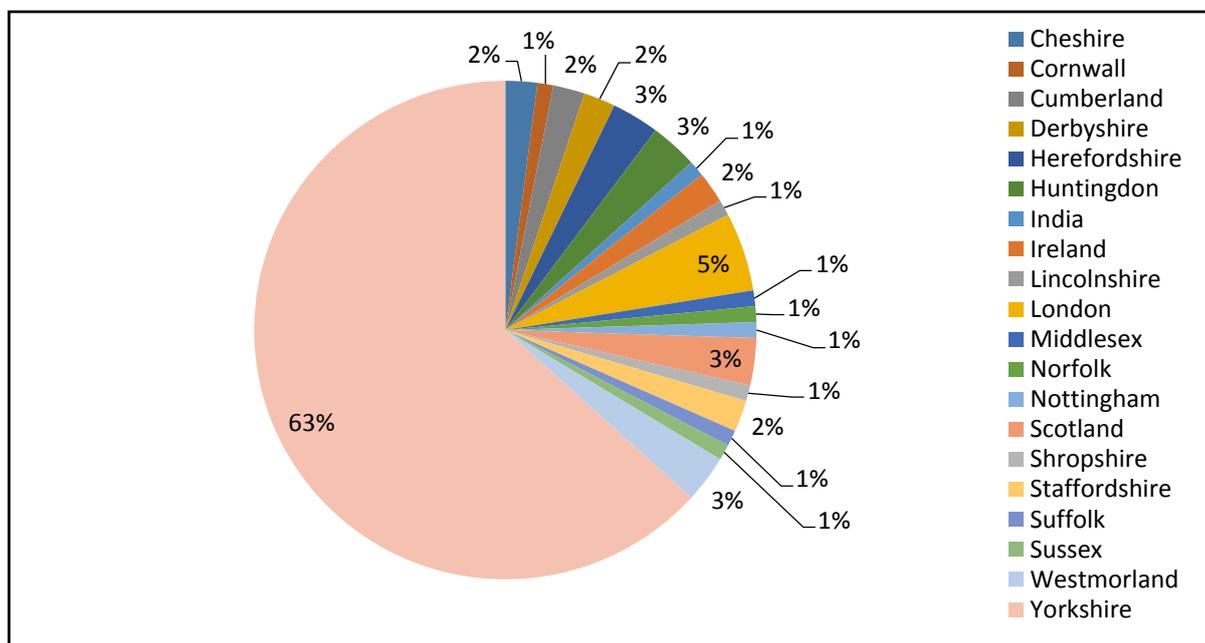
³² For a wider discussion of this process in the neighbouring district of Brierfield, see C. Hellas, 'Migration in Nineteenth-Century Wensleydale and Swaledale', *Northern History*, 27 (1991), pp. 139-161.

³³ Based on evidence in Census Enumerator book material, 1891, 1901, 1911.

the cultural, religious and linguistic similarity between the Pennine regions of Lancashire and Yorkshire allowed for easier assimilation. In 1911 the distribution of migrants around the village shows a concentration on Halifax Road/Burnley Road that leads out of Harle Syke and towards Yorkshire. On Halifax Road, of the 23 heads of household, 18 were from Yorkshire. If extended to Burnley Road (as it does geographically), this number increases by a further 13 heads of household, of which seven were again from Yorkshire. Of the remaining heads, two were Irish and one each from London, Shropshire, Somerset, Suffolk, Westmorland, Cumberland, Herefordshire, Huntingdon and Scotland. Out of a total of 56 Yorkshire born heads of household, only eight lived on a street without another Yorkshire born head of household.³⁴

Of the heads of household born outside Lancashire in 1911, 37 were in some way employed in the cotton industry, with 26 employed as weavers. Excluding the six female heads of household who had no listed occupations, there were 64 (including three carters who could be included in the cotton industry) being employed in other industries, reinforcing the wider regional trend for those from further afield occupying ancillary occupations.³⁵

Table 7: Birth locations of heads of household born outside of Lancashire, 1911

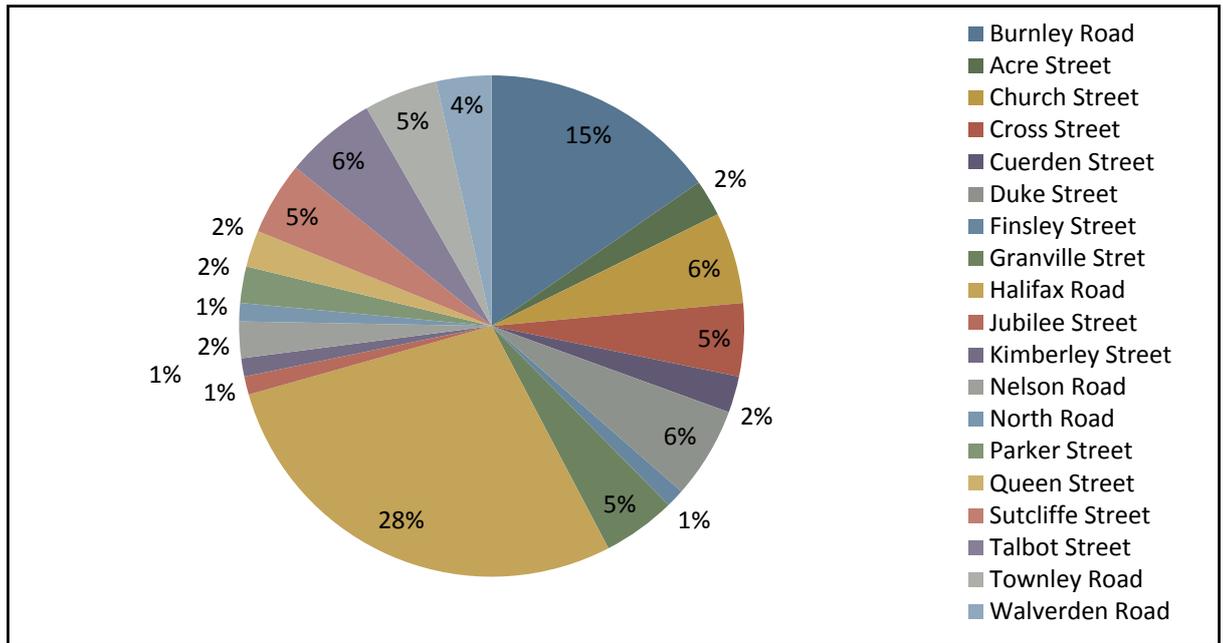


Based on Census Enumerator material, 1911

³⁴ Based on evidence in Census Enumerator book material, 1891, 1901, 1911.

³⁵ Based on Census Enumerator book material, 1891, 1901, 1911. For an example of the patterns in Burnley, see E. Higham (1972), 'An Investigation into the Migrant Population of Burnley in 1851', PGCE Dissertation, Chorley College, and E. Smith (1985), 'Migration to Burnley, 1851-81', BA Dissertation, University of Liverpool.

Table 8: Concentration of those born outside of Lancashire and living on the same road/ street, 1911



Based on Census Enumerator material, 1911

A muted class structure?

The complex interrelated structure of families was reflected in a lack of clear class division. There was thus both a high level of local involvement in the mills and more familial relationships amongst the community itself. Therefore, established local families held the main roles of local prominence. When expertise could not be found from within the community, people were imported with particular skills, for example doctors or policemen. The heads of households who were managers of cotton mills in 1891 were all born in Briercliffe (counting Extwistle as Briercliffe). In 1901, one was born in Padiham. By 1911, of those who owned or managed mills (including company secretaries) 13 identified as being born in Briercliffe, one in Burnley, and one in Nelson.

Of the 13 Heads of Household in 1891 who had 'higher' mill jobs (mill overlooker, mill manager, cotton salesman, secretary etc.), all bar one (John Earnshaw, born in Langcliffe) were born in Briercliffe or Extwistle. By 1901, of the 37 heads of household of the same strata, 28 were born either in Burnley or Briercliffe. The remaining men included two from Nelson, one from Worsthore, one from Middup, and Earnshaw again from Langcliffe. Of the latter two, the locations are roughly 30 miles away from Briercliffe.

By 1911 of the men, only four were born outside of Lancashire, and they all originated from textile areas in Yorkshire: Baildon, Todmorden, Keighley and Howden Clough. The remaining five Lancastrians not from either Briercliffe or Burnley are from nearby Nelson, Worthsthorpe, Padiham, Stacksteads and the only one of any significant distance, Stalybridge.³⁶ The figure for those with the 'higher' jobs increased to 60, which considering how many were born locally, implies that Briercliffe had begun to 'export' skilled men to other places.

³⁶ Based Census Enumerator book material, 1911.

The continuity evidenced through those involved in the cotton industry was also seen in the families regarded as originally ‘farming’ families. The surnames prevalent from 1829-1834 show a series of owners and occupiers throughout 46 farms, allotments and smallholdings. Of these listed for owners, the surnames Halstead, Halsted, Smith, Foulds, Wilkinson and Greenwood stand out as being a constant presence in the village until the present day. Likewise of the occupiers, the Hargreaves, Stuttard, Heap, Sutcliffe, Dearden, Hartley, Leaver and Whittaker families show heavy involvement.³⁷ Similarly, Frost’s list of tenant farms as far back as 1443 lists several Foulds (de Ffold), a Whittaker (Whytaker), a Halsted and a Parker.³⁸

As shown by Redmonds, especially in the Pennine region, the importance of family heritage and surnames is of great significance in interconnected communities.³⁹ Thus, as well as forming the links between interconnected families, the sense of continuity was an important attribute offering a clear link to the past. In terms of the wider area, the families which became significant in the Burnley textile industry included: the Althams, Burrows, Emmotts, Simpsons, Smiths, Spencers, Stuttards and Waltons, yet, even several generations later they were regarded as being originally ‘from’ Briercliffe.⁴⁰ In terms of heads of households, the five most prevalent surnames and amount of household heads with those surnames in the township from 1891-1911 (Table 9) correlate with the most popular surnames in 1851: Nuttall, followed by Kippax, Smith, Jackson, Greenwood, Whitaker, Edmondson, Sutcliffe, Taylor and Halstead. Of these surnames, Leaver, Nuttall and Duerden have Lancastrian origins, Greenwood, Kippax, Edmondson and Halstead have Yorkshire origins and Atkinson originates in the north of England. Hence, as discussed in Chapter 1, the continuity from the earlier yeomen culture could be drawn upon and used to further create networks.⁴¹

Table 9: Frequency of surnames in Briercliffe, 1891, 1901, 1911

1891		1901		1911	
Leaver	17	Nuttall	20	Nuttall	25
Nuttall	16	Leaver	19	Edmondson	22
Greenwood	13	Duerden, Edmondson	16	Atkinson Leaver	18
Atkinson Duerden	11	Halstead	15	Halstead (excluding two Halsteds) Taylor	17
Kippax	10	Atkinson, Taylor	14	Greenwood	16

Based on Census Enumerator Material 1891, 1901, 1911

Familiar local surnames reappear in key positions within the cotton concerns throughout Harle Syke’s history. For example, in the 1920s the directors of James Thornton and Co are listed as: W. Halstead, J. Halstead, H. Halstead, W. Burrows, W. Duerden, J. R. Halstead and M. Whittaker.⁴² Even the directors of Queen Street Mill in 1954 are listed as: Edward Crowther, Willie Leaver, Harold Sutcliffe, Fielden Nutter,

³⁷ Frost, *Lancashire Township*, p. 30.

³⁸ Frost, *Lancashire Township*, p. 25.

³⁹ See G. Redmonds, *Christian Names in Local and Family History*, (Canada: Dundurn, 2006), and *Names and History: People, Places and Things*, (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2004).

⁴⁰ Howell, ‘Burnley Cotton Manufacturers’.

⁴¹ See pp. -

⁴² These names were at the top of the dated letter heads issued by the company. QSM Archive.

John Proctor and Willie Burrows.⁴³ Further analysis of a number of the family trees produced through the Briercliffe Society further adds to the pattern through generations.

The names Frost gives as the oldest in the township are: Briercliffe, Halstead (Halsted), Hartley, Kippax, Ingham, Nutter, Parker, Proctor, Ridehalgh, Smith, Tattersall and Wilkinson. The names he gives as pre seventeenth century: Brown, Edmondson, Haydock, Laycock, Pollard, Robertshaw, Robinson, Simpson, Spencer, Stanworth, Taylor and Whittaker are still the key names in the twentieth century and the descendants of these still reside locally. Even by the period of temporary boom and the eventual decline of the post-Second World War years, the men in senior positions are mostly familiar Briercliffe names (Tables 10 and 11).⁴⁴

Table 10: Managers and Salesman of Harle Syke cotton concerns, 1956

Company	Managers / Salesmen / Directors
Atkinsons	F. Atkinson, F. Atkinson
HJ Crowther's	F. B. Crowther, W.W. Crowther
Haggate	William Taylor, Arthur Walsh
Harle Syke Mill Co	H. Halstead, H. Taylor
Hill End Mill Co	N. Khazam, E. Proctor
Mason, West, Bather	J. S. West, A. Bather, J. W. Bather, W. West
Queen Street Mill	Barker, W. Burrows
South View Mill	William Taylor, Arthur Walsh
Thorntons	F. E. W. Halstead
Walshaw	T. Constantine, R. Proctor

Based on information in *Cotton Spinners' and Manufacturers' Directory, Burnley District, 1956*

Table 11: Managers and Salesman of Harle Syke cotton concerns, 1965

Company	Managers/ Salesmen/ Directors
Crowthers	W. W. Crowther, F.B. Crowther
Finsley View (Subsidiary of Manifold Ltd)	J. K. Corrin, M. Proctor, K. Bythell
Oxford Mill	Part of a firm from Accrington
Queen Street Mill	E. E. Sutcliffe, J.C. Burrows, A. Leaver
Walshaw Mill	J. Hartley, H. Rushton, J.W.W. Atkinson

Based on information in *Cotton Spinners' and Manufacturers' Directory, Burnley District, 1965*

The degree of interconnectivity had one effect of muting class differences. The structure is clearly noticeable when reviewing the types of houses mill managers/owners/salesman inhabited. The concept of the mill owners being 'of' the rest of the townspeople became an increasingly important aspect of industrial relationships in Harle Syke - the idea that the mill managers 'wore clogs on a Sunday.'⁴⁵ In terms of the actual housing, the majority of the men lived in fairly modest properties (Figure 9), bar George Mason's marginally grander house on Jubilee Street and Abraham Leaver's home at Cockden. On the whole these men were neighbours with weavers and other people with 'normal' jobs.

An analysis of census material, combined with the family trees produced by the Briercliffe Society

⁴³ Queen Street Mill Directors Book, QSM Archive.

⁴⁴ The names are those listed in the *Cotton Spinners and Manufacturers Directory* (Manchester: John Worrall), 1952, and 1965.

⁴⁵ *Burnley Express*, September 26th 1915.

highlight how interrelated the majority of mill managing families were.⁴⁶ However, multiple branches of the same family performed different roles of different levels at several mills. For example, whilst George Mason was one of the owners of King's mill, his relative William Mason was a Tackler at Harle Syke Mill.⁴⁷ Even for those with more tentative links, the closeness of their families through things like involvement in religious groups to an extent created a closer shared identity. To further reinforce said links, the industry locally acted independently of wider bodies, such as the Cotton Spinners and Manufactures Association (CSMA) with the Briercliffe Employers forming their own unaffiliated union to allow for greater freedom over their actions, and forming their own Mutual Insurance Company in 1907.⁴⁸

Local networks

Birch's anthropological study of small industrial settlements (Glossop in his case) throughout industrialisation and decline highlighted how a general level of local acquiescence could be achieved. The key element, he suggested was different strata of society utilising 'contact ... not only in the mills but outside in the churches and chapels, the reading rooms and clubs, at public lectures and on the sports field.'⁴⁹ In an even smaller settlement, the importance of such action was arguably amplified. The same basic levels of local social life were therefore key areas in which local identities were forged.

From Harle Syke's foundation, the role of religious organisation was a key characteristic of its development, although not always an overt one. The prominent families were overwhelmingly of a Nonconformist background. Jeremiah Preston's diaries especially show this: Thomas Proctor, Abraham Altham, William Preston, William Stanworth, James Berry, Lawrence Atkinson, and Elijah Kippax are all listed as young men who became lay preachers at the Haggate Baptist Church whilst Joseph Shackleton and John Duerden were Sunday School Superintendents.⁵⁰ Most of these men also held other positions locally and (most notably Altham and Proctor) rose to local prominence, whilst their families were to become key members in the creation of the local economy.⁵¹

⁴⁶ See for example the materials available online from the Briercliffe Society. See <http://www.briercliffesociety.co.uk>.

⁴⁷ Based on 1890 and 1911 Census returns.

⁴⁸ The company was officially incorporated in 1908, and lasted until 1948, NA/BT 31/31994/97593.

⁴⁹ A. Birch, *Small Town Politics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 21.

⁵⁰ Preston, *I Well Remember*, p. 48.

⁵¹ Proctor was a Sunday school teacher, preacher, superintendent and choirmaster. Altham founded the tea merchants in his name, and later a travel company that is still popular in East Lancashire, as well as being J.P. and Alderman.

Figure 9: Mill manager's homes, c.1911



Source: Locations based on census material. Base map author's own. Images courtesy of Google Maps, bar Cockden, which is courtesy of the Briercliffe Society.

Although Nonconformist children for the majority of time went to school in Nelson and Brierfield whereas Anglicans went to Burnley schools, the importance of religion was in solidifying and continuing kinship ties. An analysis of the signatories for the main Nonconformist groups show that the Baptist Chapel trustees were: John Taylor, John Thornton, Abraham Leaver and Smith Pickles. Likewise the guarantors for the overdraft of Hill Lane Chapel were: Leaver, J. Leaver, M. Nuttall, J. Sutcliffe and W. Shackleton. Willie and Thomas Nuttall were chairman and secretary. This was mirrored with the signatories for the Haggate Baptist choir: Willie Burrows, Thomas Atkinson and Richard Whitehead.⁵² The influence of these men and families stretched further than just Briercliffe, offering the opportunity for greater networks and influence. An example of this being Willie Burrows and other Briercliffe Nonconformists featuring alongside other prominent figures in Nuttall's *Burnley and District Worthies*.⁵³

One key component of Nonconformity that endured into and beyond the late Victorian period was the notion of village 'elders'.⁵⁴ Therefore, family reputations were an important aspect of local life. As 'Th' Owd Syker,' Roland Kippax, described in his weekly column in the *Burnley Express* in 1978, this could sometimes create difficulties:

My dad was very much against me becoming a bookmaker and, even though I was married, he was of the opinion that I should do as he said. So when he said "there are going to be no Kippaxes in that line of business", I said I was still going to be a bookmaker under my Christian names.⁵⁵

When the Briercliffe Bowling Green Society was founded in 1900, it was done so through the influence of the village 'elders'. There was another bowling green club originally based in the Haggate. However, the group had garnered a reputation for being boisterous, with reports of drinking, swearing and gambling. To combat this a resolution in the parish council minute book from August 1902 states 'that a letter be sent to ... Nelson (police) station that gambling and betting is largely indulged in on the Bowling Green in connection with the Hare and Hounds Inn, Haggate.'⁵⁶ Indeed, the Haggate club was described by the landlord upon his arrival as 'practically a waste piece of ground with pig stys and hen cotes round about and where one could see pigeon flying and jumping and anything one liked,'⁵⁷ something that the church elders resolutely disagreed with, leading to the formation of new club in their image: based upon share principles, but with a strict set of moralising guidelines.⁵⁸ As Jackson has shown, bowling in the industrial north 'developed from a sport into one of the interlocking cells of community,' with a local club 'life growing out from it, therefore the influence (morally) that could be extended through it was wide reaching.'⁵⁹

The bowling club was one of the many cornerstones of the local community. It was also one of the many aspects of local life financed through share purchasing. Therefore, leisure and workplace both held vested

⁵² Information from bank details held at the Barclays Archive, Manchester, 28do7/2.

⁵³ J. Nuttall, *Burnley and District Worthies; Religious, Social, Literary and Musical*, (Burnley: Nuttall and Co., 1917).

⁵⁴ In many Nonconformist denominations, the notion of elders represents a continuation of St. Paul's description of them as 'the overseers or bishops of the flock', which Conder interpreted as the heads of families. See J. Conder, *On Protestant Nonconformity, Vol 1*, (London: 1818), p. 201.

⁵⁵ *Burnley Express*, July 18, 1978.

⁵⁶ Frost, *A Lancashire Township*, p. 144.

⁵⁷ Frost, *A Lancashire Township*, p. 145.

⁵⁸ A more detailed discussion of the Bowling Green Club is provided in J. Southern, 'The Briercliffe Bowling Green Company And The Study Of Community', *Journal of the Institute of Local and Family History*, (2012).

⁵⁹ B. Jackson, *Working Class Community*, (London: Pelican, 1972), p. 101.

interest for local people beyond a basic level. The result of worker, and wider community involvement financially and in some aspects through having an active voice in the running of local institutions was to add create a greater local unity.

When businesses were set up under a share scheme, they had greater local importance. An analysis of the minute book of the new Hill End Mill Company shows that from its formation in 1905 it was an especially local concern. Of the original shareholders, only one lived in Burnley and even he lived on the border of Briercliffe, whilst the share purchasers themselves came from a variety of professions from weavers to quarrymen, and the managers of other mills. Indeed, even in terms of management, when the board of directors was increased from five to seven in August 1905, it comprised a grocer, tape sizer, mill manager, two overlookers, a weaver and a twister. The weavers generally lived in the houses directly surrounding the mill, creating a distinct community. However, by 1920, complaints were made that the mill struggled for workers, as the extra mile 'up a large hill' discouraged those travelling up to the mill to travel past Harle Syke.⁶⁰

In many respects the cross-class system created a sense of democracy over decisions that was diluted in larger settlements. Consultation was therefore part of many local decision, for example something as simple as job positions. When R. Ackroyd resigned from his position as tape-labourer, the position passed to James Benson as he was next in the ballot,⁶¹ and likewise Richard Thelfall was appointed tackler after a ballot between twelve applicants.⁶² However, the system was not always open to non-residents and across Briercliffe work opportunities often utilised local networks. Positions could also utilise families, which for mill managers in itself created a greater deal of stability, and was shown by 'Th Owd Syker in his column in the *Burnley Express*:

I would just like to mention two families who worked there during my period. First Richard Thornton, director at one time and a teacher. His son Tom followed him on the same set of looms. Tom was killed in the war and the youngest son Walter took over the set. The oldest son John and his three sisters - Jane, Betty and Clara - all worked as weavers during what I would think was all their working lives. Another family was Roger Greenwood's brood of 12 children. I am sure 10 of them worked there at one period of their working lives. James Henry was a tackler and the rest were weavers.⁶³

To maintain the communitarian system, some mill shares were not offered to the wider public, and Hill End in 1906 introduced a charge for the transferring of shares to try and prevent them being sold. Shares then were generally held locally, creating for some a complex system of multiple interests. Willie Burrows, the long serving secretary of Queen Street Mill, acquired shares in Hill End Mill and eventually up to eight different concerns across Lancashire⁶⁴ and when Witham Halstead died, he was at least partially involved with around 10 different concerns.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ LRO/DDX1123/6/2/421b.

⁶¹ Hill End Minute Book, April 3, 1911.

⁶² Hill End Minute Book, April 11, 1910.

⁶³ Th' owd Syker, *Burnley Express* April 18, 1983.

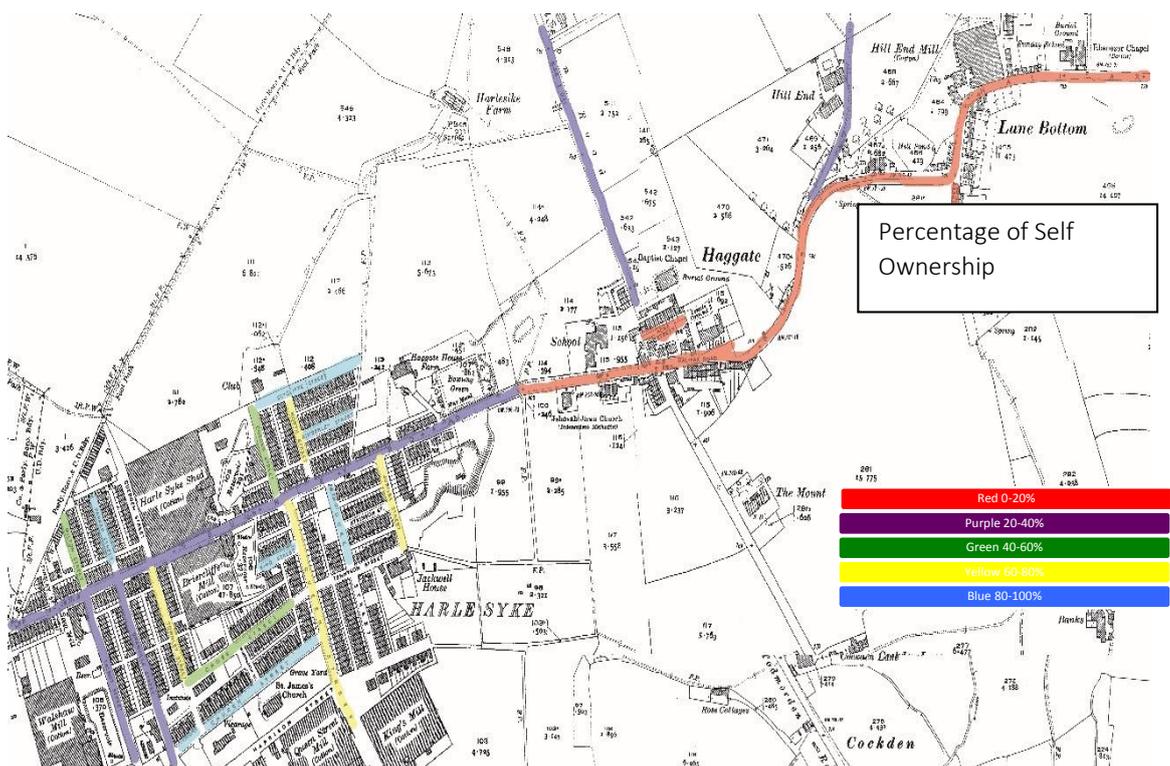
⁶⁴ Frost and Bythell, *Harle Syke Mill*, p. 37.

⁶⁵ As well as being part of the firm of Thornton and Co., He was on the directorate of the Harle Syke Mill Co. and Walshaw Mill Co. in Harle Syke; Gorple Manufacturing Co. in Worsthorne; Fountain Manufacturing Co. in Bury and two firms at West Houghton – the Hall Lee Manufacturing Co. and Taylor and Hartley Ltd. *Burnley Express*, January 2, 1937

House Ownership and investment opportunity

The ability to invest in multiple ventures highlights how advanced the local economy had become in relative terms. As has already been seen, the need for housing created both investment opportunity and increased need for skilled tradesmen. Therefore, the houses in the newer parts of Harle Syke were generally built as investments with members of single families owning and selling multiple properties within the village and house ownership being particularly high. For comparison, nearby Worsthorne had a figure where self-ownership was outnumbered 6/1 in favour of renting.⁶⁶ However, rental continued to be the prevalent form of occupation in the older parts of Briercliffe whereas in Harle Syke itself there is a concentration of self-ownership (Figure 10). Therefore, this consolidated a position for the 'older' families within the village and the newer migrants reiterating a certain hierarchy locally.

Figure 10: Percentage of houses being self owned in Harle Syke c.1898



Source: LRO/DVBU 1/8/6, Base map from Edina Maps.

There are some discernible and significant patterns of home ownership. Primarily there was a mixture of those building for re-sale, and those building for rental. Of the 10 houses on the newly built Jubilee Street (by no means the least expensive) in 1897, eight were owned by James Leaver and one each by Samuel Corrin and Wm Whittaker.⁶⁷ By 1910, four were owned and occupied, whilst one was owned by a different Leaver, Fred, and the remaining had new owners and were occupied.

On Granville Street in 1891, of the odd numbered houses 1-21, only number 21 was not owned by Leaver and Law. Only three others were occupied. By 1910, number 21 had passed to and was occupied by

⁶⁶ LRO/DVBU/1/8/6.

⁶⁷ Mill owner George Mason lived on the street, despite owning several houses around the village.

James Leaver, Mary Nuttall and Ellen Robinson. Each owned two houses. George Mason had one and the remaining five were owned by Wm Nuttall. Bar Leaver's, all of these houses were rented out.⁶⁸

On Burnley Road, the pattern is different. A good portion was owned by two different John Duerdens in 1891 and numbers 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 31, 33 and 35 remained under the same ownership in 1910 even though one of the John Duerden's had himself moved to Southport (the other having died and his executors living on Queen Street). Indeed of those who rented from him, a family of 'Arnolds' are at the same address (23).⁶⁹

With Queen Street in 1895, of the evenly numbered houses 24-42, Thomas Pickles owned houses numbered 24-34, alongside Abraham Leaver (36 and 42), James Thomas (38) and Robert Proctor (4). However, the evidence shows that as Queen Street extended, so did Pickles and Leaver, thus using their capital to build new houses. By 1910, these were all self-owned, bar number 32, which Elizabeth Burrows owned; although the tenant was Mary Burrows and next door was Willie Burrows. The only remaining person from 1895 was James Thomas, still at number 38.⁷⁰

On Townley Street in 1897, the odd houses 1-19 had four owned by Robert Wilkinson, one by J. W. Mason, three by Thomas Brockbank and one by Norman Nuttall. By 1910, seven were self-owned with one still owned and lived in by a Sarah Brockbank. Simpson and West owned five on Granville and Thomas Pickles owned 11 on Church Street, both of which ended up predominantly self-owned by 1910.⁷¹

A proportion of the people who owned large numbers of houses, namely W. M. Heap, W. M. Dent, W. M. Rhodes, some Whittakers and Leavers were listed in 1868 in the Mannex directory as farmers,⁷² showing a continuation of the rural foundations of the village into the industrial period. This situation continued with different individuals and families acquiring multiple houses. However, as shown in Table 12 the newer built roads show a higher frequency of owner occupiers than in older parts of the township.

The investment in housing also highlights the growing levels of consumerism locally. Other industries blossomed on the back of the demand for cotton. Such was the mutual benefit to the local economy as late as the 1950s, only one mill had a canteen and people still relied on local shops. In turn this meant that people had less need to go to Burnley and ensured that Harle Syke maintained itself as a self-contained village. Analysis of the Barrett directories for Briercliffe highlights the impact the growth had on job and economic diversity.⁷³ In 1879 a narrow spectrum of professions included a boot and shoe maker, a grocer, a grocer/baker as well as a plasterer and painter. By 1890 the scale and diversity of jobs had increased significantly, with nine shopkeepers, four grocers, a newsagent and a butcher. In terms of other trades, there were no stonemasons, tailors or smiths but there were two joiners and a physician.

⁶⁸ LRO/PUZ4/4 and DBVU/1/8/6.

⁶⁹ LRO/PUZ4/4 and DBVU/1/8/6.

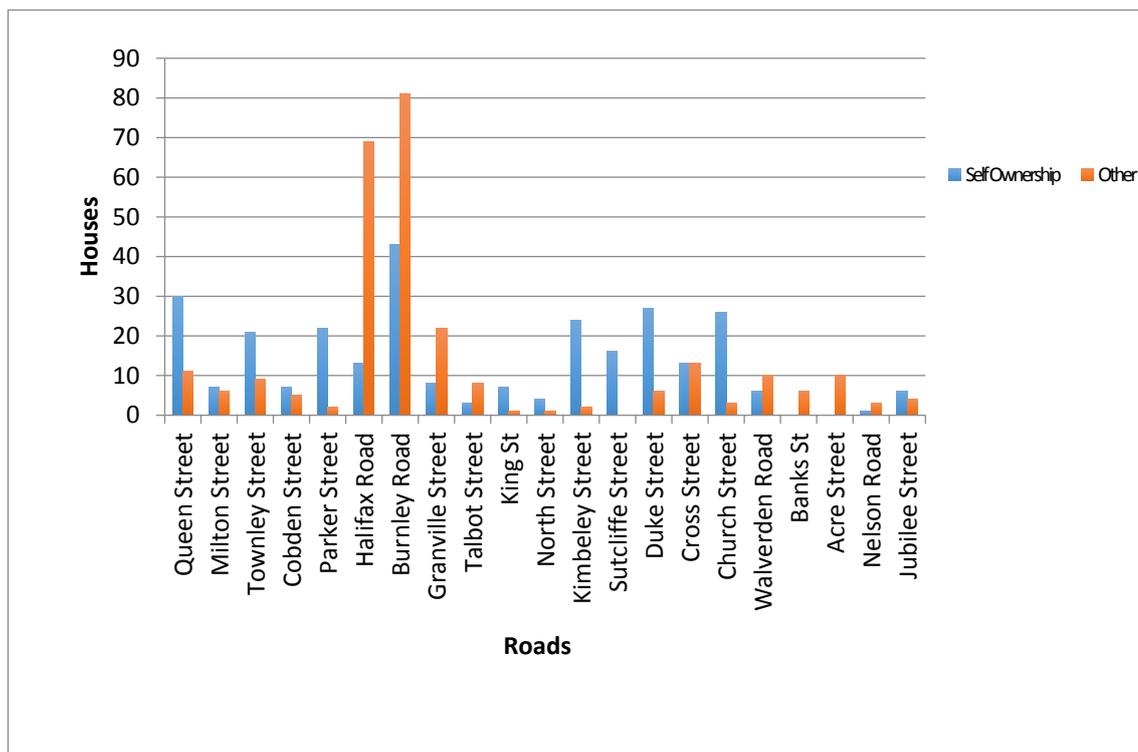
⁷⁰ LRO/PUZ4/4 and DBVU/1/8/6.

⁷¹ LRO/PUZ4/4 and DBVU/1/8/6.

⁷² *Mannex Directory*, (London: Mannex and Co., 1868.)

⁷³ *Barrett's Directory of Burnley and District*, (St. Annes), 1879, 1890, 1902, 1914.

Table 12: House Ownership in Harle Syke c.1910,



Source: LRO/DVBU/1/8/6

By 1902 the range had increased to three physicians, three joiners, a glazier, a coal dealer, four masons, two builders, a machinist/gas fitter and a painter. The diversity of food also mirrored the growth of the industrial town with a single newsagent, yet seven grocers, three shopkeepers, two confectioners, a refreshment shop, an eating house, three butchers and a fried fish dealer. There were also two tailors, three cloggers, two boot and shoe makers and a hairdresser. By 1914 a plumber, a joiner/funeral director, four coal dealers, a clogger, a sawyer, a contractor, an ironmonger, two painters, a wheelwright, a china dealer, a plasterer, a sexton and a machinist/gas fitter were active. There was also an eating-house, two butchers, two fish dealers, a tobacconist, a poultry dealer, ten grocers, a fruiter, five confectioners, a newsagent, a drug store and a tripe dealer. There were also two tailors, a hairdresser and a clogger.⁷⁴

The growth in opportunity, population and urban development resulted an abundance of opportunities and business possibilities within a diversifying local economy. Even in transportation, each mill had its own stable. Harle Syke Mill built theirs in 1882 that they then replaced with a larger one shared with Haggate Weaving Company in 1903 along with additional stable and cart sheds on other roads. Queen Street Mill had its own stables from 1895 that were replaced by a car garage in 1927 and West's stables from 1906. Harle Syke Mill even had a smithy and slaughterhouse attached to its stables.⁷⁵ Through such advancements, increased opportunity presented itself. A Mr. Crowther, who was an early director and engineman at Queen Street Mill, left the company in 1915 to begin a haulage business in partnership with

⁷⁴ Barrett's Directory, 1914.

⁷⁵ J. Stuttard, *Briercliffe: A History Of The Township And Parish Of Briercliffe With Extwistle Within The County Palatine Of Lancaster Collected From Ecclesiastical And Civic Documents, Papers And Records*, (Briercliffe: Unknown Publisher, Held at Burnley Local History Collection, Burnley Library, LE02 Briercliffe/Stu, 1959), p. 46.

Jess Brierley bringing yarn into the village and taking cloth out to the warehouses in Manchester. This more than likely took advantage of the move away from horse carts.⁷⁶ The links that both men had within the community presented a calculated risk, with almost guaranteed custom answering local needs.

Similarly, with the coming of the motor car for haulage, the local companies made additional money by adding seats at weekends and providing travel services. The best example of how this system worked is again provided by Th' Owd Syker. What he highlights are both the ability and opportunities local people had and also the thriving consumer culture that was part of everyday village life. It highlights both the changing (and in some cases dual professions people undertook) whilst highlighting the changing fortunes of various residents. He also shows how these local networks saw people change careers and take advantages of opportunities locally.⁷⁷ He uses several examples such as millowner George 'Dody' Mason starting as a weaver before eventually becoming an employer and he himself started in the mill before becoming a bookmaker.

At Hill End mill in December 1905, it was passed at a meeting that notices be posted in Harle Syke for applications for a manager and secretary in the knowledge that the village had a supply of able men. Local workers were therefore utilised. One such example was the work undertaken at number 11 Church Street, constructed in 1895. Jane Nuttall, a widow and her two sons, Fred, a weaver and John W., a cloth looker, occupied the house in 1901. The itinerary of the work carried out on it still exists today and shows both the prices and amount of local tradesmen involved. The house cost £192.10.0 and had a £3.8.6 solicitor's charge. Various tasks were undertaken by Alfred Bridge, including rewiring the gas. Arthur Foulds undertook the painting and tiling, J. Atkinson repaired the floor, W. Dent altered the scullery, Collinge Bros fixed the plumbing as well as F. Holgate being billed for a brass plate and J. Taylor for some blacksmith work. All of which was a total cost of £226.9.1 ½ . There was a further stage of work undertaken between 1897 and 1900, Collinge Bros this time installing a bath and A. Foulds varnishing. John Atkinson did some joinery and later some window work followed by more joinery by John Nuttall who later did glass work plus several other jobs and building, totalling a further £35.13.8 ½ .⁷⁸

Even when larger or specialist jobs were put out to tender, they often went to nearby places like Burnley or in the case of the purchase of some new looms for Hill End Mill, Harling and Todd in Rosegrove, which several of the local mills were kitted out with.⁷⁹ A second advantage was that knowledge could be exchanged locally. For example, it was agreed that a similar system to Queen Street Mill be adopted at the directors meeting on 24th June 1905. This also extended to sharing technology, when in 1907 the Directors, along with the Wood Top Company in Burnley, fought against patent infringement action brought against them by the Anti-Vibration Incandescent Lighting Company.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Th' Owd Syker, *Burnley Express*, April 18, 1983.

⁷⁷ *Burnley Express*, June 25, 1978.

⁷⁸ Church Street House Purchase 1895, Briercliffe Society Archives.

⁷⁹ Hill End Minute Book.

⁸⁰ Hill End Minute Book, March 4, 1907.

The perceptions of local culture

Throughout the whole industrial process, Harle Syke developed its own culture based upon a strong lineage to its past but also adapted to the growth of the cotton industry. Thus like practically all Pennine settlements, Briercliffe has an active history in local music. As Etheridge has shown, the links between working communities and brass bands in this region were key elements of social relationships.⁸¹ The band competed in competitions locally and regionally, winning various prizes. Yet even the prize band also shows how community engagement helped local people. Harry and William Trigillgas joined, and became key members only on the condition that they were found work, which after some 'canvassing' culminated in their window cleaning business being established.⁸² Locally, the members also performed the function of playing at significant local events, fairs, etc. reinforcing the closeness of the community. It seems to have become custom for a cornet solo to be played from the top of a mill chimney when opening a new cotton mill – as happened with both Hill End and Queen Street.⁸³ There are strong links to the Nonconformist churches with singing groups as well as secular ones. There was a Glee band in the mid-1800s as well as a Choral Society from around 1860 and the Prize Brass Band formed in 1864 lasting until 1936.⁸⁴

Local leisure activities continued to serve as bonding agents for community sentiment. Comparisons can be drawn with the cotton areas of the American South where 'Individual families and small groups of local investors built and owned most of the early mills ... the urban mill village retained its early rural design ... the family labour system helped smooth the path from field to factory.'⁸⁵ A variant of the same system had been in existence in Lancashire and continued to be so for generations. In the confines of smaller self-contained villages, the same process could be even more potent. Hence, when families celebrated wedding anniversaries, or mourned, they did so with their neighbours. In some cases family (and by extension community) events closed down mills for the day (as did illnesses spreading) but maintaining these close links meant that the community remained interrelated. The cell-like structure of the local community was an organic growth and the extent to which it was a product of the social conditions and constraints bears similarity to the arguments displayed by Durkheim, especially his concepts of primitive society and organic solidarity.⁸⁶ That a local culture was so strong up to and beyond the 1950s is testament to the local involvement in the process. Again, comparisons can be drawn from the American South where the identity of the community:

Occurred at no single moment in time; rather it was evolved, shaped and reshaped by successive waves of migration off the farm as well as the movement of workers from mill to mill. Village life was based on family ties. Kinship networks facilitated migration to the mill and continued to play a powerful integrative role. Children of the first generation off the land married newcomers of the second and third, linking households into broad networks of obligation, responsibility

⁸¹ Stephen Etheridge, 'Brass Bands in the Southern Pennines, 1857-1914: The Ethos of Rational Recreation and Perceptions of Working-Class Respectability', in, A. Baldwin, C. Ellis, S. Etheridge, K. Laybourn, N. Pye (eds.), *Class, Culture and Community: New Perspectives in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Labour History*, (Newcastle-Upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), pp. 37-54.

⁸² Frost, *A Lancashire Township*, p. 183.

⁸³ *Burnley Express*, October 17, 1936.

⁸⁴ J. Preston, *I Well Remember*, p. 39.

⁸⁵ J. Dowd-Hall, R. Korstad, J. Leloudis, 'Cotton Mill People: Work, Community, and Protest in the Textile South, 1880-1940', *The American Historical Review*, 91, 2 (1986), pp. 245-286.

⁸⁶ See E. Durkheim, *Division of Labour in Society*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1994).

and concern.⁸⁷

Returning to the notion of 'native place identity', further reflections of local pride can be evidenced. In the early years of Harle Syke's development, local people were regarded in the Burnley-based press as being from Briercliffe and more specifically Haggate. But as Harle Syke grew in repute and became the focal point of the township, locals increasingly became referred to as 'Sykers' in a wider context. Locally, the differences in settlements remained ingrained. By 1944, the generalisation over locality became such a cause of consternation that complaints were made in the local press that Briercliffe, described in one local letter as 'the most important village in the Burnley Rural District', did not have its own post office, as one was in Harle Syke, which could not be found by foreign post offices.⁸⁸ As was argued, 'their address is "Briercliffe, near Burnley" not "Briercliffe, near Harle Syke."⁸⁹

Indeed even in 1937, the *Burnley Express* lamented the difficulty in defining the area:

Briercliffe is surely one of the most confusing districts round Burnley. Visitors are usually at a loss to know where the township ends, which is Harle Syke and which is Haggate and not many of the inhabitants are able to enlighten them. For their information we may point out that the township of Briercliffe extends from the Burnley Borough boundary to the top of Thursden Valley. It includes Harle Syke, which extends from the boundary to a green point near the parish Bowling Green, Haggate, which is on the crown of the hill, and Lane Bottom and Hill-Lane on the other side of the hill towards Thursden. The Briercliffe parish of St. James extends within the borough to Lanehead. Those who are not quite sure, therefore can always be on the safe side by referring to Briercliffe and refraining from mentioning Harle Syke or Haggate.⁹⁰

Regionally, the area was certainly a separate entity. When Foster's and Co. took over Wood Top Shed in Burnley in 1903, the *Burnley Express* made a point of noting that that the new company was comprised of 'Harle Syke' people.⁹¹ Similarly soldiers during wars were from Burnley or Harle Syke. Frost and Bythell reinforce this perception of 'otherness' stating that 'many ... moved up out of Burnley in order to 'better' themselves socially.'⁹² The same authors offer a checklist that as Briercliffe natives serves as testament to the continued local culture. Largely reiterating the regional wide traits previously discussed, they describe Harle Syke as, 'class free, non-deferential, and largely made up of thrifty, independent, honest, sober hard-working, God-fearing, unpretentious, cash-paying folk,'⁹³ noting how 'at the start of the twentieth century, Harle Syke simply oozed respectability ... it faithfully reflected the values and culture of its day.'⁹⁴

To further demonstrate the levels of respectability that the area cultivated, Briercliffe also produced a number of men who rose to prominence within Burnley. As well as the previously highlighted leading textile families, a number of mayors and aldermen were of Briercliffe backgrounds. The stories of their success and rise to prominence are further evidence of the culture attributed to the Briercliffe area through a reinforcement of the same traits ascribed by Bythell and Frost. Almost universally men, the

⁸⁷ Dowd-Hall et al., 'Cotton Mill People', p. 250.

⁸⁸ The writer felt that Briercliffe consisted of 'parts' known as Harle Syke, Haggate, Cockden, Lane Bottom, Holt Hill and Thursden, *Burnley Express*, December 2, 1944.

⁸⁹ *Burnley Express*, December 2, 1944.

⁹⁰ *Burnley Express*, July 24, 1937.

⁹¹ *Burnley Express*, August 15, 1903.

⁹² Frost and Bythell, *A Lancashire Weaving Company*, p. 78.

⁹³ Frost and Bythell, *A Lancashire Weaving Company*, p. 78.

⁹⁴ Frost and Bythell, *A Lancashire Weaving Company*, p. 78, similar sentiments are expressed in other semi-rural, industrial settlements. This is most notable in the work of Bridges in relation to Great Harwood. See W. Bridges, *Threads of Lancashire Life*, (Lancashire: Landy, 1987).

notable figures were usually described as 'Liberal', though they were not always politically active. Thomas Emmott's obituary reinforces his successes whilst highlighting a familiar pattern, based in thrift, hard work and family/community. Thomas, later described as a 'remarkably strong man' who would 'carry a warp from an ordinary loom from Burnley to Haggate on his shoulders'- along with his father, Robert and three uncles, William, Thomas and Henry Burrows, began manufacturing cotton on 25 looms in Haggate apparently doing all of the work themselves and taking the cotton to the station by handcart. However, they later separated with four of the partners taking over a mill in Burnley. They subsequently split into separate firms and founded Thomas Emmott and Sons Ltd at Wood Top Mill, Wm Burrows and Son Ltd at Whittlefield, Thomas Burrows Ltd at Britannia and Belle Vue Mills and Robert Emmott Ltd at Ferndale and eventually Stanley mills.⁹⁵

Such themes are recurrent through the obituaries of several Burnley mayors. Hartley Emmott's death in 1925 saw him referred to as, 'one of the leading commercial men of his time, and like many other in the town's history hailed from Haggate', whilst Thomas Burrows, who died in 1906 was, 'another of those "Haggaters" who made it good'. James Sutcliffe was 'brought up at Haggate Baptist Chapel, where many prominent Burnley public men received their early training.'⁹⁶

The strength of influence Haggate descendants had also manifested in the local customs of Harle Syke. It was proudly boasted that Harle Syke had no pub in it (there are several in Haggate, and next to Cop Row) and the Band of Hope were a strong presence within the local community. There was also the Order of Rechabites, usually associated with upper-class groups, who themselves met in one of the Methodist chapels, desiring to spread both the ideas of temperance and respectability. Thus, the *Burnley Express* saw the christening of a new mill engine at Harle Syke Mill as 'an important step towards the consummation of a movement which will materially help to increase the welfare and prosperity of Harle Syke.'⁹⁷ When Queen Street Mill published its prospectus, its 'promoters' were 'encouraged by the very great success achieved by the other companies in the immediate neighbourhood.' They were 'confident that this company will promote industry, and hope it will prove a good and safe investment for shareholders being aided by 'the population of the district (that) has lately increased, so there will be no difficulty in obtaining thrifty and skilled workpeople, and it will meet our urgent want of employment for our young people.'⁹⁸

The anchoring in communitarian sensibilities indicates the balance between the pursuit of economic viability and local responsibility. Thus, when a problem with the water supply to a mill threatened employment, the local weavers dug the waterway to ensure that work could restart.⁹⁹ Indeed from this comes a great deal of confusion with later generations trying to classify such systems as cooperation in the Rochdale sense. When Hill End Mill was purchased by several workers from the Smith family in 1905,

⁹⁵ *Burnley Express*, June 23, 1926.

⁹⁶ Obituaries, Indexed by J. Nadin, Burnley Library Archive.

⁹⁷ *Burnley Express*, June 8, 1904.

⁹⁸ *Burnley Express*, March 3, 1894.

⁹⁹ There is photographic evidence of the incident within the Briercliffe archives.

it was described by the *Burnley Express* as 'Briercliffe's latest lesson in thrift',¹⁰⁰ also warranting a letter attributed to 'Good Old Thrift': 'Dear Sir, I wonder what the Socialists of Burnley think about the Haggate plan for getting hold of the means of production?'¹⁰¹

Thus, issues over modern attribution to community action has somewhat muddied the overall subject of Pennine industrial communities. Such confusion is typified in the novel 'Heather Mixture', published in 1921. The main character, Chapman, details the reality of Socialism in the area: that the men are judged on hard work and merit and were still actively trying to make a profit from rents.¹⁰² Moreover, a non-fictional example of worker-capitalist principles is shown through the construction of the Briercliffe Reading Rooms in 1877. The *Burnley Gazette* described the construction as a 'practical turn' in creating 'a disposition to have additional accommodation for innocent recreation, mutual improvement and social intercourse.'¹⁰³ It was noted at the foundation stone laying ceremony that in addition to locals, people had come from Burnley, Brierfield, Nelson and Worsthorne, in part due to the fact that many, despite the 'considerable exodus' from the area, took 'considerable interest ... in anything which concerned the welfare of the population.'¹⁰⁴ It was recounted that the idea came from 'workingmen' meeting in a chapel for 'some time' to provide a 'home of literature and of happy and innocent recreation amongst this busy, industrious and enterprising people.'¹⁰⁵ Utilizing empty land the building, noted for being 'impressive' included a library, billiard and chess rooms, two toilets and sitting rooms.¹⁰⁶ It was thus designed to reflect a modern, aspirational community.

The construction of the reading rooms again utilised local tradesmen and, more significantly, was financed through shares: 700 at £1 each. Even at the foundation stone laying ceremony, Councillor Altham warned the Haggate people that up to 250 applications from other districts were applying to purchase shares.¹⁰⁷ There is therefore the implication that the reputation for sound investment in Briercliffe had spread. The secretary Mr. Corrin declared:

I am not much of a financier, so I can't show you that it will certainly be a profitable undertaking for the shareholders; I hope it will. We should all like it to pay 4 or 5, or 6 or 8 per cent. But you must be content to wait. It is well understood that our chief object is not gain.¹⁰⁸

The symbol of the reading room, which the *Burnley Express* described as 'facetious', as an almost town hall, signifies the status of the village as well as being an outwardly sign of affluence and identity (Figure 11). Councillor Nutter also spoke at the opening, further reinforcing the feeling of the residents as a separate entity from neighbouring settlements:

It affords me very great pleasure to see such a noble building as this in Haggate. I do not know what you call it - whether you call it a town hall or reading rooms, or what, but it is worthy of the name of a town hall. I hope that you will make

¹⁰⁰ *Burnley Express*, 27 May 1905.

¹⁰¹ *Burnley Express*, 5 October 1905.

¹⁰² Klaxon, 'Heather Mixture', *Blackwoods Magazine*, (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1922), p. 599.

¹⁰³ *Burnley Gazette*, December 22, 1877.

¹⁰⁴ *Burnley Advertiser*, March 31, 1877.

¹⁰⁵ *Burnley Advertiser*, March 31, 1877.

¹⁰⁶ On the role of literature see J. Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, (USA: Yale University Press, 2012).

¹⁰⁷ *Burnley Advertiser*, March 31, 1877.

¹⁰⁸ *Burnley Express*, Saturday 22 December 1877.

the best use of it.¹⁰⁹

Figure 11: The Briercliffe Reading Rooms, c.1900



Source: The Briercliffe Society

That shareholders could build a basic community facility with the possibility of profit as much as of a physical and moral benefit directly symbolises the growing sense of self-importance being revelled in. Alderman Altham added, to further reinforce the notion of using the building as a way of further advancing local ideas:

I am sure that the building itself is an ornament to a village and township like this. I know that when we were growing up as boys and young men we found the great necessity of a place similar to this, where we could congregate together without being brought into contact with temptation, and things which were calculated to draw us aside from the paths of virtue and industry, and everything that is good ... Those parents who may have some misgiving in regard to the morality of the young people who become members, may be informed that no swearing will be allowed in the place, nor any bad conduct whatever.¹¹⁰

Conclusion

The founding of the Harle Syke village showed how the culture of north east Lancashire could evolve and be redefined to create local identity. The role of native place identity and the importance of ancestral ties was a key component of those that left and returned, and contributed to forging a new collective way of life based around the cotton industry. The mixture of continuity, change and the process of melding them created complex identities that manifested in several different ways. In north east Lancashire, the importance of how such traits survived and evolved had a striking influence on all aspects of society and established 'norms' through which commerce could continue to develop. In Harle Syke, identity had much of the same roots as in Burnley but diverged in the confines of a self-contained area to foster a

¹⁰⁹ *Burnley Express*, Saturday 22 December 1877.

¹¹⁰ *Burnley Express*, Saturday 22 December 1877.

distinctive character within the parameters of the wider regional culture. How far Harle Syke was an anomaly is debatable, as several other villages and small towns display their own intricacies and individual character. The great 'what if?' comparison draws the greatest conclusion with towns like Burnley and Nelson, who each expanded at different times and developed very distinctive local identities, however all were still set in the parameters of the culture of north east Lancashire. However, as the settlements grew to larger sizes they lost a degree of control over their ability to shape themselves. Harle Syke managed to stay self-contained and find a balance that in terms of an industrial weaving village saw it position itself with a competitive advantage, which in turn fed into a mentality as being 'above' neighbouring places.

What is evident in Harle Syke is a complex system of relationships and interdependence that enables a community to function successfully for the majority of time, in which class distinctions are less clearly defined and familial/kinship links are more complex than in larger, more urban areas. This, however, does not detract from the importance or interest the role such an area has within the study of industrial Lancashire. Indeed the ability to examine such a place offers great insight into the structure, ideals and mindset of working people at a crucial point in the development of fledgling ideologies. It has been shown especially how the community interacted with the cotton industry and how its relationship to it was different from that of a larger settlement. This also gives a different perspective on understanding feelings towards the collapse of cotton in the later years within such a close-knit context.

A priority for working people was the ability to earn money, to provide a good stable environment to build and that it involved being part of a community. Indeed, that local figures who were prominent became quasi-celebrities is testament to how powerful this is and became known across the wider region. Thus, Harle Syke existed as part of the north east Lancashire cotton industry, but in some ways outside of it and different to it.

3. POLITICAL IDENTITIES WITHIN NORTH EAST LANCASHIRE C.1885- C.1902: LABOUR IN THE 'NORTH EAST LANCASHIRE SENSE'?

Happy home and self-respect are better than beer and race horses.¹ - David Shackleton

In 1902, David Shackleton was elected unopposed for the Clitheroe constituency as Labour's first northern English Member of Parliament. Shackleton's rise was meteoric by contemporary standards, and took place at a key crossroads for the fledgling Labour movement. Yet, he has become something of a forgotten man, and the significance of his by-election victory has been largely ignored in historiography.² This is an oversight. At the time his election was viewed as a breakthrough for Labour and, according to the *Burnley Express*, sent shockwaves across the area politically and socially.³

Shackleton was, as highlighted in the opening quote from 1906, grounded in the culture of north east Lancashire. His particular appeal was built around his personality, which reflected the shared outlook of many ordinary people. This chapter is therefore an investigation of how the remarkable by-election culminated in such a result and what it demonstrates about the political 'soul' of the subject area. It develops from the previous chapter that discussed the development of Harle Syke to analyse how the culture of the area could be reflected in the dominant political ideologies across north east Lancashire.

The vacant Clitheroe seat was noted for its regional and national importance yet, significantly, no party except Labour fielded a credible candidate, and this chapter shall explore why. The chapter will also explore the type of candidate that Labour was fielding at the beginning of the twentieth century, and their typicality in a regional context, for this too is significant.

The political identities of north east Lancashire demonstrated both change and continuity through the effects of the industrial process as described in the previous two chapters. However, as late as 1950 the *Manchester Guardian* wrote of a:

Labour in the north east Lancashire sense ... not proletarian socialism ... The prevailing philosophy is an individualist, free-trading, radical trade unionism that grew up under the Liberal wing and has since absorbed (but not assimilated) Nelson's ILP and Burnley's SDF theorists.⁴

In terms of this overall thesis, the 1902 by-election offers a key case study through which to analyse the character of north east Lancashire in the political sphere. In a wider context, it also contributes to the arguments Ward makes with regards to his study of the Welsh politician Huw T. Edwards, in that British and labour history are more than simply London-centric.⁵ Earlier studies have provided narratives of the Clitheroe by-election, and as such it is needless to repeat them here.⁶ Instead, the approach of this

¹ *Burnley Express*, January 27, 1906.

² See David Howell's review of Ross Martin's *Lancashire Giant* in *Labour History*, 42, 2 (2001), pp. 223-224.

³ The *Burnley Express* described the result thus: 'a representative of the workers thus succeed an aristocratic Liberal landowner, and the local Radicals are very wroth about the change.' *Burnley Express*, August 2, 1902.

⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, February 17, 1950.

⁵ See P. Ward, *Huw T. Edwards* (Wales: University of Wales Press, 2011).

⁶ See especially F. Bealey, 'The Northern Weavers, Independent Labour Representation and Clitheroe, 1921', *Manchester School*, 25, 1 (1957), pp. 26-60, also D. Howell, *British Workers and the Independent Labour Party, 1888-1906*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1983), R. M. Martin, *The Lancashire Giant: David Shackleton: Labour Leader and Civil Servant*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), and B. Marsden (1991), 'David James Shackleton', MA Dissertation, Manchester Metropolitan University.

chapter is to understand the event in the context of north east Lancashire. The justification for this approach within the thesis has been established by two main studies: firstly, Caunce, who argues that:

For many people the locality and the region have the greatest day-to-day cultural reality, so understanding identity requires engagement with them even though nations, or potential nations, are easier to research.⁷

Secondly, Trodd, in his discussion of politics in Blackburn and Burnley of this period, remarks that 'in short MP's were first and foremost men of local substance chosen not primarily for their political programme but for the way in which they typified locally admired qualities.'⁸ When Shackleton was elected and stated his own beliefs, a clear embodiment of these same arguments are expressed:

I stand for Labour, and for Labour only ... The Conservative, Liberal, Socialist, and Independent Labour Party man is found in the ranks of Labour, and apart from the questions of party colour the interests of all are alike, and are concerned with true progress and much needed reforms in many directions ... I am a trade unionist before a politician, a labour man before a parliamentary servant.⁹

This chapter firstly explores the creation of the Clitheroe constituency, and the competing local identities that contributed to this. Secondly, it offers a discussion of labour politics across north east Lancashire and then provides a narrative of the events leading up to the 1902 Clitheroe by-election. Both of these events were embedded in the local culture, and the events, and choices made reflect the dominant ideology of the area. The analysis then shifts to the change and continuity politically in the area, specifically comparing David Shackleton, Ughtred Kay-Shuttleworth and Philip Snowden, and the shift from an aristocratic Liberal MP to working-class Labour candidates being the dominant political force locally.

The formation of the Clitheroe Consituency

The town of Clitheroe lies on the periphery of the study area (Figure 12). However, as a parliamentary seat from 1885-1918, it incorporated the majority of the settlements of north east Lancashire whilst encircling the neighbouring seat of Burnley (Figure 13). It was, from its inception, different from other seats. By 1902 it was described as:

For the most part urban and industrial. From one end to the other there are twelve miles of continuous street lamps. The district is a succession of not large towns, but all of them prosperous, flourishing and full of intelligent life. There is plenty of agricultural land around Colne and the skirts of Pendle Hill, but the agricultural vote is too small to be of importance. Nelson, Colne, Padiham and Clitheroe are the principle centres of population, and they are full of textile workers ... The seat has always been looked upon as a stronghold of English Liberalism.¹⁰

The constituency was created following the partition into four seats of the North East Lancashire division (due to the Redistribution of Seats Act 1885) resulting in Clitheroe, Accrington, Darwen and Rossendale. Whereas other districts had very clear focal centres of population, Clitheroe did not. Likewise, where the populations of each new division were fairly similar, Clitheroe contained a higher number of petty sessional divisions. The result was a dual identity between the older and newer settlements, with the former like Clitheroe, looking backwards and feeling certain privileges based on past prestige and the

⁷ S. Caunce, 'Parliamentary Elections 1950-2005 As A Window Of Northern Identity and Regional Devolution', in C. Dyer, Hopper, E. Lord and N. Tringham, *New Directions in Local History Since Hoskins*, (Hertfordshire: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2011), p. 68.

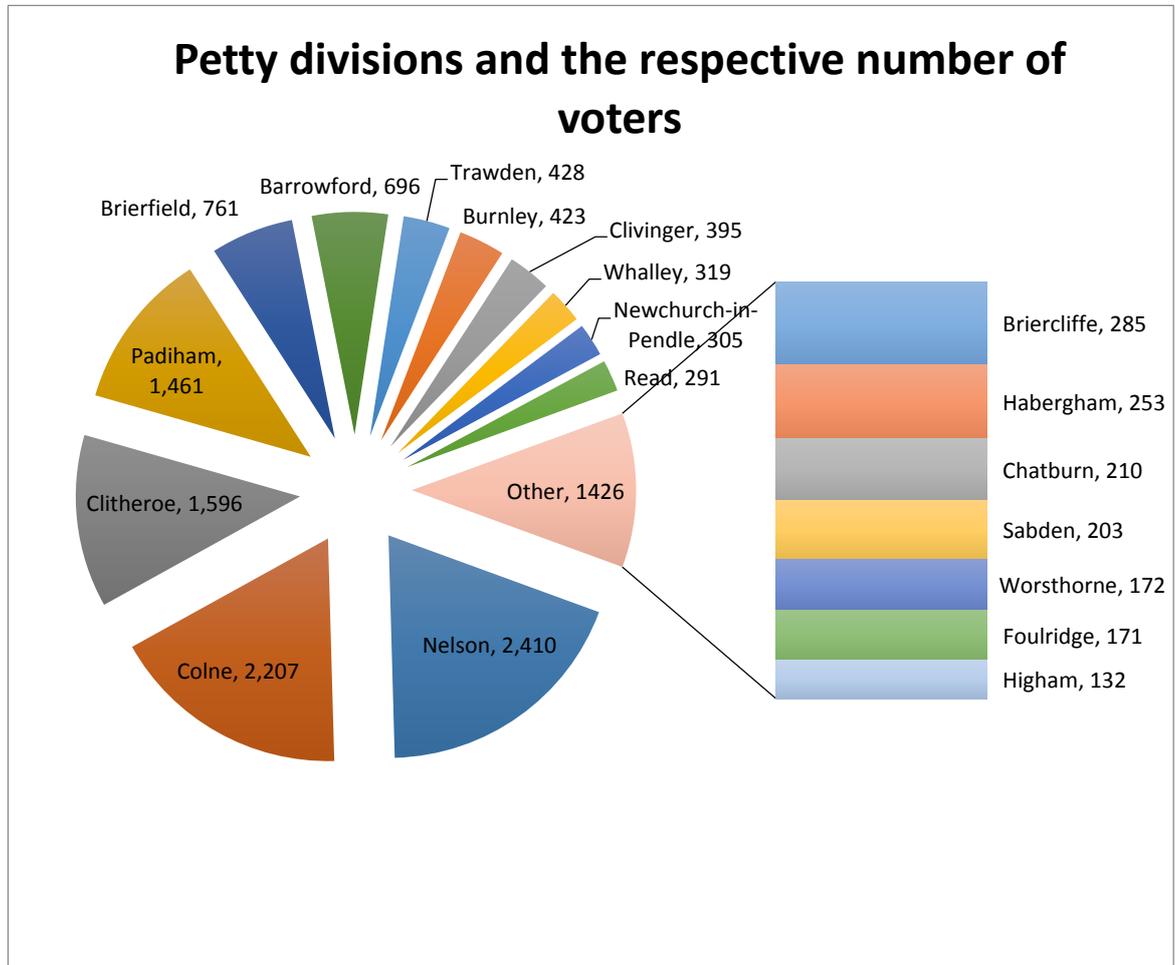
⁸ G. Trodd (1978), 'Political change and the working class in Blackburn and Burnley, 1880-1914', PhD Thesis, Lancaster University, p. 128.

⁹ Marsden, 'Shackleton', p. 37.

¹⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, July 3, 1902.

newer like Nelson, looking forward based on industrial expansion.¹¹ As a constituency it presented a busy and varied schedule for potential MPs, yet, power bases and even election victory could come from either the urban or country setting, represented by the distribution of votes shown in Table 13.

Table 13: Distribution of voters in Clitheroe's Petty Divisions, 1885.



Source: *Burnley Express*, December 5, 1885

The variation between the settlements coupled with the continued strength of 'parish belonging' created dislocation across the area.¹² Particularly, the process of deciding which settlements to include within the constituency witnessed a number of localities feeling that they had a right to determine where and what they should be included in and seen as. As the Colne Town Clerk argued at one meeting: 'If we get tacked onto Clitheroe, we shall be a rural population, whereas if we are attached to Burnley we shall be urban.' The former was seen as having 'little or no commercial or social intercourse'.¹³

The formation of the Clitheroe division was thus a highly contentious process, and as noted by the *Manchester Guardian* more debated than in other areas of the country:

In no part of Lancashire (and perhaps no part of England) was the discussion of possible and impossible boundaries more vigorous than in north east Lancashire. This may be accounted for by the exceptional character of the district, where no

¹¹ This was itself mirrored when the constituencies were again redrawn in 1917, and Colne appealed to be included with equal prestige to Nelson based on its ancient history.

¹² See Chapter 2, and also K. D. M. Snell, 'Local Xenophobia', *Social History*, 28, 1 (2003), pp. 1-30.

¹³ *Manchester Courier*, January 7, 1885.

specialty rural division was possible, and which yet varies from densely populated factory towns to moorland farms.¹⁴

Due to the North East Lancashire Division's size, both geographical and demographic, various groups put forward proposals for potential boundaries at an enquiry held in Preston in January 1885. A widely held notion was that the division required further partitioning to include a specific rural seat, as other areas of comparable and lesser populations had.¹⁵ Credence was given by the area's wider importance in terms of the cotton industry as well as the diversity between its settlements. The attempts to find a solution were, however, equally contentious as different towns battled for prestige and both local authorities and political groups argued over boundary lines and names. Indeed, notions of local character were evoked in trying to assign different settlements to the new seats. For example, when discussing the settlements included and excluded from the Accrington division, the Commissioner of the enquiry said 'there was no doubt that the places near Chipping had very little to do with Darwen. At the same time they were very much of the same character as those parishes south of Blackburn ... what had Chipping in common with Colne?'¹⁶

The naming of the divisions therefore became a focal point of local identity. For example, 'Calder Vale' was seen as too similar to other places, such as the nearby Calder vale chapelry, 'Bacup' and 'Rossendale' were both put forward by respective bodies around that area, whilst Darwen felt that its size warranted its own subdivision being named after itself, and its Corporation worked to ensure it wasn't joined with other areas under proposed names like 'Ribblesdale' and 'Clitheroe and Darwen'.¹⁷

There was also a degree of resentment in Nelson over how, as one letter argues, they had been 'ignored' as a possible centre of a division. Locally, there was an affinity with the Burnley Poor Law Union, alongside Colne, Brierfield, Padiham and Trawden. One resident argued, much like the Colne Town Clerk, that:

The idea of attaching the Colne, Nelson and Burnley Valley, full of life and industry, to the antiquated borough of Clitheroe is so ridiculous that even Pendle Hill laughs and steps in and says, "I am a natural boundary and will stop the way."¹⁸

The constituency was settled following amendments partly proposed by leading local Liberal Party figure Sir Ughtred Kay-Shuttleworth. However, the result was a far from a perfect solution as several settlements were split between divisions. Todmorden district, for example, was split over three different parliamentary divisions, namely Clitheroe, Sowerby and Middleton.¹⁹

¹⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, February 22, 1885.

¹⁵ *Manchester Guardian*, January 22, 1885.

¹⁶ *Manchester Guardian*, January 22, 1885.

¹⁷ *Manchester Guardian*, January 1, 1885.

¹⁸ *Manchester Guardian*, January 12, 1885.

¹⁹ Although now in Yorkshire, the border of Lancashire and Yorkshire actually ran through the centre of Todmorden until 1888.

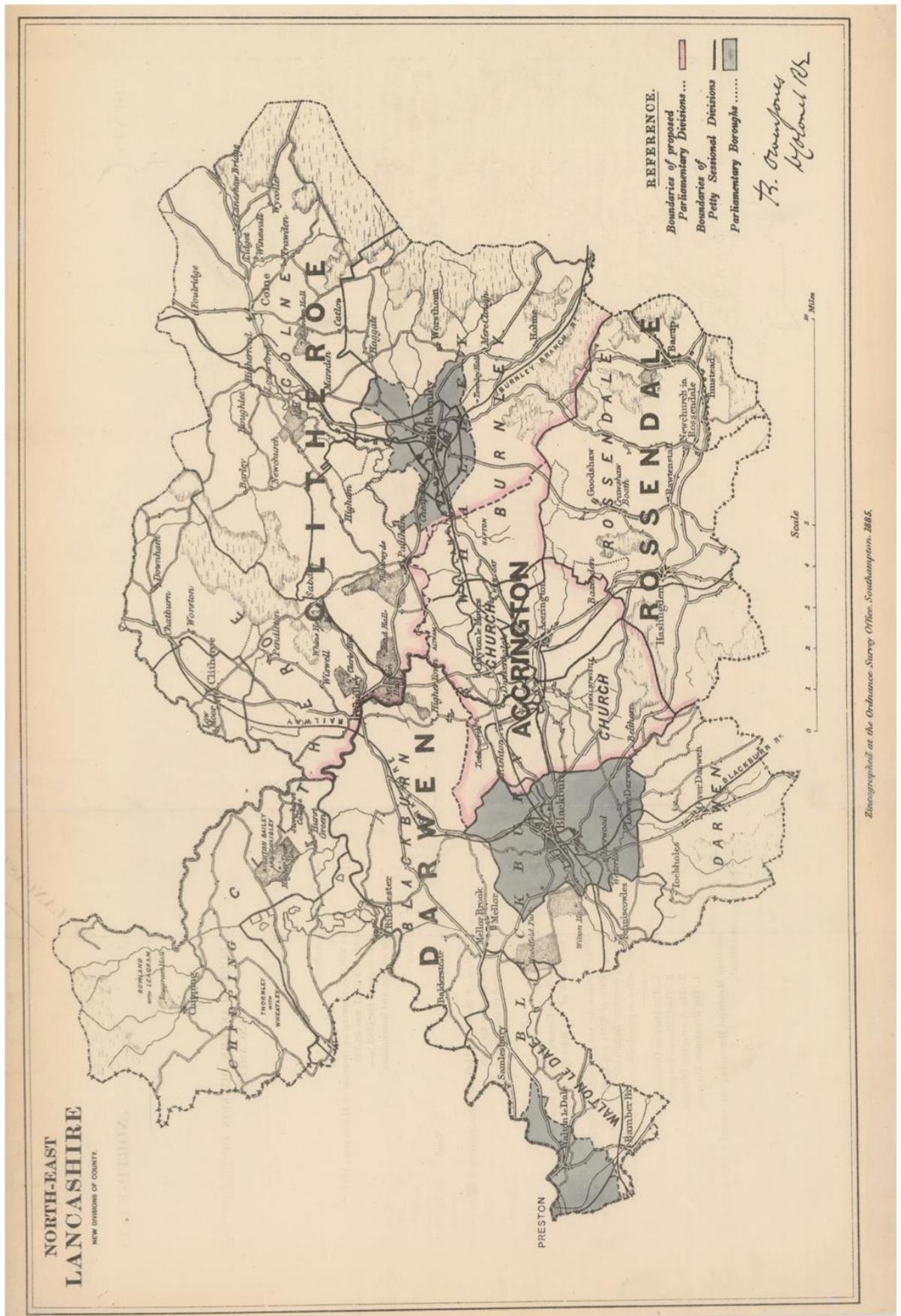


Figure 12: North East Lancashire, 1885. Source: Visions of Britain Map Archive

The Clitheroe Division came to be regarded as a 'safe' Liberal seat, leading Clarke to describe north east Lancashire in a simplistic way when he argued that 'the high degree of specialisation meant that cotton towns were homogeneous to an extent unrivalled except by coal villages.'²⁰ Kay-Shuttleworth represented the Clitheroe division from 1885 onwards, and unopposed from 1892, where he defeated the Liberal Unionist candidate by 7657 to 5506 votes. The 1892 election was fought over the home-rule issue, in which the opponent, W.E. Briggs, campaigned along sectarian lines appealing to Nonconformists against Catholics. Such a tactic was rare outside of large industrial towns and a peculiar approach aimed to appeal to the trade union movement, in which the issue had become contentious.²¹ As was discussed in Chapter 1, the lower levels of Irish immigration across north east Lancashire at this time meant that issues such as sectarian schooling were less disputed, and had little electoral impact.²² Briggs was a cotton manufacturer, and was both well known and popular locally. He had previously been MP in Blackburn where he was regarded as 'the only man who could lower the Tory flag' in the town, ideologically positioning himself as an 'old' Liberal in the wilderness of a party that had 'lost its way'.²³ Hence, Briggs appealed to the long established culture of the area at a time of flux. When Briggs visited Haggate and Harle Syke, he was greeted with 'three cheers for Shuttleworth' in a place that was a 'stronghold of his opponent ... long pointed to as an example of the industry and prudence of the people' where 'there were two characteristics of that district – thrift and sturdy Nonconformity.'²⁴ The area was thus populated by settlements across a spectrum, from the more isolated and traditional-minded communities, to the rapidly growing blossoming urban centres. As Caunce argues in relation to Yorkshire, these 'communities did not decay over time, but instead helped to structure change and to make it acceptable through a sense of continuity, control, and purpose.'²⁵

Labour politics and north east Lancashire

For many ordinary people in north east Lancashire, the late nineteenth century was the apogee of an opportunity to shape local life. It is worth reiterating how rapidly and widely possibilities for local involvement had developed, albeit relatively organically, since the situation discussed in Chapter 1. The days of secret meetings in barns on the outside of towns had been replaced with institutes and education, the chance to run for municipal positions and a boom in leisure activities and interests. With the opening of opportunity came variation reflecting local circumstance.

The evolution of opportunity is especially seen in the widening of political ideologies. Smith chiefly shows how the combination of old and new ideas can be seen in British socialism, much of which was born of this region, that, as opposed to continental variants, stands out for being 'a particularly ethical kind and more likely to be expressed in terms of the sermon on the mount than Das Kapital'.²⁶ Parallels can be

²⁰ P. F. Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p. 76.

²¹ For example Briggs several times appealed to Nonconformists, *Burnley Express*, June 25, 1892.

²² L. Smith, *Religion and the Rise of Labour: Nonconformity and the Independent Labour Movement in Lancashire and the West Riding, 1880-1914*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1983).

²³ *Burnley Express*, May 30, 1892.

²⁴ *Burnley Express*, July 9, 1892.

²⁵ S. Caunce, 'Communities and Regions In Economic Development, Lessons From The Past', in G. Haughton (ed.), *Community Economic Development*, (London: Routledge, 1999).

²⁶ L. Smith, *Religion and the Rise of Labour: Lancashire and the West Riding, 1880-1914*, (Keele: Keele University Press, 1993), p. 18-19.

drawn with how Pelling describes the same changes in industrial Yorkshire, with which so much similarity has been discussed. He observes:

We must bear in mind ... the growth of population in areas once almost deserted, which provided opportunities for the emergence of a type of society which challenged the more traditional and hierarchical social structure to be found in areas of more continuous occupation.²⁷

As shown in Chapter 1, north east Lancashire had an established history with worker combination, as well as enabling strands of Nonconformity and yeoman culture to evolve into new forms of identity and individual localised cultures. From the 1880s it was also one of the earliest areas to see the development of 'progressive' or 'socialist' political groups. Such ideas were vague, prone to local circumstance, but crucially not imported concepts. Therefore, many fledging political groups had an overlap ideologically and personnel-wise with developing local bodies like trades councils, trade unions, municipal bodies and local branches of established political parties.

The abundance of opportunity for ordinary people resulted in a complex structure of labour politics and a lack of uniformity across the general labour movement, which as Crick suggests resulted in a widespread factionalism.²⁸ Indeed, Tom Mann, leading Independent Labour Party figure and main ideologue, was defeated in his attempts to have the party renamed 'The Social Party' in 1894.²⁹ North east Lancashire, like many industrial areas, had multiple titles, allegiances and policies changing across localities. However, the area was active in labour politics from very early on. For example, Nelson and Colne were the only two weaving unions present at the establishment of the Labour Representation Committee (LRC), and in Colne's case, for a time the only to affiliate to it.³⁰ However, some areas were slower to develop openly defined socialism, and several of the country districts such as Haggate, Harle Syke and Barrowford were regarded locally as 'true strongholds' of Liberalism.³¹

The two main parties to self-identify as being *socialist* in the area were the Social Democratic Federation (SDF), who were particularly strong in Burnley, and the Independent Labour Party (ILP), generally most active in Nelson. Both parties contained broad elements from across the socialist spectrum, and there was a great deal of difference, ideologically, between local branches even within the same groups.³²

The SDF were centred on Henry Mayers Hyndman, born of a wealthy background and graduate of Trinity College, Cambridge.³³ Formed in 1881 as the Democratic Federation the party adopted a Marxist standpoint in 1883, adding the 'Socialist' element. The SDF were, as Crick details, 'a collection of oddities' in that they were a loose coalition of anti-imperialists, Irish sympathisers and people with domestic concerns, united by a hatred for capitalism and 'the leisured class it spawned.'³⁴ Although originally

²⁷ H. Pelling, *Social Geography of British Elections: 1885-1910*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1967), pp. 314-315.

²⁸ M. Crick, *History of the Social-Democratic Federation* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1994).

²⁹ *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 17 April, 1894.

³⁰ Martin, *Lancashire Giant*, p. 25.

³¹ There are multiple newspaper reports which refer to the smaller places in terms of 'stronghold' or similar, see for example *Manchester Guardian*, 31 October, 1887.

³² In terms of Burnley, as discussed by both White and Hill, the overwhelmingly dominant political grouping was a native form of Lib-Labism. See J. L. White, *The Limits of Trade Union Militancy: The Lancashire Textile Workers, 1910-1914*, (USA: Praeger, 1974), p. 161, and J. Hill, 'Lib-Labism, Socialism and Labour in Burnley, 1890-1918', *Northern History*, 35, 1 (1999), pp. 185-205.

³³ Crick, *SDF*, p. 30.

³⁴ Crick, *SDF*, p. 34.

confined to Hyndman and other middle-class intellectuals, the SDF began to make some ground with the working classes by launching more local-based campaigns in favour of grand internationalist policies. The Burnley branch of the SDF formed from the local trades' council in late 1891 and grew by 1893 to host the thirteenth annual SDF conference. Part of the success in Burnley is attributable to the efforts of local activists, to coincide with the national SDF publication *Justice*,³⁵ *Burnley Socialist and North East Lancashire Labour News* was launched and reached a circulation of 2,000.³⁶ The driving force behind the Burnley SDF from 1894 onwards was Daniel Irving, who embodied the shift to local focus and eventually became Burnley MP with Labour support in 1918. Much of his later success was built upon his active engagement in local issues and municipal politics. Irving was successful in the School Board elections of 1897 alongside John Sparling whilst being one of two candidates returned in both the 1894 and 1901 Poor Law Guardian elections.³⁷ He was also returned for the Gannow district for a council position in 1902.³⁸

The Burnley division was highly coveted by Hyndman and the party initially looked to court the Burnley Weavers' Association (BWA). However, the complexity of local labour relations coupled with a failure to connect to parochial issues meant there was little success without a dedicated campaign or notably embedded candidate. The failure to address local sensibilities such as their open dislike of religion further hamstrung the SDF. An example of the criticisms levelled at Hyndman in 1912 were that:

Mr Hyndman compares Burnley to Stuttgart. This is an unfair and misleading comparison. But compare Burnley to other business towns and Burnley will come out favourably. How about the business part of London - the city where Mr. Hyndman lives ... Mr. Hyndman's description of weaving shed conditions is untrue and shows a want of knowledge and observation. The working people of Burnley are healthy, cheerful, bright and intelligent.³⁹

In other towns, the ILP became the dominant labour voice, although their successes too were uneven, as a place like Briercliffe did not even form a branch until 1913.⁴⁰ Their overall success, Savage and Miles suggest, was partly due to their closeness to liberalism and in many localities to Christian socialism. Therefore, the ILP fared better in towns with stable populations where religion and liberal traditions remained, and where it is also argued the labour movement remained closer to its radical liberal roots.⁴¹ The relationship between Liberalism and the Labour movement was therefore a muddled terrain ideologically speaking, and many Liberal Party candidates were felt, at least locally, to be sympathetic to working people or 'friends of labour.'⁴² The cordial relations between working people and the Liberals were further cemented by the candidature of working class candidates. Indeed the ILP made gains often when this relationship came under threat through the perceived exclusion of working class voices.⁴³

³⁵ P. Firth (1993), *Society, Politics and the Working Class in North East Lancashire, c; 1890 to 1920*, (Self-Published) p. 59.

³⁶ Crick, *SDF*, p. 111.

³⁷ Firth, *Society*, pp. 62-74.

³⁸ Firth, *Society*, p. 61.

³⁹ *Burnley Express*, December 14, 1912.

⁴⁰ Firth, *Labour Politics*.

⁴¹ M. Savage and A. Miles, *The Remaking of the British Working Class, 1840-1940*, (London: Routledge, 1994), p.79.

⁴² Crick, *SDF*, p. 111.

⁴³ Such antagonism between Liberal and Labour groups is repeated nationally and as Thane has discussed in regard to the ILP in the West Riding, schisms between Radical and Moderate Liberals, could force Labour-led and other local groups to move away from the Liberal Party. Thane discusses several different cases across the country of the split between liberal and labour groups. For example in Leicester there was a tolerant rivalry between the Liberals and Labour, to the antagonism felt in Bradford, as well as situations in Birmingham, Manchester, Salford, Woolwich, Battersea all having different developments. P. Thane, 'Labour and Local Politics', in E.

No clearer indication of the ILP gaining prominence from a feeling of exclusion can be seen in Nelson, which, having only gained a charter in 1890, had no real political traditions in an established sense.⁴⁴ The ILP there formed in 1892 from a split with the SDF in the town. The idea of running trade union or 'labour' candidates locally led to the Nelson Weavers' Association (NWA) sponsoring two 'labour men', one of which was William Ward, who was the secretary of the trades council, for the municipal elections in 1890.⁴⁵ Both men were successful, despite opposition from the Liberals, who had failed to adopt them as candidates.⁴⁶ The two men stood on a moderate and pragmatic platform: economy in town expenditure, fair labour contracts at trade union rates, cheaper schoolbooks and the abolition of gas-meter rents. The event, in Hill's opinion, was significant and 'pushed organised labour into adopting an independent position it might not initially have been seeking.'⁴⁷

Pragmatism was a dominant theme within the ILP and was evident in the formation of the LRC. The leaders - Keir Hardie, Ramsay MacDonald, Bruce Glasier and Phillip Snowden - all offered different forms of 'aspirational' leadership, often with either a religious or moral platform. Indeed, Tanner partly credits the ability to mobilise a local socially 'rooted' appeal in the shift from Liberalism to Labour in some areas.⁴⁸ However, there was some concern from various trade union groups towards the concepts of overt socialism. The United Textile Factory Workers Association shared the belief in Labourism, but were originally hesitant in the formation of the LRC, due to a potential politicisation of trade unionism.⁴⁹ Even in 1903, David Shackleton's letters to Ramsay MacDonald detail the difficulties in winning the group over.⁵⁰ Yet, the desire for closer links with the trade unions also resulted in a more balanced and appealing programme in Labour's early years, which Thane summarises: 'Central to Labour's own conception of the Socialist state ... were quintessentially radical notions of rights, justice, fairness, independence, dignity and individual freedom.'⁵¹

The balance between labour politics and a radical tradition continued for many years. In 1918 the *Burnley News* ran a heartfelt piece arguing against Dan Irving's election on the grounds that 'socialism would not work', and that the best representative for Burnley would be local mill owner John Grey. Their argument typifies a great deal of the problem for north east Lancashire, ideologically speaking. It was felt that 'the creation of wealth is absolutely essential for the well-being of any community' whilst, 'Socialism would kill enterprise'. The solution to this would be found in Liberalism, which 'would release enterprise from the trammels of privilege and preference. Socialism would submerge the individual; Liberalism seeks to rescue the individual from submergence. Socialism attacks capital; Liberalism attacks monopoly.' Therefore, what they felt was needed was 'a Democrat ... a Liberal Democrat, not that impossible hybrid -

Biagini and A. Reid (eds.), *Currents of Radicalism: Popular Radicalism, Organised Labour and Party Politics in Britain, 1850-1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 259.

⁴⁴ See J. Hill, *Nelson* (Lancaster: Carnegie, 1997).

⁴⁵ Howell, *British Workers*, p. 61.

⁴⁶ Hill, *Nelson*, p. 57.

⁴⁷ Hill, *Nelson*, p. 58.

⁴⁸ D. Tanner, *Political Change and the Labour Party 1900-1918*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.144.

⁴⁹ H. Pelling and F. Bealey, *Labour and Politics, 1900-1906: A History of the Labour Representation Committee*, (London: Praeger, 1982), p. 19.

⁵⁰ Papers relating the David Shackleton and the Labour Party – People's History Museum, Labour Party Archive, Salford, LHA/LRC 6/410.

⁵¹ P. Thane, 'Labour And Local Politics: Radicalism, Democracy And Social Reform, 1880-1914', in Biagini and Reid, *Currents of Radicalism*, p. 260.

a Socialist Democrat.⁵²

The 1902 by-election

In 1902 a series of events converged to challenge the labour movement. Firstly, the Taff Vale case in 1901 managed to both challenge and bring increased interest in unions nationally. Secondly, a series of local trade disputes within the cotton districts resulted in local weaving groups seeking greater collective security through the LRC. The loss by the Blackburn Powerloom Weavers', Winders' and Warpers' Association with the Blackburn Weavers' Protection Association to the Bannister Brothers and Moore Limited in a libel case over strike action was perhaps the most notable, both locally and within the industry.⁵³ The result brought an increase of activities for local Labour groups, who were buoyed by the successes of Keir Hardie and Richard Bell, with further involvement in municipal elections.⁵⁴ This process gathered pace when Clitheroe MP Ughtred Kay-Shuttleworth's health (already poor) declined, and he was given a peerage.

The local Labour groups were, however, inexperienced in anything other than municipal elections and fearing an incursion of SDF candidates, required the central party to take some involvement. The Colne Weavers' Association secretary, A.B. Newell, wrote to request support and for MacDonald to 'show us the ropes',⁵⁵ whilst also requesting copies of *The Legal Position of Trade Unions* and *Labour and Politics* be distributed to trade union officials.⁵⁶ The Labour representative at Colne felt the district was 'very promising' and begged MacDonald to visit, as he was a 'stranger' and the SDF seemed to be mobilising and trying to forge links with local unions.⁵⁷ It quickly became apparent that nearly all local political groups were both interested in running and had their own opinions on who or what a possible candidate should be. Yet, a general unease over terminology still remained, and grew to become a greatly contested issue at a March 1901 LRC conference, when one of the four resolutions proposed that the running of a 'Labour and Socialist' candidate be changed to purely 'Labour'.⁵⁸ This same unease over the inclusion of socialism, to a large extent halted the budding campaign of Philip Snowden, at the time a leading light of the local Labour movement. A resident of Nelson, Snowden was also seen as a 'full-time firebrand',⁵⁹ which as well as deterring potential voters, stood in contrast to the still conciliatory nature of the cotton industry.⁶⁰ Hence, due to the demographics of the Clitheroe constituency, it was felt by general consensus that the candidate should be a 'cotton man', of whom the most prominent was David Shackleton.

Despite Shackleton's adoption as the official LRC candidate, he was a disputed figure in some circles due

⁵² *Burnley News*, October 26, 1918.

⁵³ The case concerned picketing at the Bannister Brothers' Mill, at which five strikers were found guilty of 'besetting' and a local band who were part of the acting prosecuted. *Manchester Guardian*, October 18, 1901.

⁵⁴ See for example *Manchester Courier*, January 15, 1902, whilst Dan Irving, eventually to win the Burnley constituency, was being talked of as a possible candidate as early as 1893, see *Burnley Express*, July 12, 1893.

⁵⁵ LHA/LRC/4/37.

⁵⁶ LHA/LRC/3/103.

⁵⁷ LHA/LRC/3/124.

⁵⁸ Martin, *Lancashire Giant*, p. 30.

⁵⁹ For a discussion of Snowden's conversion to Socialism, see T. Bunnell, 'Philip Snowden's Dramatic Conversion To Socialism In 1893: A Literary Examination', *North West Labour History*, 34.

⁶⁰ The issue of conciliation within the cotton industry is discussed in more detail in the proceeding chapter.

to his avowed position as an 'independent' Labour candidate. Several local branches of the ILP and SDF were concerned by the level of influence the trade unions could wield through him, whilst the Nelson SDF even took the step of writing to their London headquarters requesting a list of names to contest the by-election, a move which was frowned upon by the Clitheroe branch.⁶¹ The SDF paper *Justice* stated that 'Men of Mr Shackleton's type are just the men the wire pullers or capitalist parties will welcome'.⁶² However, they partly missed the point that many outside the hard left felt such a representation as no bad thing and as the *Burnley Express* noted, the area's socialists favoured a 'well to do man' in representing them.⁶³

The position of the other parties was similarly complex. The Conservatives struggled to find a candidate to run whilst the Liberals were torn between working with, and fighting against, a Labour candidate. They worked through a series of possible candidates who for various reasons declined. The closest to running, and most prominent of these, was Philip Stanhope, who had previously been MP in Burnley. Stanhope, it was hoped, would pacify the Labour vote, being noted as:

Thoroughly progressive in his views and his sincere interest in Labour questions is beyond controversy. No candidate would be more likely to unite all the progressive forces of the division in his support.⁶⁴

Stanhope eventually withdrew, refusing to take part in a competition between trade unions and Liberalism.⁶⁵ After the failure of the Liberals to forge a pact with Labour and a lack of viable candidates, Shackleton was left with no real opposition. A Liberal supporter in the area described the situation thus: 'Mr Shackleton is a Liberal, he is practically one of us and that makes our position all the more awkward.'⁶⁶

Liberal leaders Gladstone and Campbell-Bannerman saw an opportunity to stem the rising Labour movement by making Clitheroe a concession once it was apparent that a suitable candidate could not be found. They looked to exert pressure on the local branches of the Liberal Party to ensure that Shackleton was not opposed, although branches tried several times to find an alternative candidate. Indeed, the 600 strong Liberal Council adopted an amendment 'that at all hazards the election be fought'.⁶⁷ A clear split developed between the grassroots and central party, with the other Lancashire Liberal MPs agreeing that Shackleton should not be opposed.⁶⁸ Gladstone publicly presented a united front:

A Labour representative came into the field ... What had the Liberal Party (in Clitheroe) done there? They had said, "We will not oppose the representative of Labour." (Cheers.) He is a good Liberal ... (And) we are so anxious to have a great cotton industry of Lancashire worthily represented that we stand aside and sacrifice our own interest in... the representation of Labour (cheers.)⁶⁹

In reality, the Liberals had tried to forge an alliance several times and on the 14th July 1902 delegates from both the Liberals and Labour met to consider both Shackleton and Philip Stanhope running as

⁶¹ Martin, *Lancashire Giant*, p. 36.

⁶² Pelling and Bealey, *Labour and Politics*, p. 123.

⁶³ *Burnley Express*, July 9, 1902.

⁶⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, July 3, 1902.

⁶⁵ *Manchester Guardian*, July 4, 1902.

⁶⁶ *Burnley Express*, July 9, 1902.

⁶⁷ Martin, *Lancashire Giant*, p. 40.

⁶⁸ Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism*, p. 92.

⁶⁹ Martin, *Lancashire Giant*, p. 40.

Liberal-Labour, or Labour-Liberal. Labour rejected the overtures but an agreement was made that a lack of a Liberal candidate in Clitheroe would result in a reciprocal gesture in other parts of Lancashire.

However there were growing demands that Shackleton openly declare his Liberal leaning, which were resisted on the grounds that he was determined to remain independent. A further letter from A. B. Newell to Ramsey MacDonald confirmed Shackleton's determination and advised that Shackleton 'would not run under a Lab-Lib ticket, even if the trade unionists agreed to it.'⁷⁰ Shackleton himself outlined his views:

I am a Labour candidate pure and simple ... I have been in close touch with all classes of labour for about fifteen years, and I have a lifelong knowledge of the textile industry. As the representative of the textile workers, I should help them in the removal of the special grievances which press upon them at the present time.⁷¹

David Shackleton's nomination was signed by eleven other trade union officials, emphasizing his own background, and reiterating the prominence of the cotton industry to the general public. He was duly elected at 12:30pm, sending two telegrams, one to his wife, reading 'elected unopposed' and one to his father - with whom his strained relations due to the disapproval over his marriage - which read 'Shackleton unopposed'.⁷²

Shuttleworth, Shackleton and Snowden: a departure or evolution?

David Shackleton and Ughtred Kay-Shuttleworth came from alternative ends of the social spectrum of north east Lancashire. Yet, both represent different expressions of the character of the area, adapted for changing circumstances. The two men shared a number of similarities in outlook and eventually became good friends. Ideologically, both were grounded in radical liberalism, Nonconformity and temperance.⁷³ That both men were in effect different facets of the same shared culture meant that the transition from an aristocratic Liberal to working Labour man did not result in a radical departure from the normal parameters of local politics.

Ughtred Kay-Shuttleworth was regarded as a man of repute, but seen as a 'friend of labour', a position nurtured along with his fellow east Lancashire Liberals.⁷⁴ He corresponds to a continuation of what Belchem called a 'gentleman leader', or a respectable man of the people.⁷⁵ He was seen as having a 'personal acquaintance with the whole division',⁷⁶ whilst in another report he was shown to have great accord with his constituents:

Sir Ughtred has shown that it is possible to combine the firmest grasp of the wider political questions of the day with a

⁷⁰ LHA/LRC/4/39.

⁷¹ *Manchester Guardian*, July 8, 1902.

⁷² Martin, *Lancashire Giant*, p. 142.

⁷³ Martin, *Lancashire Giant*, p. 150.

⁷⁴ Shuttleworth and Stanhope were the leading lights of the Liberal movement locally, see Howell, *British Workers*, pp. 52-69, and Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics*, p. 7.

⁷⁵ See also personal accounts of Fergus O'Connor and Henry Hunt across Lancashire, as well as the Burnley MP Jabez Balfour. The latter especially in D. McKie, *Jabez: The Rise and Fall of a Victorian Rogue*, (London: Atlantic Books, 2004), J. Belchem and J. Epstein, 'The Nineteenth-Century Gentleman Leader Revisited', *Social History*, 22, 3 (1997), pp. 174-193.

⁷⁶ See P. Joyce, *Society and Politics: Culture of the Factory in Later Victorian England*, (England: Harvester Press, 1982), p. 7 for a discussion on what he views as the influence of the aristocracy in Burnley.

close special acquaintance with the conditions and requirements of his native county.⁷⁷

Shuttleworth's father, James Kay-Shuttleworth, was from a middle-class background and was famous across Lancashire for his medical work during the cotton famine, and later a notable champion of education. He married into the Shuttleworths, a gentry family long established in the area,⁷⁸ and was later made baronet for Gawthorpe Hall, Padiham, as well as serving as High Sheriff of Lancashire. Shuttleworth was, however, mostly raised by his mother, who was a prominent member of 'Liberal circles'.⁷⁹ With a notable, respected lineage on both sides of his family, schooling in Liberalism and affiliation with working class causes, Shuttleworth cultivated a wide-ranging appeal. Primarily he did this in two ways. Firstly, the family was heavily involved in regional politics, which in Joyce's opinion made them the leaders in the local Liberal movement based out of Gawthorpe Hall, which was central to 'attempt the necessary marriage of the town's Nonconformist radicalism and the county's Anglican Whiggism.'⁸⁰ Secondly, Kay-Shuttleworth had an astute understanding of what issues mattered to his constituents. He was regarded as a 'progressive Liberal', who had a prominent role in the construction of the major local developments, like Burnley Mechanics Institute, Grammar School and Technical School, as well as Padiham Technical Institute, towards which he personally gave £1,000. Perhaps most significantly, Kay-Shuttleworth was regarded as 'a representative whom the Labour Party could trust.'⁸¹

In comparison, David Shackleton was born on November 21, 1863 in Cloughfield, Rossendale. He grew up in a traditional Lancashire cotton family with relatives on the same road and surrounding streets. Although one of several children, he was the only one to live beyond the age of two, though his father's remarriage following his mother's death gave him six half-sisters. Shackleton's family was typical in textile Lancashire at this time: his grandfather had migrated from Todmorden and several relatives were involved in the textile industry. By the age of nine, he was working half time in a weaving shed. Later, when his father set up as a watchmaker, he combined the mill with working in the shop. He became a full-time weaver at the age of 13, but continued his education by attending night school. Shackleton had his political grounding through a mixture of his father's and grandfather's own influences, from temperance and Nonconformity. He stated that:

I remember I used to eat my dinner whilst at work so as to be able to spend the dinner hour in a reading room, where I eagerly devoured the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Manchester Examiner*, thinking over and digesting what I had read when I returned to the mill.⁸²

Shackleton also began to lecture on Temperance and teach at Sunday school along with his own studying, even teaching in the reading rooms for people wishing to calculate their own sorts for working out what wages they were due. Therefore, Shackleton was firmly established in the popular politics of the day and the culture of cotton towns, through a mixture of self-help and Nonconformity, with aspirations to improve his 'lot'. He was described as 'a typical Lancashire man — shrewd and genial and with that of

⁷⁷ *Manchester Guardian*, May 2, 1892.

⁷⁸ The Shuttleworth's were engaged in a range of activities from at least the 16th century, including wool manufacture on their estates in north east Lancashire. See N. Lowe, *The Lancashire Textile Industry in the Sixteenth Century* (Manchester, Cheetham Society, 1972) pp. 8-12.

⁷⁹ *The Times*, December 22, 1939.

⁸⁰ Joyce, *Work Society and Politics*, p. 7.

⁸¹ *Manchester Guardian*, May 2, 1892.

⁸² Marsden, *Shackleton*, p. 3.

great strength and independence of mind.⁸³ Shackleton shared many traits with fellow ‘independent’ Labour leaders Keir Hardie, Will Crooks and Arthur Henderson, who were fellow teetotallers, and bar Hardie, non-smokers.⁸⁴ Richard Bell, who was the second Labour MP elected shared much of Shackleton’s Liberal and trade union background, and has been described by Jennings as ‘almost Lib-Lab.’⁸⁵ Indeed, the desire for independence, and confusion over what Labour ‘should’ be resulted in several disputes for the fledgling Labour Party.⁸⁶

Politically, the very clear roots of north east Lancashire in radical liberalism with labour sympathies facilitated the arrival (politically) of a man like David Shackleton. Labour’s adoption of Shackleton as a candidate in 1902 put the Liberal Party in, as the *Burnley Express* noted, ‘an exceedingly awkward position’ with Labour deciding ‘whether they would force the hands of the Liberals in the Clitheroe division or continue to be the hewers of wood or drawers of water for the official radicals.’⁸⁷ What convinced the majority of these groups to accept Shackleton was his perceived independence. His credentials as a self-made union man, with Liberal leanings and a firm grounding in temperance and Methodism, gave him a clear affinity with the people of north east Lancashire. The *Manchester Guardian* itself played up to these facts:

Mr Shackleton said that on political questions he should support whoever’s opportunity offered the programme of the Trade Union congress ... An important element in the choice is the fact that Mr Shackleton is known to be of Liberal sympathies.⁸⁸

Ughtred Kay-Shuttleworth and his Burnley contemporary Philip Stanhope contributed to the local strength of Liberalism by being attuned to their respective constituents.⁸⁹ Such was Stanhope’s popularity that the SDF declined challenging him on multiple occasions, and he himself declared that he was ‘a better socialist than any in the Socialist Party’.⁹⁰ In turn, Shuttleworth was ‘not one of the worst opponents to the Labour question by far’ and the strength of his reputation built upon this reputation offered him a great deal of security. Significantly, when the notion of an LRC candidate was first mooted, it was felt from within the Labour ranks that ‘whilst it would be better for us to have a man free from the trammels of party politics, it would be difficult to unseat the present member by public vote.’⁹¹

Regarding Shuttleworth, it was said by the Liberals in Higham that ‘his views on all great social and political questions were in hearty accord with theirs’⁹² whilst his speeches were noted for encouraging principles such as education, cooperation and democracy through widening local participation.⁹³ Shuttleworth was regularly seen at local events and donated money for various causes in both his own

⁸³ *Manchester Guardian*, July 8, 1902.

⁸⁴ It was said that the early Labour leaders ‘lived on little, had no staff to help them and that they made such a great impression on the House and on the country was a triumph of character’, *Manchester Guardian*, August 2, 1938.

⁸⁵ I. Jennings, *Party Politics: Volume 2: The Growth of Parties*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 246.

⁸⁶ See for one example ‘The Devonport Incident’ which revolved around Crooks, Shackleton and Henderson speaking in Devonport at a by-election in June 1904 on a free-trade and Labour platform, endorsing a Liberal candidate, at a time when their ally, Bell was being disciplined by the party for similar actions.

⁸⁷ *Burnley Express*, July 3, 1902.

⁸⁸ *Manchester Guardian*, July 7, 1902.

⁸⁹ As Hill details, the continuing prevalence in Burnley was to cling onto a native form of Lib-Labism longer than other places, driven by the dominance of the local Weavers’ Union. See Hill, ‘Lib-Labism, Socialism and Labour in Burnley’.

⁹⁰ Crick, *History of the SDF*, p. 111.

⁹¹ PHA/LRC/2/20.

⁹² *Manchester Guardian*, October 15, 1888.

⁹³ *Manchester Guardian*, October 18, 1880.

constituency and the surrounding area. However, his main skill was in balancing the demands of the growing urban centres, whilst maintaining widespread support in the 'country districts'. Thus, he was a highly active local MP in terms of visiting the areas of the constituency, but his presence partly masked the increasing view that the Liberals at the local level had become complacent and disconnected. The strength of Shuttleworth's local support thus waned during the several bouts of ill health he suffered. As has previously been discussed, the interconnectivity of local people to their parishes, and in-turn Parish Councillors resulted in a culture of relative approachability with elected representatives, which was severely damaged through Shuttleworth's incapacity.

The complaints levelled against the local Liberals varied. The Barrowford Liberal club was described as 'a disgrace,' whilst many of the other clubs were seen as disproportionately social, being used for card games and billiards.⁹⁴ The problem was seen as a lack of grassroots interest, 'staunch Liberals of note' not visiting the area and the meetings 'so managed only the views of official politicians are heard.'⁹⁵ It is from here that the Labour movement began to grow. Even still, Padiham Urban District Council passed a resolution in 1901 for a public declaration of sympathy over Shuttleworth's illness.⁹⁶ The loudest calls for Labour representation were generally from the more urban settlements, where the local attachment to the Liberal Party had begun to dissipate. Thus when Shackleton was elected, a great deal of his focus was on activities in Nelson and Colne, with their union strength.

A general shift can be witnessed as the cotton operatives across Clitheroe moved into a state of political maturity. Indeed, David Shackleton's purpose as described by the *Manchester Guardian* was to 'be a direct representative of the textile workers of Lancashire.'⁹⁷ As the electorate widened (Table 14), the urban cotton powerbase was strengthened and Nelson became the key battleground of elections.

By the 1906 election, the majority of votes the opposition candidate, Belton, received came from the Clitheroe petty division, as he failed to visit, and subsequently gain any real support in Nelson and Colne.⁹⁸ Similarly in 1910, Nelson and Colne were again the basis of Shackleton's success with '80 per cent' of operatives at looms in the district wearing red and yellow in support of Shackleton on Election Day.⁹⁹ The later by-election of 1910 also reinforces the shift in local emphasis, with Albert Smith, the local weaving union candidate, spending the days before the election speaking in Barrowford and Colne once, but in Nelson twice. The Unionist opponent in 1910 was Jarvis Blayney, a 25 year old cotton manufacturer from Lytham-St-Annes. He ran on a tariff-reform ticket, and focusing his campaign on Sabden, Worsthorne and Briercliffe.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, February 13, 1901.

⁹⁵ Newspaper cuttings included in correspondence from a Labour Representative in Colne to Ramsay MacDonald, PHA/LRC/3/126.

⁹⁶ *Manchester Guardian*, February 13, 1901.

⁹⁷ *Manchester Guardian*, July 8, 1902.

⁹⁸ The election saw the opposition candidate Belton have no party backing, refuse to give interviews, issues various offensive telegrams, and stand on a platform of free trade, alcohol and gambling. It was also notable for the car Shackleton travelling in being owned by the Altham's killing someone whilst on a pre-election tour in Burnley the day before polling, *Burnley Express*, January 27, 1906.

⁹⁹ *Burnley Gazette*, January 22, 1910.

¹⁰⁰ *Burnley Express*, December 10, 1910.

Table 14: Total electorate and election results of the Clitheroe Division

Year	Electorate	Year	Labour	Conservatives
1885	12,698	1902	Unopposed	-
1892	15,212	1906	12035	3828 (Independent Conservative Candidate)
1906	20,613	Jan 1910	13873	6727
1910	22,368	Dec 1910	12107	5783 (Unionist)

F. W. S. Craig (ed.), *British Parliamentary Election Results 1885-1918*

David Shackleton represented the feelings of a constituency with shifting dynamics, one now moving towards what he described as a 'working class' constituting '75 per cent' of people to the '25 per cent' that was the 'upper and middle class'.¹⁰¹ He was a natural progression from Shuttleworth, combining the elements of Liberalism so popular in the area with a distinguished career in trade unionism and local politics. Shackleton was a lifelong teetotaler, non-smoker and committed Rechabite, although he was described several times as 'not bigoted' in these beliefs. In terms of evidence from speeches, Shackleton referred heavily to his moral grounding, whilst politically, he was an outspoken advocate of free trade, speaking out against the bread tax as being against that principle.¹⁰²

Shackleton's rise in politics was meteoric, but at the same time highlights the opportunities that were open to working men. Between 1878, when he moved to Accrington and the 1902 by-election, he had become a trade unionist and was elected and later president to the committee of the Accrington Weavers' Association. He became JP by the age of 29 despite a 17 week period of unemployment following the anti-union stance of one of his employers. He then went on to be full-time secretary of the Ramsbottom Weavers and within a year had taken the same position at the Darwen Weavers, a significant jump up in terms of size and influence in trade unionism. In 1895 he was elected to the Darwen town council, under the auspices of a candidate in the interests of the trade council, and in 1896 he was the first working man elected to the committee of Blackburn Chamber of Commerce. Shackleton was then elected to the Central Committee of the Amalgamated Weavers' Amalgamation, rising to chairman within a few years, and was part of the deputation that met MPs to discuss the Factory Acts. His growing repute resulted in an invitation to stand as a Liberal MP in Darwen, which he refused, as he had not been a member of a party for a number of years and felt it compromised his impartiality in his union roles. However, his reputation allowed him to be a member of a delegation with six cotton employers to investigate machinery in America, meeting President Roosevelt between April and June 1902.¹⁰³

The early favourite to secure the Labour nomination for Clitheroe was Philip Snowden. As late as February 1902, he was openly courting the division, replying to a question on his intentions with, 'where there's

¹⁰¹ *Burnley Express*, October 15, 1902, Shackleton also clarified his view on the working class several times, for example, 'I say working class because you must bear in mind that the amount of money a workman spends in food is greater in proportion than in the case of a man blessed with this world's goods.' *Lancashire Evening Post*, July 7, 1902.

¹⁰² *Burnley Express*, July 7, 1902.

¹⁰³ Martin, *Lancashire Giant*, p. 24.

smoke there's fire.'¹⁰⁴ Snowden's own history emphasises the divergent possibilities ideologically for some working class Liberals, having converted to socialism following his incapacitation. His story was much like Shackleton's and very typical of north east Lancashire. Born in the tiny Yorkshire Pennine hamlet of Ickornshaw, near Cowling, with a population of 160 of mostly inter-married families, he was the son of weavers and raised in Methodism. He was schooled in, and equally taught others the principles of temperance and thrift, whilst his father was known to be a Gladstonian Liberal. Tanner notes, 'The Snowdens were deeply embedded in these institutions and values.' The family then moved to Nelson, where Snowden worked as an insurance clerk, commuting to Burnley, and later for the Inland Revenue in various places. After falling in 1891 and being deemed too ill for office work, Snowden devoted himself to reading and lecturing, becoming 'enlightened' to socialism, and soon emerging himself in politics, and was elected to the Cowling Parish Council in 1894. Despite his conversion, Tanner suggests there was 'no dramatic and immediate break with his Liberal friends or his existing Liberal values. His increasingly frequent speeches were strewn with biblical references, Nonconformist values, and support for Liberal causes.' However, with growing confidence, Snowden's ideology developed. He even condemned as 'bloodsuckers and parasites' a number of leading local Liberal businessmen.¹⁰⁵

Snowden's switch to a more aggressive form of discourse was a doubled edged sword. On the one hand, it brought much greater publicity, but on the other it challenged the sense of mutual dependence which was still prevalent in the cotton industry. Indeed, it is telling that the preferred option for the vacant Clitheroe seat in 1902 was a cotton man who understood the nuances of the industry. There was therefore a balance to be maintained within the boundaries of certain principles politically, which stretched across the labour and liberal spectrums. These same principles continued to offer a foundation over time, evolving to suit wider situations.¹⁰⁶

The 1910 election for Shackleton's replacement saw the early favourites as all union men.¹⁰⁷ Albert Smith the eventual winner was an alderman, Mayor of Nelson, and an official of the Nelson Weavers' Association, as well as founding member of the Nelson LRC. Smith also was a second cousin of, and grew up on the same street as, Philip Snowden in Cowling.¹⁰⁸ Alternative names considered included A. Shaw of the Colne Weavers and Fred Thomas of the Burnley Weavers.¹⁰⁹ Smith held Clitheroe until 1918, taking the newly formed Nelson and Colne seat, before resigning due to poor health and the increasing struggle to split his time between parliamentary and union work. However, he fit the template established by Shackleton, being a cotton man and 'respectable'. Indeed, this became even more apparent after his war heroics, where he was only referred to as 'Captain Smith' out of respect for his record working up from

¹⁰⁴ *Burnley Express*, February 19, 1902.

¹⁰⁵ D. Tanner, 'Snowden, Philip, Viscount Snowden (1864–1937)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn., (2011)

[<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/36181>, accessed 1 May 2015]

¹⁰⁶ Examples of the similarities between Labour groups and policies is provided in the appendix p. 294.

¹⁰⁷ Shackleton himself felt that his involvement in industrial relations was of more use than working as an MP and despite coming within one vote of becoming Labour Party Chairman, and being one of the most senior members of the party, Shackleton accepted the invitation from Winston Churchill to become the labour advisor within the Home Office. He flitted in and out of public life, though he was always a prominent figure during industrial disputes, and eventually was appointed the first Permanent Secretary within the new Ministry of Labour in December 1916. Shackleton retired to Lytham St-Annes in 1925 and effectively disappeared from public life following defeat in a local ward election.

¹⁰⁸ *Manchester Guardian*, December 8, 1910.

¹⁰⁹ *Burnley Gazette*, November 23, 1910.

Private.

Conclusion

The selection of David Shackleton for the 1902 Clitheroe by-election was a clear reflection of the culture that had developed by the early twentieth century in north east Lancashire. It also represented the ascendancy of trade unionism as a political force, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4. Locally, the press regarded Shackleton as a popular MP within his constituency, who was widely respected by his constituents, and focussed his energy on key issues important to cotton operatives.¹¹⁰ His importance to the wider body of cotton operatives can therefore not be overlooked. Indeed, upon his retirement, it was stated that 'all parties agreed that it will be impossible to secure a Labour candidate who can command anything like the support accorded to Mr Shackleton,'¹¹¹ as few other candidates could achieve his status as cotton's 'man on the inside'.

Through examining the political identity of north east Lancashire, it is possible to see the emergence and development of political ideas that mirror the growth of the electorate. Thus, the changing nature of the population, the combination of old and new ideas and the impact of urban development bear the hallmarks of the culture that was defined in Chapter 1. There remained differences between settlements, as in some places like Nelson moved quickly to embrace Labourism, others like the village of Harle Syke remained Liberal 'strongholds'. For the town of Burnley, somewhere between the two, socialism blossomed more than in neighbouring places. However, despite the changing titles and names, there were certain principles that remained ingrained, setting certain parameters in which potential candidates could operate, and the parties at the opposite ends of the political spectrum equally maintained elements of these. Central to these parameters was the sustained focus on maintaining the prosperity of the cotton industry. Therefore, Shackleton served as the 'ideal' candidate, and his succession by Captain Smith, far from a radical departure, was a continuation of the area's political realignment. Overall, the concept of 'Labour in a north east Lancashire sense', which was something based in the locality, was formed from the character of the area and its unique history, with a mixture of Nonconformity, native socialism, Liberalism and trade unionism, all the while adaptable and able to change to fit the times.

¹¹⁰ The issues included industry based causes such as working practices, such as health and safety, working hours, but also wider issues such as women's' suffrage. Shackleton's work on the latter earned him the nickname of 'The Women's Champion'.

¹¹¹ *Manchester Guardian*, Nov 13, 1910.

4. EXPLORING TRADE UNIONISM IN URBAN AND COUNTRY SETTLEMENTS C.1875-1914

The cotton trade unions were by the end of the Edwardian period regarded as arguably the strongest and best organised of all the 'new unions' in Britain.¹ The strength of these unions, coupled with the importance of the cotton industry, resulted in a great deal of influence socially and politically in many towns. There has thus been a great deal of interest in the role of cotton trade unionism in ordinary lives.² However, there has been a great deal of generalisation over how omnipotent trade unionism was at the local level and this has been reflected in the representations of the cotton towns themselves. Indeed, north east Lancashire has been characterised as the epicentre of militant trade union activity,³ whilst the Amalgamated Weavers' Association (AWA) has been assessed, much like certain elements of textile Yorkshire,⁴ as the more radical sector of the cotton industry.⁵ Yet, divisions existed even amongst the weaving operatives and although gender and wage differentials have received some attention, the role of localism, and how this contributed to the AWA has been widely ignored.⁶

The strength of trade unionism, or a local equivalent, fluctuated and was prone to variation. This chapter therefore explores the differences between the settlements of north east Lancashire, and how they reacted to changing economic and industrial variables. It follows the timeframe proposed by White. He divides the industrial disputes in the Lancashire textile industry into three separate periods, which this chapter uses as a framework. The first period was between 1875 and 1894, and concerned a defence against wage cuts and the attempts for recognition. The second phase was from 1894 to 1906, which White described as a period of 'relative industrial peace', whilst the third was the period of conflict between 1910 and 1914.⁷

Chapter 1 of this thesis has already highlighted how unique the evolution of north east Lancashire was, and Chapters 2 and 3 have further expanded upon the importance of local, community based identities. Some form of worker involvement in the mill was an equally embedded aspect of everyday life. As has been shown in Chapter 3 especially, the influence of trade unionism grew greatly in the late nineteenth century, and became central to community structures. Trade unionism could in some places utilise the fact that full families worked in the mill, and this was strengthened in the larger urban centres through recruitment, training and the neighbourhood system of collecting subscriptions. A parent was able to pass membership onto their children, whilst training, if not by a direct family member, was often

¹ See especially H. A. Turner, *Trade Union Growth: Structure and Policy*, (University of Toronto Press: 1962).

² See for example A. Fowler and T. Wyke (eds.), *Barefoot Aristocrats: A History of the Amalgamated Association of Operative Cotton Spinners*, (Littleborough: George Kelsall, 1987).

³ McIvor and Jowitt argue, 'It was these areas of north east Lancashire which became centres of militant union activity.' J.A Jowitt and A.J. McIvor, *Employers and Labour in the English Textile Industries: 1850-1939*, (London: Taylor and Francis, 1988), p. 213.

⁴ Jowitt and McIvor, *Employers*, p. 213.

⁵ See K. Laybourne (2012), *The Rising Sun of Socialism: The Emergence of the Labour Movement in The Textile Belt Of The West Riding of Yorkshire C.1890-1914*, Huddersfield Local History Day Conference on Yorkshire Radicalism.

⁶ For an engaging discussion of gender, see J. Scwarzkopf, *Unpicking Gender: The Social Construction of Gender in the Lancashire Cotton Weaving Industry, 1880-1914*, (Ashgate: London, 2013). For wages, E.M. Gray, *The Weaver's Wage*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1937) and J.L. White, *The Limits of Trade Union Militancy: The Lancashire Textile Workers, 1910-1914: Lancashire Textile Workers, 1910-14*, (USA: Praeger, 1974).

⁷ White, *Limits*, p. 219.

conducted by a family friend and the subscriptions collected on a house-to-house and road-to-road basis.

Savage has argued that the higher prevalence of male weavers than in other districts in Lancashire also strengthened and added to the familial feel. Further, he suggests that as a result of the higher number of men, there was a narrowed job market in traditionally male roles, resulting in males being pushed into weaving positions.⁸ The result of the higher number of men also meant a further extension of patriarchal family units to the factory. In the smaller country districts, the inclusion of elderly men, coupled with the increased levels of job security meant that there were in some instances a shortage of males willing to perform tasks other than weaving. In these districts therefore, the patriarchal led family system was amplified.⁹

The desire for standardisation

The period directly before the outbreak of the First World War was perhaps the peak for urban growth and local municipal power in north east Lancashire. The isolation that some settlements had enjoyed had been challenged as administrative boundaries shifted and were re-drawn to compensate for urban growth. Therefore, local customs such as wages, work patterns and the local rates paid were heavily scrutinized. Within the larger settlements, the local weavers associations often viewed the country areas as different to themselves. The official history of the AWA notes that (in relation to Longridge) 'in a rural area the difficulties of organisation were great'.¹⁰ In Skipton, which was described as an 'outpost', the mills in the town operated on their own individual wage lists until 1912, and after affiliating in 1902 took a further five years to establish an AWA office in 1907.¹¹ Furthermore, Burnley Weavers' Association (BWA) officials referred to Harle Syke as 'that little nook up there',¹² in 1915 whilst the *Cotton Factory Times* noted how it had 'long been a menace to other districts paying the list' in 1913.¹³ Indeed, the *Lancashire Evening Post* as early as 1897 described the country districts as the 'bête noir' of Burnley's manufacturers.¹⁴ During a meeting of Cotton Spinners and Manufacturers Association (CSMA) in 1899, the country districts were surveyed, and it was felt that 'the standard list is disregarded with impunity.' The districts had undergone a growth from 18,000 looms in 1897 to 24,000 looms in 1899, and their rapid development became an increasing cause of consternation. Whilst trade was good and the districts were small, they could, to an extent, be tolerated. However, when trade dropped, the ability of collections of unfederated mills to undercut larger settlements coupled with their flexibility both economically and in working practices was inherently against the desire for standardisation. Yet, the country district employers argued that their operatives were happy, earned good, stable wages and had a better standard of working life.¹⁵

⁸ M. Savage, 'Women and Work in the Lancashire Cotton Industry 1890-1939', in Jowitt and McIvor, *Employers and Labour in the English Textile Industries*, p. 213.

⁹ LRO/DDX1123/6/2/421b.

¹⁰ E. Hopwood, *The Lancashire Weavers Story*, (Lancashire: Co-Operative Press, 1969), p. 45.

¹¹ Hopwood, *Lancashire Weavers*, p. 46.

¹² *Burnley News*, August 28, 1915.

¹³ *Cotton Factory Times*, August 29, 1913.

¹⁴ *Lancashire Evening Post*, February 18, 1897.

¹⁵ The Country Districts listed are, Barnoldswick, Earby, Foulridge, Wheatley Lane and Spenbrook, Haggate and Harle Syke, Clivinger and Clitheroe, *Burnley Express*, April 22, 1899.

Burnley, with the majority of the country districts bordering it, was the loudest voice of discontent. The local manufacturers and sections of the weavers in the town had previously opposed the moves towards standardisation in the late 1890s, fearing it would stunt competition and benefit rival towns like Blackburn.¹⁶ The success of the country districts was thus a very antagonistic reminder of the freedoms that had been eroded for themselves.

With the desire for standardisation, trade unionism grew especially fast in the larger urban population centres. In particular, the BWA increased to become arguably the dominant regional weaving association. However, the BWA, and in turn the AWA, were forced to make 'humiliating' concessions in the attempts to bring the country districts – Barnoldswick in 1895, Skipton in 1911 and Harle Syke in 1914 - up to the standard wage lists. Eventually the campaign had to be taken to industrial courts in both 1920 and 1936 to try and resolve the issue.¹⁷

The growth of trade unionism in north east Lancashire

Early after its amalgamation in 1884, the AWA sought to extend its reach and forge new links with outlying districts. The results of these efforts were mixed, and local associations affiliated, left, disbanded and reformed at various points across the weaving districts.¹⁸ It was in the country districts where the associations had the greatest difficulty in maintaining a permanent presence. However, the AWA grew from 29 districts in 1892 to 38 by 1907,¹⁹ and further increased membership in the already affiliated districts.

The BWA had engaged in an 'all-embracing' approach to recruitment, in contrast to the tactics of the Colne and Nelson associations, which were to seek lockout and industrial action after victimising non-unionists.²⁰ The BWA felt 'a little annoyance (which they will not, of course, admit)' to the tactics of the AWA who had come to favour the actions of Colne and Nelson, and whose pursuit of non-union operatives became more aggressive. Indeed, the tactic of intimidation was 'everything they (Burnley) had been working against,' and it was noted that the BWA's strength lay primarily in heavy canvassing and the persuasion of new members through stressing the benefits of unionism.²¹ The tactics in Burnley were generally successful, and the BWA grew from 14,500 members in 1906, to declaring themselves 'the largest single trades union in the world,' with a membership of 30,000, or one third of the town's population by 1913.²² As shown in Table 15, the growth of the AWA was equally impressive. Bar a period of plateau between 1894 and 1904, they went through a period of tremendous expansion, and peaked in 1914.

Table 15: Membership of the AWA

¹⁶ With hindsight, several Burnley manufacturers stated that standardisation had set the town back. *Lancashire Evening Post*, February 18, 1897.

¹⁷ *Burnley News*, September 6, 1913.

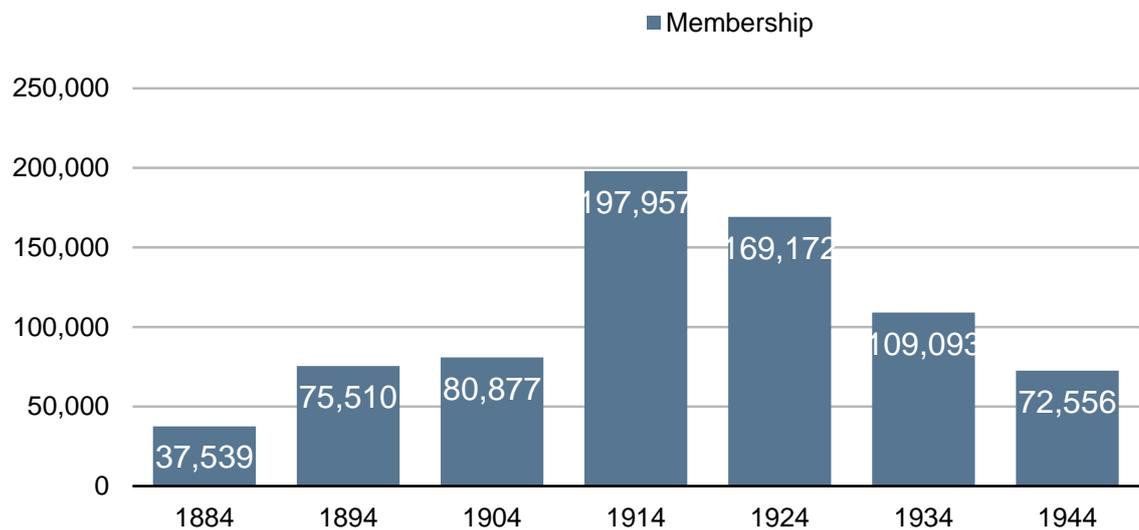
¹⁸ Bullen, *Weavers*, p. 26.

¹⁹ Bullen, *Weavers*, p. 26.

²⁰ *Burnley Express*, December 30, 1911. It is also shown through interviews, and within the Weavers' minutes that people were hired to perform tasks such as physically assaulting and intimidating non-unionists. Such discussions are seen in the correspondence files, LRO/DDX 1123/5.

²¹ *Manchester Guardian*, January 11, 1912.

²² *Burnley Gazette*, March 24, 1906.



Figures from Hopwood, *The Lancashire Weavers Story*, p188

The concerted efforts to boost AWA membership figures were part of a shift in mentality amongst the union leadership. Primarily, the AWA felt a need to address its perceived weaknesses and to build its 'industrial strength' in the face of the challenges facing trade unionism nationally.²³ The impetus came from a position of relative stability. As the industry had sustained a period of growth and general industrial peace, there was a speculative boom in mill building between 1907 and 1908, representing the degree of confidence in long-term prosperity from operatives and manufacturers, although this was followed by a trade slump in 1908. There was also a degree of security in industrial relations, codified through previous settlements, firstly by the Brooklands Agreement in 1893 and solidified by the adoption of 'Joint Rules' in 1908.²⁴ Indeed, as Joyce argues concerning the later Victorian era, the development of the industry and the tradition of unionism had removed the sense of class-based 'antagonism' from trade disputes by 'giving it a bureaucratic and ritual expression.'²⁵ If this view is somewhat simplistic, there was, at least in the 1906-1910 period, a certain degree of 'going through the motions' in many trade disputes in the urban areas. To an extent, the pageant-like nature of settlement encouraged stability, and it is possible without over generalisation to evidence a level of understanding of this between both sides. For example, the publication in Burnley of the local song, *The Great Sham Manufacturer* (Figure 13), based on Dickens' *Fine Old English Gentlemen*, offers the threats against the abuses by a tyrannical mill owners as strikes, which are like 'tooth ache' and that the manufacturer will end up in poverty. There was thus a desire for fair wages, and for those of higher standing to act with compassion to the workers. The threats were not of violence or revolution, but were based in the cultural expectance of having some kind of input into the industry, and in turn local society.

Like in *The Great Sham Manufacturer*, the main cause of industrial disputes across north east Lancashire

²³ Bullen, *Weavers*, p. 26, The threats to trade unionism for example were the Taff Vale Case 1903, The Trade Disputes Act 1906 and The Osbourne Judgement 1909. For a general history see E. Evans, *The Shaping of Modern Britain: Identity Industry and Empire 1780-1914*, (London: Routledge, 2011).

²⁴ Although the result of the resolution of a Spinning dispute, the Brooklands Agreement, along with the Standard Lists established certain protocols in terms of the machinery to settle disputes. For a detailed analysis, see A. McIvor, *Organised Capital: Employers' Associations and Industrial Relations in Northern England, 1880-1939*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). For Joint Rules, See Hopwood, *Lancashire Weavers*, p. 76.

²⁵ P. Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics: Culture of the Factory in Later Victorian England*, (England: Harvester Press, 1982), p. 60.

was wages. Between 1906 and 1908, the two main issues that concerned the AWA were increases in wages linked to the rising costs of living, spearheaded by the three largest affiliated members - Burnley, Blackburn and Nelson - and the problem of bad, or lesser quality, materials, which in turn resulted in wage reductions for poor work. The first issue failed in the face of slump, but for many in the AWA, the campaign was undermined by the presence of non-unionists.²⁶ The issue of bad materials was an on-going problem and a form of employer cost-cutting, through cheaper materials, and also fines related to the weaver's finished product. Thomas Emmott and Sons at Wood Top Mill underwent a six month strike over the issue,²⁷ whilst in a single quarter of 1907, 27 different disputes were entered into and a further six firms had undergone strike action.²⁸ However, in the period between 1906 and 1910, the majority of strike cases were resolved with employers ultimately paying compensation.



Figure 13: 'The Great Sham Manufacturer'. Source: Burnley Library Collection, LT62/BUR

Rising strike action coincided with a plateau in AWA membership recruitment. As Bullen details, to coincide with the AWA's 21st anniversary, moves were taken to 'revitalise' the movement, and a further recruitment drive was undertaken through the hiring of temporary agents, mass leafleting, canvassing and increasing local efforts to further drive up numbers. The result of this was to 'radicalise' the rank and

²⁶ A. Fowler and L. Fowler, *The History of the Nelson Weavers Association*, (Nelson: 1984), p. 17.

²⁷ *Manchester Guardian*, September 3, 1907.

²⁸ *Burnley Express*, April 17, 1907.

file against non-unionists.²⁹ The process gathered momentum in 1910 when David Shackleton stepped down from his position as president due to his new role with the Board of Trade. His replacement was John W. Ogden of the Heywood Weavers' Association and his appointment signalled a new approach to membership. In the same month as Ogden was appointed, the AWA General Council decided that in districts with 85 per cent union membership, mills would be able to receive financial support for members refusing to work with non-unionists.³⁰ The tactic of pursuing a 'closed shop' initially targeted already pro-union areas and ultimately, in Hill's opinion, backfired, with 'far reaching political and industrial consequences which were to haunt the cotton industry in the 1920s.'³¹ However, in the short-term, the newfound fervour created a climate akin to a 'religious revival' and duly saw a 'backlash' amongst less enthusiastic operatives fearful of the left-moving associations.³² Further evidence comes from a member in Accrington who quit the local association after becoming 'disgusted with the spirit shown by trade union officials and the squabbling about getting nice jobs.'³³ The *Blackburn Times* asked:

What they will gain by forcing within the union the few people who prefer to remain outside is at all commensurate with the loss they will sustain by the lockout? It is no secret that some of the older leading trade unionists are extremely doubtful on the point and have been led into the present quarrel by a few younger hot-heads with far less experience and judgment.³⁴

The fear of a politicisation of the weaving unions created further divisions. In Nelson, Catholics sought to have their own union partly over Labour's support of non-sectarian education and other links to anti Anglican/Catholic bodies. They formed the Nelson and District Catholic Workers Union in 1906. There were also a growing number of active anti-socialist groups within Burnley. The Anti-Socialist Union and the Women's Unionist Association held several meetings around north east Lancashire, but often held the larger meetings within the town.³⁵ There was also the issue of Protection Societies, which were effectively rival local unions, but with a clear attempt to remain depoliticised.³⁶ These societies developed throughout Lancashire and set up with their own Federation in 1885 in opposition to the AWA's political activities. Indeed, they too were seen as a 'menace' and in some instances also aligned with an anti-socialist message,³⁷ part of what White termed their 'self-defined claim to distinctiveness.'³⁸ The Protection Societies varied in success, but as White has rightly shown, usually appeared more prevalently where the ILP was active - thus Burnley did not have one, yet Blackburn, Clitheroe and Preston did. The general conservative nature of the Protection Societies, and their avoidance of strike action represents the perception of an older, more deferential system of relations. Thus, when the Nelson and Clitheroe districts formed their Protection Societies, the function was to be 'a trade-union society purely and simply without being used for political purposes.'³⁹ Indeed, by 1919 the Federation of Protection Societies

²⁹ Bullen, *Weavers*, p. 29.

³⁰ Hopwood, *Lancashire Weavers*, p. 78.

³¹ J. Hill, *Nelson: Politics, Economy, Community*, (Lancaster: Carnegie Press, 1997), p. 32.

³² Bullen, *Weavers*, p. 30.

³³ *Manchester Guardian*, December 21, 1911.

³⁴ *Blackburn Times*, 30 December, 1911.

³⁵ *Burnley Gazette*, September 27, 1911.

³⁶ In some districts, the Protection Societies did align with the Conservatives.

³⁷ Hopwood, *Lancashire Weavers Story*, p. 78.

³⁸ White, *Limits*, p. 166.

³⁹ *Burnley Express*, April 27, 1912.

applied to join the Trade Unions Congress and maintained a membership of 9,000.⁴⁰

The 1911 lockout and the role of the locality

Within the context of the growth of the AWA and the challenges faced by trade unionism, the issue of non-unionists reached fever pitch, and the industry on Wednesday 27th December 1911 underwent a lockout affecting 160,000 workers in north and north east Lancashire. Furthermore, as the demand for yarn reduced, some 150,000 cotton spinners were stopped from Saturdays to Tuesdays until the weavers returned to work.⁴¹ The dispute eventually halted on the 20th January 1912, at a cost of £71,000. The settlement put in place acted as an effective halt to any action from either side for six months, whilst George Askwith - later awarded a KCB partly for his work - was brought in to mediate and decide on a course of action. The non-unionist issue eventually became embroiled in the pursuit of overall wage rises and once again, their presence was felt to be a direct challenge to collective strength of the AWA.

In the aftermath of the settlement, the CSMA sought assurances from the AWA that in future disputes with non-unionists they be declared 'non-combatants'. The AWA, now aware that much of the industrial action had occurred through local initiative, stated it was out of their power to stop the local associations raising the non-unionist issue. However, they were prepared to guarantee that they would not advocate strikes over the issue, 'practically' admitting 'they had burnt their fingers by their action'.⁴² Adapting White's figures for the period of 1910 – 1914, the total number of strikes initiated by weavers or winders stood at 139. However, of these, 94 were unofficial to 32 official, five were lockouts and eight lack data. The three places to suffer the highest levels of strike action were Burnley and Haslingden, both with 13 and Nelson with 11. Of the causes for all 139 noted, only seven concerned the issue of non-unionists and 10 concerned the issue of union recognition, 11 were due to dismissals and a further 11 due to unspecified grievances. Instead, the two highest causes, with 24 each, were either 'unspecified' or due to being made to work with bad materials.⁴³ It is, therefore, difficult to view the apparent 'militancy' of north east Lancashire as anything other than a reaction to worsening conditions (poor cloth/fining for poor work), and an attempt to defend working practices and wages. Indeed, dismissals affected not only the worker themselves but also the notion of the family wage and in turn the respective community.

The various incidents and disputes within localities can also be viewed as part of a collective *zeitgeist* amongst the operatives who were frustrated at the lack of stable wages or other workplace advancements. Although the AWA used a great deal of bellicose discourse, whether they were prepared for such an enthusiastic response is uncertain. White suggests that the AWA had planned on a slow campaign to build up strength and confront the CSMA from a secure position, but the situation arose where weavers were willing to take strike action almost ad-hoc.⁴⁴ The likelihood is that the AWA were victims of their own propaganda campaign, encouraging both a new confidence in the strength of

⁴⁰ *Burnley Express*, August 9, 1919.

⁴¹ *The Times*, December 28, 1911.

⁴² These actions were two small incidents, which became the public face of the movement to push the industry into full dispute. In Accrington, Joel and Sarah Riley, and Margaret Bury in Great Harwood had resisted the local pressures to join the union. *The Times*, January 13, 1912.

⁴³ White, *Limits*, pp. 92-93.

⁴⁴ White, *Limits*, p. 133.

unionism, and a scapegoat in non-unionists. The general advancement of trade unionism thus created a snowball effect. One example was a 4,000-person lockout at Perseverance Mill in Padiham following the dismissal of a weaver without a given reason. The local association took the dismissal as an attack on job security. The reason suspected by the unionists was that the dismissal was to allow the sister of another weaver to take her job.⁴⁵ However, in calling strike action, the Padiham Weavers' Association acted independently of the established protocols, therefore forfeiting the support of the AWA, and garnering condemnation that was 'generally in accord with responsible trade union opinion.'⁴⁶ The incident therefore added credibility to the growing belief that the mechanisms for dealing with disputes were biased towards the employer.

The incident in Padiham served as a source of inspiration for many operatives, despite calls for restraint from the AWA. By May 1910, operatives were threatening daily strike action, which employers met with threats of lockouts. The *Manchester Guardian* described the threats as 'becoming more and more a favourite weapon' with the employers now 'ready to lay their hands upon it on any flimsy pretext.'⁴⁷ Local action, such as intense canvassing, public rallies and tours by notable speakers, reached, in White's view, 'crescendo' by December.⁴⁸ The heightened tensions continued into 1911, and union members turned to strike action almost immediately after attempts to coerce non-unionists had failed.⁴⁹ The BWA gained parliamentary attention when they advised their members to shun non-unionists as if they 'were possessed of some plague or fever and to refuse to assist them in any way, or to associate with them.'⁵⁰ At Rishton, the results were described as 'phenomenal' after operatives refused to work with non-unionists, which according to reports resulted in a situation where 'out of several thousand workers in the town all but one has now joined.'⁵¹ In Nelson, the local association took the steps of issuing the threat that unless cotton workers of all grades became unionised, strike notices across the town would be handed in.⁵²

Despite the vigour of several of the local campaigns, the overall mood of operatives varied. When a dispute at Yatefield Mill in Burnley saw 28 union spinners threaten strike action over four non-union workers, the potential for a wider scale dispute caused the operatives locally to be 'greatly disturbed.'⁵³ Despite the fear of potential hardship mass industrial action would bring in Burnley, the earlier threat issued from Nelson frightened the CSMA enough for them in December 1911 to post the declaration that the established protocol of one weeks' notice for a lockout was to be removed. The CSMA argued that they were 'defending their right to engage competent workpeople without imposing on them 'the test of membership of the operatives' organisations.'⁵⁴ The move was an attempt at forging collective strength and solidarity, meaning that employers could lock out operatives in support of mills undergoing strike

⁴⁵ *Manchester Guardian*, February 10, 1911.

⁴⁶ *Manchester Guardian*, February 14, 1911.

⁴⁷ *Manchester Guardian*, December 2, 1910.

⁴⁸ White, *Limits*, p. 132.

⁴⁹ *Manchester Guardian*, December 21, 1911.

⁵⁰ *Burnley Gazette*, December 9, 1911.

⁵¹ *Manchester Guardian*, October 14, 1911.

⁵² *Manchester Guardian*, December 6, 1911.

⁵³ *The Times*, October 8, 1911.

⁵⁴ *The Times*, December 12, 1911.

action. The employers in Burnley especially emphasized the newfound unity in the town when they declared that:

Never have the Burnley manufacturers shown such a solid front and such a determined attitude ... We are not going to have this bother over again. We are determined to have no more coercion over the non-unionist question, and we are going to have a little more peace in our sheds than we have had over the last few months.⁵⁵

Yet, the newfound unity within the CSMA further increased the paranoia amongst operatives over the decline of collective bargaining, and disputes locally continued unabated. When the CSMA committee met on 22nd December, it was decided that both spinning and weaving mills would close on 27th December until the question of non-union members was resolved,⁵⁶ a move which in Fowlers' opinion 'took the Amalgamation by surprise.'⁵⁷

The authority of the AWA was challenged from both the CSMA and the operatives. As the effects of the lockout started to impact upon communities across Lancashire, they looked to resurrect the older issue of wage increases, requesting an advance of five per cent that was rejected.⁵⁸ The request was an attempt to end the dispute having saved face. As Fowler notes, the AWA, 'had no idea how to end the dispute without appearing to have sustained a very demoralising defeat,'⁵⁹ and White argues the wage claim was 'their final card' which was met by the CSMA with refusal and the message that 'nothing less than unconditional capitulation' would be acceptable.⁶⁰

In the aftermath of the settlement the AWA suffered greater losses to its authority, although the overall impact was uneven across Lancashire.⁶¹ Although hardly any dissent towards the agreement arose south of Preston, hostility towards non-unionists remained in several districts.⁶² In Nelson and Colne where the AWA officials were heckled off the platform, a campaign of unofficial 'wildcat' agitation developed.⁶³ Fowler and Hill both deal with Nelson and Colne's reaction in full detail, but the weavers associations in the towns emerged from the lockout as stronger and more united units, able to approach local rivals and non-unionists with a renewed aggression.⁶⁴ The newfound strength of the Nelson Weavers' Association locally gave them an authority to successfully push for local wage rises. The weavers in the town became in some instances the highest paid weavers in Lancashire, and due to the tradition of women in weaving receiving pay parity with men, probably near the highest paid women in the country, which as Fowler argues 'transformed the economic and social position of the weaver.'⁶⁵

However, in Burnley, the settlement was welcomed with 'genuine relief and thankfulness,'⁶⁶ as the operatives there did not want further stoppages.⁶⁷ This was mirrored outside of the area, for example in

⁵⁵ *Manchester Guardian*, January 11, 1912.

⁵⁶ *The Times*, December 23, 1911.

⁵⁷ Fowler, *Nelson Weavers*, p. 18.

⁵⁸ *Manchester Guardian*, January 6, 1912.

⁵⁹ Fowler, *Nelson Weavers*, p. 19.

⁶⁰ White, *Limits*, p. 135.

⁶¹ White, *Limits*, p. 139.

⁶² White, *Limits*, p. 140.

⁶³ *The Times*, January 19, 1912.

⁶⁴ See Fowler, *Nelson Weavers*, and Hill, *Nelson*.

⁶⁵ Fowler, *Nelson Weavers*, p. 22.

⁶⁶ *Burnley Gazette*, January 21, 1912.

⁶⁷ *Burnley Express*, January 24, 1912.

Preston, which had gone through a period of great distress, the operatives were described as ‘nothing exciting ... they don’t work themselves up here the same as they do Nelson way.’⁶⁸ Indeed, this is further reiterated in a statement by a Blackburn official, and highlights how differently the weaving districts were affected by the lockout:

If the operatives today would be content to live on necessities, as they were in 1878, they could carry on the present fight for two or three months without difficulty. But times have changed ... and now they must have their Saturday football and their theatres and picture shows every week. This is not the way to fight a lockout.⁶⁹

The impact of the lockout across localities

The effects of the lockout across the weaving districts were varied and multifaceted. Under AWA rules, members had to have paid 13 consecutive weeks membership to be eligible for strike pay, meaning that new recruits were in many instances ineligible. There was also a sliding scale in terms of contributions and benefits. Generally, the members in Nelson received between 12s and £1, Burnley ranged from 6s to £1 and Padiham between 5s-15s. Members in Colne usually received around 15s a week, whilst in Blackburn, the wages ranged from 9s-15s. The different figures, it was noted accounted ‘far more for the determination shown by the operatives in north east Lancashire ... than socialist leanings with which they are generally credited.’⁷⁰ There was thus disparity from the start. Reports described some operatives dressed in holiday clothes starting the strike ‘like a sort of picnic to Johannesburg’ with country rambles.⁷¹ The reports from Colne, which *The Times* claimed was common at most institutes and working men’s clubs, detailed a ‘genial atmosphere’ with lectures, reading, and games such as billiards, draughts, ‘tip it’ and a 200-person-strong dance at half past two in the afternoon.⁷² However, the situation in Burnley declined rapidly. By mid-January 1912, only 1,700 operatives there were estimated to be working out of 32,000. The operatives were spread across eight mills, with one, F. Houlding Central Mill, being solely on non-union labour. Some 20,000 of the 26,000 union members received out of work pay, with 6,000 new members and an estimated 4,000 non-unionists ineligible for help. In Nelson, a further 2,000 operatives were ineligible for benefits until they had completed their full 13 weeks of contributions. The Accrington Weavers’ Association decided to pay new recruits; the Great Harwood Weavers’ Association took the decision to take each new member’s case on merit, unlike nearby in Blackburn where new association members did not receive strike pay.⁷³ In Blackburn, the Poor Law Relief Committee had an ‘extraordinary meeting’ to cope with the situation there, described as ‘a sad picture, and it will become sadder if the now overdue settlement is any longer delayed.’⁷⁴ In Rochdale, the Co-op resorted to distributing ‘over £10,000 in dividend money.’⁷⁵

In some places the community rallied to try and alleviate some of the distress. By the 13th of January, locked-out operatives were going around the towns trying to raise funds, whilst in some towns, local groups such as the Oddfellows provided free meals. Similar schemes were set up, with a soup kitchen in

⁶⁸ *Manchester Guardian*, January 11, 1912.

⁶⁹ White, *Limits*, p. 139.

⁷⁰ *The Times*, January 19, 1912.

⁷¹ *Manchester Guardian*, December 29, 1911.

⁷² *Manchester Guardian*, December 29, 1911.

⁷³ *Manchester Guardian*, January 4, 1912.

⁷⁴ *The Times*, January 6, 1912.

⁷⁵ *The Times*, January 11, 1912.

Brierfield opened by the local Liberal and Working Men's Club.⁷⁶ Nelson coped better, due to the higher wage rates there allowing for more savings. A higher proportion of operatives owned their own houses and furnishings, and as the *Burnley Express* explained:

The more thrifty persons are able to put by a good sum, and are not wholly dependent in troublesome times on the benefits they receive from their respective unions. This class of operative can afford to stand out for a lengthy period. These are the principal persons who form the backbone of the unions. They have money invested in the Co-operative Society, Building Societies and other similar institutions and in their determination to carry the principle to a successful issue fears are entertained that at the end of the resources of the unions they will obdurate.⁷⁷

In common with Nelson, the operatives in Great Harwood relied on its Co-operative society, of which 90 per cent of residents were members. The town failed to have any Poor Law applications, using £66,000 in share capital and £11,000 in the Savings Banks.⁷⁸ Great Harwood itself had some common traits with the 'outer districts' - a strong cooperative tradition, a close-knit community, and a reputation for thrift. However, there was variation even amongst the villages of north east Lancashire, and in some cases downsides to being in a smaller settlement. The village of Sabden, with only one mill and generally low union numbers, suffered as the local mill closed, leaving around 500 people without income and only a small number with union pay. Indeed, as soon as the lockout began, it was noted 'should the dispute last any length of time whole families will suffer' due to this.⁷⁹ The slightly larger of the nearby villages, such as Trawden, were able to offset such action by distributing the unemployment across the remaining open mills. Similarly in Todmorden, only one mill, Harvey's Alma Mill, was directly affected by the action,⁸⁰ whilst Brierfield kept 6,000 of its 9,000 looms running. It was in Harle Syke, Worsthorne, Brownside, Wheatley Lane and Clivinger that all of the mills kept running unaffected. The combination of uneven strike pay, community pressure, and open mills in the country districts therefore encouraged strikebreaking. In some cases, mills in the country districts took advantage of the lockout to increase orders, and brought in 'knobstick' workers to undertake the increase in work. As one letter to the *Burnley Express* explained:

Much ... has been heard in this district (Burnley) concerning the Weavers' Union and non-unionists ... if there was anything to be gained joining the union the weavers of Burnley would not be long in toeing the line. What I can not understand, however, is the number of people who tramp to Harle Syke every morning ... while those coming in the opposite direction could be counted on the fingers of one hand ... the Syker ... would sooner work under their own conditions ... than exchange places with his brother down the lane.⁸¹

The character of 'country' trade unionism

As previously discussed, the country areas were often regarded as being different, and even in 1912 Harle Syke was described by the AWA officials as being in 'a world of their own' and 'pernicious isolation'.⁸² Indeed, as the textile industry of Burnley expanded, it moved increasingly closer to the country districts. However, the operatives across the administrative borders were still seen to be 'different'. As one letter argued, there was no real sense of solidarity between Burnley and the country districts: 'Harle Syke

⁷⁶ *Burnley Express*, January 13, 1912.

⁷⁷ However, within a week, the number of children requiring school meals locally had risen from eight to 33. *Burnley Express*, January 13, 1912.

⁷⁸ *The Times*, January 5, 1912.

⁷⁹ *Burnley Express*, December 30, 1911.

⁸⁰ *Burnley Express*, January 12, 1912.

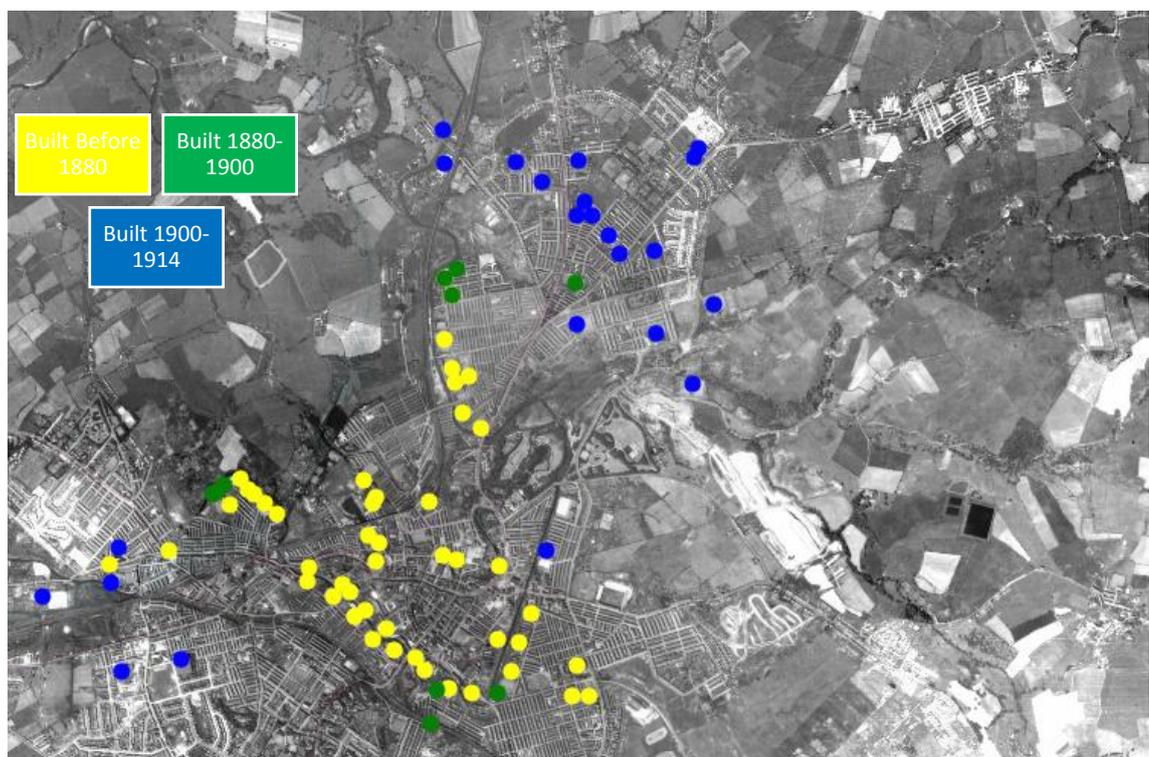
⁸¹ *Burnley Express*, November 18, 1911.

⁸² *Burnley Express*, October 13, 1915.

workers have an advantage. If Burnley workers had that advantage, would they go on strike to give it us? Not likely.⁸³As shown in Figure 14 the newer mills that were built in Burnley tended to be predominantly northwards. This meant that in some instances barely a few yards lay between districts, operating independent wage rates and working practices, and bringing wider scrutiny to the differences.

There was variation amongst the country districts in regards to their relationship to trade unionism. One letter defending Harle Syke during the 1915 strike there highlights the mind sets of people within some of districts, and how they had retained a competitive entrepreneurial spirit which characterised previous generations: '(the Harle Syke operative) doesn't seem to take such a fancy to unions. There's a good many people been the same before him, especially when they have had it all their own way so long. But it was never good for anyone to have their own way all the time.'⁸⁴ But the relationship between some of the country villages and trade unionism could change. As has previously been discussed with the case of Sabden during the lockout, the majority of the operatives in the village were unaffiliated. However, the local employers were close enough to the CSMA to join in the industrial action. Thus, what was and was not an unfederated mill was subject to change, but there were recurring areas that were problematic, which as shown in Figure 15, tended to be those around the Burnley-Nelson-Colne conurbation. The two areas to gain the most union attention were Harle Syke and Barnoldswick.

Figure 14: Years of Mill Construction in Burnley



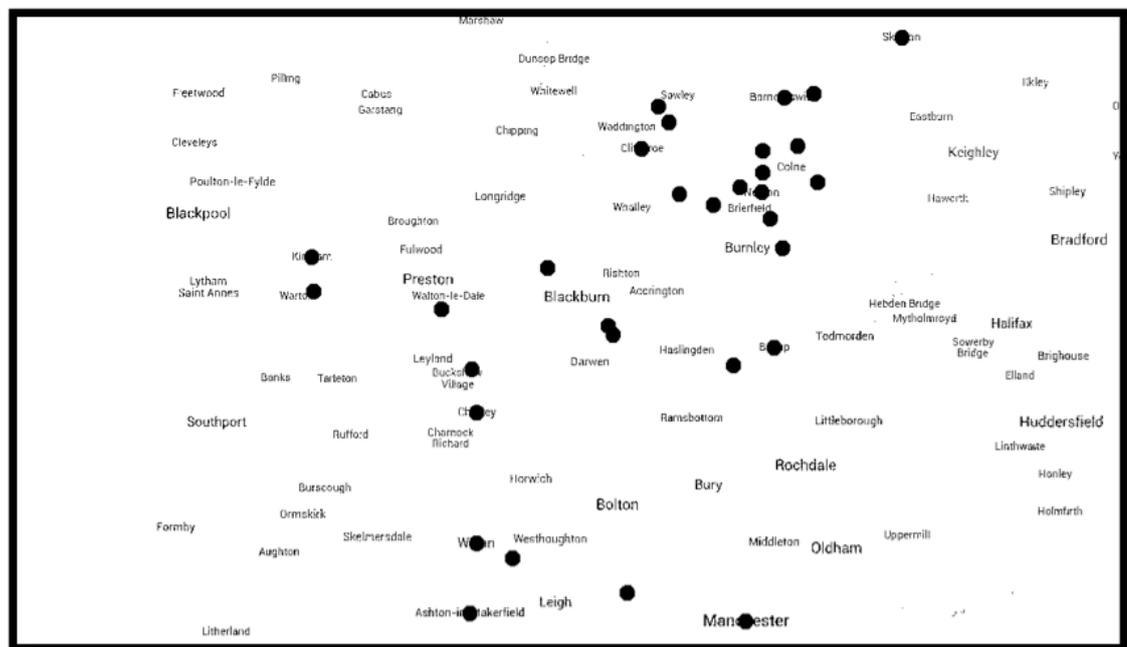
Base map from MarioMaps, Lancashire County Council, and data from Sister Elizabeth (1959), 'The Decline Of The Cotton Trade In Burnley', Thesis, formerly of Belfast University, Burnley Library Collection, LM31/ELI and J. Howell, 'Burnley Cotton Manufacturers Personal Details, Cotton Mills And Cotton Mill Partnerships', Burnley Library Collection, LM31/HOW.

⁸³ *Burnley Express*, December 11, 1915.

⁸⁴ *Burnley Express*, October 20, 1915.

Many of the country mills were built in locations that were regarded as naturally damper,⁸⁵ and did not engage as frequently in the practice of steaming – creating artificial humidity – in the weaving shed. The mills were also widely regarded as using higher quality yarn. Many also engaged in the practice of ‘local disadvantages’, paying underneath the agreed wage lists due to perceived hindrances, such as extra carriage costs, based on their locations. A key source for understanding the mentality of these places is the evidence presented at the March 4th 1920 Industrial court on Local Disadvantages of Firms of Lancashire and Yorkshire Weaving Industry and AWA.⁸⁶

Figure 15: Main settlements containing at least one unfederated mill



Source: Evidence supplied from Industrial Court, 1920, DDX1123/6/2/421b. Base map Googlemaps

As previously expressed, the distance from the main centres was held as a key factor in the everyday life of the country mills, so a clear separation existed between the everyday town and village life. Likewise, the struggle and effort to which the AWA described in recruiting members in these districts implies that they were met with a large degree of resistance or disinterest and unionism was, thus, met with scepticism. As is seen again with the case of Harle Syke, one reporter noted how due to the closeness of societal relations ‘he could scarcely tell the employer from the workpeople,’⁸⁷ notably different than in Burnley. The conditions in Burnley were felt by many trade unionists to be where the AWA attentions should be focussed, rather than on country districts. A further local letter argued that:

It would have been better had the union declared a strike at some of the Burnley mills where worse conditions exist ... It is a waste of money to strike against good conditions. The Harle Syke weaver often has full work when we have not ... Don't let us pull down their conditions, but rather let us rather ascend to their position. It appears to me that the union is

⁸⁵ There is a degree of truth in this. See the map provided in the appendix p. 294, which shows the average annual rainfall, and correlates to the areas with unfederated mills generally receiving higher rainfall.

⁸⁶ LRO/DDX1123/6/2/421b.

⁸⁷ *Burnley Express*, December 11, 1915.

out more for power than to brighten and mitigate the hard-working people's existence ... go to Harle Syke and work there, and by doing so you will not crush your union, but will help it to be remodelled on proper lines.⁸⁸

A country culture

The Barnoldswick and Harle Syke strikes share remarkable similarities despite being thirty years apart. Indeed, all of the country strikes share similarities which highlight the influence of local character. Firstly, both Harle Syke and Barnoldswick had roots in the attempts of the AWA acting through the BWA to open negotiations regarding the issue of 'local disadvantages' and being ignored. Secondly, both occurred at times when the settlements were still expanding, physically and industrially. In the case of Harle Syke, the lack of union success was attributed originally to the influence of the local shareholders, but also to the disinterest of local operatives and to the archaism of the local employers.⁸⁹ The atmosphere was summarised by the *Manchester Guardian*:

Apart from the weekly wages, there was the half-yearly dividend to look forward to, and that anticipated with perhaps keener interest than the wages. Dividends of 20, 25 and even 30 per cent for the year were not uncommon, and the workpeople needed no encouragement to 'keep the average up'. They were as ardently bent on a good dividend as any of the directors. They would even turn up at the mills before five o'clock in the morning to clean their looms, take pieces of cloth off the rollers and do other work which could be done before the engine started at six o'clock ... little supervision was needed and the hands enjoyed many little privileges denied to the town operatives.⁹⁰

However, *The Cotton Factory Times* denied this view:

It has only been their apathy and indifference to trade union methods which has kept them from The List up to present ... we can scarcely believe that... they would sell their rights to List rights for such a miserable pottage as a dividend of five or ten per cent on their shares.⁹¹

The lack of understanding over the system in place at Harle Syke by wider circles was mirrored in description of the conditions in Barnoldswick as being 'peculiar'. The local employers were seen to be largely self-made and the workers frugal and thrifty. Many operatives had savings invested in mill property and had previously lent money to the local employers. It was remarked that there were few places where the tenants so universally owned dwellings. All of these things 'tie people down to Barnoldswick, and cause them to avoid doing anything which would injure the trade of the town.'⁹² In both cases, it was also seen that the unrest caused by trade unionism had been brought from outside. It was stated in regards to Barnoldswick that 'under the circumstances one is inclined to believe the assertion that the majority of those who are enrolled among the strikers are not natives but immigrants, who have come in search of work.'⁹³

The Harle Syke strike in 1915 was described as a battle against 'greed and autocracy, avarice and despotism',⁹⁴ and many of the country strikes had a moralising undertone to them. As one letter to the *Burnley Express* highlighted in regard to Harle Syke, the system in place there, which to outsider may have appeared exploitative (and perhaps was to non-natives), was generally a success:

⁸⁸ *Burnley Express*, December 15, 1915.

⁸⁹ *Manchester Guardian*, October, 13, 1915.

⁹⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, August 28, 1915.

⁹¹ *Cotton Factory Times*, August 29, 1913.

⁹² *Leeds Mercury*, April 29, 1896.

⁹³ *Leeds Mercury*, April 29, 1896.

⁹⁴ *Burnley Express*, 16 October 1915.

With all their faults they work on a better system. They are managing their sheds better. All the weavers may not be shareholders, but the pioneers are and they control the show; that is why there is no strike or lockout.⁹⁵

To defend the notion of 'local disadvantages', several arguments were presented separately from the logistical issues that represent the realities of unionism in these districts.⁹⁶ Firstly, there was a smaller pool of people. Over time, this would be of benefit as it allowed for time to develop skills and expertise, but also created problems in terms of finding replacements for departing, and in terms of the community, poorer workers. The close-knit nature of the community could thus be a benefit, through maintaining a family structure within the mills, but also a hindrance. The clearest example offered was the impact of a wedding or funeral potentially forcing several mills to close at once. The country weavers were also seen as less 'adaptable' to their urban counterparts. In the case of Skipton, the weavers were generally described negatively and often as being 'sloppy'.⁹⁷ Similarly, there was perceived to be a lack of drive amongst a number of the country weavers, with a number happy to live and die within their communities, and maintain a stable position in the workplace without seeking promotion. The location of the mill could also be a deterrent, as the Hill End Mill in Harle Syke struggled to attract workers due to it not having much housing around it, and it lying a mile away 'up a steep hill'.⁹⁸

The implication of a more 'relaxed' setting is repeated in the variance of working practices. The natural method of conducting business thus rested upon personal relationships. A similar argument is made by Birch concerning the 'industrial peace' found in Glossop, itself a kind of country district throughout the industrial period.⁹⁹ Although the experiences are subjective, there is enough evidence to indicate that the closer societal structure was fairly common. The kind of relationship and privilege that the operatives had is also reinforced by operative Billy Brooks who began working in the late 1890s in Barnoldswick. It is clear to see that the slimmer class margins offered a greater job security and bargaining power:

But I says, I says 'Well, I've been in taping for thirty years and I've allus gotten ... what I've wanted.' And it's a funny thing but I always did. When I wanted owt I says to t'boss, I says 'I'm underpaid!' ... He says 'well, I'll enquire and if I find out thart reight we'll make it reight' ... He made it reight, it made about eight bob a week difference, eight bob were a lot then. So I says (to the union) 'I've allus gotten what I wanted, I'll finish me time out now without' ... Aye, of course we used to talk straight to one another did me and the boss you know.¹⁰⁰

John Hebron, reinforces Brooks' reminiscences with his descriptions of Harle Syke in 1915. He describes the better conditions in contrast to those in Burnley:

The average wage per loom at Harle Syke is 6/6, perhaps a trifle over; we have no steam in the mills, and no driving; men were earning 38 shillings to £2.00 per week off 6 looms, without a tenter; previous to the strike, 'children' at 14 and 15 years of age were put on four looms; old men were also respected, and many of them had six looms without even a tenner; when a worker came late no one was put in his place; during working hours weavers went out for a smoke five, and even ten minutes every morning and afternoon.¹⁰¹

The country strikes

The main strikes to attempt to remove local disadvantages and spread trade unionism in the country

⁹⁵ *Burnley Express*, January 4, 1912.

⁹⁶ These are given variously as access to canals, railways, carriage costs, and steep inclines on hills etc.

⁹⁷ *Craven Herald*, July 28, 1911.

⁹⁸ LRO/DDX1123/6/2/421b.

⁹⁹ A. H. Birch, *Small Town Politics: A Study of Political Life in Glossop*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 21.

¹⁰⁰ Billy Brooks, Lancashire Textile Project, TAPE 78/AB/6.

¹⁰¹ Steaming again refers to the creation of artificial humidity, whereas driving involves the practice of forcing more work out of a weaver. *Burnley Express*, October 13, 1915.

districts were Barnoldswick in 1895, Skipton in 1909 and Harle Syke in 1915. All of the strikes ultimately resulted in the AWA accepting compromises by 'force majeure';¹⁰² although a similar dispute at Hebden Bridge 1906 has been included for further comparison due to its timing, similarities and geographical positioning.

All of the strikes in the country districts had the propensity to last for extended periods - Skipton seven weeks, Harle Syke eight months, and both Barnoldswick and Hebden Bridge two years each. All of the strikes encompassed the whole community. In the confines of a village with a close-knit population, it was almost impossible for people to not be involved in a dispute. Hence, all strikes talk of community involvement, with brass bands and singing, and also the after-effects such as feuds. The tendency for continued hostilities usually involved the targeting of migrant workers or newcomer families. For example, in Barnoldswick the resentment after the strike settlement resulted in several families being forced to leave due to a combination of local hostilities and blacklisting.¹⁰³ Similarly, the reason that the Harle Syke strike continued for eight months was the issue of re-employing the strikers – the majority of whom were commuters from Burnley.

The first dispute to consider is the 1895 Barnoldswick strike. It was, as the *Leeds Mercury* described, 'the last place in which one would look for a labour war,' but became, due to the determination of the local employers and the AWA just that, against the wishes of local people.¹⁰⁴ It started as a result of attempts to bring the wages in the district up by ten per cent, with the threat of bringing the larger towns down by the same amount if this was not done. The BWA approached the employers within the town to discuss the matter, with all but one, Mr. Eastwood, declining. Eastwood then agreed to pay an amount closer, but underneath the Burnley list; however, it later transpired that Eastwood was in fact breaking this agreement. Several hundred weavers were thus called out on strike, yet a large number continued to work, including many union members, and none of the mills ceased working. Imported workers from other towns filled the labour shortages and it was felt that many of the strikers would be forced to leave the town as their positions had been filled. Strike pay ranged from 17s to 23s a week, including non-unionist strikers getting pay. The strike began at Long Ing Shed, a room and power mill, and by March 1896 involved 1,200 weavers. At the time, the employers were not federated, and the AWA attempts to bring organisation and wage lists to the town were described as 'futile,' whilst a lack of coordination left the operatives 'completely disorganised'. Ultimately, the result of the strike was seen as a failure for the local weavers association, and the strike caused great financial losses.¹⁰⁵

The strike was generally passive until weavers were imported, taking over both jobs and housing in Barnoldswick. The challenge to the established community led to violent scenes across the town and increased militancy. One of the mills that had engaged migrant workers, Butts Mill, was forced to close when all the warps on its looms and all its packed pieces in the warehouse slashed. The act received widespread condemnation from all sides of the industry and there were no similar actions committed.

¹⁰² DDX1123/6/2/421b.

¹⁰³ LTP TAPE 78/AB/2.

¹⁰⁴ *Leeds Mercury*, April 29, 1896.

¹⁰⁵ *Burnley Gazette*, February 17, 1897.

The demographic situation was complicated by some of the weavers living in effective 'industrial colonies', with their properties being owned by their employers. This had several knock-on effects. Mr. Eastwood again garnered attention when he evicted his striking workers and families to make way for their replacements. In a sense this refers back to the idea of reciprocity: if the weavers were unwilling to cooperate, then the employer sought to replace them with ones that would, with little regard to the wider community.

The evictions usually attracted crowds of several hundreds and thus became shared experiences. One of the first to be evicted from the houses belonging to Mr W. P. Brooks of Wellhouse Mill was a Mr J. S. Reddihough who had lived for ten years at No.1 Wellhouse. He could not find alternative accommodation, so arranged to have some of his furniture stored at the home of one of his relatives, who were not on strike. However, they were then told that taking Reddihough's belongings would result in an eviction notice, which they were then given a few days later. As a crowd gathered, the man who owned the bailiff company felt sympathy with the family and allowed them to store their possessions in his mill (Victoria Mill). The AWA, anticipating the eviction of the remaining residents and neighbours, prepared to supply tents for the operatives. Eastwood, however, continued his actions, evicting several other families in more of his houses to make room for replacement workers, this time with the aid of the police. The events became a symbol of local spirit, as people sang, 'Britons never shall be Slaves' and 'Old Ireland' whilst by a parading through the town mocking Eastwood.¹⁰⁶

Billy Brooks, 13 at the time, spoke of his memories of unionism and the 1895 strike in Barnoldswick, and reiterates many of the above issues:

Well they were amalgamated to t'Northern Counties you know and Barlick, wi' being on a branch line, they had a bit of a do of their own, local disadvantage. They paid a bit less you see but after a while they wanted to do away with that ... And t'Northern Counties of course had to muck 'em out you know. They brought Long Ing out first, best shop I' Barlick, ... Well, as time went on, folk come out of Lancashire and they get filled up, aye ... Well aye, well these that come into the town you know, they, the unions in Barlick, if they saw them they'd offer 'em loom pay you see, not to start So they wouldn't start but they all, eventually it all fizzled out, they (the mills) got filled up and they had to go back, aye. Aye, under the same conditions as they come out. Now, after that, these that had come out on strike, they [the manufacturers] wouldn't have them no more you see, they black balled 'em. Manufacturers had an association of their own. They had to flit out of Barlick to Nelson, up and down aye ... I know one chap as I tented for a bit, him and his wife had ten loom making a reight nice do ... and they came out on strike. They wouldn't have 'em back and they had to go working in Chatburn aside o' Clitheroe there ... I remember a tremendous lot of families come into Barlick after the Barlick Strike and settled down here out of Lancashire and got their children going into weaving. It were so simple you know, just two up and two down you see, plain weaving and they got on.¹⁰⁷

The Barnoldswick strike was characterised as being driven by both the local employers and the AWA pumping money into the district in an attempt to claim victory; in the latter case, 'over and above' the usual amounts,¹⁰⁸ in total nearly £60,000.¹⁰⁹ Locally, shops with relatives working for mills saw their business picketed and several court cases were brought in regard to violence and intimidation. The local employers came out of the strike with their own association and a newfound unity to maintain the newly agreed and officially accepted local disadvantages.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ *Lancashire Evening Post*, June 20, 1896.

¹⁰⁷ LTP TAPE 78/AB/2 and LTP/ 78AB5.

¹⁰⁸ *Burnley Express*, December 18, 1895.

¹⁰⁹ *Burnley Gazette*, February 17, 1897.

¹¹⁰ S. Graham, *Stanley's View: Volume 4*, (lulu.com, 2010) p. 251.

The Hebden Bridge fustian strike began on July 26, 1906 at Foster Mill. The incident adds further evidence to the role of the community in country strike action. The local weavers wanted pay parity with the fustian weavers in Bury. The strike action quickly spread across the town affecting 500 weavers, who based themselves at the 'Tin Tab', the local Methodist chapel in the centre of town.¹¹¹ It developed to be one of the most violent strikes within the modern British textile industry, as well as one of the most complex. Within the course of two years, incidents included a riot, a suffragette rampage, a suffragist response, condemnation by the AWA, speeches by several notable figures including Emmeline Pankhurst and attempts by the local weavers to buy two disused mills and set themselves up as a self-financed 'cooperative garden village' self-help community.¹¹² As shown by Goldthorp in her research into the strike, the original plans for the village aimed at a utopia:

The site is fitted to become an arcadia and to ring with song and happiness. It has its church (St. James', Mytholm), its factory, its streams, its rocky cliffs, its woods and meadows, and some day it will have its cottage homes- a garden village, where its people will live lives free from carping care, free from lock-out or strike, happy in their beautiful surroundings on their own hillside.¹¹³

The local men rebuilt several old mills and renovated several houses for the project, undertaking the work themselves, whilst raising £7,000 of the desired £10,000 amongst their community.¹¹⁴ Indeed, the majority of the violence and disturbances which dominated the strike are attributed to the Suffragettes arriving in the town. Mrs G. H. Wilson of Illingworth described her activities in Hebden Bridge upon her release from prison: 'I went in gaol a rebel, but I have come out a regular terror.'¹¹⁵

The strike petered out through a combination of factors. The drop in trade in 1908 meant that the local association could no longer fund the strikers in Hebden Bridge, and much like in Barnoldswick, several mills imported workers, whilst other employers made individual agreements with operatives. Numbers began to dwindle until the strike finally tapered off, with the employers eventually managing to impose a five per cent decrease in wages. The report of the 1908 Todmorden and District Weavers' and Winders' Association was scathing in who to blame:

This is the final account in connection with the strike at Hebden Bridge ... This strike... has lasted for a much longer period than any strike in the history of our Amalgamation, and though we cannot claim a victory, yet the prices have been improved ... Our failure to obtain what we sought to achieve ... must be laid at the door of the workers themselves, for had it not been for our fellow-workers in other districts coming and taking the places of those on strike, we might have had a different result to record. The weavers who came out on strike stood out loyally and have earned our respect, omitting, of course, those few whose membership with this Society dates only a little more than the strike itself, and closed with the closing of the strike. The action of such only shows the way that sympathy can be abused, but ... the door is closed to such practices in the future, and only those who contribute in times of peace will receive financial assistance in times of war.¹¹⁶

The Skipton strike of 1911 came during such a 'time of war' at the height of the period of industrial disputes. The local association had been requesting wage increases for at least 15 years which had been ignored, and the local employers had around a 10 per cent advantage over Lancashire, and especially

¹¹¹ See the more recent local efforts to save the same building <http://www.hebdenbridgetimes.co.uk/news/local/bid-to-save-tin-tabernacle-1-1807004>.

¹¹² *Manchester Guardian*, August 12, 1907.

¹¹³ L. Goldthorp, 'The Fustian Weravers Strike', Hebden Bridge Lit & Sci: Local History Booklet, 3. Reproduced at <http://www.hebdenbridge.co.uk/history/redheb/fustian-weavers-strike.html>.

¹¹⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, January 7, 1908.

¹¹⁵ *Hull Daily Mail*, February 21, 1907.

¹¹⁶ Quoted by Goldthorp, 'Fustian Strike'.

neighbouring Colne. In November 1910, the local association submitted a list in the hope that this would be adopted. However the suggested wage was rejected, and the operatives felt that the local employers had 'played with them' by 'putting them off'.¹¹⁷ The weavers association then called out the weavers at four mills, to which the local employers posted lockout notices. In retaliation the operatives immediately went on strike August 1st, gradually spreading across the town, leaving only two of the 11 mills working.¹¹⁸ The benefit of this move was securing higher pay as was the case in a lockout. 1,200 of the town's 1,500 weavers came out - although due to the knock-on effects, the figure grew to include around 3,000 people.¹¹⁹

The Skipton strike was as White describes, 'solid and peaceable',¹²⁰ and was generally unremarkable, but for Skipton being so late to have any form of local association and managing to mobilise so quickly. Overall it was overshadowed in the context of the wider agitation in other industries. As Jackson shows, the AWA were critical of the despondence from local operatives.¹²¹ Yet, the largest thanks following the dispute was offered by the Skipton weavers to the AWA and Lancashire 'comrades' for their support.¹²² There was little resistance and the local employers were willing to negotiate throughout, at one point going back to work and paying the full 10 per cent difference in wages during a break in negotiations.¹²³ The strike was settled with the paying of the Colne list with five per cent deductions. Coming during a plateau in AWA membership, it provided a relatively smooth experience for the union.¹²⁴ However, there were some repercussions locally as an example from 1913 highlights. Weaver John William Hargreaves tried to commit suicide by jumping into a river after being offered his job back at Bairstows' Mill on condition that he leave the union. Upon being rescued by a farmer, he declared, 'don't save me; what will they do to me.'¹²⁵

The straightforward nature of the Skipton strike bred confidence that the AWA carried into the final dispute in 1914. Indeed, Harle Syke stood as the yardstick upon which to test the remaining 'out-districts' and the hope was that their capitulation would bring uniformity at last.¹²⁶ The *Manchester Guardian* explained the problem:

So long as Harle Syke remained a small weaving district little of nothing was heard in the way of complaint from ... Burnley, Blackburn, Nelson and other big centres, but its expansion during the last fifteen or twenty years has altered the situation.¹²⁷

Following the settlement of the 1911 lockout, the issues of wage increases became entangled with the continued presence of the 'local disadvantages'. The CSMA used the presence of Harle Syke and other 'out-districts' as justification to withhold any wage increases and demand wage cuts. When a wage increase was eventually granted, it came with a clear condition attached: to take 'immediate steps' to

¹¹⁷ *Yorkshire Evening Post*, August 2, 1911.

¹¹⁸ *Yorkshire Evening Post*, August 2, 1911.

¹¹⁹ *Yorkshire Evening Post*, August 2, 1911.

¹²⁰ White, *Limits*, p. 94.

¹²¹ K.C. Jackson, 'Local Disadvantages and the Weaver's Wage in the British Cotton Industry', *Ars Textina*, 10, (1988), pp. 85-98.

¹²² *Burnley Express*, October 14, 1911.

¹²³ *Manchester and Lancashire General Advertiser*, June 23, 1911.

¹²⁴ Bullen, *Weavers*, p. 29.

¹²⁵ *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, September 16, 1913.

¹²⁶ *Manchester Guardian*, December 29th, 1911, p. 5.

¹²⁷ *Burnley Express*, August 21, 1915.

remove the disadvantages and what they felt was unfair competition.¹²⁸

The BWA had maintained a long campaign in Harle Syke (and also Haggate, although these became a single campaign under Harle Syke) over the previous years with mixed results. However, they had reached by their own estimates 60 per cent membership of the operatives there.¹²⁹ The BWA followed their usual tactics of extensive canvassing and it was estimated that around 1,000 people were added within the six months leading to the end of June, 1913.¹³⁰ The majority of the recruits were more than likely the weavers who travelled up from other districts to work daily or the 'newer' inhabitants. The BWA increasingly used Harle Syke as a scapegoat and deflected local problems towards them, as a speech by a local official at a rally highlights, the dominant discourse was to portray the employers of Harle Syke as being the enemies of labour:

Harle Syke is the only place that said "we won't recognise your union." Either the Harle Syke employer was superhuman in his majesty or the weaver a little below human in his capacity. Either Harle Syke was right and the rest of the county wrong, or Harle Syke was wrong and the rest of the county right ... the weaver who really had British blood in his or her veins would refuse to accept German methods either from German soldiers of English employers...the policy of terrorism would be no more successful than the policy of non-recognition of the union ... a soldier who ran away would be a coward for life, weavers who didn't strike would be a knobstick for life.¹³¹

The pressure locally built quickly and handbills were distributed explaining that the shareholders in Harle Syke were taking upwards of £50,000 a year out of wages.¹³² Several attempts were made to meet with the Harle Syke employers, including a delegation going to the mills during working hours, only to be told that no one was there.¹³³ Notices of strike action were handed in on the 19th of August, and having failed to receive a reply, the notice to stop work expired at the dinner hour on 25th August, 1915.

There were estimates of 1,300 on strike in the village, of which 1,050 were union members and 250 non-members. It is difficult to ascertain how many remained on strike. At one point one mill was said to have 55 per cent of the weavers working, whilst others had 30 per cent. A day later, this figure was put at 30 per cent in two or three mills and 70 per cent in another.¹³⁴ The figure was probably around the 50 per cent mark for the amount of looms kept running. However, in terms of the mills, Queen Street Mill was reduced to 900 looms, West's reduced by 50 per cent, as were Hargreaves', Atkinson's and Crowther's, which were reduced by 400 to 500 looms. Within the first few weeks of the strike, there was thus an uneven distribution of the action, as it was estimated 35 per cent remained working in total. Walshaw Mill (the third largest) closed, however, Queen Street Mill and Harle Syke Mill were the least affected, as approximately 60 per cent of their workers remained. 900 out of 1500 looms at Queen Street Mill remained operational, whereas only 300 out of 1200 at Mason, West and Bather's did. Queen Street's resilience can probably be attributed to the higher level of shareholders working in the mill, which was a similar situation to that in another joint stock company, Harle Syke Mill. Mason West and Bather were a

¹²⁸ *Manchester Guardian*, March 2, 1912.

¹²⁹ *Burnley News*, August 21, 1915.

¹³⁰ *Burnley Express*, June 25, 1913.

¹³¹ *Burnley Express*, August 21 1915.

¹³² The mills were paying wages underneath the standard list at the following rates (names not given); No.1 8 3/4 per cent, No.2 8 1/8 per cent, No.3 7 1/4 per cent, No.4, 7 1/2 per cent, No.5 7.3 per cent, No.6 6 7/8 per cent, No.7 6 1/3 per cent, No.8 47/8 per cent, *Burnley Express*, October 8, 1913.

¹³³ DDX1123/6/2/421b.

¹³⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, August 28, 1915.

more traditional weaving outfit.¹³⁵ However, schemes were quickly worked out to compensate for the strike action.

The BWA had underestimated the ability of the Harle Syke employers to keep the mills running and spoke openly about their confidence of a quick victory. Yet what happened was a rallying of the remaining workers. Shift patterns were worked out with mill directors' wives starting work from 05:15am, children working around school and elderly people up to the age of 70 working some hours. The use of elderly men was already long established in the village, but there is no way to tell if this extended to include older women as well. Indeed, the suspicion of illegal child labour is mentioned in the AWA letters,¹³⁶ but a newspaper reporter present in the village confirmed it as just a rumour.¹³⁷ Other jobs like cut lookers ran looms with their excess time. The level of work was also increased and adapted, with reports of younger girls running six looms and men and women -increasingly the latter due to the war efforts – running up to 11 looms instead of the standard four. The remaining operatives were also shared across the mills in the village to give a distribution of the workload, and maintain employment throughout the whole community.¹³⁸

From the beginning of the agitation, the Harle Syke manufacturers remained as non-committal as possible and avoided negotiations, at least publicly. Evidence suggests that the BWA looked to bring about some form of conciliation, discreetly corresponding with the local Reverend Knox to try and act as a chairman to bring about a meeting within the village. Two of the employers in the village, Crowther and Hargreaves, were willing to meet the BWA and held several conversations with them throughout the dispute.¹³⁹ However, the secrecy surrounding these communications was potentially dangerous for the local employers as they excluded the workers' input. Upon hearing the news that various concessions had been agreed to by the local employers, the remaining Harle Syke operatives, incensed that they had not been consulted themselves, went out on strike.¹⁴⁰ The *Burnley Express* noted this was 'Gilbertian in its ludicrousness' as now non-unionists were striking for effectively being paid higher wages.¹⁴¹ What this actually highlights is a resistance to an erosion of local autonomy. For many people in Harle Syke, the system they had guaranteed work and wages and this was a forfeit of the position of reciprocity they expected.

A battle waged in the local newspapers through the letter sections arguing both sides of the case. The spokesman for local residents was primarily Fred Leaver, a deacon, schoolteacher, JP and Chairman of Burnley Rural District Council. He was very much of the 'old families' of Briercliffe,¹⁴² and in many ways conformed to what Frankenberg described in his discussion of rural communities crossing multiple societal roles.¹⁴³ His position locally, coupled with an active role in Liberal politics, meant that he argued

¹³⁵ *Burnley News*, August 29, 1915.

¹³⁶ AWA Correspondence, LRO/DDX 1123/5.

¹³⁷ *Burnley News*, September 29, 1915.

¹³⁸ *Burnley News*, November 27, 1915.

¹³⁹ AWA Correspondence, LRO/DDX 1123/5.

¹⁴⁰ The operatives demanded no further concessions, especially not union recognition. *Manchester Guardian*, November 9, 1915.

¹⁴¹ *Burnley Express*, November 13, 1915.

¹⁴² R. Frost, *A Lancashire Township: A History of Briercliffe with Extwistle*, (Burnley: Rieve Edge, 1982), p. 331.

¹⁴³ R. Frankenberg, *Communities in Britain*, (London: Penguin, 1970), p. 249.

from a belief in independence and individualism. He wrote several letters arguing the viewpoint of the village community:

With regard to the agitation that is raging in and around Harle Syke at present, one begins to think that all the virtues of heaven are on the side of the weavers union and the vices of hell at Harle Syke. The leaders of organised labour at Burnley call a public meeting in the open air to lecture the operatives about their short-sighted practice of working under list prices in Burnley, and openly boast that that their case is the only one worth considering. I went to the meeting and came away firmly convinced that so-called leaders have not learnt an atom of true political economy. If they want to hear the other side of the argument, let them take a room in the village- I shall be much obliged if they will do – and have a proper meeting conducted by an impartial chairman, who shall have power to eject unruly persons. Then I will give a guarantee that all the argument shall not be on one side. They ought to bring some new argument as the old one is getting rather stale.¹⁴⁴

One especially illuminating letter from 'A Burnley Female Trade Unionist' offers a telling insight into the experience of being a worker travelling up from Burnley to the area and reiterates how much of an 'other' the concept of unionism was to the local residents. Indeed, the arguments she makes contrasts the mind-set of urban and 'country' unionism:

Sir- all down the ages reformers, pioneers and leaders have been persecuted on account of attempting to put into operation their ideas with a view of benefiting their fellow man, no matter whether it has been from a spiritual or material point of view... still we find a certain amount of opposition or ignorance. Take Harle Syke, some have said if they had lived in Burnley they would be in the union as it was a case of necessity, but no use here. Such people overlook the fact that the same class of exploiters exist at Harle Syke as elsewhere ... They have made money their idol. We want something else besides. Natives of the district overlook this. They have neglected to inspire their offspring with a desire for knowledge for things higher, so that when a more intelligent race intermingles with them they are ignored. The old inhabitants who have lived their lives in a small place find themselves unprepared to receive the enlightenment of the more progressive. It is said by the natives that they can do without other townspeople; but who has helped to build up Harle Syke in the last ten years? Why people from other towns, Burnley in particular. Therefore why don't the old inhabitants do unto others as they would have done unto them?¹⁴⁵

A response to the letter offers the alternative view, whilst at the same time emphasising the communal relationships in the village and the advantages of engaging with the local culture:

Dear Sir ... in regard to letter by Burnley unionist... I should just like to say a few words. I myself have been a resident for above twenty years and have earned more money per loom than I ever earned in Burnley... But our lady trade unionist says all we think about is money and says we are an ignorant class of people. I should like to ask that lady whether her conditions are better at Harle Syke than they were at Burnley as regards to making money and pleasure? I should like to know too if that lady knows that some of our manufacturers wear clogs on Sunday? Thus there cannot be much of Sunday saints and Monday devils. I have also heard the strikers gloat over their pound a week for weeks so it is clear they are thinking a lot about money...Why have we had three or four hundred workers coming to Harle Syke every morning for years on the trams if the conditions are better in Burnley? Moreover I would like to know why all the doors are painted different at Harle Syke? They are not so in Burnley. I think it is through the people of Burnley coming from Burnley buying their own homes which they could not do in Burnley... I'm a bit like a humming bee, when I drop on a good thing I stick to it.¹⁴⁶

One of the responses to the above letter again looks to portray the residents of Harle Syke as economically driven, playing to the stereotype which on one hand praises their thrift, whilst on the other damns their material drive:

Harle Syke is not all heaven and Burnley all hell... he trots out that brilliant horse that people own their own houses. I ask why do they own their own house? For the simple reason that they could not live in Harle Syke if they did not. Every builder who erected house did so to sell, not to let.¹⁴⁷

A further letter from a unionist in Burnley even pleaded with Harle Syke weavers not to be tempted to join the BWA:

¹⁴⁴ *Burnley Express*, August 18, 1915.

¹⁴⁵ *Burnley Express*, September 25, 1915.

¹⁴⁶ *Burnley Express*, September 26, 1915.

¹⁴⁷ *Burnley Express*, December 8, 1915.

What I want to point out to the Weavers of Harle Syke is to be wise in time, and don't be led away that you are going to have your conditions bettered by working under the conditions of the Burnley Weavers Association...There are hundreds who are waiting an opportunity, including myself to get work at Harle Syke.¹⁴⁸

Likewise the debate over who had actually caused the strike action was a contentious issue. Some blamed villagers for being outside of the union and bringing the wages of the county down, where some saw blame with the Weavers' for trying to impose a centralised power upon them, as 'A Worker' describes:

... who is responsible for the Harle Syke strike? The Weavers? No, because a large number of them did not want to come out; they were quite satisfied and would rather have a little less money and a bit better work than some of the places in Burnley, where they have to pay extra to get the work done. No, it is the Burnley manufacturers who are at the bottom of it all. They do not like to see the Harle Syke people get on, and as for the workers missing out on the war bonus, that is all bluff, because the masters never dreamt of paying one. But it served their purpose to bring Harle Syke in as their excuse... the union have for once been the tool of their masters...¹⁴⁹

By January 1916, the number of those still on strike reached 1,150, whilst 950 were working, whilst the settlement was held up by the resistance of the Harle Syke manufacturers to reinstate strikers.¹⁵⁰ Despite intervention by political figures such as Lord Shuttleworth, the strike continued until April, eight months after it had begun, at a cost of £30,000 to the Amalgamation and £12,377 from the BWA. There then proceeded to be picketing at the two mills that had originally been excluded from the strike action, although this was short lived.

The settlement terms meant that Harle Syke operated at four per cent under the standard Burnley price list, that striking workers would be permitted to return and that the union would be recognised in the village.¹⁵¹ This was a stalemate, and although the BWA publically stated that they had succeeded, they received widespread criticism.¹⁵² The AWA now had official recognition in Harle Syke, but had to concede to officially recognising local disadvantages, coupled with their own financial losses. The incident also had larger consequences, as in regard to the other non-unionised mills the question of 'whether they fall in line of wait for action remains to be seen.'¹⁵³

In the aftermath, the mills of Harle Syke continued to flourish, as shown by Bythell, in regard to Harle Syke Mill:

There are occasional mentions in the later years of the war of labour problems because of individuals being called up to fight, of demands for higher wages and of the rising cost of coal. However, despite the fact that some important export markets were cut off during the war, the general trade account showed an increasingly healthy surplus, and in the course of 1918 the company paid a dividend of 18 shillings (90p) per £1 share ... In 1919 ... despite paying a total dividend of 30 shillings (£1.50) per share over the year the company found itself sitting on an enormous sum of profits not needed for the time being.¹⁵⁴

Indeed by 1919, the BWA were again complaining to the CSMA over the out districts paying even lower wages than ever before.¹⁵⁵ By the 1930s, Skipton, Barnoldswick and Harle Syke all saw further strike action and 'non-unionist' problems resurfacing as the AWA weakened. Perhaps as tellingly in 1935 when the overlookers union wrote to the firm of John Bibby in Freckleton, asking them to fill their vacancies

¹⁴⁸ *Burnley Express*, November 19, 1913.

¹⁴⁹ *Burnley Express*, October 29, 1915.

¹⁵⁰ Bullen, *Weavers*, p. 38.

¹⁵¹ *Manchester Guardian*, 24 March, 1916.

¹⁵² Burnley Weavers Minutes, LRO/DDX1274/2/1.

¹⁵³ *Burnley Express*, March 25, 1915.

¹⁵⁴ Bythell and Frost, *Harle Syke Mill*, pp. 70-71.

¹⁵⁵ McIvor, *Organised Capital*, p. 174.

from a union list, they were met with the reply that, 'as you are aware we have an arrangement whereby we make our own overlookers. In a village it is far different to a town and outsiders are not welcomed.'¹⁵⁶

Conclusion

The role of trade unionism in the more urbanised centres of north east Lancashire was a binding element of local life. In a larger population, and generally more metropolitan way of life, it acted as a form of community that connected the mills across the towns through shared experiences and it acted as their voice. In the smaller country areas, the community remained stronger and more close-knit, therefore negating the usefulness of an organised body to push for standardisation. The role of the community in these settlements acted as a de-facto form of trade union, but maintained a sense of parochialism, which had been diluted, in the larger settlements. Hill terms the overall period as 'the decisive rupture with the past' but, as has been shown, the situation in the 'country' districts was much more complex.¹⁵⁷ In some regards, the position of the country districts was an archaism. However, it resulted in a complex local social structure. Links can be drawn to the concepts of corporatism, with a focus on action for the collective through shared interests but also to strands of Nonconformity, of which several variants followed the 'the plurality of elders.'¹⁵⁸ Even in Burnley, what Hill describes as 'mutualism', offers an evolution from the collective village mind-set.¹⁵⁹ In some respects, this conforms to Marshall's 'Industrial Colonies', which were distinct communities on the fringes of towns, with a loyalty to the mill and village and acted according to this.¹⁶⁰

The Harle Syke strike was the last major incident the pre-First World War cotton industry faced. It was therefore approached with confidence by the AWA and BWA, as the final hurdle to bring about uniformity. Yet, as will be shown in the following chapters, the relative economic security, which enabled the growth of trade unionism, did not last. The industrial battles fought post-1918 were done so under trying conditions, which challenged the established culture of the cotton industry and north east Lancashire.

¹⁵⁶ M. Savage (1982), 'Control At Work, Control At Work: North Lancashire Cotton Weaving, 1890-1940', *Lancaster Regional Papers*.

¹⁵⁷ Jeffrey Hill, 'Lib-Labism, Socialism and Labour in Burnley C. 1890-1918', *Northern History*; vol. 35, (1999), p. 201.

¹⁵⁸ For Baptist beliefs see, P.A Newton, *Elders in Congregation Life: Rediscovering the Biblical Model for Church Leadership* (Michigan: Kregel Publications, 2005).

¹⁵⁹ Hill, 'Lib-Labism', pp. 185-204.

¹⁶⁰ See J. D. Marshall, 'Colonisation as a Factor in the Planting of Towns in North-West England' in H. J. Dyos (ed.), *The Study of Urban History*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1976), pp. 215-30, and also G. Timmins, 'Textile Colonies and Settlement Growth in Lancashire, c.1780-1850', in J. F. Wilson, (ed.), *King Cotton: A Tribute to Douglas A. Farnie*, (London: Crucible Books, 2009), pp. 280-304.

5. 'ORPHANS OF THE STORM'? THE IMPACT OF THE INTERWAR PERIOD ON THE CHARACTER OF NORTH EAST LANCASHIRE

The first half of this thesis emphasised how the general stability of the cotton industry allowed for communities to develop their own sense of place and identity within the parameters set by the shared culture of north east Lancashire. This chapter serves as a sharp departure from this theme, as it explores how in the post-First World War period the erosion of stability and decline of the cotton industry impacted upon the communities of the area and re-defined identities. In doing so, it will be shown that the basic cultural norms shifted as people tried to make sense of a new economic environment.

The arguments around industrial decline in Lancashire have long been debated, and as Toms argues, have been dominated at various times by both historians and economists of different schools.¹ The issue of whether the industry could have been saved has been prominent in these discussions, and it is not the intention to enter this debate in this thesis. Rather, it seeks to examine the attempts to restructure, redefine and rebuild the area, and the implications of doing so. This shall be a theme throughout the remaining chapters. It will be argued that despite the global reach of cotton, north east Lancashire was still internally focused. Though under economic pressures, the general trend across the area was to return to tried and tested measures, rather than make a radical break from the past. As will be shown, the ability to mobilise internal resources diminished, as at local and regional governmental levels external initiative was sought - which operated under very different rules to those with which the area was familiar.

Local government took a bigger role in steering business and confronting social issues and it is the shift in mentality, from self-help, and community based initiatives to wider reliance on governance that becomes an increasingly recurrent theme throughout the latter chapters of this thesis. As a further development, cross-industry and cross-county bodies were formed with large remits, further increasing the move towards forms of centralisation. In a sense, such collective action challenged the old informal communities, and removed their spontaneity and internal agency that had previously existed. Therefore, the dominant culture of the area was challenged, and adapted with a range of results. For at least half a century, the locally 'driven' system had brought unprecedented business success to an area generally disadvantaged. However, when this local system no longer sufficed, alternatives were sought.

In a global context, various industrial populations were as equally invested in the link between communities and their dominant local industries as north east Lancashire. Through the diffusion of modernity, many of these populations turned to revolution. Smith's analysis of the workers in St Petersburg, Russia and Shanghai, China especially offers comparison, yet revolution did not come and

¹ See S. Toms, 'The English Cotton Industry and the Loss Of The World Market', in J. F. Wilson (ed.), *King Cotton: A Tribute to Douglas A. Farnie*, (London: Crucible Books, 2009), pp. 64-82.

was arguably never close to coming to Britain.² What is observed through the proceeding chapters are how the character of the area facilitated the attempts to cling on to the industry (Chapter 6), reinvent it (Chapter 7) and finally how north east Lancashire attempted to diversify (Chapter 8).

Within this chapter there are three distinctive phases. Firstly, the end of the First World War period, where conditions worsened dramatically and then recovered slightly, the post-war boom and then the drop after 1921 when the demand for cotton was met and conditions went on a downward spiral, eventually exacerbated by the Great Depression. Indeed, it was the miners' leader A. J. Cook who tried to articulate the feeling of local people in 1928:

Cotton and coal were twins in distress – orphans of the storm, both suffering for almost the same reasons, both subject to financial manipulation and financial jugglery, which in any civilised and sane community would have meant jail for those responsible.³

The most significant effect of the interwar period was in undermining the perception of social mobility. The eventual realisation that cotton was not a viable career in the long term was difficult to accept for operatives and mill managers alike, and the lack of alternatives well understood. As one Burnley resident told J. J. Astor in his examination of the town in 1922, 'If cotton goes, we all go.'⁴ One conversation reported by the *Burnley Express* highlights how bleak this future looked by 1930:

This cotton boycott is not confined to operatives. I have heard scores of millowners say, "happen what may, my son isn't going in t'mill" a remarkable attitude in a county and industry where family tradition has always been strong ... I interrupted a conversation of this nature by asking Mr. X, a prominent Burnley manufacturer, what he proposed to do with his son. "He can go in the army, or be trained for a profession, but I don't care what he does so long as he gets out of the cotton. There's not a dog's chance for him here."⁵

The impact of the speculative boom

Mentally, north east Lancashire in 1918 was not overly different from 1880, apart from some organic developments. However, by 1939 it had been transformed on both superficial and deep levels. The region came out of the post-war period in a difficult position. Some of the towns, like Nelson, were shielded from the harsher effects of depression by the production of finer, or more bespoke goods, yet others were exceptionally hard hit. Burnley in particular had problems on several fronts, partly as a continuation of the problems that had begun to surface during the pre-war industrial action and partly through a number of other older issues that had gained attention with the outbreak of conflict. Burnley manufacturers were used to working 'hand to mouth', or at short notice between ordering and supplying products, thus, any disruption in the ordering process resulted in a very quick impact. In terms of more technical problems, there was a lack of available machinery to work khaki or heavy cloth, which meant government war orders could not be undertaken. Alterations to the machinery addressed the issue as quickly as possible, but with the possibility of damage to the looms themselves through weaving heavier material than they were equipped for. Operatives were thus exposed to uneven and reduced working hours, and some took work in Yorkshire, where the khaki weaving industry had a shortage of operatives,

² See S.A. Smith, *Revolution and the People in Russia and China: A Comparative History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

³ *Burnley News*, January 18, 1928.

⁴ J.J. Astor, *The Third Winter of Unemployment: The Report of an Enquiry Undertaken in the Autumn of 1922*, (London: Forgotten Books, 2012 edition), p. 126.

⁵ *Burnley Express*, July 5, 1930.

and struggled to find people willing to work night shifts. However, due to the lodging rates being increased disproportionately across the border, many chose to remain in Burnley.⁶

Burnley had, unlike Nelson, undergone little diversification and was still focused on grey cloth, to the extent that even in 1931, 83 out of the town's 106 companies wove it for the export market. Grey cloth thus accounted for a figure somewhere between 90 and 96 per cent of the town's goods produced.⁷ To compound this, the outbreak of war initially cut off most of the overseas buyers, which was exacerbated by the fact that the majority of dyes used were initially imported from Germany.

Burnley and the rest of Lancashire gradually adapted and the industry then made what Timmins describes as 'a remarkable recovery.'⁸ A new confidence manifested through a speculative boom in 1919-1920 that witnessed the purchasing of mill shares in the area mostly by absentee speculators, paid for with raised prices to cover debts.⁹ Such action was condemned in many circles, including many local weavers associations as the beginning of the end of the 'old' form of paternalistic capitalism.¹⁰ As discussed later, such notions did continue in certain instances, but that such an idea spread highlights certain psychological ramifications.¹¹

The investment from speculators created a sense of optimism built on a steadfast belief in the long-term viability of the cotton industry, and the benefits were felt across Burnley with investment in other local industries such as building and machinery etc. Profits rose, dividends increased and borrowing and investing were (recklessly) encouraged as the town looked forward to a period of economic prosperity and industrial peace. As speeches by Burnley MP Dan Irving highlight, this was to be a 'new dawn' for the area and there was hope that such economic activity would enable the town to start a redevelopment programme into the early 1920s.¹² However, this dawn was a false one in two respects. Firstly, the effects largely failed to be felt by operatives. Secondly, by 1921 the demand for cotton was all but satisfied: profits fell and interest charges mounted in the face of dropping dividends and investments.

As Table 16 highlights, the market share of the industry was in decline following the post-war boom, and in the face of declining conditions the short-term gains began to be rescinded. The decline was greatly exacerbated by decisions like re-joining the gold standard in 1925, which unwittingly had the worst impact on the export market despite being viewed in north east Lancashire as an outward reassertion of continued colonial strength. The greatest benefactors in the long-term were Japan, whose own domestic economic manoeuvrings contrast with British policy and who also had a vexatious relationship with the gold standard.¹³

⁶ *Burnley Express*, November 18, 1914.

⁷ H. Clay, *Report on the Position of the English Cotton Industry*, (London: Securities Management Trust Ltd, 1931), p. 23.

⁸ G. Timmins, *Four Centuries of Lancashire Cotton*, (Lancashire: Lancashire County Books, 1996), p. 73.

⁹ Firth, *Unemployment And The Weaving Industry In North East Lancashire: 1919-1929*, (Self-published, 1994), p3

¹⁰ Firth, *Unemployment*, p4

¹¹ See p

¹² *Burnley News*, December 17, 1919.

¹³ See for example K. Yamamura, 'Then Came the Great Depression: Japan's Interwar Years', in M. Smitka, (ed.), *The Interwar Economy of Japan; 1910-1940*, (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 264-295.

Table 16: World trade in cotton textiles (millions sq. yards/000 quintals)

	1882-1884	1910-1913	1926-1928	1936-1938
United Kingdom	4410	6650	3940	1720
Europe	770	1900	2320	1490
U.S.A	150	400	540	250
India	50	90	170	200
Japan	...	200	1390	2510
Other countries	...	260	190	290

Figures from Robson, *Cotton Industry*, p. 4.

Despite the challenges of foreign competitors, there remained a bullish attitude over the superiority of Lancashire goods. Mr. W. Gee, chairman of the Textile Factory Workers Association, openly declared in 1919 that the industry was:

Not impressed with talk about competition from America, India, and Japan. It had always been advanced and ruin prophesied every time higher wages or shorter hours were sought. Yet the trade of the country and its prosperity had increased.¹⁴

Indeed, the prevalence of such a blinkered view of Lancashire's importance is especially highlighted by Spector-Marks in regard to Gandhi's visit to Lancashire. As she shows, it was inconceivable for the majority of the county to think of the industry suffering from a serious long-term decline.¹⁵ There was also the belief that external problems were to blame, rather than the internal problems that had become apparent during recent years. The BWA noted that 'It would be a gross error ... to convey the impression that the depression in the cotton trade ... is due solely to the out-of-datedness of our industry.'¹⁶ Yet, it was the combination of several emergent home-grown markets with protectionist policies in various countries (which themselves were hit by the drop in silver prices affecting their buying power) that began to seriously undermine the export market for Lancashire's cotton goods. Britain could not compete with protectionism. In India, there was also the emergence of the Swadeshi Movement that encouraged the boycott of British goods, and removed one of the cornerstones of the world market. The Indian government were handed fiscal autonomy in 1922, and a national boycott was implemented in 1929, followed by tariffs on British goods increasing by 25 per cent by 1931.¹⁷ The decline of the world market further aided the Japanese, who by 1930 had effectively ousted Britain from the Chinese market, and had begun to move into India. The expansion of Japanese interests expanded into further Far Eastern and South American markets.¹⁸

Lancashire continued in depression up until 1929 and worsened with the General Depression of the 1930s, which globally encouraged even more countries to enact tariffs to protect their own industries,

¹⁴ *Burnley Express*, April 12, 1919.

¹⁵ See I. Spector-Marks, (2008), 'Mr. Gandhi Visits Lancashire: A Study in Imperial Miscommunication', *Honours Projects*. Paper 3, Macalester College.

¹⁶ LRO/DDX 1274/6/3, August 1931.

¹⁷ Spector-Marks, 'Mr. Gandhi', p. 4.

¹⁸ *Lancashire Evening Telegraph*, July 4, 1930.

further hitting the export market.¹⁹ The whole cotton industry went into decline, with grey goods being especially hard hit, such as is shown in Table 17.

Table 17: Decline in British exports of piece goods in linear yards, 1913-1919

	1913	1929
Piece Goods	7,075,252,000	3,764,851,000
Grey Exports	2,357,492,000	954,823,000
Bleached Exports	2,045,245,252,000	1,288,273,000
Printed Goods	1,230,754,000	551,706,000
Dyed Goods	1,441,754,000	970,049,000

Lancashire Evening Telegraph, July, 4, 1930

Some areas of north east Lancashire were less severely hit by the decline in exports, such as those producing dyed goods. However, eventually even the dyed goods market was lost, for example between 1932 and 1933, over 1/3rd of the most important market, Tanganyika, had been lost to the Japanese.²⁰ In contrast, some areas, notably the South of England, had a completely different experience going into the 1930s, with new and successful industries flourishing there.²¹

Demographically, north east Lancashire was still largely insular, and community focussed. People tended to commute short distances, if at all, and even then they tended to be from the outskirts of major settlements crossing into neighbouring districts. The data supplied in the 'North East Lancashire Regional Scheme' (1926) study highlights this pattern. For example, the majority of movement for Burnley happened between itself, Padiham and the Burnley Rural District. For the Burnley Rural District, the majority of workers crossed into Burnley and the other districts with which it shared borders. In a wider context, the pattern of borough and rural district operative movement was shared on a smaller scale with other population centres. In Blackburn, the majority of movement was between the borough and Blackburn Rural District, although with less people (1,313 of 5,249 living within and working without and 969 of 4,455 working within and living without). The larger settlements generally had over 50 per cent employment of people living within, whereas the outlying districts were slightly below. The exceptions were Barnoldswick and Earby, in effect acting as their own self-contained appendage.²² In terms of worker movement, the Burnley Rural District is perhaps the biggest anomaly, with a remarkably high level of people living without but working within, shown comprehensively in Table 18. The vast majority of migrants come into it from the outskirts of Burnley town. Likewise, in the case of Barrowford, 705 of its workers that lived within and worked without crossed to Nelson, whereas 572 of the 794 that worked within and lived without also made the same journey.

¹⁹ R. Robson, *The Cotton Industry in Britain*, (Manchester, MacMillan, 1957), pp. 4-16.

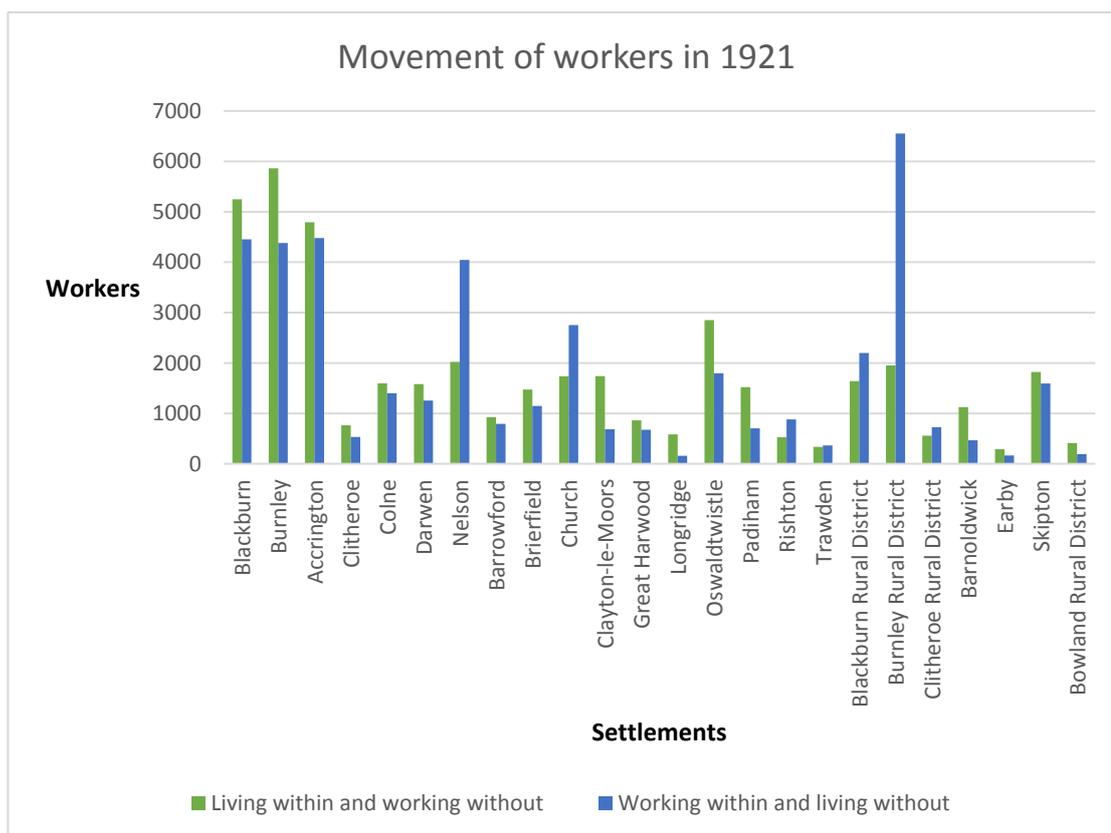
²⁰ *Lancashire Evening Post*, February 3, 1934.

²¹ See especially P. Scott, *Triumph of the South*, (London: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 121-161.

²² This data is shown through patterns illustrated in 'North East Lancashire Regional Scheme' (London: North East Lancashire Region No. 2 Joint Planning Scheme, HMSO, 1926), LRO/D1NOR.

The 'North East Lancashire Regional Scheme' also plots location of those workers who migrated for employment. The clearest pattern to emerge is that they congregate on the outskirts of large settlements and fail to really penetrate the main urban centres, in effect creating fluid borders. Overall, the position of these people on the periphery implies that the traditional links between settlements were unaltered by changing administrative boundaries. In the case of the Burnley Rural District, the data also reinforces just how much the industries had grown across the scattered country districts, requiring the native population to be supplemented by workers from outside.

Table 18: Movement of workers, 1921



Based on information in 'North East Lancashire Regional Scheme' (1926)

The changing attitudes of operatives

By the latter part of the 1920s, north east Lancashire had gained a reputation as being deprived. Indeed, a report by the Labour Distressed Areas Commission suggested that it was perhaps the most distressed area in the county, bar Wigan.²³ The growing scrutiny from external sources, coupled with rising expectations in terms of living standards from within, meant that besides an artificial reprieve during the Second World War, the overall experience was psychologically damaging. The area and cotton industry in general stopped being able to facilitate innovation from within, upon which so much success had been built. Instead the weaving section became entrenched and backward-looking, as Farnie states desiring to 'return to normality and to its pre-war eminence.' Yet even this 'proved to be a harrowing experience and

²³ LP/DAC/47/331/1.

wholly failed to persuade that the loss of advantages was permanent.²⁴ As a result, the instability in economic terms was reflected in the failure of the continuing push for an adequate wage to match the cost of living. Many operatives thus became disenchanted with the idea of constructive, collective bargaining and with it the commitment to trade unionism was further challenged, after the events leading up to the First World War as discussed in the previous chapter.

The period after the speculative boom of 1921 was dominated by a desire to bring lasting stability to the cotton industry, and in turn the settlements of north east Lancashire. A report from 1921 by a 'Yorkshirewoman' offers insight into the realities of the end of the boom in Burnley. She described the local men's conversation as 'generally about business. Politics take second place. The men are too intent on personal advancement to care much about the nation.' In contrast the women were, 'restrained in their troubles! So little grousing during this trade depression. They take everything as it comes- with unfailing wit and humour.'²⁵

The notion that people in Burnley were focused on their local industry, without stimulating any radical solutions is a recurring theme. Globally, several nations restructured along adaptations of corporatist ideas, most notably Fascist Italy and the USA under the New Deal.²⁶ Yet the suggestions for cotton and for north east Lancashire were mostly backward looking. A sign of the overall disappointment felt by the industry was the results of the Graham Report in 1930,²⁷ a dissatisfying review that failed to come up with anything 'sensational or original', and took negative attitude to governmental intervention.²⁸ A shift in thinking began to explore the possibility of such action, which much like King's overload thesis, signifies a new concept of the role of government.²⁹ As Abrams argued, the ability of the Government to do much at this time, regardless of its desire to, is questionable.³⁰

The decline of trade unionism and the attitudes of operatives

For operatives, the inter-war period was one where gains were won, but were ultimately considered fruitless in the face of economic decline. Such struggles coincided with Burnley Football Club's rise and fall, which compounded these feelings.³¹ A three week industry wide strike in July 1919 regarding hours eventually reduced the working week to 48 hours, a reduction of 7.5 per cent. However, the process was

²⁴ D. Farnie, *Region and Strategy in Britain and Japan: Business in Lancashire and Kansai: 1890-1990*, (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 141.

²⁵ *Burnley Express*, August 13, 1921.

²⁶ See J. Whitman (1991), 'Of Corporatism, Fascism and the First New Deal', Yale Law School, *Faculty Scholarship Series*. Paper 660.

²⁷ Some of the recommendations of the Graham report included:

The use of cheaper cotton in the production of the cheapest kinds of cloth.

The substitute of ring spinning for mule spinning. The use of higher draft spinning and winding machinery

The use of automatic looms, with suitable modifications of weaving lists, and, perhaps double shifts.

The formation of large corporations of spinning and weaving or large corporations of spinning and large corporations of weaving working on a common policy and with concerted action

The formation of amalgamations for merchandising, working in harmony with amalgamations for spinning and weaving to attain by bulk buying of raw cotton, bulk production and bulk selling, the sale abroad of standard goods at the worlds market prices.

²⁸ See N. Riddell, *Labour In Crisis: The Second Labour Government 1929-1931*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 70.

²⁹ Although King's focus is on the 1970s, his arguments are pertinent for this shift in mentality. A. King, 'Overload: The Problem of Governing in the 1970s', *Political Studies*, 23, 2-3 (1975), pp. 284-296.

³⁰ See P. Abrams, 'The Failure of Social Reform: 1918-1920', *Past & Present*, 24, (1963), pp. 43-64.

³¹ Burnley started this period by gaining promotion to, and challenging for the league, and the FA Cup, eventually winning it 1914, and the First Division in 1920-1921. However, a series of poor finishes saw the club slide down the league and suffer relegation in 1929-1930.

drawn-out and the very role of trade unionism was questioned, as the federal system began to fragment. The United Textile Factory Workers Association, who were acting for all operatives, were openly challenged several times by different branches of the industry, resulting in a loss of authority. The situation became critical when the CSMA were left with no authorised body to negotiate a settlement with and resulted in unofficial action throughout districts. Although later ratified, the small disputes were noted for the lack of central union control, and were described by observers as 'chaotic'.³² In the aftermath of a settlement being agreed, various towns began to adapt the newly agreed systems and devise their own working hours. The agreement intended for work to start at 7.45 and end at 5.30, however, most women found the arrangements unworkable with their family roles. Thus, mills adapted working hours and break periods to suit the operatives there.³³ Overall the concept of a united operative base came under serious scrutiny. Yet, for many of the operatives, the question of working hours was a simple matter of convenience and common sense.

There were several other small incidents that created further fragmentation amongst operatives. A spinning strike at county level in 1918 shut the whole industry down, whilst several incidents at the local level had wider reaching effects. For example, one dispute resulting from a strike over working hours in Cornholme, saw the local employers retaliate by locking out Todmorden. The overall result was that an estimated 60 per cent of looms were stopped between 1914 and 1918.³⁴ There was consequently little work for returning soldiers, of which Burnley had the third highest number in Lancashire behind Manchester and Liverpool.³⁵ The situation worsened with certain conditions set out by the Cotton Control Board on how many machines could run at certain times, meaning that when work was available, it was usually on short time.³⁶

The result of the textile boom in 1920 allowed for a wage advance of around 70 per cent for the operatives.³⁷ However, by the end of the same year, a contraction was followed by a spate of mill closures, and the result of the speculative investment. Consequentially, in 1921 the CSMA pressed for reduction in list prices and when a compromise could not be found, all mills closed on June 3rd. The stoppages coincided with a coal dispute, ultimately limiting the damage to the manufacturers themselves, but resulting in what the *Manchester Guardian* called 'an industrial disaster'.³⁸ The demands by the CSMA for a 90 per cent reduction were negotiated to an initial 60 per cent, followed by an additional 10 per cent after six months. However, arguments over terms, and more trouble over the federal structure of the unions, meant that an agreement was delayed until June 25th. Even then, the return to work came at short time. A similar incident followed a few months later, resulting in a further 50 per cent reduction. Overall, during the period from April 1921 to October 1922, there was a total reduction in list prices of 120 per cent, effectively bringing wages back down to the level of 1914.³⁹ Altogether operatives suffered

³² *Manchester Guardian*, July 19, 1919.

³³ *Manchester Guardian*, September 19, 1919.

³⁴ Hopwood, *Lancashire Weavers Story* (Lancashire: Co-Operative Press, 1969).

³⁵ *Manchester Guardian*, April 3, 1919.

³⁶ This also included town rotas, and reducing how many looms weavers could run to control numbers of operatives in work at certain times.

³⁷ See Hopwood, *Lancashire Weavers*, p. 94.

³⁸ *Manchester Guardian*, June 4, 1921.

³⁹ Hopwood, *Lancashire Weavers*, p. 95.

wage reductions in 1921, 1922, 1929, 1932 and 1935.⁴⁰

A further spate of industrial disputes did witness a series of victories for the AWA. The reduction in working hours mentioned previously was followed by various reforms long seen as key issues in working practices and key to operatives' health, such as humidity. Yet, the sense of progress on one front jars with the worsening job market. A further problem was that workers' actual interest in conditions was, especially in the harder economic times, a secondary concern, or as Greenlees argues, 'inconsistent, localised and sporadic.'⁴¹ Hence, there was a growing dissatisfaction over the erosion of long-term, stable employment. The AWA also suffered from the death of three presidents in quick succession, which, especially with the highly regarded Joseph Cross, had a lasting impact.⁴² The secretary for much of the later period was James Hindle from the BWA. He had a crucial role in several disputes and found himself at the centre of the industry's struggles, with Burnley serving as the battleground between operatives and employers. The level of dissatisfaction amongst operatives manifested most strongly in a resurfacing of the non-unionist movement, which was of enough concern that in June 1923, a week was designated for local associations to make a special effort to 'restore' their memberships.⁴³

Despite the rising polarisation, there were some unifying initiatives implemented locally by certain employers, which challenged the need for trade unionism. To an extent this was a sign of the continuation of both paternalism in a family-owned mill environment, yet also mutuality in maintaining a healthy, happy workforce. As Jones argues: 'welfare capitalism was adopted as a way of gaining identity and support in the wider community.'⁴⁴ However, such initiatives decreased in the face of worsening conditions, although some mills maintained a compassionate standpoint. Burnley's first mill canteen was built at Lowerhouse Mill in 1920, the opening for which was marked by 'the good feeling which exists between employer and employed'. The opening ceremony included a party for pensioners and school children in a 90-foot-long carpeted marquee lit by electricity and heated by steam. The ceremony was opened by the local MP and the Mayor of Burnley, the latter of which congratulated the owners for 'bringing a little happiness to the lives of their workpeople.' The canteen was to act as a social club, with 1,000 members signed up by opening allowed one drink of beer and stout per meal.⁴⁵ Thus, it was also seen as 'a spiritual and moral example to Burnley', and part of a wider modernisation and redevelopment for the Lowerhouse area. The initiative therefore included a picture house to create community entertainment.⁴⁶ Within a year, the canteen was extended to include committee rooms, reading rooms, a billiard room, accommodation, a bowling green, three tennis courts, a football pitch and huts for boy scouts and girl guides, as well as spaces for activities such as cookery, welfare and sewing classes.⁴⁷ Such was its success, fellow mills in the area replicated the initiative during the boom years, applying to build

⁴⁰ See Hopwood, *Lancashire Weavers*.

⁴¹ J. Greenlees, 'The Dangers Attending These Conditions Are Evident': Public Health And The Working Environment Of Lancashire Textile Communities, C.1870–1939', *Social History of Medicine*, 26, 4 (2013), pp. 672–694.

⁴² See Hopwood, *Lancashire Weavers*, pp. 94–115.

⁴³ *Burnley News*, May 19, 1923.

⁴⁴ Jones, 'The Rise in Mill Amenities', in J. A. Jowitt and A. McIvor (eds.), *Employers and Labour in the English Textile Industries: 1850–1939*, (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 74.

⁴⁵ *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, January 12, 1920.

⁴⁶ *Burnley News*, January 14, 1920.

⁴⁷ *Burnley News*, January 12, 1921.

canteens and engaging in such activities to try and improve the wellbeing of operatives.⁴⁸

Operative health became another area for which Burnley attracted scrutiny. Returning to the admittedly idiosyncratic observations of 'Yorkshirewoman', her comparisons between the workers of Leeds and Burnley especially highlight the friendliness, openness and good humour of the town, although she attempts to explain the declining social conditions as part of the local character. She describes how a large number of women frequently drank in pubs, unlike in Leeds, and not nearly as commonly as in Liverpool or Manchester. This she partly attributes to the town's ill health and a lack of cleanliness. She also remarks that Burnley women could not cook and relied on convenience food, due to how busy they were with working and looking after children, whereas Yorkshire housewives retired from the mill when married. She also noted the prevalence for bad language, and that she could not find a cafe open (bar one) at 'supper time', but that on Saturday, cafes and restaurants were open until 10pm serving:

Steak pudding and pies, "hot torpedo" (whatever they may be!), potato pies, "pie and peas" (such a funny dish!) and fish and chips. And one can rarely get a decent cup of coffee! One is regarded coldly by the waitress if one asks for chicken, lobster salad or any of the delicacies one can get anywhere in other towns. Truly Burnley has a palate of its own. The messes they consume would make an epicure weep.⁴⁹

Assessing the impact of the interwar years on communities

The change in economic stability created different situations across the area. The impact was dependent on each settlement's own development, and later circumstance. The newer settlements, for example, suffered far less from many of the problems that the older settlements experienced. Thus, Burnley had many problems associated with slum housing and took a longer time to alleviate them, whilst Nelson had few of these issues. Burnley had consistently higher infant mortality rates than the national average, whilst Nelson was consistently below it, despite the structural and climactic similarities. Thus, in 1926 where Burnley was the 5th worst town in Lancashire (an improvement on 3rd in 1921), Colne was 8th and Nelson was 32nd.⁵⁰ The local authorities in Nelson openly felt they had less distress throughout the period (its Trades Federation wrote to the Labour DAC to say as much), helped by the wider range of materials manufactured in the town.⁵¹ Some places, such as Padiham that were focussed on grey cloth, wrote begging for intervention of some kind, feeling particularly hard hit.⁵²

Variation is shown across years and settlements, however there is little consistency outside of Burnley and Padiham, which shared urban and industrial similarities. As Swain highlights, both towns shared higher than average mortality rates as far back as the 1580s.⁵³ For certain areas in north east Lancashire, the mortality and infant mortality rates were consistently higher than the rest of England and Wales. For example, between the years 1922 and 1926, the mean average of infant mortality per 1000 of the population was 72 for England and Wales, but 94.1 in Burnley, 106 in Brierfield, 99 in Barrowford and 100 in Padiham. For general mortality per 1000, Burnley and Padiham were equally consistent with high

⁴⁸ Barden Mill for example in March 1920, *Burnley Express*, March 3, 1920.

⁴⁹ *Burnley News*, August 6, 1921.

⁵⁰ *Burnley Express*, July 28, 1926.

⁵¹ LP/DAC/2/18.

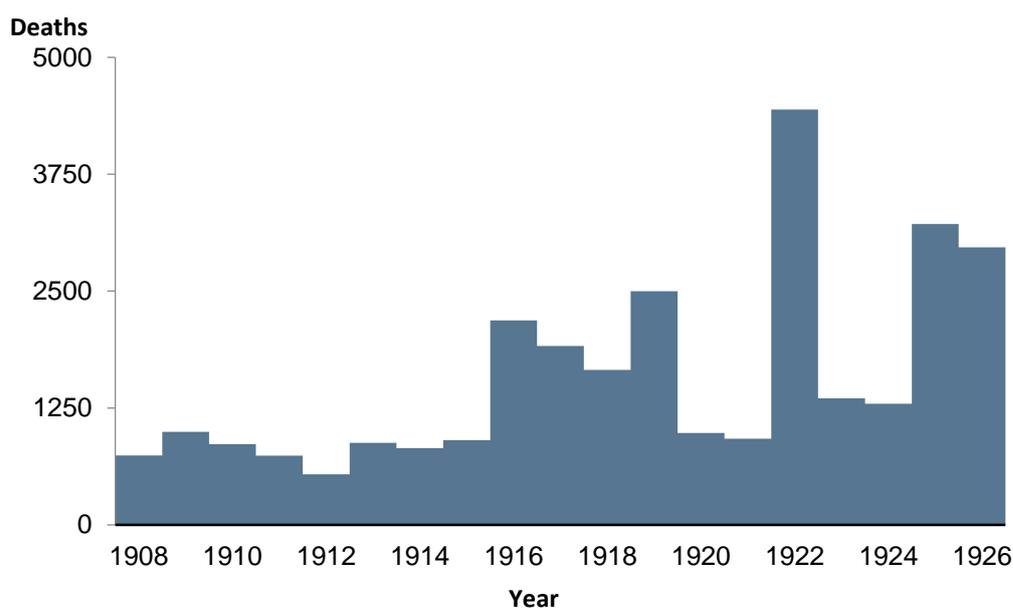
⁵² LP/DAC/43i.

⁵³ Swain declares the area 'particularly prone to famine'. J. T. Swain, *Industry Before The Industrial Revolution*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), p. 32.

figures. For example in 1927, when the figure for England and Wales stood at 12.3, Burnley was 15.4 and Padiham 16.1.⁵⁴ Indeed, Burnley garnered the reputation as ‘The town where they killed the babies.’⁵⁵

The overall problems of public health were reinforced by the increase in deaths by infectious diseases mirroring the years of downturn and marginal recovery, bar 1922, which followed smallpox, scarlet fever and influenza outbreaks. 1921-1922 was also the period where the majority of the urbanised districts peaked with population and sequentially, as seen in Table 19, this period witnessed a peak in infectious diseases in Burnley. The Burnley Medical Officer’s report of 1922 offered a detailed examination of why Burnley was so consistently deadly. It found that in comparing the situation to 1890, there were a number of factors. Firstly, there were a number ash pits and stable middens in the middle of dense urban areas. Secondly, there were a large number of remaining back-to-back houses, which showed a much higher frequency of infant mortality than in the newer dwellings. Thirdly, there was a high rate of deaths by cancer as well as tuberculosis. The local council however lacked the necessary infrastructure, and funds to deal with diseases in enclosed areas.⁵⁶

Table 19: Deaths by infectious diseases in Burnley



Figures adapted from Greenlees, ‘Public Health’.

The solution proposed in 1923 was to build a sanatorium to isolate tuberculosis carriers; yet, even this was to be built in the midst of a growing residential area.⁵⁷ The social conditions in Burnley continued to be trying and people looked externally for answers, a reversal of the conditions which framed the first section of the thesis (built upon the freedoms and autonomy of localities) to one actively encouraging greater state intervention. However, the additional layers of bureaucracy were not without problems. As one Alderman stated, to wide approval at a public meeting:

⁵⁴ North East Lancashire Regional Planning Report, Joint Town Planning Advisory Committee, (1929), LRO/D1NOR.

⁵⁵ *Burnley Express*, February 7, 1931.

⁵⁶ *Burnley Express*, June 2, 1923.

⁵⁷ *Burnley Express*, June 2, 1923.

There was an obligation, but the people that ought to have met that obligation have shirked it and put it on the local authorities. The people who ought to have faced that obligation are the Government of the day.⁵⁸

Communities began to question where responsibility lay. One case in Hapton, of recurring settlements of 'Gypsies' on the common, found people complaining to the parish, only to be sent to Rural District, which would then do little. One letter to the local press regarding the case lamented that when things were built in older times 'crowds assembled and threatened to burn it down' and complained that if the land were under Burnley Council action would be taken, even threatening that if the Rural District Council didn't act soon, 'some other party will.'⁵⁹

The attitude of the authorities in Burnley is described by Greenlees, as generally 'laissez-faire'.⁶⁰ In one case, the local Government Board in the 1920s were made to explain why they had failed to bring the town's housing up to scratch with the Housing Acts of 1890 and 1909. Indeed, Padiham shared in this approach, and as early as 1914 the town was regarded as suffering from the same problem through a lack of manpower to undertake the required improvements.⁶¹ To outside observation there was still a resoluteness seen as a defining characteristic of the people in the town, as well as a sense of denial over how bad the conditions were. As the *Burnley Express* reported:

A lot has been said of Burnley's slums ... but the special correspondent, after seeing them, admits that even slums are relative... it requires a reduced morale in the inhabitants as well as the houses, to produce houses of the Scotland-Road (Liverpool) kind. Either from inherent qualities of character, or the sanative influences of the adjacent moorland and hills the east Lancashire cotton operative is rarely morally flabby ... The Registrar-General now tells them that their numbers have dwindled... they know Burnley better than the Registrar-General, and they do not believe they are in a diminishing community.⁶²

The main problem was the perceived inefficiency in sanitary improvements, which meant that even into the 1930s, the situation, when faced, was overdue and sub-par. Even in the Rural Districts, the lack of sanitation was an acknowledged problem, with Wheatley Lane, Higham and Clivinger all being viewed as having poor sewage and 'unsatisfactory conditions.'⁶³ Despite having different sanitary concerns than in more urbanised settlements, they shared in the strong criticism that local focus was on other issues which working people had little concern for, such as improvements to tram routes.⁶⁴ Burnley still suffered from a higher than average occupancy per room, which as Greenlees also adds can be traced back a number of years:

The town's inability to retain Poor Law doctors due to their refusal to pay the going rate for the area, combined with Burnley being the last major industrial town in Lancashire to build an Infirmary in 1886, reveals much about how the council prioritised health before the First World War.⁶⁵

A corresponding problem, as highlighted by the Governmental 'Public Health Survey of 1932', was the notion of Burnley 'putting all its eggs in one basket.' The report quotes one observer as viewing the operatives as 'the most uncouth in Lancashire', worse even than Wigan.⁶⁶ Burnley was viewed as a 'dirty'

⁵⁸ *Burnley Express*, February 7, 1931.

⁵⁹ *Burnley Express*, June 4, 1927.

⁶⁰ Greenlees, 'Public Health', p. 688.

⁶¹ LHA/LP/DAC/2/18.

⁶² *Burnley Express*, December 17, 1927.

⁶³ *Burnley Express*, July 28, 1926.

⁶⁴ *Burnley Express*, January 8, 1927.

⁶⁵ Greenlees, *Public Health*, p. 688.

⁶⁶ Wigan is used through several different reports and observations as the benchmark for most of the ills for Lancashire.

town, where 'mothers are not housewives, but weavers, and weavers get hot and dusty and dirty.' There was also the common folklore that many of the poorer residents were the descendants of the previous centuries' tramp weavers, who in this context were viewed as a negative.⁶⁷ The slums were viewed as being populated by people of Irish descent, who were seen to 'arrive in the town and go straight onto relief ... the Superintendent health visitor said poor rates would halve without the Irish.'⁶⁸ The reality of this situation is as both Higham and Smith have shown, that the Irish population was generally transient, organised by geographical lineage in the late 19th century,⁶⁹ and as Durkin recounts from local oral tradition 'came from North Connaught. Since they were destitute, they took the cheapest accommodation they could find in the already rotting inner core of Burnley.'⁷⁰ However, by the interwar years of the 20th century, there was a strong and populous Irish community in the town that was significant enough to become heavily embroiled in Irish republicanism.⁷¹

The reactions of ordinary people

The situation as described by Chapples in his recollection of the interwar period was of 'depressing poverty', where sewage was still thrown directly into the canal running through the town centre of Burnley from both houses and mills.⁷² The impact that the economic and social conditions had on people was to gradually drain morale. The interviews conducted by Fyles, especially with Eileen Wilkinson, who saw the worst areas as being around the Whittlefield district, especially describe how trying the conditions were: 'If you looked in some houses, no furniture, the children crawling around with hardly anything on in their own filth.'⁷³ Yet, these recollections stand out for being so vivid, in that extreme poverty was something *different* from the norm. There are details especially in the earlier parts of the period reinforcing importance of community as a coping mechanism and safety net. Recollections often detail the ways in which people clubbed together to help the worst affected, particularly children, creating a strong sense of mutual dependence.⁷⁴ However, by the latter part of the 1920s and early 1930s, such strength had begun erode. Married couple, Harry and Bertha in Slater's *All Bed and Work*, recount the change towards the more loom period discussed in Chapter 6. Harry stood outside a mill every day for six months without getting work, and was eventually taken on at a mill operating the new system, which was 'more work for the same pay' and where they then sacked the poorer weavers, or as Harry felt 'sorted the wheat from the chaff'.⁷⁵

The years of economic uncertainty through the 1920s meant that for a long time, people appeared to be collectively worn down and lacked the stomach for disputes. The incidents that took place did so

⁶⁷ Tramp weavers in the country districts were held in high regard for their technical skills.

⁶⁸ Burnley Town Medical Report, Public Health Survey, NA/MH66/1069.

⁶⁹ P. Smith (1985), *Migration to Burnley, 1851-81*, BA, University of Liverpool, and E. Higham (1972), *An Investigation into the Migrant Population of Burnley in 1851*, PGCE, Chorley College.

⁷⁰ G. Durkin, 'Irish Park', *Burnley District Historical Society Retrospect*, Vol 8, (1988).

⁷¹ There was an especially heated debate over the release of Irish political prisoners that dominated the 1923 Burnley by-election. See M. Moulton, *Ireland and the Irish in Interwar Britain*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 260-265.

⁷² L. Chapples, *Life in and Around the Weavers Triangle*, (Burnley: Green Arrow Publishing, 2009), p. 11.

⁷³ Interview with Eileen Wilkinson, in P. Fyles, *Burnley 1926: With Particular Reference to the General Strike and the Miners' Lock-Out*, Typescript, held at Burnley Library Local Collection, LE02/BUR/FYL.

⁷⁴ See A. Green (1970), *Effects and Repercussions of More Looms in Burnley*, Unpublished Thesis, Chorley College, Burnley Library Local History Collection, LM312/GRE.

⁷⁵ C. Slater, *All Bed And Work: Looking At Lives Of Lancashire Textile Workers: Burnley 1975*, (Lancashire: Christine Oppong, 2013), p. 52.

begrudgingly and in conciliatory spirits. For the majority of people, there was a real desire to work properly and securely, and the strength of the AWA was challenged repeatedly in times of mass short-time working. Key incidents for the communities of north east Lancashire include the impact of the miners' strike of 1926, which again affected Burnley disproportionately, by cutting off the fuel supply to the mills and other works, effectively stopping even the smaller industries in the town. It is described in several reports how the weavers' lack of support for the miners further polarised the communities, but more significantly, as Eileen Wilkinson remembered: 'The miners' strike destroyed everybody's will ... you couldn't afford to have principles.'⁷⁶ The separation between cotton operatives and other industries was reinforced by the *Burnley Express*' portrayal of the unity between the other unions and the notable absence of the weavers in the aftermath of the General Strike (which both the local Liberal and Labour Party spoke out against). It was notable that 'the trade unionists were ceasing to think as miners, engineers, railwaymen or bricklayers and were beginning to think in a solid fashion as workers.'⁷⁷ Indeed, the cotton industry was not required by the T.U.C to cease work as part of the General Strike but, due to the effect it had on the coal industry, a number of firms had to close. In Burnley, there was also some confusion and controversy in terms of eligibility for strike payment, due to the union rules of not paying grants for strikes caused by other industries.⁷⁸ William Woodruff's recollections of the period in Blackburn especially view 1926 as a turning point of sorts. He noted a shift politically for people, feeling that 'if the workers could replace the toffs in parliament, a new day might dawn,' but then how, after losing a local election, 'the very people Labour wanted to help proved to be their worst enemies. Too many workers didn't want to change.'⁷⁹

W.M. Radcliffe, a weaver in Burnley, articulated the operative's frustrations in an earlier letter. He argued as 'not a believer in strikes or lockout, but ... a believer in public opinion.' Radcliffe presented a breakdown of wages following the various cuts with an analysis of the costs an average weaving family would undergo and how these prices had changed since 1914. He gave the average net income of a four loom weaver following deductions for insurance, unemployment, oiling and tea water as £2. 1s 4.5d for each of the 52 weeks of the year, adding that he himself only averaged £1. 13s 5.5d in 1921. Excluding expenses for holidays, food, clothing, shoes and household wear and tear, he presented the following table:

	1921.		1914.			
	Per year					
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Water rate	2	17	4	1	8	9
Gas	5	12	4	3	10	2
Borough rate	13	1	8	6	6	0
Poor rate	1	19	6	0	17	6
Ground rent ..	2	10	0	2	10	0
1 per cent for repair per war rate	4	0	0	4	0	0
Insurance (about)	0	5	0	0	5	0
2 cwt. of coal	14	19	0	5	4	0
Church expenses	5	4	0	3	5	0
Papers	3	9	4	1	12	6
Trade union (for a time suspended) (about)	1	0	0	1	6	0
	54	18	2	30	4	11

Figure 16: Average costs for an operative. Source: *Manchester Guardian*, August 22, 1921

⁷⁶ Fyles, 1926, Appendix.

⁷⁷ *Burnley Express*, November 17, 1926.

⁷⁸ *Burnley Express*, June 26, 1926.

⁷⁹ W. Woodruff, *The Road to Nab End*, (London: Eland, 2000), pp. 227-241.

It is obvious from the rough calculations that the cost of living had risen drastically above wages, which had fluctuated. A key change for example is the dramatic rise in the cost of coal, which practically all families relied upon, nearly trebling, and the borough rate over doubling when wages had stagnated at the same level. For many people within the communities and families of the area, this was a very real and frustrating situation, especially regarding underemployment and the lack of stable regular opportunities. As one AWA report noted, the number of looms between 1913 and 1933 in the Burnley area (excluding Brierfield) had dropped from 98,301 to 60,714.⁸⁰ At a time when the family wage would perhaps provide some respite, the opportunities eroded. As Pope argues, the need for this family wage coincided with a period of diminishing alternatives in employment, which together halted most chances of moving out of the industry. The result was higher than national numbers of unemployed women (which was worsened following the introduction of more looms) for multiple reasons, including the push in some areas, especially Nelson, for males to earn a 'family wage', and in others due to the inability of some women to perform the demands of the adapted roles.⁸¹ The introduction of the Anomalies Act in 1931 exacerbated the situation, cutting unemployment benefits for 5000 married women in Burnley alone,⁸² the result of which the Nelson Weavers' Association publication *Power Loom* declared in 1931:

It still remains that legal justice and actual justice are two very different things. Injustice is inherent in our 'present' social order. We must continue to cherish a healthy discontent with working-class conditions.⁸³

To reiterate the arguments made by Radcliffe in 1922, the operatives' main desire, he contended, was for a living wage. As he described nine years before the period of further losses and declining opportunities:

All that is desired by the worker is that he shall have a living wage ... The workers are for the time being crushed and broken, but discontented, and that is a menace for the future, because where there is not a living wage there can be no peace.⁸⁴

The situation on the streets was explored in the J. J. Astor edited *Third Winter of Unemployment*,⁸⁵ a collection of investigations into the problems of unemployment across the country by a self-described group of 'persons of diverse economic experience and different political opinions'.⁸⁶ Despite Astor's own political allegiances and history of opposition to working class causes, the book has many merits, and especially highlights the crucial link between the declining employment market to the loss of workers' self-respect and the demoralising effect this had. The people of Burnley were seen to have undergone a rise in general living standards in the boom period directly after the war, but the change in situation had curtailed this.⁸⁷ As late as 1924, the *Northern Daily Telegraph* issued a booklet for advertisers, talking of the potential of North East Lancashire's desire for nonessential goods. It would appear that the true seriousness of the period had not yet become obvious. The booklet stated that: 'the people of North East Lancashire ... can pay for the best of everything-and want it!' whilst at the same time:

⁸⁰ Weavers Letters, LRO/DDX 1123/6/2/372.

⁸¹ R. Pope. 'Unemployed Women In Inter-War Britain: The Case of the Lancashire Weaving District', *Women's History Review*, 9, (2000), pp. 743-759.

⁸² LP/DAC/2/18.

⁸³ *Burnley News*, November 28, 1931.

⁸⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, August 18, 1922.

⁸⁵ J. J. Astor, *Third Winter of Unemployment*, (London: P.S. King and Sons, 1923).

⁸⁶ *Economica*, 9, (1923), pp. 247-249.

⁸⁷ Astor, *Third Winter*, p. 150.

Cosmetics are naturally in exceptional demand in a district in which industrial activities are so preponderant, and especially where so large a proportion of the women work in the factories and mills. While the practice of using face creams and other toilet preparations is not long established, it is extending rapidly, and the demand will become steadily greater in future.⁸⁸

However, by 1930, the situation had greatly altered. Don Haworth's reminiscences especially show the shift in mentality came about, where a comparison is made with the change from the post First World War boom to the 1930s in Burnley and Harle Syke:

It was a good time for business. Cotton boomed. Few doubted that a good time was ending; they could not invest their money fast enough. Other trades prospered in consequence ... sharing a bed with me in the depression of the thirties, my uncle Ben remembered those first golden days of peace. "We were proper high-steppers in those days, Donny."⁸⁹

The shift in morale Haworth highlights can be further traced in *Third Winter of Unemployment*, which describes the stratification of operatives into two very distinct classes, the 'habituated' who had moved from selling their furniture to asking for and eventually relying on relief and the 'demoralised' who had inherited moral weakness, and had been swelled by men demoralised through military service. The problem of the 'habituated', that 'they no longer feel ashamed to be seen in the queue at the Labour Exchange or to apply to the relieving officer', contrasted with the notion that 75 per cent of them were looking for work, being 'heartily sick of doing nothing' and wanting the security of wages.⁹⁰ One observed woman perhaps best represents those same people:

I spoke to an unfortunate woman a few days ago. Her husband had died just a week before and she could not get work and had nothing, so she applied to the Guardians for relief and received 15s. Half in money and half in the form of a coupon for provision, but she was deeply ashamed to present the coupon in a shop because it associated her with the pauper class.⁹¹

The period therefore seems, much as Radcliffe described earlier, to be one where the operatives of Burnley were at a loss for a solution to the extended period of malaise, yet many clung on to the existent culture of the town, relying on the community and ability to have an active role in the cotton industry. This is argued, again admittedly, from a standpoint hostile to socialism in *Third Winter of Unemployment*:

There is practically no political unrest in Burnley. Some time ago, the steady section of the unemployed attempted to organise themselves, but a few hot-heads came into the organisation, the steady people withdrew, and it collapsed ... On the whole the cotton operatives are content with their work and working conditions ... many of the operatives know the members of the mill-owning families personally and there is little petty tyranny of overlookers and managers. The weaver is not readily stampeded by political hot-heads.⁹²

The continued decline of trade union strength

The degree of disengagement amongst operatives was mirrored with a loss of political influence for the AWA. Despite the attempts at reform within the industry previously discussed, and the rise of the Labour Party as a national force, the influence of the textile unions began to dwindle in the later 1920s. In 1929, when the party won 287 seats in the General Election, the cotton unions only managed to return four of

⁸⁸ North-East Lancashire: A 300 Square Mile Industrial Area: A Compact Unit For Distribution And Advertising, Business Services Research LTD. (Blackburn: *Northern Daily Telegraph*, 1927), Burnley Library, LM07/BUS.

⁸⁹ D. Haworth, *Figures in a Bygone Landscape*, (London: Mandarin, 1987), p. 60.

⁹⁰ Astor, *Third Winter*, pp. 151-153.

⁹¹ Astor, *Third Winter*, p. 151.

⁹² Astor, *Third Winter*, p. 153.

six sponsored candidates and failed to return any in the elections of 1931 and 1935.⁹³ They were also partially hamstrung by the local Labour Party associations overlooking their candidates in favour of perceived more left-wing alternatives, seen through the adoption of Arthur Henderson in Burnley and Arthur Greenwood in Nelson.⁹⁴ Both seats were seen as safe Labour wins, and Henderson was by this time regarded as having a 'knack' of losing elections.⁹⁵ Henderson's own campaign quickly aligned him to the area's culture, being regarded dually as a moderate and socialist, and aping David Shackleton by declaring that, 'in his capacity as Member for Burnley he was not going to merely serve one party, but to serve all irrespective of their party politics and to do his utmost to look after their local interests.'⁹⁶ Locally, people enjoyed the idea of having a 'name' as the MP, feeling that it befitted a town of such perceived importance.⁹⁷

To combat the lack of political clout, there were further attempts to tackle the country districts and unfederated mills over 'local disadvantages', where the AWA managed to persuade the Minister of Labour to have the matter sent to an industrial court, resulting in various amendments and the abolition of disadvantages in some cases in 1920. The issue was again revised in 1936 following the more looms dispute. Part of the defence presented by the unfederated employers was one of inefficiency, and that more looms were needed as well as the reductions to enable them to compete with the larger towns.⁹⁸ This was prophetic of the whole industry and an argument that has much more resonance in the following few years. It was also part of a general movement to seek greater governmental intervention in disputes and the industry as a whole. However, when intervention came, it appeared out of touch with the operatives and usually aligned with the employers' intentions. This was especially the case with the results of the Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act of 1927 that severely undermined the strength of unionism across north east Lancashire.

Perhaps the most significant incident however was the Rigby-Swift award in 1929 (where operatives' wages were cut by 6.4 per cent), in a case of arbitration in which Lord Justice Rigby-Swift, partly chosen because he was a Lancastrian, was severely criticised and the outcome routinely condemned from all sides other than the CSMA. Their demands for a wage cut of 25 per cent were rejected by delegates at an Amalgamation meeting in July 1929 which was met with a three week lockout. There were then a series of meetings between textile leaders and the Government regarding various issues, which saw the CSMA brought into discussions. They remained adamant about the wage cuts and rejected the offer of arbitration, although they later agreed to change this if the operatives would agree to their conditions. Some sections of the industry did, although not the AWA. The CSMA then met with the Prime Minister and agreed to arbitration, to which Rigby-Swift, accused of sleeping through part of the hearings, sided with them. It was for many operatives the end of arbitration and a betrayal. W. H. Carr, the Secretary for Ashton Card and Blowing Room Operatives' Association declared in the aftermath:

⁹³ A. Fowler, 'Lancashire to Westminster: A Study of Cotton Trade Union Officials and British Labour 1910-1939', *Labour History Review*, 64, (1999). pp. 1-22.

⁹⁴ Fowler, *Lancashire to Westminster*, p. 14.

⁹⁵ *Burnley Express*, October 14, 1924.

⁹⁶ *Burnley Express*, March 1, 1924.

⁹⁷ *Burnley Express*, October 14, 1924.

⁹⁸ For a discussion of the whole case, see K.C. Jackson, 'Local Disadvantages and the Weavers Wage', *Ars Textrina*, 10, (1988), pp. 85-98.

I think it will disgust the operatives when any suggestion is made for arbitration in the future ... At all textile meetings weavers have advocated arbitration. I should think they have had enough of it now if this is a sample of all they can get by it.⁹⁹

Such sentiments were shared by several other leading figures, including Luke Bates, Secretary of the Northern Counties' Textile Trades Federation and Alderman Far, Secretary of the Mossley Card and Blowing Room Operatives' Association, who likened the decision to 'stealing the cheese out of the mouse trap and expecting the trap to do its work.'¹⁰⁰ After eleven districts sent resolutions in protest to the award, there was a ballot held on the issue of a motion to express disappointment with the decision and apply for an immediate wage increase. Due to opposition from the union leaders, the issue was pushed back until the next general meeting of the AWA, where it was overwhelmingly passed. There was then a ballot taken over the issue of ceasing work to force the raised wages, which passed 92,142 to 43,531. However, it was decided by the General Council of the AWA to not proceed, due to 173 spoiled ballots and 8,523 blanks. Indeed, this was followed by the suggestions of the Ministry of Labour in 1929 that unemployed women seek employment outside of the mill by moving into domestic service. Seen as an affront to the independence and structure of community life of the area, the issues combined did little more than antagonise people, as the *Manchester Guardian* noted:

The traditions of a century or more cannot be expected to be readily overthrown ... The father who had risen from weaving to the position of "jobber", or "tackler" would be able to keep his weaver wife at home, but his children might all go in the mill. Weaving was not, perhaps, considered as one of the aristocratic occupations, but by hard work and correct training a reasonably good wage could be earned... and as the weavers put it "they knew when they had done"... the weaver puts great value on her independence.¹⁰¹

The different perceptions of settlements

A recurring local issue was the notion that the country districts had coped better than the larger areas through insulating themselves and concentrating the mechanisms of community to minimise the distress. However, even in the less affected areas conditions were arduous. The most famous example was perhaps Fenner Brockway's survey *Hungry England* and his visit to Great Harwood, which was published in 1932. He described the town as 'fresh, clean and tidy' and that he had 'rarely been in a town with more indications of respectable comfort'. One woman, when asked if she had any pleasures replied, 'We have to go to the pictures. We force ourselves to go, though we don't know what we'll have to eat. It's the only way to stop yourself going mad.'¹⁰² There is evidence that the smaller districts were seen as less distressed to internal observations as well. One example was when R. W. Whittaker of Atkinson St., Harle Syke proposed a resolution to the BWA for the 'abolition of the degrading custom of standing for work in the sheds'. Indeed, 'standing' was well established in the country districts and in some regards held to be a way of earning a better position through the sheer determination of waiting for a position. Whittaker was singled out for living in Harle Syke, where:

A Burnley weaver working "up Syke" is the envy of the street. They "addle good brass theer." The same applies to a Burnley weaver working in Nelson. Is it any wonder the impulse to earn more- when often it means "less work" - drives

⁹⁹ *Manchester Guardian*, August 24, 1929.

¹⁰⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, August 24, 1929.

¹⁰¹ *Manchester Guardian*, February 11, 1931.

¹⁰² F. Brockway, *Hungry England*, (London: Victor Gallancz, 1932), p. 39.

weavers to “stand”?¹⁰³

However, not all of the districts fared well. In 1926 at Barnoldswick, a dispute started by 50 operatives seeking compensation for bad materials led to 5,000 weavers including 1,000 non-unionists, who were ineligible for strike pay, were locked out for two weeks in March.¹⁰⁴ The discussions between the local employers and the AWA were arranged and presided over by members of the Urban District Council, ministers and local ‘gentlemen’, whilst operatives waited ‘for hours’ outside of the Town Hall for news of a settlement.¹⁰⁵ Such was the mood locally, when news of the employers’ decision to end the lockout was displayed in the local cinemas, it was greeted with ‘loud applause’,¹⁰⁶ highlighting the general feeling of relief rather than any form of class based anger. A parliamentary debate over unemployment relief in 1926 highlighted the devastating effects the period could have within a small community, as Mr Finburgh, MP for Salford noted:

In the Barnoldswick area there were formerly 32 sheds and mills, and 26 have gone into the Bankruptcy Court or had to close down. In the Burnley area I believe 40 to 50 have had to go into the Bankruptcy Court or close down. The industry generally is in a deplorable state.¹⁰⁷

The increasingly fraught dependence upon the return of the industry to productivity is further highlighted in the case of the Hargreaves family in Harle Syke. In 1912, Richard Hargreaves gave up his business and post office to become under-manager at Primrose Mill alongside his brother James. Such a move would, in the context of the time, be seen as a calculated risk. Indeed, as seen in Chapter 2, many people within the village swapped occupations to take advantage of developing opportunities. By 1920, the company had changed to the Limefield Manufacturing Company, consisting of several other Hargreaves brothers and sisters, using money from their mother’s estate and £200 from James, which he had borrowed. James, however, could not pay his debts, and so the company took over his liabilities and he left the firm. The company ended up in liquidation, with worthless shares, liabilities of £103,782 and assets of £7,940 with two of the brothers, Richard and Levi, bankrupt.¹⁰⁸ What then followed was a battle over Mary Hargreaves’ estate as creditors chased their losses. Upon her death, her relatives went to court to try and stop the estate being swallowed up in the company’s liabilities, despite all the beneficiaries of the will giving their consent to the money being given over initially.¹⁰⁹ Another court case followed over fraudulent payments in 1923, and by this time Richard Hargreaves had become a weaver, as many of the other family members did. In earlier years, this company would have in all likelihood flourished, but in a time of economic hardship struggled to ever really get going. However, that the family were able to survive and re-enter weaving reiterates the strength of community at Harle Syke.

The lack of finance and growing liabilities from the speculative boom period proved to have long reaching after-effects. Despite the cuts in wages, the industry still looked to further reduce costs, which led them to the more looms experiment discussed in the next chapter. Both the Fowlers and Hill cover the earlier

¹⁰³ *Burnley News*, December 8, 1926.

¹⁰⁴ Other reports state only twenty per cent were part of the union. *Burnley Express*, April 3, 1926.

¹⁰⁵ *Burnley Express*, March 27, 1926.

¹⁰⁶ *Burnley Express*, March 31, 1926.

¹⁰⁷ Hansard, Relief Of Unemployment, HC Deb, 16 November 1926, vol 199 cc1715-825.

¹⁰⁸ *Burnley Express*, November 12, 1921.

¹⁰⁹ *Burnley News*, May 22, 1922.

disputes in the Nelson area that precluded and led up to the eventual dispute over the issue, but as Hill argues, as the area moved into the 1930s, there were increasing questions being asked 'of authority at work and control over the labour process.'¹¹⁰ A lockout in Nelson in 1928 was a culmination of issues that had dominated the local industry there, primarily the use of poor quality yarn, 'steaming' sheds, and fines for weavers making poor quality cloth, all of which were driven by the desire of employers to cut costs.¹¹¹ Coupled with this was what Hill called 'a general intensification of work discipline', for example parading unemployed weavers outside mills to remind workers of the pool of workers available.¹¹² Mentally for operatives, the level of uncertainty over jobs was constantly reiterated.

One of the major effects that the continued economic turmoil of the period had on the local communities was population decline, at a higher rate than could be replaced. The problem was described in government reports as 'heavy and persistent', and the wider area saw the Blackburn area lose 13,700, Burnley area 13,900 and Haslingden area 2,700 people between 1921 and 1931. Even within the smaller areas there was a problem, if a much less serious one. Between 1931 and 1951 for example, Briercliffe saw a drop in population from 2,752 to 2,372. It is therefore apparent, studying the subject area in its municipal form in Table 20, that between 1921 and 1931 the towns closer to Burnley suffered worse than those of a greater distance, which can at least partially be explained by the retention of industry there, both in textiles and other developments - rayon, footwear etc., - and the fact that Burnley was the centre for cotton's experimentations. However, between 1931 and 1951, the only area not to suffer a large drop in population was the Burnley Rural District.

Table 20 Population changes amongst the weaving districts, 1921-1951

	1921	1931	1951	Percentage of drop 1921-1931	Percentage of drop 1931-1951
Burnley	103,186	98,258	84,987	4.8	13.5
Burnley Rural District	17,701	17,418	16,771	1.6	3.7
Barrowford	5,626	5,299	4,766	5.8	10.1
Brierfield	8,341	7,697	7,009	7.7	8.9
Colne	24,871	23,918	20,670	3.8	13.6
Haslingden	12,486	16,639	14,513	4.8	12.8
Nelson	39,815	38,277	34,384	3.9	10.2
Padiham	12,477	11,636	10,041	6.7	13.7

Figures from *North East Lancashire Regional Report*, (1952)

Conclusion

The interwar period was a decisive break from the past for the people of north east Lancashire. Much of what had made the area a success was attacked and eroded. Left with little alternatives, some kept faith with the industry, whilst some moved to other areas in search of opportunity. The combination of

¹¹⁰ Hill, *Nelson: Politics, Economy, Community*, (Lancaster: Carnegie Press, 1997), p. 77.

¹¹¹ Hill, *Nelson*, p. 77.

¹¹² Hill, *Nelson*, p. 77.

modernity and improvements in certain aspects of working practices contrasts with diminishing chances and unstable work. With little room for manoeuvre, those who turned to trade unionism and labour politics were let down and left with a sense of betrayal. Audrey Green especially encapsulates the reality for a generation of people. Born in Burnley in 1933, her parents spent the period in and out of work, and during the disturbances of 1932, were both unemployed and living with relatives. When the strike action was over, her father went between short-term and short-time work, becoming so disillusioned with the situation, he cycled to Derby and found work in a foundry, and as Green says, 'never worked in weaving or joined a union again.'¹¹³ She reiterates the arguments made by Rex Pope that the:

Failure of unions to cater for unemployed, lack of success of clubs and classes and unwillingness of working class to participate in social or political activity specifically related to their plight, were all recognised in areas where unemployment was treated as temporary and exceptional rather than the norm.¹¹⁴

There were some bright spots, and certain areas in north east Lancashire communities continued to function and provide leisure and activities such as the cinema, as shown most comprehensively by Jones.¹¹⁵ Yet, the area suffered from a number of industrial and social problems. A declining, ageing population focused on an industry having serious issues with productivity, yet still chasing profits. The reality of the new economic landscape is further addressed in the next chapter, where the attempts to save the industry jarred with the established cultural norms and practices of north east Lancashire.

¹¹³ Green, *Effects and Repercussions*, p. i.

¹¹⁴ R. Pope (1975), 'The Unemployment Problem in North-East Lancashire, 1920–38', M.Litt Thesis, Lancaster University, p. 355.

¹¹⁵ S. Jones, 'Work, Leisure and the Political Economy of the Cotton Districts Between the Wars', *Textile History*, 18, 1 (1987), pp. 33-58.

6. 'NOT EXPERIMENTING FOR FUN': EXPLORING EXPRESSIONS OF IDENTITY DURING THE MORE LOOMS DISPUTE

At the height of depression in December 1928, the Burnley Master Cotton Spinners' and Manufacturers' Association (BMA) approached the Burnley Weavers' Association (BWA) with a proposal to arrest economic hardship, increase productivity, cut costs and return Lancashire to its position of dominance. The Amalgamated Weavers' Association (AWA), acting through the BWA, claimed the proposal to increase the number of looms worked by a weaver from the standard four loom system was 'drastic and revolutionary',¹ as it would result in increased workloads and mass operative displacement. The Cotton Spinners and Manufacturers Association (CSMA), acting through the BMA, declared in response to this claim that they were not 'experimenting for fun'.² The result was an area-wide dispute, termed the more loom dispute that would leave a lasting legacy on the communities of north east Lancashire, and fundamentally alter local relationships with trade unionism.

The more loom dispute itself provides an opportunity to examine how the north east Lancashire weaving section of the cotton industry faced up to the changing economic circumstance of the early 1930s. As a result it highlights the attempts to retain the culture of the area, at a time of radical change. Therefore a clear comparison can be made to the strike action discussed in the first half of the thesis. As Chapter 4 discussed, the ability of local settlements to interact with trade unionism was built upon a steadfast belief in the longevity of the cotton industry. In this chapter, the industrial disputes come at a time of economic and social uncertainty, as described in Chapter 5.

Hopwood described the industrial action as 'unprecedented', and likened to a state of 'guerrilla' warfare.³ Therefore, the focus here is to explore the shift in public consciousness, the change and continuity amongst the communities of north east Lancashire, and the local expressions of identity in an industry described by a contemporary operative as struggling to survive.⁴

Operatives in general were never opposed to the principle of cutting costs if it was necessary. The acknowledgement that the long-term survival of the cotton industry was of the utmost importance to local communities was still strongly embedded. However, a concern over wages and job security resulted in scepticism over how reductions could be achieved.⁵ Continued attempts to find a way for the industry to modernise in a beneficial way had been consistent disappointments for operatives, and generally frustrating for employers. A primary obstacle was that any template resolution acceptable to employers across the cotton industry would mean compromise for ordinary operatives. Indeed, the growing gulf

¹ *Burnley News*, December 13, 1930.

² *Burnley Express*, May 27, 1931.

³ E. Hopwood, *The Lancashire Weavers Story*, (Lancashire: Co-Operative Press, 1969), p. 108.

⁴ B. Dickinson, *James Rushton and his times; 1886-1956*, (Salford: Working Class Movement Library, 1982).

⁵ See for example the demands articulated by Socialist MP W. J. Trout, *Daily Dispatch*, March 28, 1930. These included:

Extension of the system to be gradual

Trade Unions to have a voice in deciding what operatives shall be displaced

Co-operation in making some provision for displaced labour

Definite guarantees as to the quality of the material – that is warp and weft – supplied to the weavers together with size of cop

Retention of provision in uniform list of prices for all special cloth.

between the AWA and the rank and file membership eventually resulted in the forging of personal compromises with individual employers, a splintering of union strength and an erosion of uniformity across the weaving sector. For example when Victoria Mill in Read reopened under new management in July 1931, they did so under a six loom system paying wages below the agreed list prices. The result was that the Padiham Weavers' Association expelled the 60 operatives engaged in work.⁶ In the same year, six operatives working for Tertius Spencer at Queen's Mill had to write to the Ministry of Labour for assistance after the local weavers association had ignored their pleas for assistance.⁷ As one operative declared in 1931:

Why should we consider them any longer ... They said they would support us if we rejected the eight loom system, but the only thing they have done is collect our subscriptions regularly and we have had to pay them out of the dole.⁸

Explaining the more looms dispute

The question raises the issue of how a period of malaise and worsening conditions, seen in the previous chapter, could develop into one of tension and hostility inherent in the lockout of 1931 and strike of 1932. The latter was regarded by the AWA as 'remarkably loyal, particularly in the North-East Lancashire area,'⁹ yet, as will be discussed, the situation was much more varied and complex. The first section explains the more looms dispute, and is followed by some of the possible solutions to a declining cotton industry and how these reflected the changing culture of north east Lancashire. The chapter then explores the alternative solutions from the operatives themselves, before finally examining the situation of the country districts.

What is offered here is an overview of the key events of the period. Other historians, whose focus lies in more specific areas, have addressed the technicalities of the more looms dispute previously.¹⁰ However, an overall review of the dispute is required for context.

In November 1928, the BMA approached the BWA for cooperation in trialling both various automatic and semi-automatic looms, as well as the eight looms on the traditional 'Lancashire loom' system. There is evidence that trials had already taken place unofficially in Burnley prior to this.¹¹ The trial of using more looms than the established four looms was on condition that various ancillary jobs (sweeping, oiling, carrying etc.) were removed and the speed of the looms reduced. An agreement was made for around a dozen Burnley manufacturers to each place four per cent of their looms on the eight looms per weaver

⁶ *Manchester Guardian*, July 30, 1931.

⁷ *Lancashire Evening Post*, July 30, 1931.

⁸ *Manchester Guardian*, August 7, 1931.

⁹ Hopwood, *Lancashire Weavers*, p. 110.

¹⁰ The more technical aspects of the More Looms Dispute, are presented most comprehensively D. Higgins and S. Bowden, 'Productivity on the Cheap? The 'More Looms' Experiment and the Lancashire Weaving Industry during the Inter-War Years', *Business History* 41, 3 (1999), pp. 21-44., and the dispute from the Employers' perspective is covered by A. McIvor, in *Organised Capital: Employers' Associations and Industrial Relations in Northern England, 1880-1939*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). For a personalised account from a leading local communist see B. Dickinson, *James Rushton and His Times*. Perhaps the most digestible account is provided by Branson and Heinemann, *Britain in the Nineteen Thirties*, (London: Panther, 1973), pp. 91-99, although both A. Fowler, *The History of the Nelson Weavers Association*, (Nelson: 1984) and J. Hill's *Nelson: Politics, Economy, Community*, (Lancaster: Carnegie Press, 1997) are useful.

¹¹ One such place is at Daneshouse Mill, Burnley, *Burnley Express*, April 24, 1929.

system.¹² There was great criticism directed towards the BWA for agreeing to the experiment, due to concerns over displacement and the increased physical effort needed to run the extra looms. However, despite concerns from the AWA that they were unable to see the full results of the experiments, a number of reports claimed them a success. Indeed the *Burnley News* carried such a headline, detailing the advantages as being: better cloth, fewer ends down in the warp, lower production costs and better earning for the weavers. Yet, it was acknowledged that this would be at the cost of labour, and more ominously, that it ‘was only the beginning’.¹³ As Graham observes, employers from other towns were interested in the effect the system would have, citing for example the case of Henry Slater in Barnoldswick:

Henry Slater at Clough Mill was a friend of Tertius Spencer at Burnley where the system was first tried out ... Henry went to look at how it was progressing and came back so convinced that it was the way forward. He immediately converted some looms and set weavers on to see how it worked out.¹⁴

The question of more looms gained increased scrutiny in 1930. A period of wage cuts brought on by continually worsening economic position which is shown by the spate of mill closures seen in Table 21, was followed by the events surrounding the Rigby Swift award, and the disappointment of the Graham Report previously outlined in Chapter 5. Despite a general agreement that the more loom system was successful, there was no consensus over how to implement it. Stifled by the lack of progress, the CSMA announced that the system would be introduced across Lancashire, to which the AWA responded with the threat of strike action. Employers then locked out operatives in January 1931, but backtracked under severe union and public pressure, withdrawing the system by February.

Table 21: Mill closures within a year.

Town	Mills closed in the last year	Looms affected	Total temporarily or wholly unemployed operatives or wholly	Other
Burnley	14	8,071	12,201	1/8th Borough population unemployed.
Padiham	4	2,200	2,000	
Nelson and Barrowford	8	2,920		One in three unemployed, 2/3rd Partially Employed.
Colne, Trawden, Cottontree and Foulridge	6	1,330	3,200	Half of those working temporarily stopped.
Accrington	9	4,500	4,500	Three mills have hope of re-opening, six have little hope of ever re-opening, some have been totally dismantled.

Source: *Burnley Express*, December 30, 1931

In Burnley, Tertius Spencer persisted alongside some other employers to implement a modified version of

¹² The figure is often given in various sources as ‘around a dozen’, ten, and according to Bowden and Higgins, thirteen. Bowden and Higgins, *Productivity*, p. 26.

¹³ *Burnley Express*, November 2, 1929.

¹⁴ S. Graham, *Stanley’s View*, Volume 4, (online: lulu.com, 2010), p. 261.

the system, causing demonstrations and the closure of his Imperial Mill in March 1931. Spencer then introduced the system in August at his Queen's Mill, re-starting Imperial Mill in the process, and instigated the spreading of the system across Burnley through the months leading into 1932. Momentum gathered by May 1932, and when the operatives refused further wage reductions, several employers broke away from the CSMA and repealed previous agreements. As a result, a wave of strikes broke out across the county through July and August.

A settlement was agreed after governmental intervention in September through the so-called 'Midland Agreement'.¹⁵ However, working conditions continued to worsen, wages dropped, machines were not slowed and the quality of materials was poor. There was also an increasingly resentful feeling among the operatives due, as will later be discussed, to the confused and at times contradictory actions of the AWA. Union numbers dropped, weakening the ability to fund strike action. A Ministry of Labour report showed that the agreement was not being upheld in most places,¹⁶ the period known as 'the breaches of agreement' - and by 1934 the system of wider collective agreements and the union enforcement of them had all but collapsed. Uncontrolled wage cutting was widespread. The AWA called for collective agreements to be made law, but employers argued that the employer breakaways were proof that wages were too high. In 1934, the Cotton Manufacturing Act passed, making a new wage list legally binding. Despite the fact it raised wages on six looms, it in fact dropped them lower on four, which a number of companies then reverted to in order to make savings. It was not until 1935 that the situation finally settled down, and by 1936 and a second Industrial Court hearing the few remaining mills and districts with 'local disadvantages' were tackled, bringing general uniformity to the weaving sector.

In 1935, average earnings were 31s 6d a week in comparison to 33s 6d in 1932 before the introduction of more looms. As Singleton shows, by the mid-1930s underemployment was still affecting around 20 per cent of operatives.¹⁷ Thousands needed food tickets to survive, and in 1936 during an upturn of trade, a strike was narrowly avoided as operatives' pressed for wage increases. A compromise left rates below 1929 levels, and employers still refused the idea of a guaranteed 'fall-back' wage.¹⁸

The solution(s) to a problem?

Various solutions were proposed to reinvigorate the cotton industry as it faced up to the two-pronged problem of a radically changed international environment and stagnant conditions across mill towns. More looms was not the only suggested solution, but it was the one which gained credence. There were two serious options: either bring the machinery up to date, or find a way to produce the material as cheap as the foreign competition. There had been discussion over modernisation and adopting new systems and newer looms for a number of years, despite a widespread resistance both due to cost implementation from employers and wage reductions and displacements from operatives.

¹⁵ The Midland Agreement, named after the hotel in Manchester was later legalized as the Cotton manufacturing 1934. It basically allowed for weavers to work six looms, paid at a lower rate than the four looms Uniform List, but with reduced speeds and ancillary tasks were provided. See McIvor, *Organised Capital*, p. 202.

¹⁶ LRO/ DDX 1123/6/2/372.

¹⁷ J. Singleton, *Lancashire on the Scrapheap: Cotton Industry 1945-1970*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 17.

¹⁸ Branson and Heinemann, *Britain in the Nineteen Thirties*, p. 91-99.

As Bolin-Hort has shown, the attempts to introduce modern or 'Americanised' systems in Burnley had failed in the past, partially due to the impact of wage bargaining. However, the perceived likelihood of displacement was an equal deterrent.¹⁹ In effect, both sides had to face up to some harsh realities. As Table 21 previously highlighted, in the year 1930 the situation was a dire one for both operatives and employers, with Burnley particularly suffering from mill closure. To further analyse the figures for Burnley, its 12,201 operatives were split: 8,108 fully unemployed to 4,091 temporarily unemployed. The majority of the 12,201 were women, but the amount of men fully unemployed, 2,294, was higher than the men temporarily stopped, and at a similar figure to the women temporarily stopped (2,801). There was therefore a body of men becoming increasingly demoralised, which was reflected in the growing movement for men to be able to earn a 'family wage'. There was now little stability for the operatives across north east Lancashire, and the *Manchester Guardian* argued in 1931 that the effect of a worsening employment market and unstable wages threatened 'the family income of the operatives; and in the weaving communities, where so many of a family are engaged, it will be a serious blow to family and social life.'²⁰

Generally, weavers remained on the 'traditional' four looms per weavers system. Uniformity had never actually been achieved, and around the Burnley area weavers had operated more than four looms with the assistance of a tenter for a number of years.²¹ Serious discussions over introducing more loom schemes date from as early as 1903, and reports of experiments using eight looms between two sets of workers were acknowledged as early as 1909.²² One example in Briercliffe shows the decision to move a father and son onto eight looms, after they had applied to run ten in 1914.²³ Despite the variation in practice, there was a growing desire for a complete, uniform overhaul of the weaving system. Several mills trialled variations of automatic (Northrop) looms, which first shipped to Ashton Brothers in Hyde and were set up by American hands in 1902.²⁴ But, together with the alternative propositions such as double-shift patterns, the reliance on technologies and methods developed abroad highlight a now clear lack of innovation from within the cotton industry. For example, several mills in Canada were running 32 loom systems and shift work, and some mills in South Carolina, USA, had 72 looms on automatic systems.²⁵ Meanwhile the Chinese and Japanese, Burnley's direct market competitors, were running 16 looms.²⁶ Even the local 'Communist agitators' campaigning against more looms had to at one point admit that such a system was already in use in Russia. Yet, the long term ability to actually match, let alone compete with foreign industries was questioned.²⁷ As early as 1930, the secretary of the Blackburn and District Cotton Manufacturers' Association openly stated that ultimately automatic looms were the future, but that due to the economic conditions the only real option was to make the best use of the

¹⁹ See P. Bolin-Hort, *Work, Family and the State: Child Labour and the Organisation of Production in the British Cotton Industry, 1780-1920*, (Germany: Studentlitteratur, 1989), pp. 166-185.

²⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, December 6, 1930.

²¹ Although the term tenter has several definitions according to locality, around the Burnley area it was usually a young trainee weaver who assisted an experienced operative.

²² LRO/DDX6/2/363a.

²³ Hill End Mill Minute Book, June 19, 1914, Briercliffe Society Archive.

²⁴ *Lancashire Evening Post*, August 8, 1902.

²⁵ *Burnley Express*, January 31, 1931.

²⁶ *Burnley Express*, May 27, 1931.

²⁷ One letter from a Mr Proctor to the *Burnley Express* declared 'It is time that those who depend upon the cotton industry for their livelihood began to think clearly and deeply upon the difficulties which beset the cotton industry so that they can find the best way out of the impasse that the textile industry is now in.', *Burnley Express*, June 26, 1929.

machinery the trade had available.²⁸ He was not alone in his belief, but ironically, when automatic looms were first introduced, the resultant local strike action and general sense of resentment at points echoed Luddism.²⁹ The Northrop loom was no longer an innovation, and the Japanese Toyoda loom was now the market leader, however, it cost around £65 per loom, or around £70,000 for a 1,000 looms shed. By 1930, 1/10th of Japanese industry had been converted over to Toyoda, but to do the same for Lancashire would cost over an estimated £4 billion.³⁰

In February 1930, the *Burnley Weavers Journal* proposed the way forward as one of three choices: stay 'as they were', implement more looms at an undetermined rate of wages, or resist the system to 'stimulate' the establishment of automatic looms.³¹ The *Textile Weekly* investigated the net cost of cloth (based on a 91 and 3/4 yards-long piece) based on four looms, eight looms and automatics and found that on 4 looms the cost would be: £365.08d, on 8 looms: £349.02d and on the automatic (Northrop): £336.85d.³² Yet the cost of implementation was still a stumbling block in a mature industry with heavy debts from the speculative boom years. Following one of several exploratory missions by the CSMA to examine alternative approaches, a solution was found in a system from Silesia, crucially, not from within Lancashire.

From within the cotton industry itself, there were several solutions proposed that gained wider attention. The two most prominent plans, which highlight different approaches to dealing with the decline of the industry came from Sir Amos Nelson, of Nelson and Tertius Spencer of Burnley. Nelson was a self-made man, who along with his father had worked his way up from the shop floor. He was thus grounded in and in-turn was a product of traditional Lancashire principles. Spencer was the third generation of his family in manufacturing, and as one letter of support in the local press described, was seen as 'making the worker fit the economic conditions instead of making the economic conditions fit the workers.'³³

Nelson's proposals were for fancier cloths, but support from the AWA implied that if successful they could perhaps be adapted and across the industry. The system he proposed was regarded by the Nelson Weavers' Association as 'an honest attempt at reorganisation ... this is not the beginning of any new golden age of prosperity, but is simply the best we can see of anything within reason at the present time.'³⁴ Spencer's focus was purely on saving the industry through introducing more looms, and he spoke of a return to past glories for cotton, and in turn the British Empire.³⁵

Spencer was part of the family-owned J. Spencer Ltd. (originally a Briercliffe family), and director of both Queen's and Imperial Mills, two of the largest in the Burnley area. Later knighted for his contribution to

²⁸ *Burnley Express*, December 31, 1930.

²⁹ The local incidents in Hyde indeed retarded the spread of the automatic system more widely. See especially the strike of 1908, See A. Fowler, 'Trade Unions and Technical Change: The Automatic Loom Strike, 1908', North West Group For the Study of Labour History, *Bulletin*, 6, (1977), For more on the role of Luddites as a defensive force against systematic change and technology for comparison, see D. Linton, 'Luddism Reconsidered', *ETC: A Review of General Semantics*. 42, 1 (1985).

³⁰ *Burnley News*, May 17, 1930.

³¹ *Burnley Weavers Journal*, February 1930.

³² *Textile Weekly*, June 20, 1930, p.339.

³³ *Burnley Express*, June 6, 1931.

³⁴ *Lancashire Evening Post*, July 25, 1931.

³⁵ By 1933, Spencer was one of the key members of the Cotton Trade League who lobbied the government to introduce protectionist policies for Lancashire cotton across the Empire, *Manchester Guardian*, February 14, 1931.

the textile industry, he stated in April 1930, following the delays in discussions over the implementation of more looms that:

I am not going backward in this job, but forward. There is no question of what we shall do in Burnley. I do not know what the trade as a whole will do, for it does not matter to the bulk of the people ... the trade has gone backward enough and cannot go much further without going out altogether.³⁶

Spencer represented a cabal of employers who were resolute in the desire to force change, and he eventually led the breakaway from the CSMA to implement more looms systems. Indeed, he was accused by the local press of 'kite flying' for his fellow employers upon leaving the CSMA, and it was felt that he had 'the brass face for the job.'³⁷ Spencer was very clearly thick-skinned, not only liaising with operatives throughout the whole period, but often approaching strikers at mills to argue his case. Despite the riotous scenes outside his mills throughout the attempts to forge a solution, Spencer was resolute. He offered work for at least 12 months on the new system, and several letters of support portrayed him as 'courageous', 'the salt of the earth', and 'a brave man ... doing something the present Government is afraid to do, "go over the top" and face the issue.'³⁸ Thus, for many, he was a man of action offering a return to past glories on one hand, but at a basic level, offering reliable work. The negativity surrounding the lack of action from the AWA therefore strengthened Spencer's case, and as another letter outlined, there began a growing movement to 'give him a chance to prove himself'.³⁹ For many of his fellow employers, Spencer provided cost-effective solution to cheapening labour, with the conviction to get the industry moving. As a further opinion from Burnley employers highlights, many felt this was a necessary evil to save the industry:

The operatives are making a big mistake. Nothing can stop the advent of the eight-loom system now that experiments have proven, even to the satisfaction of the Weavers' representatives themselves that it is practicable, and it is in the best interests of the operatives that they should help to control the change-over and to regulate the displacement of labour.⁴⁰

However, Sir Amos Nelson presented an alternative vision. From humble beginnings, he had become a respected and innovative figure in the industry, being the first person to introduce the sateen trade to Nelson. He eventually built a large estate at West Marton but maintained a strong link to his businesses in his hometown. Throughout the depression years, Nelson's mills had managed to recover remarkably quickly and adapt by diversifying production, and developing their own commercial outlets to bypass merchants, actions that brought the company into dispute with other employers.⁴¹ Yet, such was his standing locally that during the 1928 Nelson lockout, he was sought as mediator between the local employers and operatives.

Nelson's suggested scheme focussed on a gradual change over to semi-automatic looms with weavers working between six and eight looms. It also offered several new innovations such as: a guaranteed fall-back wage for the first time; a bonus system; the abolition of fines in mills; the elimination from the mill

³⁶ *Manchester Guardian*, August 11, 1930.

³⁷ *Burnley Express*, March 25, 1931.

³⁸ *Burnley Express*, June 6, June 13 1931.

³⁹ *Burnley Express*, June 13, 1931.

⁴⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, April 17, 1930.

⁴¹ A. Fowler, 'Nelson, Sir Amos (1860–1947),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (online ed). Oxford: OUP, 2004, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/48083>, (accessed 15/15/2015).

of married women whose husbands held good positions, and where possible the discharge of married women to find work for married men. There were to be no new employees engaged and ancillary positions were to be filled by unemployed weavers.⁴² The scheme found support from a number of local weavers associations, but was rejected by the CSMA. As a concept, the scheme would be a guarantee of 'family wage',⁴³ which was a notion behind many lesser considered schemes.⁴⁴ The Nelson Weavers' Association made an agreement with Nelson to implement his system at his mills, and along with some further amendments, were some of the only successes of the period.⁴⁵ Criticisms only surfaced when pressure from the CSMA forced Nelson to withdraw agreements he had made with his operatives.

Questions of extremism and challenging trade unionism

For the majority of operatives in north east Lancashire, Burnley became the focal point of antagonism. However, many of the incidents were aligned in the press with the notion of 'outsiders' – or those not of the town causing trouble. Marches, meetings, strikes and demonstrations became frequent events, and operatives became part of a fluid mass of people who amalgamated in the town. To combat the increased population density and heightening tensions, a number of police officers were imported from other places, predominantly from northern cities. For example, in August 1932 there were over 100 officers from Manchester and Liverpool, when the local force only numbered 127.⁴⁶ The Burnley Council and other local bodies condemned the actions of the outside officers, especially the Mancunians, for their 'brutal' treatment of strikers. The *Burnley Express* tried to rationalise the situation, by describing how:

The imported police have been used to dealing with the scallywags and the scum of Manchester and Liverpool, and they had been treating the citizens of Burnley on the same basis.⁴⁷

For some in Burnley, there was thus a very clearly perceived delineation between how locals would act, and how 'outsiders' were behaving.⁴⁸ The Home Office Disturbances papers offer several discussions over the apparent brutality at the hands of the police and imply that there was truth in the accusations. However, the conditions under which the police were operating somewhat muddied the situation.⁴⁹ There was a series of violent scenes, which perhaps adds context to the situation. In the larger settlements tensions increased between those working and those not and local authority bodies in both Burnley and Blackburn severely criticised the police.⁵⁰ At one point the Government considered a full investigation into how several incidents were dealt with, but the idea was shelved.⁵¹ Yet, from the same platform the unity of operatives quickly split, both from town to town, and within the towns themselves. Some turned to 'knobsticking' and others to more militant protest, both through joining Communist activity and increasing numbers of people from surrounding settlements congregating in Burnley town centre. Mass

⁴² *Burnley News*, July 22, 1931.

⁴³ See especially the links to the survival of handloom weaving to the family structure in G. Timmins, *The Last Shift: The Decline of Handloom Weaving in Nineteenth-century Lancashire*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

⁴⁴ The Nelson Weavers' eventually supported a form of loom modernisation with provisions to guarantee a 'family wage' with the head of the household earning enough from the system for married women and single people to perform ancillary jobs. See Hill, *Nelson*, p. 79.

⁴⁵ *Burnley Express*, April 21, 1934.

⁴⁶ *Lancashire Evening Post*, August 17, 1932.

⁴⁷ *Burnley Express*, September 3, 1932.

⁴⁸ As see in Chapter 4, there was, historically, a sense of 'pageantry' attached to strike action.

⁴⁹ NA/HO/144/21223.

⁵⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, February 6, 1932.

⁵¹ NA/HO/144/21223, 27/8/32.

picketing and mass marches through and between towns and villages became a recurring feature. In one incident the police cordoned off the village of Hapton after they had spent five weeks being subjected to a jazz band of unemployed weavers marching from Padiham every night.⁵²

In some outlying districts that had maintained less economic hardship than in Burnley, and were less affected by more looms, the situation was more complex.⁵³ Yet, for many ordinary people the issue was a simple one. Operative Ernie Roberts described the root cause as 'money I suppose',⁵⁴ whilst contemporary Jim Pollard, echoed this sentiment as he remembered the focus as being on 'better wages'.⁵⁵

The lack of focus for wider issues is partially explained by the difference of experiences between the larger urban settlements and smaller settlements. For example, by 14th January 1931, Burnley had 14 mills with 3,000 operatives working, Harle Syke was unaffected by the lockout and had all its mills working, Worsthorne had two mills working, and all of the mills in Brierfield (bar two which had previously closed) were running with little disturbance.⁵⁶ The presence of these places continuing 'as normal' had the dual effect of undermining the confidence of those on strike and encouraging employers to break away from the CSMA. Indeed, the combined number of looms within the three out districts of Harle Syke, Worsthorne and Brierfield working in January 1931 was 14,791, compared to Burnley's 11,367.⁵⁷ As many of the country areas suffered less from the dispute, more strike action and picketing was directed towards them, and agitation supplanted there. For example, one letter by the Police Superintendent of Burnley reveals how the mills in Harle Syke had to close due to fear of reprisals from Burnley picketers, rather than their own strike action.⁵⁸ Another 'knobstick' operative in Barnoldswick reinforced the hostility of the strikers by declaring after being faced by picketers, 'I've been over the top but I wouldn't face that lot again for a thousand bloody quid'.⁵⁹

One of the main reasons given for the increase in aggression during picketing action was the influence of the local communists. In smaller settlements their influence grew to be a significant presence, and spearheaded primarily by James Rushton, the unlikely centres of activity became Earby and Barnoldswick. The group became a recurring thorn in the side of the AWA locally, with and were seen as involved in activities ranging from rabble rousing, encouraging violent scenes and generally creating disunity amongst groups of workers. Indeed, at one point a group of communists reportedly managed to convince a group of operatives planning to strike in solidarity with a dismissed weaver to ignore the union, and to express their 'unity' by refusing to strike.⁶⁰ A large proportion of north east Lancashire's leading communists were female and this it has been argued led to a feminisation of the wider Communist Party, but locally the effect was an ability to appeal to large groups of operatives, by utilising their position as

⁵² *Burnley Express*, April 29, 1932

⁵³ *Manchester Guardian*, September 7, 1932.

⁵⁴ Ernie Roberts, Lancashire Textile Project, 78/AC/3.

⁵⁵ Jim Pollard, Lancashire Textile Project, 78/AA/3.

⁵⁶ *Burnley Express*, January 13, 1931.

⁵⁷ *Burnley Express*, January 14, 1931.

⁵⁸ NA/HO/44/21223.

⁵⁹ *Daily Telegraph*, August 31, 1932.

⁶⁰ *Burnley Express*, January 16, 1932.

part of the local culture.⁶¹ One worker in Barnoldswick described the Communist influence there:

Because in the old days they thought they'd this Communist attitude because biggest part of strikes was caused by one certain lot of people. It was the same lot that caused these strikes. And like anything else ... you get people like sheep, they'll follow won't they? They don't think for themselves, they let other folk think and then they can be talked into anything. Now then, this is why you've got these here scuffles at these mills when we'd the strikes in this area. But there were none of them that had caused this here ... when the police were down at Kelbrook, they were back in Barlick. Then it were the ordinary workers, not real hard and fast union people, that were getting thumped with the police and such as that. And then ... bosses aren't silly, they know whose who, so within a week they'd be out of the firm, they'd have no job at all.⁶²

In larger settlements like Burnley, the communists became diluted amongst the multiple groups in the town. It was claimed by the local press that during one march they numbered no more than forty, and that they, much like the imported police were a 'foreign' entity who 'came from Blackburn, Nelson, Haslingden, Accrington, Barnoldswick, Todmorden – anywhere but Burnley'.⁶³ The communists were therefore treated by some with derision, but the influence of local figures in 'rabble rousing' almost certainly increased the tensions amongst operatives. However, they generally failed to maintain any real support, and displayed a lack of cohesive planning. At one point the International Committee of Textile Workers in Berlin sent a letter to the Textile Minority Movement saying they were unaware of the strike action in Burnley, and asked to be involved.⁶⁴ The local authorities, also dealt with communists harshly as Bessie Dickinson, one of Rushton's comrades, details in her recollections of the time her arrest for harassing knobsticks:

We weren't working there at the time; we were unemployed like a lot of other people, but we took part in the strike from outside. There was a certain amount of friction between the unemployed and some who were working and wouldn't come out ... We got three months apiece in Strangeways. The agitation later obliged the union to call a town strike, which spread through the towns around Burnley and for a while the 'more looms' movement was stopped until new agreements were negotiated in 1935. But when we came out of jail (eleven weeks with remission) in January 1933, the strike was over.⁶⁵

The issue for the communists was making their ideas appeal to local people. Thus, where some women succeeded in appealing to locals, James Rushton was defeated several times in his attempts for election. At the West Riding County Council Election in March 1931 he lost a 2,417 majority to 'Progressive' Smith Bowker, who declared that the electors, 'did not want anything to do with Russia.'⁶⁶ Similar results were seen in the Barnoldswick Urban District Elections a month later, and when Rushton ran in the General Election in Burnley he finished last, polling 512 votes and losing his deposit. Rushton repeated this in Skipton in 1933 with 704 votes. Yet many of the candidates that defeated Rushton were classed as 'socialists' and 'progressives'. Moreover, the lack of enthusiasm for communism can be attributed to the success as portraying it as 'foreign', dangerous, and aggressively anti mill-owner, a threat to the potential security of industry. Indeed during the earlier 1923 local elections in Burnley, a similar portrayal of socialism dominated the campaigns of local Labour candidates, with many running on an anti-socialist message. Local advertisements for the Labour candidates went as far as to describe socialism as 'the

⁶¹ See S. Bruely, 'Gender, Class And Party: The Communist Party And The Crisis In The Cotton Industry In England Between The Two World Wars', *Women's History Review*, 2, 1 (1983), pp. 81-106.

⁶² Jim Pollard, Lancashire Textile Project, TAPE 78/AA/07.

⁶³ *Burnley Express*, March 8, 1930.

⁶⁴ NA/HO/ 144/21223.

⁶⁵ R.A. Leeson, *Strike: A Live History 1887-1971*, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1971), p. 125.

⁶⁶ *Burnley Express*, March 11, 1931.

enemy of Labour,' that would 'destroy individual freedom and liberty'.⁶⁷ At certain times however, people could overlook the differences and unite for a common cause or at least respect the ability to free speech, as seen both in the picketing action, and in Don Haworth's recollections. Discussing his grandfather's principles after he had stood up for a young boy selling copies of the *Daily Worker* Howarth summarised that:

My grandfather, who took the side of the strikers against the police, took the side of the blacklegs against the strikers, on those very principles by which he had defended the sale of the *Daily Worker* ... he had never read the *Daily Worker*, and did not intend to.⁶⁸

The frustrations with the AWA and possible alternatives

For the majority of local people, the realities of everyday life continued with the desire to earn a stable, secure wage. Despite the attempts of radical alternatives (and later the efforts of the British Union of Fascists), the overall trend was one of de-politicisation, even from trade unionism. Although the period is characterised by strike action, a great deal of that stemmed from the perceived failures of the AWA. Operatives faced a situation where loyalty counted for little, and the AWA were well aware of this. At the Special General Council Meeting of the Weavers' in December 1931, R. Graham explained that:

Every member of the association normally employed ... will understand quite clearly that if he is determinedly loyal, he is the man or woman who is most likely to be deprived of employment, and not to regain employment for any period which we can see. And the result will be this; and can you blame them? That is the alternative to me going in to run six or eight looms, then, however loyal I may desire to be, in order to preserve my own family life I have got to be disloyal; the pressure is so great.⁶⁹

In some towns, the frustration with the AWA manifested with challenges to their central authority. Many operatives returned to work before the Midland Agreement had been ratified, whilst those heavily involved in the strike action faced victimisation when returning back to the mill. It left many pondering the relevance of the union. From the start of the more looms trials, trust began to erode. Rumours spread of the system outside of Burnley, resulting in the Nelson Weavers' Association sending a letter of enquiry, whilst also reminding the AWA of how such an undertaking without consultation waived certain rights from previous agreements.⁷⁰ The response given from the AWA denied any such experiments.⁷¹ Despite the trials gaining AWA sanction, Tertius Spencer repeatedly complained of operatives purposely sabotaging the experiments on union orders and pressuring operatives to refuse to take part. Spencer eventually had to forge deals with the weavers involved through his own volition.

In January 1931, the AWA further alienated operatives by disobeying a ballot of members overwhelmingly in favour of ceasing any more discussions over more looms by holding a joint meeting in London (as opposed to the usual venue of Manchester) and effectively agreed to the system in principle. The AWA were fully aware that the local association were against the system, most clearly shown on 28 March 1930, when the BWA collected the ballot for those in favour or against the eight loom system, the result

⁶⁷ *Burnley Express*, October 31, 1923.

⁶⁸ D. Haworth, *Bright Morning*, (London: Meuthen, 1990), p. 3.

⁶⁹ Special general meeting, December 5, 1931, LRO/DDX 1123/6/2/363c.

⁷⁰ LRO/DDX6/2/363a.

⁷¹ Fowler, *Nelson Weavers*, p. 56.

of which was overwhelmingly against, with 21,109 opposed to 1,113 in favour of adopting.⁷²

By 1932 the situation had become even more disconnected. As one weaver explained: 'the weavers are getting fed up of the unions, and then the employers will make us work for nothing.'⁷³ Several ballots posted by the AWA both within localities and countywide were presented in ambiguous ways, with wording and questions leaving operatives unsure if they were really voting against more looms, against negotiations, or placing a vote of no confidence in the Amalgamation leadership.⁷⁴ The Nelson Weavers' Association explored the very real possibility of them forming their own breakaway union/amalgamation with support sections of the associations of Burnley, Clitheroe, Bacup, Padiham, Colne and Earby.⁷⁵ Although avoided, the lack of authority AWA now held meant that after the Midland Agreement, they had no real power of enforcing wages and control as it was not initially legally binding, the agreement was hence open to interpretation, and as Andrew Naesmith stated in March 1933: 'the employers have us by the throat.'⁷⁶

Perhaps the closest moment to a breakaway union forming was the incident involving the so-called 'Rebel delegation'. Ramsay MacDonald intervened in January 1931 and put pressure on both sides to meet and find a solution to implement more looms with some form of wage protection and called a meeting with the AWA. A number of operatives felt that this directly went against a previous ballot in favour of withdrawing from negotiations. When the AWA then continued negotiations, a group of leading figures in north-east Lancashire cotton were endorsed by several local associations to travel to London as an 'alternative' delegation to represent the 'true feelings of the Weavers.'⁷⁷ Following a series of attempts to approach various members of the Labour Party, they returned triumphantly to Lancashire causing great embarrassment for the AWA, being referred to as 'Rebels' as opposed to what the AWA termed 'unofficial'- with 3,000 people gathering for one rally.⁷⁸ The AWA attempted to discipline and expel the members and associations involved in, but were defeated, in part through help from the Burnley Weavers' Association. The rebels were, however, successful in turning the tide of the lockout. As Fowler argues: 'the Employers' tactic was to force the Weavers' to give their leaders the power to negotiate an agreement, but the Rebel delegation only illustrated how that leadership had neither control over events or the confidence of the members.'⁷⁹ The Rebel delegation was symptomatic of the blurring between sides of the conflict. Local, workplace and union based allegiances contributed to a multiplicity of

⁷² There were also 879 blanks, which were used by the AWA as part of the reason to disregard the results. *Manchester Guardian*, March 28, 1930. Figures from LRO/DDX 1123/6/2/363a₂

⁷³ *Burnley Express*, February 10, 1931.

⁷⁴ *Burnley Express*, January 31, 1931.

⁷⁵ *Burnley Express*, November 2, 1932.

⁷⁶ *Burnley Express*, March 4, 1933.

⁷⁷ Fowler, *Nelson Weavers*, p. 60.

⁷⁸ This group was spearheaded by the Nelson Weavers' Association, and led by Zeph Hutchinson, former president of the Nelson Weavers, and Secretary of the Bacup Weavers Association. They had links to local communist organisations and branches of the ILP. The other men included; the President of the Nelson Weavers' Association, and the Secretaries for Clitheroe, Bacup, and Skipton associations. The group arrived in London seeking meetings with Nelson MP Arthur Greenwood and other MPs involved in the negotiations, but were met with a telegram from the AWA president Naesmith declaring them an unofficial delegation. When the group were informed that Greenwood was unable to meet them, they responded that they would return to Nelson, and make this known, and that they had 'no intention of going on its bended knees to crave Mr Greenwood's indulgence to meet us.' Threats of undermining Greenwood's parliamentary security worked, and within an hour they had met him, although it was claimed this was merely as their MP. The group then went on to meet with several ILP members and Lancashire MPs, although their access to other cabinet members was denied due to Ramsey MacDonald's opposition, and they returned to Lancashire. Fowler, *Nelson Weavers*, p. 62.

⁷⁹ Fowler, *Nelson Weavers*, p. 62.

identities, neither on the side of good or bad. The local focus on imported police officers and Communists being portrayed as an 'external' enemy serve a purpose to depict a focal point of local antagonism – not being 'of' the towns. Due to how blurred the battle lines were, it became exceedingly difficult to separate sides of the argument, and from this alternative visions appeared.

Alternative models - The renaissance of self-help?

In the face of a worsening economic situation across north east Lancashire, the solutions (or lack of) offered by employers and the ineffectuality of the AWA, people sought alternative answers through their communities. Whilst discussions over the more looms system continued at union and government level, numerous examples exist of workers holding direct discussions, and pleading with employers outside of union jurisdiction in the hope of finding work. In June 1931, 700 unemployed operatives joined together due to discontent with the AWA and approached Tertius Spencer in Burnley to attempt to get him to reopen his mill under a six loom system, below the Uniform List. Rejected by their local association, the operatives issued a 'protest manifesto' in the *Burnley Express* outlining their argument.⁸⁰ Such action was followed around north east Lancashire, and one report claimed that operatives at a mill in Rosegrove accepted a 12.5 per cent wage reduction to go back to work.⁸¹ In Rishton, in 1930, 90 per cent of the operatives of two mills sent letters to the owners expressing their willingness to work on six loom systems for decreased pay.⁸² The Ridge Manufacturing Company was apparently inundated with applications for weavers on the more looms system (with sweeping, cleaning and cloth carrying by ancillary workers) at wages of 45s. to 48s. a week.⁸³ When the Kippax Brothers reopened after 10 months of closure in 1930 on a more loom system, un-federated and below the uniform list the AWA called a strike and 20 weavers left. Yet, 12 of these positions were filled within a short time.⁸⁴

There were also small pockets of communities that turned to more traditional weaving practices. Several mills managed to avoid the strikes and pickets, one for example operating on a profit sharing system between 20 weavers, where the workers 'kept mum', enabling them to carry on work.⁸⁵ Similarly, workers in Read in 1930 looked to return to the older model of cotton villages by purchasing the closed mills there and attempting to run them as mutual concerns, with the intention of providing employment for the village and surrounding areas. This was ultimately a failure as the 'plucky' villagers failed to raise the required capital.⁸⁶ However, the position of the country districts mills was obviously noticed and considered an alternative across the area. The idea of self-help concerns had something of a renaissance in the area around 1930, when a family purchased 16 looms to be run between themselves, extending to 32 looms and encouraging a further seven families to start concerns with between 24 and 100 looms each. By 1933, there were two further mills with similar concepts set up by strikers and unemployed operatives with 500 and 250 looms each, formed of their own subscriptions, and with each operative

⁸⁰ *Burnley Express*, June 20, 1931.

⁸¹ *Burnley Express*, June 29, 1932.

⁸² W. Bridges, 'Deference And Paternalism In The Cotton Industry Of North-East Lancashire During The Twentieth Century', University of Salford, *Department of Politics and Contemporary History Occasional Papers*, p. 24.

⁸³ *Manchester Guardian*, May 1, 1930.

⁸⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, May 14, 1930.

⁸⁵ *Manchester Guardian*, July 29, 1932.

⁸⁶ *Burnley Express*, December 10, 1930.

having a share in control of the firm.⁸⁷ During the strike of 1932, when 23,000 operatives were out, the only 200 operatives working were those at three self-help mills.⁸⁸ There were also adaptations of using operative funding for cotton concerns, as several Burnley firms started to use weekly sums taken out of wages to pay for looms- one with 1,000 looms and one with 350 - although this system was seen to be 'buying work' with no return.⁸⁹ In some respects, the attempts to manipulate the joint stock principle resembled the original 'putting out system,' as the weaver paid and owned the looms, but relied on the factory for work.

The issue of buying work was also part of a wider problem reoccurring over the previous few years. Operatives exchanged portions of their wages for shares in order to subsidise the running costs of mills, but with little chance of a dividend return. In effect the use of employee wages was corruption of the old self-help principles that had once been so successful. Both the AWA and CSMA disapproved of the practice and several local associations accused the employers involved of effectively cutting costs and wages through exploiting a fake share scheme, but for many operatives, the resistance from the AWA was a further sign of their inability to restart work.

Systems utilising worker capital was also used as a safeguard against strike action. When Messers Maxfield and Co. looked to reopen in February 1930, they offered employment to a small number of weavers with three stipulations: firstly, that each weaver would work on the eight-loom system; secondly, that the eight-loom system with reduced speed would enable weavers to earn 50%; thirdly, that each weaver deposit £5 to 'guarantee that he will fulfil his promise to work on these terms and conditions, and that this would be regarded as a £5 share in the firm.'⁹⁰ The deposit raised capital for the employer, but it also bound the weaver to the mill. The issue of buying work gained further publicity when weaver Thomas Taylor attempted to sue the Savoy Manufacturing Company of Fulleage Mills to reclaim his deposit for looms and a drop in wages. The company charged £4 per loom, which when paid meant that a weaver (usually non-union) could then be employed under usual 'Spencer's' conditions and wages. When the wages changed due to negotiations between operatives and employers, Taylor (after buying a further set for his wife) wanted to leave the company and he asked for his deposit back, expecting the company to buy the looms back from him, only to be told that he could take his looms with him. The judge found in favour of the company run by other 'working men', as under the scheme the operatives were free to take the looms away. He declared that:

At first I thought it was a case of capitalists exploiting the working man and obtaining capital to run the mill by this device, but I do not now think that was at the back of the directors' minds at all, but that it was more in the nature of a self-help arrangement among these workpeople.⁹¹

The growth of the movement was a concern for local associations, clouding the issue even more if done without the auspices of a 'traditional' established employer. The Barnoldswick Weavers' Association asked 'our members to not have anything to do with such so-called "self-help firms". They are springing

⁸⁷ *Manchester Guardian*, June 8, 1933.

⁸⁸ *Burnley Express*, September 3, 1932.

⁸⁹ *Manchester Guardian*, June 8, 1933.

⁹⁰ *Burnley News*, February 1, 1930.

⁹¹ *Burnley Express*, November 18, 1933.

up like mushrooms in other parts of the country.⁹² At a time of trying to unite the industry behind a new system, the possibility of individual, worker-owned firms outside of wage rates and union rules succeeding caused great consternation. Similarly, a number of the newly self-help mills had started to send their own men to the exchanges to start brokering deals, meaning the possibility of further undercutting the established employers. Furthermore, an additional complaint saw the Nelson Weavers' Association argue that the flexibility of the system that once characterised the industrial verve of Lancashire was now detrimental to the industry. Operatives were starting these self-help firms, opening for 10 to 12 weeks, only to then declare bankruptcy or voluntary liquidation to enable them to claim six weeks unemployment benefits and then repeat the process multiple times.⁹³ How true this was is unclear, but there was enough concern over these 'self-help' concerns to see a redoubling of efforts in bringing more companies under union regulations.

'The breaches of agreements' and the role of country districts

Despite the rise of new 'self-help' companies in places like Barnoldswick, the majority of the strike and lockout action had less of an effect on the country districts, until the period referred to as 'the breaches of agreements'. Following a Ministry of Labour Report of 1933 into terms of employment in the industry, it was found that various manufacturers were breaching the terms of the Midland Agreement. Although fairly widespread, Harle Syke and Barnoldswick were singled out for effectively devising their own systems. As explained by Edward Gray, the division between employers was rooted in the fact that for multiple reasons some failed to properly implement the more looms system, and were losing out to those that had.⁹⁴ Harle Syke especially had returned to a position similar to pre-1914, and as the *Burnley Express* described the employers there were felt to be acting out of 'deference' to the operatives, whilst refusing outright to be forced into joining any kind of organisation.⁹⁵ Much of the autonomy that the AWA had attempted to stamp out during the previous decades returned as other manufacturers in larger towns were deemed to be spurred on by these companies into breaking away from the union. Operatives in some of the country districts like Harle Syke therefore came to working arrangements with their employers, raising the question for some of what use unionism had been to them.

When the Harle Syke employers considered moving to the more looms system, the operatives declared that they would prefer a reduction in wages to ensure the community stayed in employment. If there were to be job losses, it would be through the workers from outside of the village. The agreed compromises, contrary to the Midland Agreement thus served as an attempt to protect the community.⁹⁶

As one local resident stated:

If other people will leave us alone, we can manage our own affairs quite well ... if we did have a six-loom system we could just about keep our own people in work, and as most of them are shareholders, they should have first consideration. Harle Syke has done well compared with Burnley, and the operatives and employers have always got on

⁹² *Burnley Express*, July 21, 1934.

⁹³ *Burnley Express*, March 28, 1934.

⁹⁴ E. Gray, *The Weaver's Wage: Earnings and Collective Bargaining in the Lancashire*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1935), p. 14.

⁹⁵ *Burnley Express*, February 15, 1933.

⁹⁶ *Manchester Guardian*, February 2, 1933.

well together. It is the outside element that causes the trouble, so we would perhaps be better without them.⁹⁷

In some areas like Barnoldswick, the willingness to work came from a continuation of parochialism, desperation and added communal pressures of the type found in more close-knit areas. For many there was a legitimate fear of stepping out of line meaning being out of work and, in all probability, blacklisting. The fear increased as 'knobstick' workers crossed boundaries to work in neighbouring districts, creating almost a domino effect of one town filling another's positions. In areas with un-federated mills, this meant the possibility of work, without openly going against the union itself. However, it also meant that the positions that remained were increasingly tenuous. Barnoldswick was also one of the few places with remnants of the 'tramp weavers: itinerant, skilled weavers who would move between towns by stopping off in lodging houses along the way. As one mill manager reminisced of the period:

There weren't as many about then as there was at the beginning of the Second World War ... There were quite a quantity ... I could always put me hands onto half a dozen or more weavers I could rely on. If you saw 'em in't street, just see them and they'd stop as long as you wanted 'em ... they were some of the best! They could handle owt there were in Barlick because they'd been used to dobbie weaving and coloured weaving. Now bulk of Barlick weavers hadn't been used to that sort of work. It seemed to frighten 'em. One with a lot of pattern in, it seemed to frighten 'em.⁹⁸

The availability and willingness to work of weavers from other towns then also undermined the strike efforts, whilst reminding the operatives of the fragility of their own employment. Billy Brooks especially highlighted the sense of unease, describing the fear of being late for work:

Well, there'd happen be three or four weavers waiting and't manager of course. If it were somebody at ... he'd use his discretion a bit you know and he'd go into t'shed and if they hadn't come he'd say ... It 'ud all depend who you were. If it were one that were customarily late you know, well he'd bezel him but if it were one that hadn't been late afore, well, he'd wait a bit you see, depends. I dare say in Lancashire they were a bit more stricter than what they were in Barlick, at that time.⁹⁹

Emma Jane Clark reinforces both Brooks' fear, and the use of the tramp weavers:

Well, they used to come in, it started at six, the mill, it started at six in the morning you know. And sometimes there'd be half a dozen men, and if someone didn't turn up for work they'd put a tramp weaver on for the day. They used to live at the Model Lodging House down Butts ... Yes and they'd come and stand and if there was no work, well, they'd go home, they'd go back. Sometimes there'd be one or two, you know if anybody was ill and couldn't come to work, but you hadn't to do. You'd to have an excuse for not going and you hadn't to be late.¹⁰⁰

Barnoldswick and Harle Syke highlight the potential positive and negative aspects of communities under pressure. In the case of Barnoldswick, the community was one able to exhibit pressure from above, and in the case of Harle Syke, by consensus from below. The increased job pressure and apathy to unionism, especially after 1932, undermined the efforts that had been made in the previous decades for trade unionism in the outer districts. When one weaver was asked whether he had role in a trade union he replied, 'No, and anybody that had owt to do with strikes before the war would never have woven at Nutters.'¹⁰¹ Indeed, the recurring element of interviews from Barnoldswick and Earby is the overall sense of uncertainty, which was much like another local operative described when he recalled the situation:

You went out on strike, you didn't know who were going to finish. You knew so many were going to have to finish, they didn't know who, and probably some of them what come out on strike and happen stood about a bit picketing, well

⁹⁷ *Burnley Express*, August 10, 1932.

⁹⁸ John Metcalfe, Lancashire Textile Project, 82/JM/01.

⁹⁹ Billy Brooks, Lancashire Textile Project, TAPE 78/AB/2.

¹⁰⁰ Emma Jane Clark, Lancashire Textile Project, TAPE 78/AK/03.

¹⁰¹ Jim Pollard, Lancashire Textile Project, 78/AA/07.

them were marked, they didn't get back at all ... Black listing 'em.¹⁰²

To try and restore some stability, several of the mills of Barnoldswick adapted an idea that was common in the outer districts. A compromise was found where operatives would work on four looms for the equivalent six loom wage, with extra pay for sweeping and oiling. However, the frequency of mills operating their own systems resulted in the AWA writing to the Ministry of Labour, asking for a 'presence' to be put in the town to influence the workers. One letter states that:

Affairs in Lancashire go from bad to worse. I had thought a few months ago that we had plumbed the depths, but I am afraid that this year we shall sink to greater depths ... Barnoldswick employers looked to introduce all manner of variations ... The situation is worse than what obtains in the Harle Syke area, where your investigators have been recently.¹⁰³

The position in Harle Syke was of great contrast to Barnoldswick, with stability being the overwhelming factor. In 1932, the *Manchester Guardian* profiled the village, and highlighted how little the situation there had changed from the early years of the cotton industry:

The inhabitants of Harle Syke have a reputation in Burnley of being shrewd and thrifty. There has been less short time ... and the operatives have an interest in the mills apart from the mere fact that they are employed there. Many of the employers are "self-made", they call their operatives by thee Christian names, and if there is anything to grumble about on either side they speak their minds to each other, come to a decision, and carry on.¹⁰⁴

The employers in Harle Syke met shortly after the Midland Agreement and decided that the adoption of the new system would be left to each individual firm's own discretion.¹⁰⁵ They were undecided over the enforcement of the official more looms system, already operating sufficiently on their own, and looked to be non-committal until a joint decision would be made. The Harle Syke operatives preferred longer hours on their own systems to the more looms system, crucially saving workers from being thrown out of work. Indeed, most Harle Syke operatives had been working alternative systems for over twenty years.¹⁰⁶ Hill End Mill had been operating its own system since its start up and introduced the practice of weavers doing their own oiling in 1906, whilst the mills in Haggate had operated their own six loom system for a number of years.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, to go even further back, Jeremiah Preston described the early years of power-loom weaving, where the ability of the Harle Syke community to find their own system is highlighted in the mid 19th century:

The hours were 6am to 6pm and sometimes overtime till 8pm for all males above eighteen years; and (from 6am) to 2pm on Saturday. The only holiday then was a day at Burnley fair. For years no female had more than 2-looms. The 3-looms weavers more than 50 years ago earned from 13s to 15s per week. If a weaver had 4-looms they had to have a full time tenter.¹⁰⁸

As an alternative to more looms, Primrose Mill agreed on working a longer-hours system on worker impetus.¹⁰⁹ The operatives at Thornton and Co. in turn proposed working on their old system with a wage reduction and variations of both were mirrored days later in most of the mills in the village, with only

¹⁰² Fred Inman, Lancashire Textile Project, 78/AH/10.

¹⁰³ LRO/DDX 1123/6/2/372.

¹⁰⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, August 10, 1932.

¹⁰⁵ *Burnley Express*, January 4, 1933.

¹⁰⁶ *Manchester Guardian*, January 21, 1933.

¹⁰⁷ Minute Book of Hill End Mill Company, April 9, 1906, Briercliffe Society Archives.

¹⁰⁸ J. Preston, *I Well Remember: The Briercliffe and Burnley Reminiscences of Jeremiah Preston*, (Burnley: Rieve Edge Press, 1998), p. 29.

¹⁰⁹ *Manchester Guardian*, February 6, 1932.

Atkinson's and Queen Street Mill planning to use the new system.¹¹⁰ Such was the debate over the issue that Herbert West resigned from the board of Queen Street Mill, being replaced by Abraham Jackson.¹¹¹ George Mason from Mason, West and Bather, owners of Kings Mill, likewise declared that the operatives in the village had earned far better wages than in Burnley. He stated that five-eighths of their looms were worked on six looms without tenters and that the management had arranged to provide sweepers, but the operatives had decided they could manage the work and were thus paid an extra four pence per loom.¹¹² In essence, the local community structure and the concept of the family (and community) wage strongly influenced the actions of the operatives,¹¹³ and the community was aware of their collective situation, which one manufacturer justified:

In a small community like Harle Syke, where employers and employee are in closer contact than in larger towns, employers could not, without some qualms of conscience pass operatives - probably friends- in the street who had just been thrown out of work. That was the main reason why they had acceded to the operatives request for less than six looms.¹¹⁴

A local operative reinforced the importance of the local structure in 1932:

We have enough looms ... to keep all the inhabitants working ... and they deserve first consideration, for most of them have shares in the mills at which they are employed. It is the outside element that causes trouble here. If the village was left to itself we would be able to carry on quite amicably, making our own arrangements ... if the extremists at Burnley are going to try to rule us here, we shall be better on our own.¹¹⁵

In reality, the workers of Harle Syke did suffer what were in some cases significant wage reductions of around 10s per week coupled with the increased hours and extra duties. However, the figure was less than the calculated 18s per week loss of working the more looms system,¹¹⁶ whilst the ability to stave off local displacement meant that families could adjust with the benefit of better job security than in Burnley. The Burnley Weavers' Association were especially perturbed at the situation, and it was argued that:

If the Weavers' Amalgamation permits the Harle Syke employers to get away with this wages reduction, it will be the greatest calamity that has happened to it for many years. Other manufacturers will be certain to want to follow the Harle Syke lead.¹¹⁷

However, the response from the Harle Syke manufacturers revelled in being able to primarily protect their own community, but by also taking a moral high-ground in compromising with their workers:

The new system of working was adopted at the urgent request of the operatives, who preferred to retain their old looms rather than see many of their number discharged under the six loom system.¹¹⁸

The success of Harle Syke's system spread when several groups of operatives in Barnoldswick and the Holme Manufacturing Co in Clivinger, voted in favour of a similar system in 1933. Andrew Naesmith, general secretary of the AWA, summarised the problem for his union, firstly by stating that, 'every fresh

¹¹⁰ *Burnley Express*, January 14, 1933.

¹¹¹ *Burnley Express*, January 11, 1933.

¹¹² *Manchester Guardian*, February 18, 1933.

¹¹³ Again here the reality of the family to survive through this means draws parallels to Timmins. See G. Timmins, *The Last Shift: The Decline of Handloom Weaving in Nineteenth-century Lancashire*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

¹¹⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, February 18, 1933.

¹¹⁵ *Manchester Guardian*, August 10, 1932.

¹¹⁶ *Burnley Express*, January 18, 1933.

¹¹⁷ *Manchester Guardian*, January 21, 1933.

¹¹⁸ *Manchester Guardian*, January 21, 1933.

instance encourages somebody else,¹¹⁹ and then that:

In the absence of legalisation or some other effective way of enforcing agreements, I really do not see at the moment what can be done to prevent this kind of thing from happening and spreading from place to place ... The position is complicated by the fact that while the operatives are members of a trade union which is affiliated with the Amalgamation, the employers are connected with a local employers' association which is not federated with the Cotton Spinners' and Manufacturers' Association.¹²⁰

Further evidence comes in 1934 when The Haggate Weaving Company, forced to close as a result of trade conditions, reopened through local worker initiative.¹²¹ The feeling locally then was of community working together and being scapegoated to deflect the attention on Burnley manufacturers - around eighteen of who were also breaking the agreements. George Mason declared:

All our workers are quite satisfied ... and my opinion is that we are working the more-loom system in a better way than many of the Burnley manufacturers. I think the reason why they are barking at us is that they realise ours is the better method. People have overlooked mills at which the six-loom system is complete and where much more distress is being caused to the operatives than in Harle Syke.¹²²

The solution to the pandemonium of areas acting independently was to reaffirm standardisation. By October 1933, several employers threatened to break away from the union, claiming they were unable to compete with Harle Syke and Barnoldswick in wages,¹²³ whilst several companies continued to breach agreements by disregarding the 'fall back wage', especially in Burnley. In response, more 'room and power' family concerns were set up, again making the enforcement of wages and rates almost impossible.¹²⁴ There were attempts at stoking agitation in Harle Syke, with a large police presence assembled in retaliation foiling several planned protests. Indeed at one stage, scenes are described of Burnley operatives sneaking across moorland to gain access to the village.¹²⁵ *The Manchester Guardian* openly judged that state action would be the only solution, declaring that both the AWA and CSMA had been so weakened that they had 'lost almost all of their influence in places like Barnoldswick and Harle Syke.'¹²⁶ Hence, the United Textile Factory Workers' Association decided to press for the legalisation of agreements.¹²⁷ But this, it was declared, would set a 'dangerous precedent' for other industries, as the unfederated mills were not invited to any meetings, nor had they signed any agreements, yet the very real possibility of the legalisation of rules which they had no part in defining were now about to be made law.

For the AWA there was a feeling of futility over the previous campaigns to bring the outdistricts under control, and as they openly stated in a circular to the Harle Syke operatives: 'for several years we have served you for nothing.'¹²⁸ A report conducted by the AWA (and distributed to the operatives) especially highlights how much variation and agreement breaking was underway across all of the weaving districts, and several companies wrote letters refuting or explaining the reasons for their adapting of conditions. A

¹¹⁹ *Burnley Express*, March 4, 1933.

¹²⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, March 4, 1933.

¹²¹ *Burnley Express*, January 3, 1934.

¹²² *Manchester Guardian*, February 18, 1933.

¹²³ *Manchester Guardian*, October 26, 1933.

¹²⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, April 7, 1934.

¹²⁵ *Burnley Express*, September 27 1934.

¹²⁶ *Manchester Guardian*, July 7, 1933.

¹²⁷ *Manchester Guardian*, June 22, 1933.

¹²⁸ LRO/DDX 1274/10/4.

survey of the mills in Harle Syke, in 1933 however, showed how little they were adhering to the system. Indeed as shown in a report conducted by the AWA all of the Harle Syke mills were failing to observe the agreement, and had devised their own wage system.¹²⁹ Harle Syke was united in their new solution to the problem, and it was one that allowed the village to continue with as little distress as possible. Indeed, they found a degree of uniformity that the industry now lacked, whilst also guaranteeing a wage for the local operatives. Whilst the number of shareholders still working in Harle Syke cannot be verified, their continued existence is referred to multiple times.

The aftermath of the disputes and the impact upon trade unionism

In the aftermath of the disputes the AWA saw an almost irreversible amount of damage inflicted onto it. By 1939, the number of weavers in Harle Syke had dropped to around 1,600, from around 2000 in 1915,¹³⁰ largely due to the effects of displacement on those who travelled to the village. Yet of these, only 297 were union members, more than likely owing to the purging of 'outsiders'.¹³¹ However, a contributing factor in the drop in trade union figures, which the AWA themselves admitted in a letter appealing for membership, was the decision following the conclusion of the more looms dispute to withhold strike payment for those in the village. The AWA at least offered some culpability for the decline of their influence in Harle Syke, stating in the same circular that 'it will be better if we all discontinue to use that word "blame"'. It is clear that mistakes were made.¹³²

The ultimate effect of the more looms dispute was that it delayed the inevitable. Indeed, in the post-war period even Teritus Spencer converted to automatic looms at a cost of £250,000.¹³³ The effect on some communities was the continuation of a slow and painful decline, which was continued for a number of years, bar the reprieve of the Second World War. For other areas there was a rallying, and a return to a sense of localism, that was only undone by the passing of the Cotton Manufacturing Industry (Temporary Provisions) Act 1934.¹³⁴ The move away from trade unionism can be seen as symptomatic of the whole of the area's disillusionment with politics. By the time the situation had calmed in 1937, unionism had been heavily dented and its standing and authority compromised. The ILP in Lancashire was breaking apart, the Textile Minority Movement had become more concerned with fighting the capitalist system as a whole instead of focusing on the cotton industry, and support for the Labour Party had dropped considerably.¹³⁵ Branson and Heinemann perhaps best summarise the position for trade unionism, describing how 'this period was disastrous. In cotton, membership fell from 282,000 in 1931 to 182,000 in 1939.'¹³⁶

Indeed, at a local level the membership in the BWA fell by 50 per cent, Blackburn 48.3 per cent, Darwen 55.7 per cent and Nelson 29.5 per cent, which although partly attributable to the dwindling numbers of

¹²⁹ LRO/ DDX 1123/6/2/372.

¹³⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, August 27, 1915.

¹³¹ DDX 1274/10/4.

¹³² These were: employers not wanting to start the mills, the employees yielding to the employers and the committee refusing to pay the strike wages. DDX 1274/10/4.

¹³³ *Burnley Express*, September 4, 1954.

¹³⁴ The act meant that amongst other things, that the agreements were legalised.

¹³⁵ See E. Barry, *Nationalisation in British Politics*, (USA: Stanford University Press, 1965), p. 337.

¹³⁶ Branson and Heinemann, *Britain in the Nineteen Thirties*, p. 99.

operatives in many cases was a direct consequence of the actions during the disputes.¹³⁷ The overall shift away from trade unionism was also witnessed in other industrial Pennine communities. Jackson's study in Huddersfield described a similar situation in the Colne Valley where 'even though the valley was a Socialist or old-style Liberal stronghold, the textile unions had never gained a bargaining hold after the strikes during the Depression.'¹³⁸ The failure of the cotton union to serve its purpose was one felt acutely in north east Lancashire, and in Great Harwood one time union official Winnie Bridges, described the shift in outlook:

The casual attitude to the unions is by no means unusual in this corner of Lancashire, and there are many former weavers of both sexes, who have no qualms about admitting that they seldom spared a thought for the union except when ... it became expedient for them to do so. Worthy of note is the phrase: "when they were 'avin' a strike...", as telling a comment as any I have heard on non-identification with the union.¹³⁹

Politically, there is also a swing away from Labour politics, as people in desperation to the deepening crisis looked for alternatives. In a sense, much like the attempts to return to forms of 'self-help' manufacturing, there was a return to the past in the 1931 General Election. Bridges especially highlights how, 'against the background of unemployment and deprivation, lack of faith in the union was matched by support, both industrially and politically for the employers,'¹⁴⁰ which, if perhaps a strong statement, reinforces a declining faith in Labour politics.

Although the National Government took nearly 90 per cent of seats in Lancashire, the two main victims were Arthur Henderson, the leader of the Labour Party, losing his seat in Burnley by 8,299 to a Rear Admiral in Gordon Campbell VC and Arthur Greenwood in Nelson and Colne, losing to barrister Linton Thorp, with a majority of over 7,000. Both candidates gained prominent local Liberal support. In Campbell's case, Ughtred Kay-Shuttleworth offered backing whilst in, and in Thorp's it was declared the influence of the Liberal rally was the decisive factor in his victory at second attempt.

Conclusion

The period of the more looms dispute represents the redrawing of allegiances in north east Lancashire. The 'traditional' system of mill-based, and community-centric loyalties was severely challenged, as the economic situation affected the cotton industry in ways it had never before. The character of north east Lancashire, which had been built upon the elements of worker input was eroded both by the lack of union strength and the resoluteness of local employers, who had in some cases been replaced during the post-War speculative boom, and in others were now facing up to the possibility of an industry in terminal decline.

In the context of a new economic and social environment, characteristics like the idea of the family wage, and social mobility were undermined. Psychologically, this resulted in a combination of some people looking backwards to more community-focussed systems such as 'self-help', and others to radical alternatives. The clearest result is the schism that developed between these two camps, which in the

¹³⁷ Pope, *Unemployment and the Lancashire Weaving Area*, (Preston, University of Central Lancashire, 2000), p. 80.

¹³⁸ B. Jackson, *Working Class Community*, (London, Pelican, 1972), p. 92.

¹³⁹ Bridges, *Deference and Paternalism*, p. 22.

¹⁴⁰ Bridges, *Deference and Paternalism*, p. 24.

former case found traction with the operatives, and in the latter case, gained favour with certain sections of the employers. Class boundaries thus became more greatly demarcated, and alternatives, most notably communism in some districts, were sought.

As the next chapter will discuss, the solution to the decline of industry and the disharmony that was in place resulted in the attempts to reinvigorate interests in cotton on a national scale. Crucially, assistance was now sought from outside of the locality, as greater centralisation and collective endeavour became popular.

7. 'THE ROMANCE OF COTTON': THE CHANGING IMAGE OF THE LANCASHIRE COTTON INDUSTRY

By the start of the 1930s, the image of the Lancashire cotton industry had been severely damaged. After almost a decade of economic and social turmoil, as discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, a growing realisation amongst the county's municipal bodies and leading industry figures led to a newfound collective spirit to counter the negative perceptions of Lancashire cotton, and in turn boost sales to revitalise the industry.

The solution was however an emotional one rather aiming to undertake any large scale reform. Cotton was transformed into *the* typically 'British' industry. The new image combined elements of folklore with conceptions of modernity to present the Lancashire cotton operative as an 'other', occupying a special importance both regionally and to Britain as a whole. But, despite the newfound collective efforts the Britishness that was presented was a decidedly *Lancastrian* one. As Ward has argued, Britishness 'fluctuated in meaning', but what is most apparent is how local culture was utilised throughout the campaigns discussed in this chapter.¹ The process of 'reimagining' Lancashire cotton utilised, and in some respects strengthened local identities. This was done through what Walton and Castells describe, as 'the discursive products of the collective invention and recreation of traditions ... grounded in the ways in which people made their own livings and lived their lives'.²

Detailed investigations of the other attempts to arrest cotton's decline focus more upon internal management and foreign competition,³ and although this chapter draws on these sources, the primary focus here is on the attempts to address the public image of the industry both internally and externally. North east Lancashire's focus on the exports is therefore of great interest to a discussion of cotton's shift 'inwards' to home markets.

The first section of this chapter outlines the first real concentrated efforts at mass propaganda, which coincided with the more looms dispute discussed previously. The next section explores the Cotton Queen competitions, which promoted a kind of industrial-regality,⁴ utilising elements of local culture such as dialect. The combined efforts across the county meant that by the outbreak of the Second World War a new 'kind' of Lancashire cotton operative was promoted, combining elements of the past with a contemporary context. The next section examines how the success of this new image in the post-Second World War environment resulted in the need for government intervention to challenge the perceptions of operatives themselves and to boost recruitment: in effect to sell cotton externally, and then, ironically, to 'sell' the industry itself internally to its own people.

Against this backdrop, north east Lancashire was central to the impact that the shifting image of

¹ P. Ward, *Britishness Since 1870*, (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 139.

² J. Walton and L. Castells, 'Contrasting Identities', in E. Royle, *Issues of Regional Identity: In Honour of John Marshall*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 76.

³ See M. Dupree, 'Struggling With Destiny: Overseas Trade Policy and the Cotton Board, 1940-1959', *Business History*, (1990), and J. Singleton, 'Showing the White Flag: The Lancashire Cotton Industry, 1945-65', *Business History*, 32, 4, (1990).

⁴ Ward discusses the importance of regality in some detail. See Ward, *Britishness*, p. 18.

Lancashire cotton was to have. The process of firstly placing the industry on a pedestal, and then shoring up the confidence of the operatives through promoting the industry's long-term sustainability contrasts with the periods of post-war decline. The result was to further divide local communities, and make the eventual decline of cotton more painful for the settlements of the area, promoting the idea of 'betrayal'.

The introduction of propaganda

The continued depressed state of the Lancashire cotton industry resulted in contemplation over how to compensate for the lack of demand in the export market. The impact of a worsening situation was evident to contemporary sources, being detailed by the *Manchester Guardian* in the bluntest of terms:

An industry such as Lancashire's, a large proportion of which has suffered eight or nine years of unrivalled depression, is in no condition to withstand fresh reverses, and orders were never needed more urgently as they are to-day.⁵

To try and stimulate the cotton markets the focus was shifted onto the domestic market. It was decided across the industry to use overt propaganda for the first time to 'secure the immediate expansion of trade in cotton goods in the home market, but also establish a foundation on which an ever increasing goodwill for cotton can be fostered.'⁶ The aim was to show the country, and indeed the world, that new, modern lines were being produced at affordable prices and to abolish the negative, out-dated reputation of Lancashire's cotton goods.

The attempts to stimulate the home market were part of a wider domestic focus. The Governmental efforts to alleviate the turbulent economic situation including the devaluation of the pound to a large extent hamstrung the export market, and resulted the 'Buy British Campaign' of 1931. As Constantine highlights, a shift in emphasis toward to political left resulted in a situation where 'the responsibility for Britain's economic recovery and well-being lay in the hands not just of governments but of citizens.'⁷ Similar campaigns had been launched before, with varying degrees of enthusiasm. Phillip Snowden, displaying the old north east Lancashire export-based mentality in 1926 regarded the 'Buy British Goods' campaign, as 'ridiculous' and 'an illustration of the madness which sometimes seizes men ... it displays a complete ignorance of the mutual exchange nature of international trade.'⁸

However, the concept of using propaganda had gathered support over some time. The Burnley Weavers' Association (BWA) issued a pamphlet in support of cotton propaganda in 1930, arguing that:

What propaganda can do if undertaken on proper methodical lines, on a large scale and with a view to the more distant future is to awaken latent requirements and to stimulate amongst the public suggestive power for the demand of cotton goods. There is a need for a collective cotton propaganda to stress the indisputable advantages of cotton to other fibres ... The propaganda must not end in empty phrases or mere statements but it must be based on justifiable and convincing arguments.⁹

The first real attempt to implement propaganda was through the 'National Cotton Week', commencing

⁵ *Manchester Guardian*, May 1, 1930.

⁶ *Manchester Guardian*, May 1, 1930.

⁷ S. Constantine, 'The Buy British Campaign of 1931', *European Journal of Marketing*, 21, 4 (1987), p. 56.

⁸ *Manchester Guardian*, November 3, 1926.

⁹ *Burnley Express*, May 3, 1930.

on May 5th, 1930.¹⁰ It was an early form of mass marketing within the cotton industry, having developed from similar propaganda campaigns held in Germany and America.¹¹

In a speech shortly before the Cotton Week's commencement, David Lloyd George assessed both the problems and the rationale behind the event. Speaking to a cross party group of 'distinguished men' at the opening luncheon in Fleet Street of the need to 'make the wearing of cotton more fashionable' he offered an impassioned account behind the decline of the industry. Lloyd George felt that fashion 'owed some amends to Lancashire for the damage it had inflicted upon it,' and he wanted the people to show the 'fighting spirit of the race' for 'renewed energy and fresh efforts' wanting to 'recapture the war spirit.' His evocation of 'warlike' language left few in doubt to the gravity of the situation. Lloyd George also exemplified a recurring theme of adding a degree of nostalgia to the industry. Emphasizing local pride, he encouraged 'the fashionable ladies of London to show off these goods' and the industry to 'bring some of the most attractive Lancashire lassies here dressed in your best material, and show how much better they look arrayed in the glory of the products of your mills'. Reiterating the notion of Lancashire being the 'workshop of the world', Lloyd George finally declared that 'Manchester is the place to do things, London is the place to show them off.'¹²

Further support to boosting the image of Lancashire cotton was aided through a series of high-profile figures praising the virtues of various goods. The *Manchester Guardian* printed interviews with a series of popular actresses such as Renee Kelly, who at the time was the lead in 'Almost a Honeymoon'. Female MPs, most notably Ellen Wilkinson, and the wives of male MPs declared that they would wear 'Lancashire cotton frocks' for the week in the commons to further build the sense of cross-societal efforts.¹³

Locally, towns undertook different activities to boost the sales of cotton throughout the week. From initiatives such as a national best dress competition to retailers offering discounts, the idea was for everyone to rally by 'lending a hand, or a window'. There were numerous competitions: for example, Preston celebrated the week by holding a window-display competition, offering cash prizes and a silver cup,¹⁴ whilst a shop in Knightsbridge reportedly removed all foreign cotton goods from sale for the week.¹⁵ The Brierfield district was singled out locally for the success of their Cotton Week, seeing dances, decorated shops and competitions for the best costumes made from cotton.¹⁶ There was, however, criticism for the effort from Burnley, attributed to the town's reliance on the foreign market, meaning there was little interest there in the principles behind the National Cotton Week. Despite the negative outlook the unions and municipal bodies did make an effort to encourage participation by making resources like extra promotional materials available for retailers requiring more.¹⁷

¹⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, May 1, 1930.

¹¹ *Manchester Guardian*, April 4, 1930.

¹² *Manchester Guardian*, May 2, 1930.

¹³ *Burnley Express*, May 3, 1930.

¹⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, April 4, 1930.

¹⁵ *Manchester Guardian*, May 6, 1930.

¹⁶ *Burnley Express*, May 7, 1930.

¹⁷ *Burnley Express*, May 3, 1930.

The week itself was regarded as an overall success, with estimates of up to 20,000 shops taking part.¹⁸ Despite the initial fear of a 'week' overkill, following similar schemes in other industries, shop owners and businesses seemed willing to cooperate. The feedback from the week showed promising signs, with fast results, although was not without criticism. Labour MP Ellen Wilkinson, openly complained of a lack of understanding with customers, and the wisdom in holding the week in May due to the weather conditions was questioned.¹⁹

The Cotton Week laid the foundations for activities that concurrently appealed to local and national pride. Wider activities stressed the superiority and benefits of Lancashire goods, without going into much detail. Thus, the focus was on the aesthetic, an appeal to the mind and pocket if anything. With links to celebrities and notable public figures, and on several occasions the Royal Family, cotton was seen to be promoted as something decidedly 'British', and as such, part of the national 'fabric'. Yet, it was a significant shift that cotton *needed* to be 'taken' to the country for the propaganda to connect with people.

The National Cotton Week was followed in 1931 with the Cotton Textile Exhibition held at White City in London. Working under the British Industries Exhibition, the aim was to enforce the positive messages being portrayed in Lancashire and to 'show the retail trade buyer at home and abroad the great variety of cotton's finished products'.²⁰ The exhibition itself was a collective effort from the Government through the Department of Overseas Trade and the Chamber of Commerce, which provided funds along with various bodies within the cotton industry, as well as external sources, such as the Blackpool Corporation. The promotion of goods at White City had a rapid effect, with almost immediate reports of requests and orders from across the country and abroad. Indeed, the evidence in the Preston District files highlights that the exhibition was itself a source of huge local pride. There was great interest and investment placed into producing the display and the local committee was determined to be the best at the exhibition. They launched a series of local events to increase interest across all of the districts of Preston.²¹

The Cotton Textile Exhibition was not without its problems. The more looms dispute was underway and there existed a general apathy from several sections of the cotton industry towards the idea of an exhibition and its potential returns.²² Raymond Streat, who at the time was the Secretary of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, was originally against the idea, and described the Exhibition at White City as 'The White Elephant' through his fears of the lack of a general interest.²³ Streat's apprehension continued up until the day before the Exhibition was to open, describing the 'appalling disorder of the show'.²⁴ However, the problem was to a large extent alleviated through the securing of official Government backing, and the exhibition was quite the success, with around 3,000 people per day, many

¹⁸ *Manchester Guardian*, May 5, 1930.

¹⁹ *Manchester Guardian*, May 9, 1930.

²⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, November 19, 1930.

²¹ For the full record of the Preston Cotton Festival Committee, see LRO/DDX/1116/6/5.

²² Raymond Streat in fact believed that the intervention of Lord Derby toward the efforts of the exhibition was a deciding factor in the Employers calling off the strike action. See M. Dupree, *Lancashire and Whitehall: The Diary of Sir Raymond Streat*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), p. 25.

²³ Dupree, *Streat Diaries*, p. 5.

²⁴ Dupree, *Streat Diaries*, p. 26.

of whom were from abroad attending.²⁵ The fear over the lack of wider interest in the exhibition perhaps explains why a rumour emerged that Charlie Chaplin would make an appearance (which brought a crowd of 5,000 people). However, his failure to arrive because he wished to attend in an unofficial capacity meant that the large waiting crowd was disappointed. The increased interest in his appearance reflected well on sales, with one firm apparently selling 'as much fabric as two mills could produce in the next six months', but served as an anti-climax for many attendees.²⁶

The work done through the Cotton Week and the Exhibition were obvious attempts to maintain and utilise local investment (emotional and financial) whilst expanding interest in Lancashire across the rest of the country and modernising the perception of the industry. The attempt to add a sense of glamour was taken to the next stage through the Cotton Queen competition. The goal of the queen was to raise the profile of the industry and act as its representative nationally. The idea of a 'Queen' representing an industry became a common tactic throughout the period, as 'queen-mania' took over most staple industries.²⁷ For example, in 1935, Brierfield's local Cotton Queen was selected and crowned by the reigning local Queen, a Locomotive Queen, an ex-Locomotive Queen, a Rose Queen, the British Legion Benevolent Queen and six semi-finalists.²⁸ However, no other industry or competition matched the success of the Lancashire Cotton Queens. Even Stanley Holloway's 1937 film *Cotton Queen* featured the subplot of a mill owner's wife entering the competition and was named so as to utilize the mass marketing possibilities, being that the appeal was 'particularly strong in Lancashire; for as the title implies, it deals with the cotton queen contest.'²⁹As shown in Figure 17, the official press book was enthusiastic about the potential of securing a box office hit through the popularity of the Cotton Queen Quest.

The past and the future

The Cotton Queen competition typified the increased aim to marry the traditional characteristics of Lancashire operatives with a sense of modernity. Yet, the Queens were multifaceted. They were concurrently local, but also regional and national. As such the cotton industry was increasingly a collective one, which was to the detriment to localism, and challenged place specific branding and distinctiveness. One example of a review of the International Textile Exhibition in London by the *Burnley Express's* correspondent highlighted the local disappointment that 'Burnley' was not on the names of the local firm's exhibition stalls, as opposed to Lancashire and Britain in general.³⁰

The Cotton Queen competition was much more than a simple beauty competition. The girls were local celebrities, and crossed into political and social spheres, acting as de-facto 'regal' representatives. John Sharples, of Sharples Manufacturers of Nelson, announced with the coronation of Marjorie Knowles in 1932, that her victory had helped cement the friendship of neighbouring towns, as she had been born in Nelson, worked in Brierfield and was crowned Miss Burnley, before becoming Cotton Queen of Great

²⁵ *Manchester Guardian*, February 19, 1931.

²⁶ *Manchester Guardian*, February 27, 1931.

²⁷ See for example Paul Ward's interview with the Coal Queen Margaret Lister, http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/16726/1/Paul_Ward_Coal_Queen_edited_transcript.pdf

²⁸ *Burnley Express*, October 2, 1935.

²⁹ *Lancashire Daily Post*, November 12, 1937.

³⁰ *Burnley Express*, August 13, 1932.

Britain. Sharples 'did not think there was another occasion in history when the Mayors and Mayoresses of Burnley, Nelson and Colne had toured the district as they did a few months ago ... being acclaimed by thousands and thousands of people.'³¹

The reimagining of the Lancashire cotton identity continued through other activities. In 1932, the Lancashire Cotton Pageant was held at Belle Vue in Manchester (Figure 18) and was the largest open-air spectacle that the country had attempted at the time. The pageant offered 'a series of spectacles' which ranged from 'illusion and symbolism' to 'historical pageantry' leading a reporter in *The Times* to declare that 'the sense of romance about the cotton industry has not been killed.'³² The pageant itself included a cast of 12,000, and was put together partly through donations of props and outfits: for example, a national appeal was launched through the press to acquire 1,500 top hats, 1,500 silk hats for the Peterloo scenes and 'very tame' goats – which were tested for suitability. The collective effort was symbolic: Lancashire and Britain was united and ready for the fight ahead.

The Cotton pageant bears great similarity to the arguments proposed by Cannadine in relation to other civic festivals in that:

At the very least, they were deliberate, regular, cumulative "celebrations of successful trade, festivals of capitalism", which reaffirmed, in the guise of consensus, a particular view of the politics, economy and society of the town, past, present and future, the setting, and choice of how to present an imagined past.³³

The historical scenes witnessed at the Cotton Pageant were symbolic of the notion that the cotton industry could be both local and national in focus, and in turn could be both modern and archaic in equal measure. The local press continued to regularly print dialect verse and the wider circulated newspapers included fiction, poetry and cartoons grounded in local culture. Sometimes the non-standard media was utilised to discuss more serious aspects of mill life such as operative health and other factory issues. As Fowler states, this process of dissemination was 'firmly rooted in the respectable domain of Lancashire culture and often had a pertinent point to make.'³⁴ Indeed, as has been shown by Hobbs, the local press was crucial to the formation of local identity.³⁵ In contrast, there were great efforts to portray a progressive industry. Upon the selection of Burnley's first local Cotton Queen, Eva Lord in 1930, a celebration was held at Joseph T. Sutcliffe's, Fulfilledge Mill, where she worked as a weaver. Lord was presented with gifts from long serving operatives whilst conclusions were drawn from the local press that such action was testament to the good working conditions and care in terms of welfare and cordiality between operatives and employer. It was even remarked that the weavers in the mill had mostly, 'never worked any place else' - a striking tribute to the management.³⁶

The Cotton Queen competition was the product of the Manchester based *Daily Dispatch* newspaper, an early proponent of photographic reportage with extensive coverage of the cotton industry, reaching a

³¹ *Burnley News*, November 26, 1932.

³² *The Times*, June 27, 1932.

³³ D. Cannadine, 'The Transformation Of Civic Ritual In Modern Britain: The Colchester Oyster Feast', *Past and Present*, 94, (1982).

³⁴ A. Fowler, *Cotton Operatives and Work*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), p. 40.

³⁵ Hobbs argues that the local and provincial newspaper were the most popular form of news precisely because of the local nature of the content. See A. Hobbs (2011), 'Reading The Local Paper: Social and Cultural Functions of the Local Press in Preston, Lancashire, 1855-1900', PhD. thesis, University of Central Lancashire.

³⁶ *Burnley Express*, May 31, 1930.

readership of 414,000 in March 1929.³⁷ By promoting the industry through visual means, the *Dispatch* utilized a unique marketing tool, in which the clearest benefit was, as Fowler suggests, that 'many employers bulk-bought the newspaper if one of their employees were entered.'³⁸

The first stages of the Cotton Queen competition were rooted in the locality. Entry was restricted to girls working in mills from one of the 18-20 divisions.³⁹ A girl was nominated from a mill and she then went into a heat. The number of entrants was whittled down to the selection of local queens after undergoing an interview process. The local ceremonies themselves were large events, judged by local celebrities and attracting crowds in the thousands. The girls would then move to the crowning ceremony alongside other town's queens in Blackpool, and a National Cotton Queen would be crowned after ballots had been received through the *Daily Dispatch*, with a cash prize to those who predicted the finishing order. The ability of the workers to elect a representative of the cotton industry was thus of great value, whilst the pride associated with electing a 'queen' of cotton on such a large scale pandered to the importance of individual localities' industry. The local press in Burnley eventually referred to cotton queens as 'Miss Burnley' and their standing within their home areas was reflected in the billing they received at local events.

The first Cotton Queen was Frances Lockett. She described her election as a great honour, and 'something so new.'⁴⁰ However, competitions held at local fairs and pageants were long established traditions in Lancashire. Indeed, Lancashire itself became heavily involved in the antiquarian movement where local revivals of 'folk' activities replaced the national narrative being formed with a southern-centric basis.⁴¹ With the continued popularity of dialect pieces there became rediscoveries of 'native folk dances'.⁴² The most famous example of this is the 'Britannia Coconutters' of Rossendale, whose 'tradition' was revived by the workers of Britannia Mill in the 1920s.⁴³ The promotion of 'traditional' activities is part of what Francmanis describes as the change of the 'folk phenomenon ... from antiquarian to national project.'⁴⁴

The development of the folk movement is striking in the need for collectors to scour the rural areas of the country to find the preservation of traditional songs and customs, where the population found themselves transformed into a romanticised 'folk'. The industrial towns and less urbanised hinterlands were in many respects the purveyors of such customs. Therefore, when Elbourne quotes two descriptions

³⁷ Cited in R. Conway (2011), 'Modernity and Popular Cultures of Holiday Making in 1930s Blackpool', PhD thesis, University of Manchester, p. 132.

³⁸ Fowler, *Cotton Operatives*, p. 42.

³⁹ The number of these divisions did change. For example, at one point Nelson was part of the Burnley district, but later counted as its own. See Ken Spencer's notes held at Burnley Library from his own research into Burnley's cotton queens, Burnley Cotton Queens (1999): Miscellaneous items, Burnley Library collection, LY52/BUR.

⁴⁰ NWS archive interview with Frances Lockett, Cotton Queen: 1982.8656, North West Sound Archive, Clitheroe.

⁴¹ See G. Boyes for a discussion on Sharp's choice of 'English' dance. Boyes, *The Imagined Village: Culture, Ideology & the English Folk Revival*, (Manchester: No Masters Co-operative Ltd., 1993) and E. D. Gregory, *Victorian Songhunters: The Recovery and Editing of English Vernacular Ballads and Folk Lyrics, 1820-1880*, (London: Scarecrow Press, 2006).

⁴² See the work of C. J. Bearman, 'Who Were The Folk? The Demography of Cecil Sharp's Somerset Singers', *The Historical Journal*, 43, (2000), pp. 751-775.

⁴³ *English Dance and Song*, 45-48, (1983) p. 24.

⁴⁴ J. Francmanis, 'National Music to Nation Redeemer: The Consolidation of a 'Folk' Song Construct in Edwardian England', *Popular Music*, 21, (20002), p. 1-25.

of local fairs from as far back as 1783,⁴⁵ both of which contain elements that were still seen in the Cotton Queen processions and ceremonies held in Blackpool. In effect the cotton events were the local fair, play and procession combined and expanded onto what was at the time the biggest platform available.

The winning girl who was crowned as 'queen' would be seen as a 'regal' representative for the cotton industry, signified by the crowning ceremony held in Blackpool, complete with its own anthem, 'The Crowning of the Cotton Queen' played from the booths along the golden mile. The importance of the event being held in Blackpool is significant. The mill workers who holidayed in Blackpool often went in village, mill or family groups to a town populated with people from similar backgrounds.⁴⁶ The cotton queen festivities were thus rooted in the Lancastrian culture, with processions and songs about cotton workers being played to an audience of cotton workers, usually from the same town.⁴⁷

In keeping with the celebratory atmosphere in Blackpool, the Cotton Queen Crowning ceremony (Figure 19) was held on the second day of a multiple event three day pageant in the middle of June. The 'programme of festivities' aimed to take advantage of the good weather, and reports usually included references to 'storms' in the south of Lancashire. The programme included a 10,000 strong Scout rally, an international swimming gala and a folk dance festival, but the centrepiece featuring the queens was the 'Pageant of Progress'. The two mile procession started with a 2,000 person and 100 horse cavalcade, in front of a 40,000 person crowd, discounting those watching from passing windows. The pageant was broken into four main sections: one showing historical scenes, a historical section described as corresponding to the 'displayed advertisement pages of a periodical', a collection of motor vehicles, and 'the main part of the procession' devoted to the growth and production of cotton, with the eighteen cotton queen finalists.⁴⁸

Despite the scale of the event, the impression of the Cotton Queen finalists was one of little pretensions, representing a 'fine manifestation of Lancashire common sense.'⁴⁹ The finalists for 1930 were described in an interview over a cup of tea with the *Manchester Guardian*, as being 'as sensible as they are elegant'. The reporter felt that 'on the whole they prefer their industrial to their royal duties,' and one of the queens reiterated this by feeling that 'smiling for two miles ... is a sight harder nor working 'ith' mill'. When asked if they had had a good time, one replied, 'ay, we've had a reet good do, but I'd rather be queen of my own time than all of Lancashire' with one adding that 'I'd be glad to win for the mills sake.'⁵⁰ Marjorie Knowles of Nelson, Queen for 1932, described her 'mission' upon being welcomed into the House of Commons as making people 'think cotton, talk cotton and buy cotton' and that it was her 'aim to press upon women that for quality, variety and cheapness, Lancashire was best.'⁵¹ Indeed, the same

⁴⁵ R. Elbourne, *Music and Tradition in Early Industrial Lancashire 1780-1840*, (London: Folklore Society, 1980), p. 33.

⁴⁶ Research in the field of social psychology has studied the 'social identity perspective'. This identity, of two or more people, can itself be salient and change or offer multiple identities to a person, but rests on a notion of a shared larger collective. The example given is that 'two Canadians meeting in the desert, may for some reason, feel Canadian and act like Canadians. In this sense they are a group, but the group they belong to is Canadian, not the two of them in the desert.' M. Hog et al., 'The Social Identity Perspective: Intergroup Relations, Self-Conception and Small Groups', *Small Group Research*, 35, 3 (2004), pp. 246-276.

⁴⁷ For the importance of Blackpool, see J. Walton, *Blackpool*, (London: Carnegie, 1998).

⁴⁸ *Manchester Guardian*, June 20, 1930.

⁴⁹ *Manchester Guardian*, June 20, 1930.

⁵⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, June 20, 1930.

⁵¹ *The Times*, February 23, 1933.

rhetoric was used on other promotional material such as the 'Cotton Queen's Plea' which stressed the benefits of Lancashire goods and appealed for people to purchase them.⁵² Marjorie Knowles and the other queens toured the country with an emphasis on northern textile communities (Figure 20), but also met with established figures, crossing societal boundaries epitomising a sense of 'regality' with 'ordinary', which was a key part of their appeal. The queens were taken seriously both as a voice for Lancashire cotton and a face for a countywide brand. Knowles even had a range of clothing trademarked and sold the 'Queen Marjorie' brand, in a similar fashion to the 'Turf Moor' brand linked to Burnley Football Club, by her employers.



Figure 17: Cotton Queen Press Book (1937). Source: BFI Archive



Figure 18: Historical scenes from the Cotton Pageant. Source: *Illustrated London Times*, June 28, 1932

⁵² Victoria Hospital Carnival Handbook, 1932, Marjorie Knowles Collection, held at Burnley Library, LG3/Knowles.

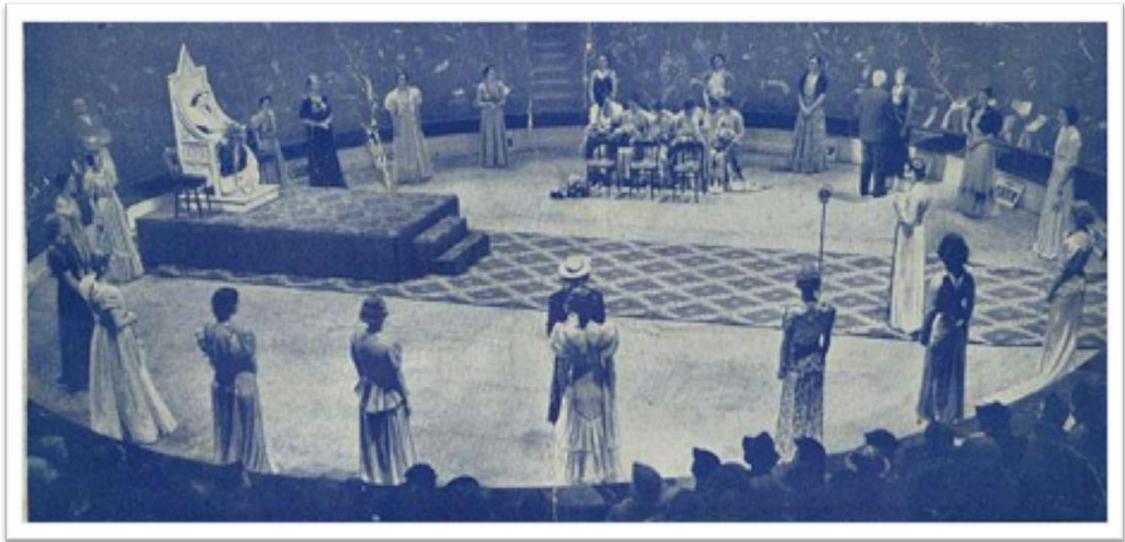


Figure 19: The crowning of the Cotton Queen. Source: Cotton Queen Souvenir Booklet (1936), Blackpool Archives



Figure 20: Marjorie Knowles laying a wreath in Nelson, 1932. Source: Marjorie Knowles Archive, Queen Street Mill Archive

There was a genuine affection for the queens in communities. This affection could border on fervour, as witnessed when the crush to see Knowles caused a near riot of 5,000 people who had scaled barricades to catch a glimpse during the Lancashire Cotton Pageant at Belle Vue in Manchester in 1932, resulting in actors and police having to smuggle her and the other regional queens out of the arena.⁵³ However, the reception for the queens was almost always a warm one. On attendance at the Palace Theatre Manchester to see the pantomime 'Dick Whittington,' reigning queen Frances Lockett entered the royal box to her own entrance as the orchestra played 'She's a lassie from Lancashire.'⁵⁴ The song itself is important for its sustained popularity and the message it conveys: a boy who travels to work in America is approached by local girls, but reminisces of his Lancastrian home and is constantly reminded of the girl he loves by his factory life, until he eventually returns to Lancashire. The linking of the song's message with the Cotton Queens is a clear representation of the shared bond that the queens could symbolise or as Jeffrey Richards explains in regards to Florrie Forde's version on her greatest hits compilation:

It is partly the songs which with their memorable tunes and simple sentiments constitute a folk memory, past joys and sorrows shared, but it is also partly they themselves comforting reminders of a continuity, comradeship and common humanity.⁵⁵

For a town to be the home of a Cotton Queen was a tremendous civic honour. When Lois Heath won in 1931, she was cheered by 'thousands of people at Atherton, where the shops and Laburnum mills were decorated in her honour.' Later in the day she was taken to Leigh where 'the streets were lined with people'. The Mayor of Leigh said they 'rejoiced that a girl from the Leigh area had been chosen' adding that 'Tyldesley would rejoice because that was her home, Atherton because she worked there and Leigh because she would be designated "Miss Leigh".'⁵⁶ The competition was something people took a huge amount of pride in, typified by Frances Lockett describing the dress she had made for her: 'it was made of the finest cotton, there weren't to be any flaws in it'.⁵⁷ A direct result of the cotton queen competition was to increase local pride and competition within the locality, but to further encourage a sense of 'otherness' within Lancashire.

Adding prestige to Lancashire

Members of the Royal Family were consistent visitors to the industrial areas of Britain, and went to great efforts to engage with areas of 'importance'. Small-scale visits, as well as full 'tours' for example, in 1913 and 1938, tended to encompass the vast majority of cotton towns. Lancashire had an advantage to other counties through the role played by the Earl of Derby in securing visits. Such was the morale boost provided by royal visits, towns were exceptionally keen to ensure at least a partial visit for the locality.⁵⁸ As well as encouraging morale, the appearances by royals further added to the sense of prestige attached to the industry. The Queen was one of the first visitors to the Textile Exhibition at White City in February 1931, and was a vocal supporter of the National Cotton Week, stating: 'I am very glad that the National

⁵³ *Burnley Express*, July 6, 1932.

⁵⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, January 27, 1931.

⁵⁵ J. Richards, *The Age of the Dream Palace: Cinema and Society in 1930's Britain*, (London: Taurus, 2009), p. 301.

⁵⁶ *Manchester Guardian*, June 29, 1931.

⁵⁷ NWS archives interview Frances Lockett.

⁵⁸ The mayor of Salford persistently lobbied to get the Royal Family to go through the city in 1934, *Manchester Guardian*, February 19, 1934.

Cotton Week will give the country generally an opportunity of seeing the wonderful fabrics which I myself saw,' whilst also ordering multiple samples to be sent to Buckingham Palace.⁵⁹ The news of the royal orders of cotton spread, as it did during the Cotton Week campaigns, helping to boost sales.⁶⁰ The Queen's open support of the industry, including public declarations of cotton purchases added greater weight to the attempts of portraying British cotton as an attractive and desirable product. Reports from directly after the White City Exhibition show that the impact of royal endorsement was a wholly positive one, with the Queen's ordering of fabrics from Blackburn leading to 'encouraged optimism', and a rise in orders, not just at home, but from Holland, Denmark, Johannesburg and the Persian Gulf.⁶¹ The involvement of such measures, however, highlights the national importance and concern over the industry, requiring royal involvement to try and make up for the losses in international markets.

The Royal Family emphasized their lineage from the house of Lancaster when visiting Lancashire towns, helping to solidify the warm feeling held for them amongst the operatives. There was a minor scandal in wider circles over the King's decision in 1913 to be toasted in the county with the traditional title of 'Duke of Lancaster', rather than as King.⁶² Such rhetoric became standard during the visits and set the tone for future interactions between the royals and operatives. During the tour of 1951, the King spoke 'as a Lancastrian, to Lancastrians', and after being toasted in the 'traditional Lancashire manner,' stated 'As a Lancastrian, we share together a long and noble heritage, and a name which none of us need be ashamed', later explaining his family lineage, describing himself as 'the successor of these Plantagenet kings ... In my own right as Duke of Lancaster'.⁶³

The tours in the cotton factories allowed people to interact with the Royal family in a way that reinforced the positive messages being published. The ability of workers within the mill environment to talk with, and even to give working demonstrations to the King and Queen acted as both a morale boost and a reinforcement of both commercial and local pride.

The enthusiasm of local people also appeared to be consistent. During a trip to Blackburn in 1913, the crowds were described as being 'enormous' and as large as 'is believed never to have assembled before in the history of the town.'⁶⁴ Indeed, as seen in the previous chapters, the native brand of socialism that developed within north east Lancashire seems to have had no desire to eradicate the Royal Family, and despite strong opposition to the House of Lords, many were staunchly loyal to the crown.⁶⁵

The Royal tour of 1913 drove through areas with large numbers of cotton operatives and 'high hills overtopping the seemingly endless line of operatives' cottages'. The King and Queen made two unexpected stops so that they could see an example of an operative's home. One was just outside of Burnley at number 286, Colne Road, and the second on a road between Bacup and Rochdale.⁶⁶ The first

⁵⁹ *The Observer*, May 3, 1931.

⁶⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, February 21, 1934.

⁶¹ *Manchester Guardian*, February 19, 1931.

⁶² *Manchester Guardian*, July 16, 1913.

⁶³ *Manchester Guardian*, April 12, 1951.

⁶⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, July 11, 1913.

⁶⁵ See Chapter 2.

⁶⁶ *The Times*, July 10, 1913.

stop was at the home of 85-year-old retired weaver Mrs Parsons, at the insistence of the King who spotted her, her brother (a Cooperative store manager) and a friend, Mrs Holt, all stood waving outside of Parson's home. The Majesties were shown 'proudly' over her 'plain, clean and comfortable home', and Mrs Holt declared that the Queen was a 'grand un'.⁶⁷ The impact that this meeting with an average person had was significant. However the visit was to a degree a sanitised vision, as Parson's house was roughly 25 years old, and in a less deprived area.⁶⁸ The visit was followed by a larger scale visit to Burnley and Padiham, in which the 'old people' welcomed them with an inscription written in dialect of 'A gradely welcome from th'owd fowks'.⁶⁹ Following lunch, and a tour of a Calico Printers in Accrington, the King and Queen tried their hand at printing and spoke to workers. The Royal tour then moved through the Rossendale Valley, where, on a road between Bacup and Rochdale, they again stopped to visit a cottage. The first home they attempted to see was empty, and there was a delay to gain access to weaver William Ford's house as he had misplaced his key. The cottage is described as being very similar to the Mrs Parson's, whilst the King and Queen asked questions to Mr and Mrs Ford 'as to their mode of life'.⁷⁰ The *Manchester Guardian* described the efforts to engage with ordinary people, and similar acts on the tour as:

Traditions as lasting and as much prized as those which cling to stately mansions ... they help to link the cottage and the throne, and to give a little bit of romance to the lives somewhat stunted of graces and gaiety.⁷¹



Figure 21: The Queen visiting a mill in Nelson. Source: 'North East Lancashire and its Industrial Facilities', (Burnley, 1958)

The importance of the royal visits is again exemplified by the rigorous pursuit by the Ministry Of Labour to

⁶⁷ *The Times*, July 10, 1913.

⁶⁸ Colne Road mostly developed in the late 19th century, and the terrace of houses next to 286, Granville Terrace, was constructed in 1879, according to the foundation stone.

⁶⁹ *The Times*, July 10, 1913.

⁷⁰ *The Times*, July 10, 1913.

⁷¹ *Manchester Guardian*, July 15, 1913.

secure an official visit to the textile districts in 1948. The tour itself comprised of visits to key cotton towns, and allowed the Royal Family to again learn and try different aspects of the industry, whilst allowing the workers involved to gain commemorative brochures.⁷² Indeed, it is again telling how in a period of distress, where cotton needed promoting, the industry turned to both the Royal Family and a new form of Cotton Queen.

The post-Second World War campaign

Following the Second World War, the economic situation in Britain meant that the government turned to the cotton industry to lead the drive for the exports market, to work alongside Marshall Aid as the basis of economic recovery. Despite the attempts of the 1930s to capture the domestic market, the decimation of textiles in countries such as Japan and Germany was presented as a chance to regain unrivalled dominance, but was a short-term fix. The government desire for a quick solution was to have massive ramifications in later years. Dupree argues that:

After the balance of payment crisis, in so far as the Government paid attention to the cotton industry, it was with regard to maximising exports at all costs ... The cotton industry became the spearhead of the government's export drive.⁷³

Several problems now faced the industry. A depleted and ageing workforce, and a resistance from young people to venture into the mill, the combination of the changes in juvenile labour – such as increasing the school leaving age and the competition from other industries for young workers – meant that the traditional route from school to the mill for many young northerners was no longer guaranteed. In Burnley for example, the growth of engineering works had significantly dented the pool of workers available. The average age of operatives in 1911 was 29, and yet by the end of the war had risen to 37.⁷⁴ To compound matters, cotton was increasingly seen as a 'dying' industry from the local authorities, whilst the memories of the 1930s were still fresh in people's minds.⁷⁵

The Ministry of Labour (MOL) aimed to boost recruitment numbers by addressing the concerns of older generations through 'stressing the present and future security in work of vital importance to national economic recovery',⁷⁶ and by aiming to 'boost or glorify the workers and their effort.'⁷⁷ The drive for exports also meant that the current workforce needed to increase in productivity, through longer hours and greater individual effort. The MOL decided upon 'indirect' forms of propaganda, with a number of techniques utilizing different media to convey the message, central to which was 'The Three Cotton Targets For 1948':

- Increasing the output of yard from 14 million lb. a week to 20 million
- Increasing the number of workers from 267,000 to 325,000,
- Increasing exports from £85 millions to £156 millions - enough to buy all of Britain's exports of wheat and butter or meat.⁷⁸

⁷² NA/LAB/43/19.

⁷³ Dupree, 'Struggling With Destiny', p. 113.

⁷⁴ R. Robson, *The Cotton Industry in Britain*, (Manchester: MacMillan, 1957), p. 13.

⁷⁵ Discussed in Chapter 8.

⁷⁶ NA/INF2/142.

⁷⁷ NA/INF2/142.

⁷⁸ NA/INF2/142.

The Government targets were conveyed to the workers through easy to understand images, displayed in booklets and brochures, and through travelling 'Cotton Shows' (Figure 22), plus the use of modern resources such as mobile cinemas. An emphasis was placed on glamourizing the cotton operative. Such an idea was explicitly mentioned and links heavily to the older cotton queen competition and to the later Textile Queen competition. The MOL stressed that:

We need have no hesitation in borrowing the glamour that surrounds less humdrum pursuits ... for example cinema and applying them to the process of 'glorifying the mill girl'. We can establish a connection with, and bathe in, a certain amount of reflected glory from other spheres.⁷⁹

It was to be emphasised that the mill was not just a job as a 'cotton operative' or 'mill girl' but a reasonable career as a worker in a task of high national importance, with a genuine chance of career progression. The logic behind this approach to dispel many of the fears held in localities. As the MOL defined, the approach 'not only appeals to self-respect and ambition, but eliminates any fear of return to days of depression.'⁸⁰ The intention of stressing the benefits of a career in cotton was to steal back some of the ground lost to other industries, which had gained workers during the war.



Figure 22: An example of a travelling cotton exhibition. Source: NA/INF2/42

The hope was to convince the public that the industry was at least as attractive as others, whilst playing on its perceived present and future security of cotton. The industry and by default its workers were shown to be of 'national interest', increased the prestige some felt in their positions, which was now 'a national duty'.⁸¹ Thus, emphasis was placed on a five day working week, freeing time for things like watching football for men and shopping for women. The problems faced by trying to recruit young workers against other industries were tackled in the form of stressing the positives of a career in cotton, without emphasising the negatives of other careers - pay, working hours, etc.

⁷⁹ NA/INF2/142.

⁸⁰ NA/INF2/142.

⁸¹ NA/INF2/142.

One speech from Labour MP Herbert Morrison, especially looked to emphasise these facts:

Now I know what some of you may be thinking, especially the old managers and workpeople alike ... some of you are thinking that you have had booms before and you remember what comes after...I'll tell you what that is, it's a ghost from the past that has no place in the reality of the conditions of the post-war world.⁸²

Underpinning the positive messages regarding working in cotton was the utilisation of local and personal pride. The worker was portrayed as a 'frontline soldier in Britain's battle for recovery'⁸³ and the idea of personal and team effort was heavily utilised. The MOL itself noted the 'peculiar pride of the Lancashire folk in their native prowess'⁸⁴ and set about taking advantage of it at every opportunity. The ability to earn credits for individual and team work was implemented, alongside the publication of local statistics from towns. The hope was to spark up local and town-based rivalries. Such a notion again was something the northern regions were renowned for, exemplified through sport, especially football, often synonymous with the industrial towns of Lancashire and Yorkshire. As Russell states: 'Central to northern celebration of its sporting culture was a belief that it was infused with an acutely developed competitiveness simply unmatched elsewhere in the country.'⁸⁵

Government press releases contained reports of the feats of individual operatives and mills across Lancashire to encourage towns to increase their productivity and garner a wider sense of goodwill. The concept behind stoking up such rivalries was to 'arouse local interest' and to convince the rest of the country that 'that those who are part of the cotton industry are the people who matter in Lancashire.'⁸⁶ The hope was that such rhetoric would 'fire the imagination' whilst 'arousing on all sides an appreciation of the tasks of the cotton worker and the magnitude of the problem.'⁸⁷ The materials produced show that the basic principles were closely adhered to.⁸⁸ The first set of posters from April 1948 included pictures of young operatives with slogans such as, 'Meet Britain's Breadwinner' and 'A Star in her own right', underpinned with the overarching message of 'Britain's bread hangs by Lancashire's thread' (Figure 23). A second batch of materials offered the personal stories of operatives, all of which were women. Three were from Burnley, and one each from Nelson, Heywood, Darwen and Stone Clough respectively. The advertisements explained the different backgrounds and different routes into the industry for the women, but all ultimately emphasize the joy gained from millwork.

⁸² Speech by Herbert Morrison at the Rally of the Cotton Industry, Belle Vue, Manchester, April 17, 1948.

⁸³ NA/INF2/142.

⁸⁴ NA/INF2/142.

⁸⁵ D. Russell, *Looking North: Northern England and the National Imagination* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 241.

⁸⁶ NA/INF2/142.

⁸⁷ NA/INF2/142.

⁸⁸ A similar, and earlier campaign for the Yorkshire woollen and worsted industry predominately focussed on male celebrities in its literature to encourage workers in, and offers a contrastingly different tone to the Lancashire materials. Yorkshire Campaign NA/INF2/ 141.

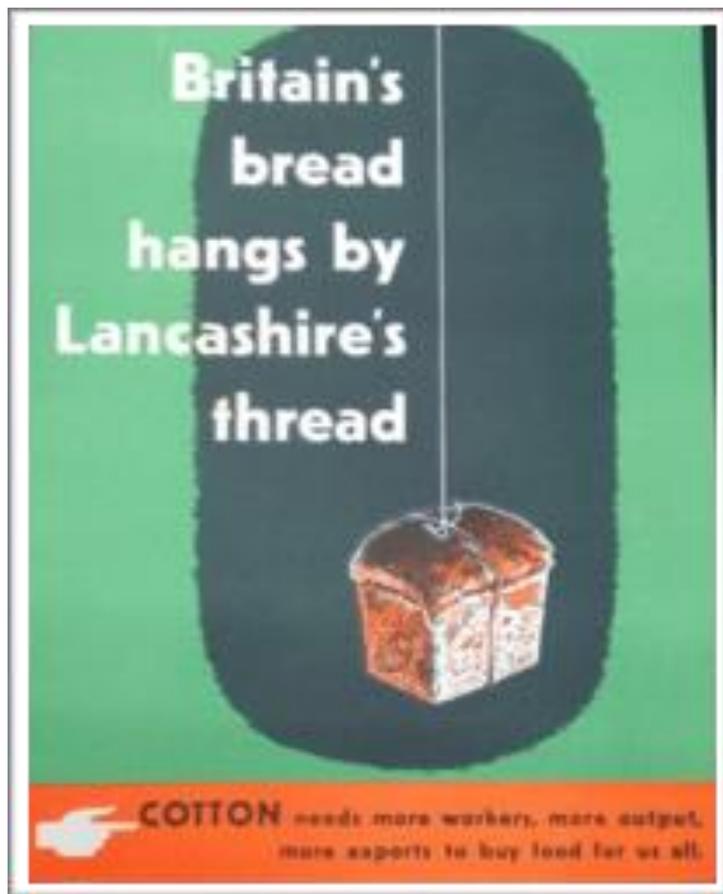


Figure 23: Perhaps the most famous propaganda poster of the era. Source: NA/INF2/42

There were also some advertisements highlighting the aspirational nature of the industry, in many instances aimed at men, explaining the possibility to work in offices, with one in particular using the slogan 'they make it easy for you to learn the business.'⁸⁹

By 1949, initial targets had not been met and accordingly the advertisements shifted to a more serious tone. The appeal was now for help, stressing the financial implications of a collapse in cotton. This was expressed mostly through cartoons utilizing colonial imagery and traditional British images, such as 'Britannia'. There was also a set of posters looking to address the apprehension of older generations, written in dialect conversation, with images of older people as opposed to more glamorous girls. The emphasis was on the need for co-operation in the industry, from 'old hands, new hands and management alike!' The efforts to promote productivity inside the mill again focussed on individual stories coupled with the utilisation of media such as work bulletin boards. The hard-hitting message once again put Britain's very survival on the shoulders of the Lancashire Cotton industry. For example, the opening line in the handbook from 'The Cotton Show' states, 'Britain is not exporting nearly enough to pay for the imports of raw materials necessary to keep her people alive and at work'.⁹⁰ However, the negativity and lack of trust from older workers in the industry was still of great concern. The conditions from the First World War onwards, had significantly dented the confidence in the industry, both nationally and locally, and genuine fears about another period of depression were still fresh in many minds.

⁸⁹ NA/INF2/142.

⁹⁰ NA/INF2/142.

The Textile Prosperity Queen

The problem of negative local perceptions is typified in the story of Muriel Wilcock. Born in Blackburn in 1932, and overcoming a 'hopeless' case of diphtheria, she left school at the age of 14 to work at the local Co-Operative emporium. Finding the work tedious, and partly through peer pressure, she moved to the Royal Ordinance Factory making clocks, but a lack of work meant she and a group of friends decided to move to the local mill as pirn winders. Her father was a beamer after the war had curtailed his progression to tackler, whilst her mother was also a cotton operative. Her mother, who went 'absolutely spare' was determined to convince her out of entering the mill, but failed.⁹¹ Wilcock then went on to become the face of the new young thrusting textile workforce when in 1948 she was elected as Britain's Textile Prosperity Queen.

The basic premise was similar to the Cotton Queen Competitions, with the girls firstly chosen to represent their mills locally. In Blackburn the heat was held at the end of a mixed night of entertainment at King George's Hall in front of 3,000 people, mostly mill workers. Wilcock beat eight other finalists -although other sources state twelve - in front of a judging panel composed of Lady Shuttleworth, the London based journalist Helen Burke and George Mould from the MOL, standing in for England international footballer Frank Swift. Wilcock then progressed to the coronation ceremony held in Blackpool and was elected as Britain's Textile Prosperity Queen in front of a 4,000-person crowd, being commended as 'having the profile and a personality that is at once charming and compelling'.⁹² She was crowned by Barbara Castle, at the time MP for Blackburn, and John Edwards, the board of trade parliamentary secretary, as well as the second MP for Blackburn. The evening's compere also hailed from Blackburn although this was attributed to being 'pure coincidence'.⁹³

The aim of the queen was to encourage younger workers into the industry, by embodying the messages of the propaganda. She was therefore regarded as the young cotton worker's representative.⁹⁴ Thus, the search was for, 'the prettiest, most attractive and intelligent girl in the trade - with the accent on intelligence'.⁹⁵ Wilcock was aged just 16 and had openly stressed her enjoyment of millwork, describing it as a 'grand job, for grand people'.⁹⁶ It is of note that only two of the thirteen finalists were blonde, despite the classic image of glamour, and the competition was very much a competition to find a 'Lancashire lass' rather than an idealised beauty queen.⁹⁷ Wilcock's speech at her first public event on the steps of Blackburn town hall reinforced this:

Although I have been crowned Queen, I will never forget that I am a Lancashire lass and that my townspeople are supporting me and expecting me to do big things for the cotton industry.⁹⁸

⁹¹ NWS archive, Interview with Muriel Wilcock / Ansbro, 1997.0006.

⁹² The subsequent references are from the Muriel Wilcock archive held at the Lancashire Record Office, DDX 1119/12. The individual articles/ newspapers have been referenced with dates where possible, but some are unreadable. *Blackburn Evening Gazette*. *Date unknown*, *Muriel Wilcock Archive*.

⁹³ *Blackburn Evening Telegraph*. *Date unknown*.

⁹⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, April 1, 1950.

⁹⁵ *Blackburn Gazette*. *Date unknown*.

⁹⁶ *Blackburn Times*, June 10, 1949.

⁹⁷ *Blackburn Evening Gazette*. *Date unknown*.

⁹⁸ *The Blackburn Gazette*. *Date unknown*.

To the local press, Wilcock was 'A queen - but she's still a Lancashire lass' which was shown when she was mobbed for autographs outside the Blackburn town hall after the crowd had chanted the ever popular 'She's a lassie from Lancashire.'⁹⁹ She reiterated her grounding in the locality in several other speeches, for example, telling a crowd that 'I promise you that I shall never forget that I am a Blackburn lass'.¹⁰⁰

Muriel Wilcock described her upbringing as being 'sheltered' and her parents sent her to the local priest before being allowed to enter the competition,¹⁰¹ which with her young age and enthusiasm added an endearing element to her 15-month reign. Although chaperoned at all times, the stories reported back emphasise the normality of a young northern mill girl, with one particular incident involving her publicly crying after having her hair cut short and 'groomed according to fashion' in London.¹⁰² She was sent to London every weekend for a month for fittings in preparation for her official weeklong tour in the capital. However, the sense of being an outsider was reinforced with reports of Muriel wearing skirts 'rather longer than fashionable', and going against the expectation of wearing the most up-to-date shorter styles. The *Blackburn Times* felt that 'she prefers them long - they are more graceful and dignified'.¹⁰³

The tour of duty upon which Muriel Wilcock embarked was similar to the Cotton Queens, however, it encompassed more prestigious and higher profile events. From small-scale appearances, such as talking at primary schools, to national public broadcasts on the radio and television, including meeting stars such as Richard Greene and Jean Simmons.¹⁰⁴ There was also great interest in appearances in America and France although these never came to fruition. Indeed, louder calls were made for the Textile Queen to go to America after her counterpart, 'The American Maid of Cotton' visited Blackburn in the April of 1949, but when this fell through, the Cotton Board were blamed for a lack of interest in the work of the Textile Queen.¹⁰⁵

The private letters from the Textile Queen archive give an interesting view into the organisational approach and influence from both the MOL and Wilcock's own mill owner, Mr Mercer. Mercer was actively involved in the campaigning from the start of selecting the girls, through to accompanying Muriel on her tours. A letter from Mrs Mortimer, Muriel's hired teacher, especially highlights his involvement, describing how 'Your dealings are so candid and to the point, and your enthusiasm for the Cotton Industry is infectious.'¹⁰⁶

Muriel underwent a series of lessons, with elocution becoming as frequent as two per week, plus more leading up to busier times as deemed necessary by Mrs Mortimer.¹⁰⁷ The feedback after the first ten lessons claimed that Muriel, despite her performing well in an appearance, 'has neither the years, background nor experience to be relied upon with certainty' after her practice attempts in front of Mrs

⁹⁹ *Northern Daily Times*, July 12, 1949.

¹⁰⁰ Blackburn Carnival Booklet, 1948, Muriel Wilcock archive.

¹⁰¹ NWS archive, Interview with Muriel Wilcock.

¹⁰² *Northern Daily Telegraph* September 28, 1949.

¹⁰³ *Blackburn Times*, September 16, 1949.

¹⁰⁴ NWS Archive, Interview with Muriel Wilcock.

¹⁰⁵ *Northern Daily Telegraph*, July 11, 1949.

¹⁰⁶ Letter from Mrs Mortimer to Mr Mercer, July 13, 1949, Muriel Wilcock Archive.

¹⁰⁷ Letter from Mrs Mortimer to Mr Mercer, November 4, 1949.

Mortimer's students and friends.¹⁰⁸ However, by May 1950, the two lessons a week were no longer required as Muriel grew into the role. This transition was evident by September 1949, when Muriel had blossomed to the extent that she proposed to the Lord Mayor of Manchester that she be given 'the run of Lancashire schools' to increase the recruitment drive.¹⁰⁹

Wilcock's speeches reiterated the MOL campaign, looking to take advantage of local pride. In one speech, she explains how:

We have our mills. We have our factories. But it is you who give life to both ... Our forefathers made Britain great. Our forefathers made Lancashire great, it is up to you to regain and maintain that greatness.¹¹⁰

Local pride was amplified when Muriel was in her hometown. A speech at a textile parade and pageant in August 1949 describes being 'in my own town amongst my own town-folk' and she told operatives that 'you my people... are the LIFE of our textile industry.'¹¹¹ Her speeches delivered to schoolchildren gave similar messages to those for adults, although they were adapted to suit the audience. For secondary children, she stressed the differing roles and opportunities, whilst at a younger children's ball, she encourages the children to save their money by using school savings groups and dressing as a fairy.

Wilcock did go back to the mill during her reign, but was out of the mill environment the majority of the time. Indeed, her ability to go back and pick up her work was something of great pride to Mr Mercer, as Muriel describes how his wife told her of their delight that she wasn't changed by her experiences.¹¹² A report of one of the occasions describes her 'instinctively turned to the pining frame'.¹¹³ Within the mill, her success was a matter of great pride. One reporter quotes her fellow operatives as saying 'Good lass Muriel, you've done well and we're proud of you.'¹¹⁴ However, the role of Textile Queen was not continued as the industry entered an entirely new phase, utilizing modern technologies. The end of Muriel Wilcock's reign as Textile Queen coincided with another period of contraction for the cotton industry. She went back to the mill, noting how 'you just got on with life, you did what you had to do ... It was a hard life, but we were happy'.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁸ Letter from Mrs Mortimer to Mr Mercer, July 13, 1949.

¹⁰⁹ *Blackburn Times*, September 23, 1949.

¹¹⁰ Speech, September 13, 1949, Muriel Wilcock Archive.

¹¹¹ Speech, August 13, 1949, Muriel Wilcock Archive.

¹¹² NWS archive Interview with Muriel Wilcock.

¹¹³ *Northern Daily Telegraph*, July 11, 1949.

¹¹⁴ *Northern Daily Telegraph*, July 11, 1949.

¹¹⁵ NWS archive interview with Muriel Wilcock.



Figure 24: Muriel Wilcock press photo. Source: Muriel Wilcock collection, LRO/DDX1119/12

Conclusion

The 1930s and 1950s each offered different facets of the cotton industry's gradual decline, and both periods underwent a process of romanticisation. Prior to this, there was no real need for propaganda and mass promotion, but, in the context of the unrest around more looms, and the post Second World War campaign, there was a newfound need to redefine just what the cotton industry was and would be in the future, and more pertinently to emphasize that it would *have* a future. This chapter has shown how the image of the Lancashire cotton weaver was for a long period portrayed as a bastion of British working endeavour, at both local and national levels. The construction of a 'new' cotton operative was based upon utilising the culture of Lancashire, and continued to be rooted in the locality. The virtues of Lancashire cotton operatives were propagated to the extent that when the industry's decline was terminal, the fierce pride of local people created a complex legacy, which continues until today. In contrast to the attempts to revitalise the industry discussed here, Chapter 8 focuses upon the attempts to confront the decline of cotton through the parallel efforts to diversify the economy of north east Lancashire, and move away from cotton, offering a counter argument to much of the efforts which have been detailed here.

The messages that placed Lancashire on a pedestal, convincing people to ignore an older generation's advice and go back to the industry were ultimately flawed. As Singleton states: 'The long decline of the British cotton industry resumed its course'.¹¹⁶ Fowler considers the change in government in 1951 as a key turning point, with recessions in the cotton industry following in 1952, 1955 and 1958.¹¹⁷ The revival

¹¹⁶ J. Singleton, 'Lancashire's Last Stand: Declining Employment in the British Cotton Industry, 1945-70', *Economic History Review*, 39, (1986), pp. 92-107.

¹¹⁷ Fowler, *Cotton Operatives*, p. 203.

of Japanese industry, with its advantageous employment strategy meant that the industry was once again on the back foot, and ultimately no longer competitive in domestic or, more importantly, overseas markets. Fowler summarises the situation:

The cotton industry began to call for protection ... both sides of industry saw import control as the solution to their problems. Government was unsympathetic ... If Lancashire suffered, so be it.¹¹⁸

The cotton industry, and Lancashire in particular, spent a long period being romanticised. The government and industry itself went to great pains to show that it was a modern, stable industry to have pride in working in. The Royal Family spoke as Lancastrians, people were able to select one of their own to spread their message and put forward their viewpoint. They were continually promised that working hard would pay off, with increased wages, shorter hours and weekends off, all with the guarantee of a stable working environment to be proud of; however, this was all a fallacy, and to return to Singleton: 'It is abundantly clear that, rightly or wrongly, Lancashire felt betrayed by successive post-war governments.'¹¹⁹

The worst hit areas were those of north east Lancashire. Here, machines were scrapped and buildings on the whole became abandoned and derelict, whilst this also hit other industries. As Pridmore demonstrated in her study of the Pennine region, 'as the textile industry declined, so did its ancillary offshoots... many stone quarries simply closed ... transports arteries serving the industries became uneconomic and closed.'¹²⁰ The area therefore began to lose faith in the cotton industry, yet many were unsure of how to approach the problem. This had important ramifications, and in some areas, disastrous consequences.

¹¹⁸ Fowler, *Cotton Operatives*, p. 204.

¹¹⁹ Singleton, *Lancashire's Last Stand*, p. 106.

¹²⁰ E. Pridmore, *Fabric of the Hills*, (Bradford: The Standing Conference Of South Pennine Authorities Heritage / Landscape Working Group, 1989).

8. RE-DEFINING A 'COTTON COMMUNITY'

The collapse of the cotton industry was a cataclysmic event for the communities of north east Lancashire. Despite the reprieve of the post-Second World War boom and as discussed in Chapter 7, the promises of long term viability for the industry, the realisation that cotton was in terminal decline resulted in a process of collective soul-searching. Shinzo Ohya, leader of the Japanese Textile Federation highlighted the feeling that Lancashire was looking backwards, and that it seemed to be known to everyone bar the county itself. He stated in 1968 that:

Lancashire should have got out of cotton generations ago. This is today only an industry for poor, underdeveloped countries. With all your inventive genius, worldwide business experience, a very skilled labour force and the nearest approach to a 'world language', you should be concentrating on highly sophisticated machinery for textiles and other industries.¹

In the face of wider economic uncertainty, answers were sought from external sources, shifting the stimulus that had driven so much of the area's success and removing a large degree of ownership and involvement from the communities of the area.

This chapter explores the process of moving north east Lancashire away from cotton through diversification, or to use Ward's concept, the attempts at 'selling places' as opposed to 'buying industries'.² It then discusses how this impacted upon the communities and identity of the area.

There were few other options available once, as explored here, the abilities of local people to kick-start any enterprise had become stunted. Despite the efforts of some local bodies, the only other industries of note in north east Lancashire were mining and engineering and both were going through periods of depression. Engineering especially suffered through the closing of mills and the sale of machinery on the second-hand market at massively reduced prices, which was a condition unseen throughout the rest of Lancashire³ Therefore the decline of cotton was all encompassing, and touched every part of the community.

Diversification and urban renewal were both felt to be necessary and encouraged in some quarters from the early 1930s, regardless of how the process would affect local people. As the *Manchester Guardian* questioned in 1959:

One of the troubles in north east Lancashire ... is that long tradition of living next door to mill or factory makes people disinclined to face even short journeys to and from work. Is this tradition, for instance, worth preserving? If older industrial areas are to change into better places to live and work in, dwelling houses should cease to be cheek-by-jowl with their mills.⁴

Yet, for settlements built from the character of north east Lancashire and used to a particular way of life, the marrying of a rapid and sudden departure from cotton brought the basis of local and community life into question.

¹ *Textile Weekly*, Volume 68, (1968), p. 177.

² S. Ward, *Selling Places: The Marketing and Promotion of Towns and Cities 1850-2000*, (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 174.

³ See E. D. Smithies (1974), 'The Contrast Between North and South in England 1918-1939: A study of Economic, Social, and Political Problems with Particular reference to Experience of Burnley, Halifax, Ipswich and Luton', Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Leeds, p. 83.

⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, September 4, 1959.

Local and regional attempts at regeneration

To reiterate much of what underpinned the first half of this thesis, up until the 1920s, the cotton industry was the driving force of the economy across north east Lancashire. With the difficulties felt after the speculative boom of 1921 (Chapter 5), concepts of diversification began to develop. Although small-scale, there was through the 1920s some limited success in attracting new industries to the area and Burnley managed to forge a position for itself as the favoured destination for businesses to relocate to. Locally, the municipal authorities went to great lengths to create a 'hospitable atmosphere', and aimed to utilize positive word of mouth and limited advertising to increase interest,⁵ primarily in offering and promoting cheaper rates than in surrounding towns.⁶

There were moves to rationalise the entire cotton industry through the Cotton Industry Reorganisation Acts of 1936 and 1939, but as Fowler argues both did little to modernise the industry.⁷ Hence, with the failure of the economic situation to improve into the 1930s, coupled with the industrial action of the more looms dispute (Chapters 5 and 6), a greater emphasis on the need to move away from cotton developed from some quarters. By 1937, it was outwardly declared by several leading local Burnley figures that 'never again shall the town rely to such a large extent on one industry'.⁸ Coming from the self-declared 'Weaving Capital of the World,' this was a significant shift in mentality, especially at the municipal level.

The *zeitgeist* of diversifying local economies was mirrored across Lancashire with varying degrees of enthusiasm. As Raymond Streat explained, by 1931 discussions for 'the movement for New Industries'⁹ were already well underway, but there was a lack of united or coherent planning. The attempts to attract new industries in turn increased competition between municipal bodies, which although beneficial to stimulating efforts, in the midst of depression, created a 'race to the bottom.' The attempts to stimulate local economies also created a renewed sense of civic pride, which was highlighted by Streat in regard to Manchester:

We in Manchester suspected that Liverpool aimed at getting recognition as the acknowledged centre for Lancashire activities. The port of Manchester and the civic and commercial authorities' felt that Manchester could not afford to let Liverpool get away with this.¹⁰

The first real attempt to create a unified, Lancashire wide initiative led to the formation of the Lancashire Industrial Development Council (LIDC) in 1931. The council was primarily a Manchester-based municipal organisation, with Lord Derby as President and Streat as Secretary, cooperating with but being independent of both the Manchester Chamber of Commerce and the Manchester Development Committee.¹¹ Funding primarily came through local authorities, contributing subscriptions of the product

⁵ *Burnley News*, March 28, 1928.

⁶ The *Burnley Express* openly stated that rates, electricity and gas were cheaper than in Nelson, Colne, Accrington, Bacup, Rawtenstall, Halifax, Preston, Blackburn and Wigan, *Burnley Express*, December 21, 1927.

⁷ A. Fowler, *Cotton Operatives and Work*, (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2003), pp. 185-202.

⁸ *Burnley Express*, May 26, 1937.

⁹ M. Dupree, *Lancashire and Whitehall: The Diary of Sir Raymond Streat* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987) p. 28, although there was serious consideration for greater diversification across Lancashire from the Civic Week of 1926.

¹⁰ Streat, *Diaries*, p. 3.

¹¹ Streat, *Diaries*, p. 4.

of one-twelfth of a penny in the pound of rateable value. Burnley contributed around £180 annually.¹² The LIDC's main aims were to stimulate foreign interest through propaganda, of which it had some success, however, there was little impact overall in securing long lasting, widespread work. Local authorities therefore took it upon themselves to work independently and attract investment. Several French companies sought to move production to Burnley, such as a tinsel company in 1936 for example.¹³

The new industries were not without problems. Some, such as leather or shoe manufacture, were still effectively liable to the same threats in the future as textiles, and there was also the problem of redeploying older textile operatives who had spent their working lives within cotton. Lord Derby stated in 1931 that: 'under no circumstances would the Lancashire of the future be the Lancashire of the past',¹⁴ and this was taken somewhat literally as businesses focussed their recruitment on younger people, consigning several generations to a bleak future. Six years later, the effect of Derby's policy was still being felt across north east Lancashire. One worker appealed to the *Burnley Express* in 1937:

Much is mentioned of these industries, but no mention is made of where one applies for these new jobs. Are these industries really intended to teach adults a new trade, or are they just intended for those children leaving school? ... the majority really want work and it is certainly pitiful to hear some of them talk of how glad they would be to work once more in their own town. Well if the authorities would make it clearer as to where people could apply for these new jobs, everyone concerned would be more satisfied.¹⁵

The future appeared bleak for several generations of people, and this feeling was accentuated through the growing movement to redevelop town centres. Part of the attempts to encourage businesses to relocate was a desire to improve the general appearances of towns and wider perceptions of them, but as a result the criticisms of localities – in which many still held great pride - became vitriolic. The movement peaked in the late 1930s with backing by the LIDC, and was typified by 1935's *Daily Dispatch* produced booklet 'A New Face for Lancashire'. The survey was part of a self-confessed 'campaign to attract new industries by sweeping away the wreckage of old ones. The face of the county is to be cleaned.'¹⁶ The main problem was a lack of funding - both with local authorities' expenditure on civic works and a lack of return for clearing up industrial waste - coupled with the 'spoliation' caused by heavy industries. The LIDC also faced criticism for its role in undermining existing industries and threatening the remaining job market through their involvement. The *Daily Dispatch* called on the Government to provide assistance, through either direct amenities grants or sponsored loans, citing the successes of housing and road schemes. Calls were also made for local authorities to have direct power in dealing with 'industrial ugliness', i.e. introduce the ability to force an owner to take down a derelict building if it was not viewed as dangerous. There was also a desire to create more green spaces within town centres, in the hope of improving the health of local populations.¹⁷

Burnley was singled out as especially bad compared to the positive messages for the majority of towns for:

¹² This figure was £177 in 1935, and £180 in 1939, so around the £180 figure in most years.

¹³ *Burnley Express*, September 5, 1936.

¹⁴ *Dundee Courier*, April 24, 1931.

¹⁵ *Burnley Express*, January 13, 1937.

¹⁶ 'A New Face for Lancashire', (Manchester: *Daily Dispatch*, 1935), p. 5.

¹⁷ 'A New face for Lancashire', pp. 5-7.

Despite its girdle of warm green hills and fine public parks, (it) has a heart of cold, grey stone. You can go over the centre of the town with a magnifying glass without finding so much as a flower or a single blade of grass.¹⁸

Burnley was thus in a conundrum. The Municipal Borough was in debt by £3,274,048 in 1935,¹⁹ which had grown to £3,472,328 by 1937.²⁰ There was therefore little funding and more generally, a need to avoid discouraging the existing industries of the town. One solution was explored through expanding into the more affluent bordering areas in an attempt to generate extra funds through increased rates and also add more 'green areas'. To further raise funds mineral rights were to be secured from those surrounding areas with greater coal deposits.²¹ However, as Burnley Borough aimed to incorporate surrounding townships and parishes, counter attempts by neighbouring municipalities were proposed. In 1931, both Burnley and Nelson made attempts to annex Briercliffe from the Burnley Rural District, much to the aversion of locals there.²² Several proposals followed, of which the attempted amalgamation of Burnley with Padiham in 1932 gained the most consideration. In 1934, a local proposal was put forward to again increase Burnley, using the Rural District's own request for bulk water supplies to some areas as a bargaining tool to cede some land. Part of Burnley Borough's argument was that a lack of desirable land was hindering further business moving into the area, but also that people were both building and living outside of the direct boundaries whilst using Burnley's amenities. Although the move was halted with opposition from the Burnley Rural District, Nelson and Lancashire County Council, the incident characterised an increase in civic assertiveness. Indeed, it was argued in 1888, whilst similar schemes were proposed that 'village ideas have not died with the village green,'²³ yet this same localism, that was once a strength of the area, was now seen in some cases to be hindering collective action.

Burnley Borough Council turned to alternative methods to raise revenue, increasing the diversification campaign with greater intensity. Stephen Ward highlights how many local initiatives through the 1930s were drawing 'on considerable local autonomy of local government and business networks to create a wide range of promotion and development policies, despite slender legal bases for their actions.'²⁴ New workshops for various industries were purchased, built and several idle mills were renovated for rental at a cost £259,000.²⁵ The most significant scheme was the building of a new factory with subsidised rent for an American company 'Platers & Stampers' which later became 'Prestige' in 1937. The plant (Figure 25), was paid for from local rates in the hope of turning Burnley into a 'little Sheffield', and later described as being 'palatial', and potentially a focal point of local pride.²⁶ The scheme was partially inspired by the success of earlier initiatives. The establishment of Trafford Park in Manchester in 1896, where the Trafford Park Estates Company Ltd. attracted American companies with the offer of an industrial estate in Lancashire and the establishment of the Preston Dock, both served the purpose of bringing in new

¹⁸ 'A New Face for Lancashire', pp. 24-25.

¹⁹ *Burnley Express*, September 7, 1935.

²⁰ *Burnley Express*, August 28, 1937.

²¹ For example, the village of Newchurch managed by 1930 to be free from rateable debt. Much of this was due to the work of a Mr Burton, Rural District Councillor, and mill owner, who having worked his way up, invested heavily in the local village, and saw himself as a 'co-worker'. *Burnley News*, August 2, 1930.

²² *Burnley Express*, March 14, 1931.

²³ *Lancashire Evening Post*, January 5, 1888.

²⁴ S. Ward, 'Local Industrial Promotion and Development Policies, 1899-1940', *Local Economy*, 5, 2 (1994), pp. 100-118.

²⁵ *Burnley Express*, August 24, 1937.

²⁶ *Burnley Express*, August 28, 1937.

industry and stemming the effect of cotton downturn.²⁷

The building of the Platers & Stammers factory was successfully driven by local initiative, despite government threats of repercussions due to, as the Burnley Trades Council openly stated, 'straining' the law through going beyond the powers of various acts. Indeed, Burnley Council later admitted that they would 'eventually have to go to the ministry and make a confession' in regard to their actions.²⁸ Several other smaller businesses, encouraged by the local efforts, including a slipper making company from Rossendale, moved to Burnley around this time. However, by offering new premises at discounted rates, other industries were being drawn into Burnley from the surrounding areas, damaging their respective local economies. Yet, the successes of the actions by Burnley Borough contrast to the general failure of wider government attempts.²⁹

The central feature of Burnley Borough's approach was to present Burnley as 'The apex of the intense industrial area of The North' utilising its apparent close proximity to the docks of Liverpool, Manchester and Hull, whilst being between the 'vast consuming area(s)' of Lancashire and Yorkshire, in effect, an attempt to rationalise the business structure that had emerged unconsciously throughout the industrial revolution (Figure 26). To promote the concept, the saying 'Burnley Means Business' became something of a semi-official slogan for the town throughout the latter portion of the 1930s.³⁰ Pamphlets and booklets stressing the motto were produced, claiming an abundance of available sites and resources, coupled with low prices. The materials produced go to great lengths to *sell* the image of Burnley arguing that 'beneath a sense of pride in her past achievements, there is a conviction that the story of Burnley's greatest contribution to the common good has still to be written.'³¹

Despite the attempts to promote Burnley to external businesses, local issues built through the actions of the local Labour councillors and other interest groups were seen to be hindering new businesses. A source of fear was that by shifting to new industries, the demographics of the town would change dramatically and in effect break local communities. One poem by regular *Burnley Express* contributor 'Fancy Free' tried to summarise the problems faced:³²

²⁷ P. Scott, *Triumph of the South: A Regional Economic History of Early Twentieth Century*, (London: Ashgate, 2007), p. 41, and for Preston, M. Savage, *The Dynamics of Working Class Politics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 94-100.

²⁸ NA/OP/DAC/2/11ii.

²⁹ The only two other significant new employers in the wider east Lancashire area were the Philips electric lamp in Blackburn, and an Ordnance Factory in Lower Darwen..

³⁰ Burnley Library Local History Collection, LM06/BUR.

³¹ 'Burnley Means Business: Burnley And Its Industrial Facilities', (Burnley: Burnley Corporation Development Committee, 1935), Burnley Local History Collection, LM06/BUR.

³² *Burnley Express*, February 15, 1936.

Burnley Means Business

“Burnley means Business” is our motto,

But it seems a most funny “do”-

There are opposite points of view.

First we have our Mayor

Who quite solemnly does declare

We need to attract all shades

Of new industries and trades.

Next we have a Labour caucus

Who in terms both firm and raucous

Say the only policy that’s wise

Is down with private enterprise.

Well, there it is – a fol-de-ral,

A problem paradoxical:

How to attract new trades to town

When you’re going to knock ‘em down

And reduce ‘em all to blotto?



Figure 25: The factory for Platers & Stampers. Source: 'North East Lancashire Industrial Facilities', (Burnley: NELDC, 1956)

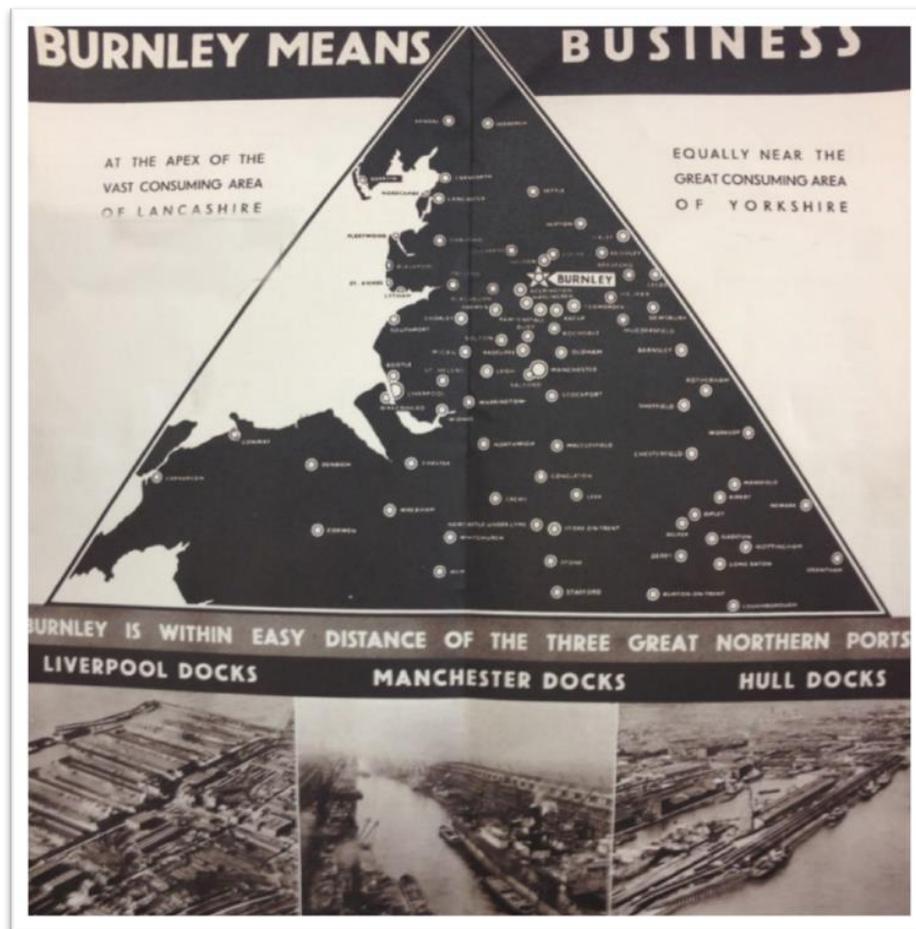


Figure 26: 'Burnley Means Business', (Burnley: Burnley Borough, 1935)

Despite the minor successes of Burnley Borough being based on local initiative, there were some wider national policies that gathered pace into the early 1930s. The direction for policy came from the Industrial Transference Board (ITB), established in 1928 with a main focus upon coal miners. It encouraged migration away from depressed areas, alongside grants, loans and re-training centres. However, the initiatives the ITB implemented were often beset by a lack of focus, contradiction and local scepticism. There was, therefore, the feeling of cotton being overlooked, which was partially addressed by the inclusion on some conciliatory boards of David Shackleton.³³ Yet, at one point, there developed the paradoxical situation of moving people *en masse* out of towns whilst bringing industries in, all the while failing to attack the root of the real problem.

Greater political centralisation

The Government policies generally failed, with a few exceptions to both diversify and buck downward trends. Primarily, the issue was a lack of control over London and the Midlands,³⁴ which was especially highlighted in the reports by Special Areas Commissioner Sir Malcolm Stewart.³⁵ London had a very obvious advantage over the rest of the country and as shown in Table 22 the majority of new plants were centred there. Yet, even when pushing businesses northward, Manchester and Liverpool offered much more attractive locations in terms of public perceptions, amenities and transport links. Hence, as shown by Scott, between 1932 and 1938, when new plants were constructed they were predominantly in the combined Manchester and Salford region where the figure of 82 compares to Burnley's 26.³⁶

Table 22 Initial employment generated by new plants

Region	Plants	Initial employment
Greater London	1,400	111,700
Other South east and South west	152	12,250
Midlands	456	48,050
Eastern Counties	111	10,500
North West	530	70,000
North East	272	26,000
Wales and Monmouthshire	39	5,000
Scotland	125	10,000

Adapted from Scott, *Triumph of the South*, p. 100.

³³ *Burnley News*, February 8, 1928.

³⁴ Randall also felt the lack of any control over London and the Midlands as significant. From 1932-1938 Greater London attracted 'about forty four per cent of the new factory development in Britain compared with fewer than five per cent for Special Areas' – as part of the preference for encouraging movement out of the depressed areas, Randall, in G. Hallett, G. Randall and E. West, *Policy For Ever?* (London: Institute of Economic Affairs, 1973), p. 23.

³⁵As well as criticising the Government, Stewart viewed the only solution to saving the regions as actively refusing industry in London and forcing them to other areas. In his second report he stated, 'there is little prospect of the special areas being assisted by the spontaneous action of industrialists now located outside the area,' adding in his third report, 'the further expansion of industry should be controlled to secure a more evenly distributed production.' See B. Cullingworth and V. Nadin, *Town and Country Planning in the UK*, (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 19.

³⁶ See Scott, *Triumph of the South*.

The proposed solution to distributing industries across the UK was the Special Areas Act in 1934, followed in 1937 by the Special Areas Amendment Act.³⁷ Once again, the focus was predominantly on the mining areas, partly through the attention raised to the conditions in them by external commentators such as the Communist Wal Hannington in his book, *The Problem of the Distressed Areas*,³⁸ and by the reports of the Labour Party Distressed Areas Commission.³⁹

The Special Areas Act was limited in scope at first, with the appointment of one commissioner for England and Wales, and one for Scotland to promote economic development and social improvement. However, with direct financial assistance to business and major public works not seen as viable, the majority of their activity was limited to sewage schemes and a smallholding movement.⁴⁰ Following the Amendment in 1937, it became the main focus of regional policy in the pre-Second World War period. As well as discouraging foreign business from locating near London, preference of government contracts was given to Special Areas, and for a time acted to stimulate regional economies.⁴¹ A direct result of the amendment was the creation of groups to try and encourage investment, such as the Lancashire Industrial Sites Development Company.

The desire to spread businesses out into the especially hard hit areas was seen by the government as a way of utilising factory premises following the latest contraction in the cotton industry. For this, Burnley and north-east Lancashire were felt to be especially suited, given the space left by room and power and other defunct companies. However, due to how the mills were constructed (the need for power, humidity, etc.) many were unsuited to new industries, and were thus limited in use. Yet, Burnley Council acted in curious manner in favouring government storage over new industries. One example is Ashfield Shed at Calder Vale Road, which was being used for storage, and was the focus of a long running petitioning campaigning by the Burnley General Purposes Committee to convince the council to sell it. As late as 1946, a Mr. T. Fletcher, of Burnley Aircraft Products, was waiting to take it over and set up a company for the manufacture of rotary switches for cookers and domestic appliances, branching out from his own business interests.⁴² In the same year, Burnley council openly complained that a number of 'outside' companies had made enquiries, but that government storage of foodstuff and commodities meant that mills could not be released. Such action stunted local initiative, but some external investors were also denied premises. Woodbine mill, with an area of 10,000 square yards, was due for auction but was being used by the RAF for storage at the same time as an 'international electrical concern' wished to move into the town and create 2,000 new jobs.⁴³

In some cases locally, there was a difficulty in letting go of cotton, and thus buildings were retained in the hope of a revival. The *Burnley Express* in 1934 published a report in comparison with 1922 to show the

³⁷ Initially the designated Special Areas did not include Lancashire, focusing on South Wales, Cumberland, Durham, Northumberland and the West of Scotland. See Randall, *British Regional Policy*, p. 19.

³⁸ W. Hannington, *The Problem with Distressed Areas*, (London: Hesperides, 1937).

³⁹ For a short discussion of the DAC Commission see David Stewart, "'Planning 'New Jerusalem': The Labour Party Distressed Areas Commission, 1936-1937", *Bulletin of the Institute of Family History*, (2012).

⁴⁰ Randall, *British Regional Policy*, p. 20.

⁴¹ Randall, *British Regional Policy*, p. 21.

⁴² *Burnley Express*, August 31, 1946.

⁴³ *Burnley Express*, April 13, 1946.

overall situation of mills in the town, which shows how little an impact diversification had made: 8 mills had been taken over by other industries, 10 were unoccupied, 23 had been stopped, and 14 were partially or fully working.⁴⁴

The lack of businesses willing to give up premises in Burnley was not an isolated case. A county wide solution was attempted with the establishment of the aforementioned LISDC, taking inspiration from similar approaches in other areas. The most successful of those was the West Cumberland Industrial Development Company in 1935 that was behind the Solway's Estate and other developments in Workington and Whitehaven.⁴⁵ With a capital of £500,000, properties would be acquired and reconditioned as well as sites purchased and factories built for rental. Using what was termed 'building society terms,' this also enabled a rent-to-buy option. Costs would be kept to a minimum through close associations with the Lancashire Industrial Development Council, only purchasing land or a property when a potential client had been found and through three of five directors serving on the management board as a 'public service' with no fees. The £500,000 was to be raised through a majority of private businesses, banks, insurance companies and with government funding.

The areas the LISDC focused their attention on to make purchases were those seen be overly reliant on a single industry and/or going through a period of contraction and general depression.⁴⁶ The areas naturally included those that were reliant on the 'staple' industries, such as 'The Weaving Belt', Wigan District and 'Isolated Black Spots' like Glossop and some other areas outside of Lancashire. The inclusion was reliant on certification by the Ministry of Labour.⁴⁷ But the initial optimism of the company took a blow when by September 1937, the lack of interest by private companies to invest meant a downscaling of plans. The total targeted capital figure was lowered to £250,000 and after some lobbying, the amount of £187,500 was promised from various sources with the government providing the final third.

The LISDC was registered on 14th January 1938, but by April 1939 had failed to spend any money, and was fiercely criticized for a lack of progress. The company took six months to even start considering potential applicants, with 'unexpected delays' in 'negotiations with the government departments concerned.'⁴⁸ The company did next to nothing during the war period, where private enterprise and the Special Areas hindered its progress and as a result it was wound up in 1946.⁴⁹ However, the emergence shortly after of the similar North Western Industrial Estates Ltd. in Wigan represents the desire for such a company, although under a less centralised system and focused more locally.⁵⁰ Indeed, the complaints from Burnley, which already had the local powers to perform the same functions as the company were that, 'it would be far more satisfactory to the majority of people in Burnley ... not be dependent on an outside

⁴⁴ *Burnley Express*, November 7, 1934.

⁴⁵ The company was set up in 1935 through the government spurred on by local involvement, See F. J. Monkhouse, 'Cumbria', in J.B. Mitchell, *Great Britain: Geographical Essays*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), pp. 415-432.

⁴⁶ *Manchester Guardian*, December 18, 1937.

⁴⁷ NA/T161/1236.

⁴⁸ *Manchester Guardian*, July 30, 1938.

⁴⁹ NA/T161/1236.

⁵⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, May 31, 1946.

body.⁵¹

A further examination of the distribution of industry throughout Britain came in 1937 through the Barlow Commission. The aim was to examine the causes of the distribution of industry throughout Britain, how this impacted upon ordinary life and what measures to put in place in the national interest.⁵² However, the findings were not reported until 1940, and the national focus shifted with the onset of war, upon which a number of areas gained a temporary reprieve. A number of the mills in Burnley were used for storage, whilst re-armament and the shadow factory initiative brought further industry to the wider north. Barnoldswick, for example, especially benefited through Rover and Rolls Royce producing the first jet engines in the town. The short term reprieve however came at the cost of stunting the movement of new industries, whilst hindering some of those recently introduced.⁵³

Becoming a Development Area

The Distribution of Industry Act was introduced in 1945 and upgraded in 1950. It served as a more comprehensive version of the older legislation, allowing areas with high unemployment to be designated or 'scheduled' as Development Areas.⁵⁴ Combined with the 1947 Town and County Planning Act, the Distribution of Industry Act was part of the new 'welfare state' mentality, and reiterated the 1944 coalition pledge to stimulate full employment.⁵⁵ Together, the acts allowed the government through the Board of Trade (operating similarly to the Commissioners in Special Areas) to take a 'hands-on' role in distressed areas through the ability to build and renovate factories in industrial areas, improve local services (as well as provide loans and grants) and compulsorily acquire land. The legislation also allowed for the control of Industrial Development Certificates which was needed to build or extend factories over 5,000 square feet, meaning a great deal of strength in directing industrial distribution.

The initial wave of scheduling overlooked Lancashire, until the South Lancashire and Merseyside Development Areas in 1946 and 1949. Both were judged to be successful, but concurrently it was felt that the surrounding areas suffered through both Development Areas becoming in-effect separate hubs. Indeed, in the years between scheduling and 1952, the two DAs had attracted 23 per cent of new factory building in Lancashire and Merseyside, despite having a population of less than 12 per cent of the county.⁵⁶ The apparent successes resulted in a clamouring of other depressed areas to be scheduled, most notably the East Coast of Scotland and West Riding of Yorkshire.⁵⁷

North east Lancashire was, however, not amongst the leading candidates and several locally based initiatives were instigated. Further investigations were launched into the municipal amalgamation of north east Lancashire into a singular body, based upon 'a community of interests' uniting Burnley, Nelson, Colne, Barrowford, Brierfield, Padiham, Trawden and the Burnley Rural District. However, it was primarily

⁵¹ *Burnley Express*, June 4, 1938.

⁵² Cullingworth and Nadin, *Town and Country Planning*, p. 20.

⁵³ See D. Edgerton, *Britain's War Machine: Weapons, Resources and Experts in the Second World War*, (London, Penguin, 2012), Chapter 7.

⁵⁴ NA/T161/1236.

⁵⁵ Randall, *British Regional Policy*, p. 25.

⁵⁶ BT117/1390.

⁵⁷ *Manchester Guardian*, May 21, 1952.

in the latter that resistance was strongest, spearheaded by local parishes fearing a loss of autonomy. The Burnley Rural District contained 20 parishes and 19 parish councils with 122 parish councillors acting as 'points of contact between the ratepayers and the authorities who govern them.'⁵⁸ In addition, each parish had a representative on the Parish Council who, it was argued, was 'usually a man known to every inhabitant of the parish.' Representatives from the Parish Council declared in the local press they were 'the essence of local democracy', and as a result of amalgamation, 'that family spirit which at present pervades rural administration would not be merely reduced but almost eliminated.'⁵⁹

An alternative suggestion was for full scheduling, which maintained local administrative boundaries and took the attempts at diversification out of the hands of local authorities. Areas would be able to maintain their level of local autonomy, whilst cooperating under a supra entity. Yet, the Board of Trade resisted, most probably through the continued export drive outlined in Chapter 7. In April 1952, a delegation from the Lancashire and Merseyside Industrial Development Association travelled to convince the sceptical Peter Thorneycroft, President of the Board of Trade to allow scheduling. He doubted the benefits scheduling would bring the area, owing to a lack of interest in building factories, and equally was concerned about diluting the effect of the legislation nationally.⁶⁰ Locally, there was a growing support for being scheduled and the idea sparked a shift to seek outside intervention. This change in mentality can be traced from 1945 where the Burnley Chamber of Commerce passed a resolution openly calling for scheduling. Yet, at this time, the focus remained (primarily due to the Chamber being dominated by local manufacturers) on utilizing the funding to modernize and reequip the remaining cotton industry. The chairman of the Chamber, Tertius Spencer, managed to gain the funding to change to automatic looms by 1954.⁶¹

The repeated failure to gain scheduling resulted in further locally driven attempts to attract new industries. As shown by Benicasa-Sharman, towns extended such action to the Festival of Britain in 1951.⁶² Several schemes were initiated, with the Lancashire Joint Advisory Planning Committee No.2 (representatives of the Blackburn and Burnley County Boroughs and Lancashire County Council), leading enquiries into firms being willing to manufacture alternative products locally, whilst also asking to be allocated to the defence programme for orders other than textiles. Burnley also undertook a scheme of allocating a proportion of its building programme for the housing of key workers in new industries in an attempt to attract families for the long term to the area.⁶³

A renewed downturn in trade and fluctuating employment figures regionally pushed north east Lancashire into crisis once again by 1952. In response, the *Manchester Guardian* launched a scathing attack on the Development Area concept, which it felt was a hindrance to developmental and industrial mobility across the whole of Lancashire, describing it as a 'policy to placate memories' and declaring:

⁵⁸ *Burnley Express*, August 31, 1946.

⁵⁹ *Burnley Express*, August 31, 1946.

⁶⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, May 21, 1952.

⁶¹ *Burnley Express*, November 3, 1945.

⁶² C. Benicasa-Sharman (2013), "'We are not dealing with someone else's left overs!' – Northern English Cities' response to the 1951 festival of Britain', Working paper, British identity Conference, Warwick University.

⁶³ *Manchester Guardian*, June 26, 1952.

Unemployment in Lancashire has come to the wrong towns. In theory, it ought to be the coal and heavy industries of South Lancashire which have fallen on hard times, and out-of-work miners should be thanking their stars for the development policy by which both Labour and Conservative Governments have been arranging new jobs for them in subsidised (or otherwise specially favoured) factories.⁶⁴

By May 1952, there was frustration and surprise at the repeated rejection of scheduling for north-east Lancashire.⁶⁵ Unemployment in the north-west had increased by 80,000 in eight months, and as textiles continued to decline, 'the weaving belt' of north-east Lancashire, still overly reliant on cotton now gained wider focus. It could no longer be argued that the criteria for scheduling had not been met,⁶⁶ and with the perception of comparative remoteness, lack of communications and out-dated transport links, the hope of attracting further industries had all but vanished. Even after the area had been scheduled, the *Manchester Guardian* described the problem:

The present system, to quite a remarkable degree comprises the turnpike routes as they existed in 1829 ... It speaks volumes for the vision and drive of our ancestors of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that we have been able to use, no matter how unsatisfactorily, a road system which was designed and brought into use for horse-drawn traffic ... it is obvious that in their perhaps less complicated age they had a much firmer grasp on what was essential to industrial prosperity and that they considered ease of communication very important.⁶⁷

Regional identity and scheduling

North east Lancashire was not the only area to seek scheduling as a Development Area.⁶⁸ The perceived benefits of being a part of a DA meant that potential inclusion was fiercely competitive and contentious. The prospect of a greater 'east' Lancastrian Development Area was explored, yet, much like the situation regarding the drawing of political boundaries discussed in Chapter 2, local and municipal bodies had no uniformity in what the entity should comprise of.

A number of different groups and organisations from across Lancashire sought meetings with the Board of Trade in the clamour to be included, to the extent that Peter Thorneycroft had to stop receiving them.⁶⁹ The early impetus for the scheduling came from Accrington through MP Henry Hynd and Blackburn, where the local Corporation had declared the town the 'head and leading town' of the area, through MP Barbara Castle.⁷⁰ Their combined argument stressed that the whole area was an

⁶⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, June 4, 1952.

⁶⁵ *Manchester Guardian*, May 21, 1952.

⁶⁶ I.E a special danger of unemployment alongside underemployment, an over reliance on one industry, whilst at the same time a desire not to strip the remaining fragments of confidence from it due to the continuing export drive (which would soon end).

⁶⁷ *Manchester Guardian*, January 19, 1954.

⁶⁸ These were: (i) The whole of the Lancashire textile belt including parts of Derbyshire, Cheshire and Yorkshire.

(ii) The West Riding of Yorkshire, both the part of the area primarily dependant on coal mining and the part primarily dependant on textiles.

(iii) The Buckie-Peterhead area of north east Scotland.

(iv) The Leith-Newhaven-Granton area (neighbouring on Edinburgh). The Furness area of Lancashire (v).

⁶⁹ The President of the Board of Trade personally met between September 1952 and January 1952 with deputations from, amongst others:

(i) Lancashire joint advisory planning committee no 2

(ii) The Lancashire and Merseyside industrial development association

(iii) The Cotton Board

(iv) The North West Regional board for Industry

(v) Deputation from Leigh, Atherton and Tyldesely introduced by Mr Boardman MP

(vi) All the local authorities in N.E. Lancashire which had not been included in the area (Blackburn, Accrington, Rishton, Haslingden, Rawtenstall, Bacup, Greater Harwood, Clitheroe and Darwen) at the meeting also a deputation from Royton.

(vii) The East and West Riding Board for Industry

(viii) The county council of the West Riding of Yorkshire and the borough of Todmorden.

⁷⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, October 30, 1952.

interconnected singular economic unit.⁷¹ The initial feeling throughout the weaving districts was of a shared problem, and the Burnley Town Clerk noted that:

Up to the present we have considered that the whole area, including Blackburn, Darwen and Clitheroe, should be included, as they have the same basic problems with regard to industrial structure.⁷²

It was thus a great shock when both Accrington and Blackburn were excluded from the Development Area, which was confined to the 'greater Burnley' area, itself roughly corresponding to the aforementioned municipal amalgamation plans. Accrington Town Council unanimously passed a resolution in protest over its exclusion in November 1952.⁷³ Alderman G.B. Eddie, leader of the Blackburn Town Council, followed Accrington's lead with a scathing attack, accusing the Manchester-based Regional Board of 'splitting' the North East Lancashire area, whilst drawing clear parallels to the problems of the more looms dispute:

It appears to me ... that the President of the Board of Trade has paid more attention to the opinions of certain outside organisations that know a great deal less about this problem than the planning committee does. It is inconceivable that the president of the Board of Trade should have regarded representations by Sir Raymond Streat and the Cotton Board as far more valuable than the entirely independent expert opinion he could get from a body such as this. The opinions of the Cotton Board and Sir Raymond are prejudiced. For the last fifty years, the attitude of the cotton employers has been that they could quite simply hang the cotton employees on a hook, and leave them there as long as they like, but they wanted them to be there to take down when they wanted them. It is the old story that the cotton trade people are telling the Board of Trade that prosperity is just around the corner.⁷⁴

Of the reasons given for exclusion, the majority revolve around the lower levels of unemployment, and of a presence of alternative industries. For Blackburn, it is clear that it was seen as part of the growing Preston/Chorley conurbation that later became the basis of the still-born Central Lancashire New Town, and that by geography, Darwen and Accrington were seen as part of Blackburn. Alderman W. Boyson, however, deemed it 'suicidal to break the weaving belt' resulting in 'smash and grab for every local authority.'⁷⁵ Burnley Corporation passed a resolution in support of Blackburn and Accrington's applications for inclusion, which was later approved by the Burnley Borough Council, but they objected to the inclusion of Barnoldswick, Earby and Foulridge.⁷⁶ Indeed the border towns of the weaving belt were complex. Todmorden had one of the strongest cases for inclusion, but was denied as despite 52 per cent of its employed people being in textiles, it was deemed to be already diverse enough. However, it was widely accepted outside of Burnley that Barnoldswick and Earby, along with some smaller settlements like Salterforth, were 'part of a homogenous economic and geographical unit,'⁷⁷ that should be included within the Development Area despite the complication of both being technically in Yorkshire. The regional Board of Trade believed that 'so far as the cotton industry is concerned Barnoldswick was at one with

⁷¹ *Manchester Guardian*, November 11, 1952.

⁷² *Manchester Guardian*, October 30, 1952.

⁷³ *Manchester Guardian*, November 4, 1952.

⁷⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, November 18, 1952.

⁷⁵ *Manchester Guardian*, November 18, 1952.

⁷⁶ Burnley demanded that:

The parish of Foulridge should be excluded from the area, That Barnoldswick and Earby should not be included in the area because- (a) there is no substantial unemployment in the district (b) that by reason of the establishment of the Rolls Royce and other engineering works in the area there is now diversification of its industries and consequently the two districts in question are not now dependent on the textile industry (c) that although there are large areas of land available for industrial development, the establishment of new factories therein would be of little use to thickly populated areas of Burnley, Colne, Nelson and Padiham having regard to the distances people would have to travel, NA/R.B.I 956/52.

⁷⁷ NA/R.B.I 956/52.

Nelson, Colne and Padiham.⁷⁸

The decision to try and exclude Barnoldswick, Earby and Foulridge was described as 'inconsistent' by the Rural District and 'selfish and ridiculous' by Barnoldswick, partially due to the fact that of all the areas suggested bar Todmorden, it had the highest percentage of its workforce engaged in cotton at 49.5 per cent compared to Burnley's now reduced 28.3 per cent. The only real alternative within their conurbation was the previously mentioned Rolls Royce factory, which was still technically temporary and had seen other works close across the country.⁷⁹

The issue of inclusion and exclusion became centred on local and regional identities. The *Craven Herald* decried Burnley's 'selfish attitude' under the headline 'Burnley wants to keep W. Craven out', with the actions surprising and angering those in the area. Skipton council passed a resolution in support of Earby and Barnoldswick,⁸⁰ whilst the *Barnoldswick and Earby Times* described Burnley's behaviour as 'parochial and narrow-minded'.⁸¹ Further condemnation came from the Mayor of Nelson who received councillors from Earby, Colne and Barnoldswick. The main fear for Burnley was that the inclusion of the outer towns with viable land could potentially drag industries away from it and towards Yorkshire. Towns over the border of a comparable size with similar amenities and workforces could draw further industries and links away from the area, and exploit routes eastwards. Yet, Burnley's position of dominance was checked by the Burnley Rural District, who held the advantage of having the three best plots of available land within their borders. Indeed, it was the same areas that Burnley had previously tried to annex, and it was a source of humiliation when Burnley Borough had to withdraw their objections in January 1953.

The ability of the Burnley Rural District to challenge Burnley reiterated the reasons for resisting the proposed amalgamation of previous years, as their local autonomy provided them with the platform to call on all 'local authorities ... to forget all about boundaries, local prejudices and desires and to get ahead with encouraging industrialists to come and look round at a community anxious to welcome them.'⁸² Yet, more significantly, the same call for the first time relayed the fears of the local population, and the complete capitulation of growing industry from within.

The Development Area was summarised as:

A single economic grouping of inter-related towns, Burnley, Nelson and Brierfield being the nucleus. A densely populated continuous urban area with satellites outside set not around but along the single axis of the valley – Barnoldswick being eleven miles from Burnley, and Padiham in the opposite direction some three and a half miles from Burnley.⁸³

With the boundaries of the Development Area set, the question turned to titling the entity whilst remaining sensitive to local identities. The inclusion of three towns technically in Yorkshire, coupled with the perceived unjust exclusion of several settlements further complicated the matter. The issue also highlights the complex nature of local and regional designations as the government wrestled with local

⁷⁸ NA/BT117/1390.

⁷⁹ *Burnley Express*, December 6, 1952.

⁸⁰ *The Craven Herald*, December 5, 1952.

⁸¹ *The Barnoldswick and Earby Times*, December 5, 1952.

⁸² *Burnley Express*, December 13, 1952.

⁸³ NA/ BT177/1668.

and regional entities that were embedded in the local psyche, even if not widely accepted. A. N. Halls at the Board of Trade favoured either the 'North East Lancashire Development Area', or the 'East Lancashire Development Area'. However, East Lancashire could at any time stretch from the edge of Manchester to Preston, and was generally seen as the areas to the east of Manchester - Oldham, Rochdale, etc, which was already well established. Even with North East Lancashire - Accrington, Barnoldswick, Blackburn, Burnley, Clitheroe, Colne, Darwen, Nelson and Rossendale, for example, had (and all still have) the Blackburn postcode, whilst Barnoldswick, Colne, Earby, Nelson and Padiham all still have Burnley telephone area codes. One member of the Solicitor's department replied regarding the sensitivity of the matter, fearing to 'incite or anger', adding that 'I as a Lancastrian know how high feeling can run in these matters', suggesting 'North East Lancashire and West Riding of Yorkshire Development Area'.⁸⁴

Although there was apparently no strong feeling regarding the naming within Yorkshire, the West Riding County Council suggested the 'Pennine Textile Development Area', which was declared 'a non-starter' due to dragging in depressed areas across the Pennines. Variants of East Lancashire created several problems with the exclusion of Blackburn and Accrington. Even the favoured and ultimately successful, 'North East Lancashire', was contentious, with one memo highlighting how:

Mr. Halls is trying to find a way of avoiding the use of North East Lancashire. The main controversy we have faced so far is in splitting off a part of the social and economic entity of the area usually regarded as North East Lancashire. You will regard Ralph Assheton's references to the Blackburn hundred which embraces the whole of the North East Lancashire area ... it does not embrace the whole of East Lancashire and indeed it is not possible to find one point of the compass which suitably expresses the geographical location of the area.⁸⁵

Burnley Corporation took it upon itself to define itself as the missing focal point. As the largest settlement it produced the heaviest publicity materials, and presented a clear vision of the image they wished to portray. The main output was the booklet and film 'New Fields for Industry' (1956). The booklet presented an image much like the Cotton Queen campaign, stressing the native industriousness of the local population along with their enviable characteristics of the environment and its people. The book utilizes colour and the green spaces throughout the whole area (against the popular conception of the town), and features a series of advertisements throughout of the goods and services already on offer within the area and its surrounds. Burnley's dominance is represented both through the number of local advertisements and through the presentation of the other towns. Colne is described as a 'good distributing centre for the highly populated parts of Yorkshire and Lancashire (note the order), whilst Nelson stresses its availability of industrial space and amenities, both in plain black and white with little to no imagery. Burnley, on the other hand, has full-colour imagery, and declares itself 'The hub of the North East Lancashire Development Area'. The booklet, however, was less than reliable, and stretched both the facilities' and potential sites' suitability to the absolute maximum.⁸⁶

Similarly, the promotional film, of the same title (1957), praised the virtues of the region's people and their openness to new industries, coupled with the natural surroundings outside of Burnley itself. It ends

⁸⁴ NA/ BT177/1668.

⁸⁵ NA/ BT 177/1395.

⁸⁶ 'New Fields for Industry, An Industrial handbook for North East Lancashire', (Burnley: Lancashire and Merseyside Industrial Development Association. North East Lancashire Development Committee, 1956).

on the positive message:

This, then, is the North East Lancashire Development Area. Its people - warm, friendly and down to earth; its municipal authorities - alert to the increasing needs of industry and the people; its development authorities ready to offer every assistance for the establishment of further new undertakings. The area looks to the future with confidence.⁸⁷

The film also fails to mention the cotton industry, which was noticed by the *Manchester Guardian*, who received it well, summarising that:

The area appears as an almost delectable demi-paradise, with rowing boats available within ten minutes' walk of Burnley's centre and yachting available within ten minutes' walk of Colne's centre. First Division soccer and league cricket are shown amid rolling hills.⁸⁸

From outside the Development Area, Accrington Borough Council in 1950 published its own vision of the present and potential future in *Industry and Prudence*,⁸⁹ which as the title suggests stands in marked contrast to that of Burnley. Although not used for advertising itself, both books contain similar material, with Accrington looking to produce a plan for its redevelopment from within, revelling in a self-directed future.

In 1961, a new version of 'New Fields For Industry' was published. Trying again to encourage industry into the area, it described some of the successes (especially in the case of Burnley) and some of the struggles (in the case of everywhere else) in attracting new industry into the area. Colne was 'Right at the heart of things', with the image showing it in the centre of a map, excluding Blackburn, Accrington, and Burnley but including Yorkshire towns. Nelson next to this is now 'For Industry and Integrity' and Burnley, 'The hub of North East Lancashire Development Area.' The book goes on to detail how industries have come and chosen to stay in the area, emphasising the relation to rural and industrial land and close proximity to open countryside that has not been 'stolen' like some of the arguments levelled against planned overspill/new towns.⁹⁰ A further 1968 version of *New Fields* takes a similar tone to the previous.⁹¹ It stresses that despite industrial setback and, with the exception of Burnley and Padiham, the lack of success in real diversification, the work especially of the North East Lancashire Development Committee had saved the area from further harm. A heavier emphasis is put on the export possibilities, the nature of the workers both in their adaptability and suitability to industrial work and to their passivity ('there has been no real industrial dispute of local origin for many, many years'). It stresses how the local authorities are progressive, and how:

The accent today is on modernisation and growth, thus this mid-twentieth century period is destined to go down in history as the one on which North East Lancashire finally cast off its old "grey cotton" mantle and stepped forward to meet the challenge of a bright new future.

Whilst the future in Burnley would be so bright that, 'It will be a town centre to inspire pride, and a far cry

⁸⁷ 'New Fields for Industry', (Burnley: Lancashire and Merseyside Industrial Development Association, North East Lancashire Development Committee, 1956) and Sam Hanna for the Burnley and District Junior Chamber of Commerce, (1957), North West Film Archive, Film 594.

⁸⁸ *Manchester Guardian*, June 28 1957.

⁸⁹ 'Industry and Prudence', (Accrington: Accrington Borough Council, 1950)

⁹⁰ 'New Fields for Industry, An Industrial handbook for North East Lancashire' (Burnley: Lancashire and Merseyside Industrial Development Association, North East Lancashire Development Committee, 1961).

⁹¹ 'New Fields for Industry, An Industrial handbook for North East Lancashire' (Burnley: Lancashire and Merseyside Industrial Development Association, North East Lancashire Development Committee, 1968).

from the lingering image of East Lancashire as a grubby, grimy, depressing conglomeration of “Coronation Streets”. Burnley thus sought to complete the transition away from the concept of the cotton town. A new identity was to be forged, which was something different from the typical Lancastrian image popularised by Coronation Street. As Roberts argues, the popularity of the show was as a ‘cobble stoned bastion of values that were fading outside the Granada complex,’⁹² precisely what the local authorities were trying to forcibly move away from.

Assessing the Development Area’s impact

Despite the local feeling in support of the Development Area, there were multiple negative reactions to scheduling north-east Lancashire. Lord Lucas of Chilworth, for Labour, highlighted two problems, seeing the move as a bowing to political pressure:

When a slump hits the textile industry, it hits every section of it, not one alone. In my view, this order is ill conceived because it is likely to do-though I hope it will not - considerable harm by 'milking,' if I may use the term, the areas contiguous to this one ... The next reason is anything done by the extension of a development area is only at the expense of the rest of the country. Time has come where the whole country should be considered a development area.⁹³

Lucas’ sentiments were echoed in the *Manchester Guardian* within a year, who were scathing in their criticism:

The post war decision to mark out certain localities for permanent favouritism from Government departments concerned with industrial planning was a concession to fear of the past, and a sop to local interests with a heavy concentration of votes.

Further adding to the fears within government that:

Every factory that is built in a development area means the postponement of factory building somewhere else ... there is no good reason for trying to squeeze twentieth-century industry into the nineteenth century pattern.⁹⁴

Even from within Burnley, more looms veteran Tertius Spencer, now serving as President of the Burnley and District Master Cotton Spinners and Manufacturers’ Association, voiced his opinion that:

His association were not in favour of development, particularly because they would lose workers. He thought that cotton had not been given the chance to recover from a depression brought about by world circumstance.

Although by contrast the Burnley Chamber of Trade President, J. Bleasdale stated on being informed of the scheduling happily:

The news has undoubtedly brought relief to the minds of the retail traders of Burnley. For so long the textile trade has been unable to maintain its operatives in full employment. With wider diversity of industry the town should never again experience the bitter effects which arise from the slump in the textile trade.⁹⁵

Therefore, the area was caught between the past and the future, and between the established culture, and a new one: a cotton town moving away from cotton. That the textile employers of the area clung onto the industry, despite calls from other local bodies to diversify, was compounded by a lack of

⁹² A. Roberts, ‘Coronation street: A Jubilee Street Party’, *History Today*, 60, 10 (2010).

⁹³ House of Lords Official Report, 180, 38 (1953).

⁹⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, 25 February 1953.

⁹⁵ *Manchester Guardian*, October 30, 1952.

enthusiasm from most political parties. As previously discussed, the government needed cajoling into the scheme in the first place, whilst the Labour Party were against it for their own reasons. All of which failed to account for how such political wrangling affected local communities, highlighted in a profile of the area for the *Financial Times*:

The towns and the people ... have paid heavily for their isolation on this eastern tip of the county and for their specialisation in cotton ... they are vitally in a cul-de-sac jutting from the main Lancashire system ... this part of the weaving belt was hit more severely in the 1930s when unemployment figures were a bad enough but inadequate account of the depression. The unrecorded underemployment led to suffering better known and described by local shopkeepers than by official statisticians.⁹⁶

The sense of isolation was reflected in several structural problems for north-east Lancashire. Being the last of the Development Areas scheduled hampered the area from the start. The area was still perceived as being isolated, lacking any decent or at least modern communication networks and having generally poor land. The lack of useable land and the still relatively poor transport links meant that, despite calls from local groups, firms were being turned away as the local infrastructure could not cope. This, coupled with the growing fears for the future of cotton and growing migration away from the area, meant that rather than gaining new industries, some towns began to lose more of their existing ones. All of the criticisms regarding infrastructure were justifiable even into the 1960s,⁹⁷ but even the actual land available for the Development Area was problematic. The sites of any use were snapped up quickly, leaving by 1956 a number of sites with little or no suitability for any real industry to develop. Coupled with this some of the remaining sites began to be coveted by other governmental departments. A dispute with the Coal Board over the acquisition of the Whitewalls site which several companies had expressed an interest in (in what was the least diversified area and only remaining site around Nelson/Colne) created great embarrassment at a time of gathering criticism over the lack of progress outside of Burnley.⁹⁸

Away from Burnley, the recurring criticism was one of a lack of coordination and purpose. One member of the Barnoldswick and Earby Development Council described the governmental action as 'Gilbertian', partly in response to threats by two companies to move to Merseyside or the Isle of Man out of frustration over the lack of progress in expanding their premises.⁹⁹ A similar hindrance was the apparent attitude of the cotton employers within the area. They were accused of 'not playing the game' and 'running up and down after Mr. Thorneycroft and other people to some degree, preventing the introduction of new industry.'¹⁰⁰ Such actions were in part a movement building for the protection and revival of the cotton industry against what it deemed unfair competition through tariffs and the 'wide boys' in London importing cheaper cotton cloth.¹⁰¹ The local authorities in Burnley however claimed to have 'done their part', whilst unemployment figures showed a promising recovery in the town (by June 1954 unemployment was half the national average), resulting in a winding down of activities to attract industries. For Burnley, 1954 was a year of optimism described by the local press as perhaps 'the town's

⁹⁶ *Financial Times*, February 12, 1953.

⁹⁷ 'The North West: A Regional Study', (London: Department of Economic Affairs, 1965), p. 56.

⁹⁸ NA/BT 177/1490.

⁹⁹ *Manchester Guardian*, November 16, 1954.

¹⁰⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, November 1, 1954.

¹⁰¹ *Manchester Guardian*, October 24, 1955.

most prosperous ever'¹⁰² and by May 1954, the town boasted of full employment, with 2,418 jobs available and with the only problem now being depopulation.¹⁰³

Burnley's success came at the expense of other towns. In 1954, local authorities in Rossendale were complaining that businesses were being encouraged to build in Burnley instead of in their area.¹⁰⁴ Rossendale had gone through comparatively more diversification after the 1870s through shoe and slipper manufacture,¹⁰⁵ yet, now these same industries were looking to relocate to Burnley. Hence, Burnley was the main beneficiary of the scheduling, with the majority of companies moving in, or very close to the town. However, most of the major projects whilst under scheduling moved onto existing premises: Mullards at Simonstone, Belling at Heasandsford and Burnley, Hapton Coach Building at Padiham, Sherloom Carpets at Burnley, Candlewick at Burnley, Clarke's Mattresses at Barnoldswick.¹⁰⁶ When purpose-built factories were constructed, the most important being Michelin at Hesandford announced in 1957 (opened in 1959), the local authorities were satisfied enough to not ask for more involvement. Of the ten firms that moved to the Development Area, seven went to the wider Burnley District, employing around 4,600 people. The three that went to the other parts of the Development Area employed around 1,000, whilst the firms that moved in after de-scheduling tended to be generally very small.¹⁰⁷

By 1956, the government began to be generally more lax with its regional policy. The upturn in Britain's economic fortunes presented the opportunity to step back from direct involvement like Development Areas. A concentration on overspill areas became more prominent, especially in the Nelson and Colne areas. The announcement in June of that year, that a reduction of financial support to the Development Areas also highlighted the government's change of tact, although this brought little opposition publicly. All areas, bar North East Lancashire, presented figures showing almost full employment and nationally the rate of unemployment stood at 1.1 per cent to North East Lancashire's 2.4 per cent. Despite the general upturn in fortunes nationally, the Development Area Controllers felt that North East Lancashire, Pembroke Dock, West South Wales and the Scottish Development Areas should keep their scheduling. The correspondence regarding the proposed de-scheduling of North East Lancashire produced in September 1956 includes the declaration that:

In North East Lancashire – heavy and chronic short-time working and an imminent, potentially large but incalculable risk of increased unemployment, the reasons given for scheduling the area (remoteness, dependence of textile and the recession 51/52) seem to apply with as much force now as they did at the time of scheduling, which was done after most of the effects of the 1951/52 recession had disappeared.¹⁰⁸

The Board of Trade felt that North East Lancashire needed to remain with Development status, which was emphasized by the growing wider interest in the press in Nelson. In January 1958 it was described as a 'Dying town that refuses to lie down', whilst several ideas for regeneration were mooted, including

¹⁰² *Burnley Express*, April 7, 1954.

¹⁰³ *Burnley Express*, May 29, 1954.

¹⁰⁴ *Burnley Express*, March 14, 1953.

¹⁰⁵ G. North, 'Lancastria', in J. B. Mitchell, *Great Britain: Geographical Essays*, p. 403.

¹⁰⁶ NA/BT177/1668.

¹⁰⁷ 'Central Lancashire New Town Proposal: Impact on North East Lancashire', (London: Ministry of Housing and Local Government, 1968).

¹⁰⁸ NA/BT177/1668.

relocating factories and redeveloping the town to become overspill for Manchester, and even the amalgamation of the whole area around Burnley into a city, although this was seen as doing little to help Nelson itself.¹⁰⁹ One resident summarised the problem of the town lacking prospects:

We were sacrificed during the dollar drive, when everywhere else got new industries and we were made to stick to cotton. Now Government owes it to us to direct new factories here.¹¹⁰

The implication, at least from Nelson's point of view, was that of a managed decline. Alderman Bannister, Chairman of the North East Lancashire Development Committee, felt that, 'it is obvious that the young people should leave the district and the old people should stay there on relief ... this may be what is indirectly intended for this area.'¹¹¹ An interesting parallel is in Blackburn, where by the 1960's, the council had taken it upon themselves to redevelop the town with a 'radical' schedule involving traffic-free pedestrian areas, a modern shopping precinct and a levelling and redevelopment of parts of the town centre, including diverting the river Blakewater.¹¹² Blackburn's success in attracting businesses, and facilitating local industry, despite being outside the Development Area gave a sense of ownership over the process. Indeed so strong was this pull that in later years some established Burnley firms relocated to Blackburn.

The impact of the decline of cotton

By 1958, Britain had become a net importer of cotton and the final meaningful attempt at reorganisation for the industry, the Cotton Industry Act of 1959, failed to stop the increasing number of mill closures and provided the opportunity for many mill owners to scrap their machinery. Despite the apparent optimism, for those not part of the new future, options were bleak and by 1956 Burnley's suicide rate was twice that of the national average. Whilst the rest of Lancashire saw its unemployment fall, Burnley's rose, leaving an increasingly aged and depleted population with little prospects. Journalist Norman Shrapnel in his exploration of the issues described it as the 'Hamlet of our towns', and posed the question, 'Does living in this industrial bowl induce claustrophobia, a sort of goldfish despair?'¹¹³ Chief Constable R. A. Noble attributed the suicide rate to the following five chief causes:¹¹⁴

- The high proportion of elderly people (eighty per cent were over 45 years of age)
- The depressing climate, which also led to chest complaints
- Loneliness and the feeling that 'no one cares'
- Illness and fear of suspected illness
- Domestic troubles that appear to have no solution

All of these factors point to a change in community life. Where previously (excluding of course, point two)

¹⁰⁹ *Manchester Guardian*, January 15, 1958.

¹¹⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, January 15, 1958.

¹¹¹ *Manchester Guardian*, June 27, 1958.

¹¹² A. Taylor, *Twentieth Century Blackburn*, (Barnsley: Whancliffe Books, 2000), pp. 90-101.

¹¹³ *Manchester Guardian*, October 18, 1956.

¹¹⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, October 4, 1956.

these issues had been tackled through kinship within close-knit areas, the impact of industrial decline now meant that ways of tackling such problems no longer existed. The underlying factor throughout all of this was the decline and eventual death of the cotton industry and the lack of significant replacements with real roots within the community.

The situation of the 1960s and 1970s was one of a contracted industry, dominated by large companies such as ICI and Courtaulds and artificial fibres, however, the contraction between 1979 and 1981 all but sealed cotton's fate in Lancashire.

Tony Cummings, who started his working life in the mills, described the changes:

The thing was that as we got into the 1970s the area had gone through a transformation ... I'm not saying the transition was easy, but Burnley people were used to working and at this time they showed they were adaptable. I went to work in production control for Michelin at the tyre factory they'd opened in Burnley. When I got there I found the whole working environment very different.¹¹⁵

The lack of success in other parts of the Development Area to move away from cotton as efficiently as in some other areas resulted in much harsher effects and in some areas even saw a backlash to again cling onto the industry. Nelson Town Council set up a Textile Action Committee in 1962 for example, to save the textile industry.¹¹⁶ But this was too little, too late.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how diversification and local feeling clashed as solutions were sought, and how this impacted upon north east Lancashire. It has shown the shift in mentality from insularity to seeking government intervention, and importing industries. In doing so it has shown how the culture of an area, and the local identities that are produced can evolve under pressure, and how they can impact wider regional policy.

The decline of the cotton industry was a difficult process for all involved For the people of the towns and villages built on the cotton industry, their role was that of the cast in what Fowler describes as 'one of the most powerful dramas of modern British economic history.'¹¹⁷ The actions taken by local and national governments were at best confused, and at worst counter-productive. As this chapter has shown, the attempts to diversify shifted the impetus away from local communities and towards central government and external sources. In response, the focus locally was upon younger generations, of which many sought to migrate away from the area. The older generations were stuck in a kind of industrial limbo. The result was a fundamental challenge to the communities, and culture of north east Lancashire. Where so much success had been built on families and communities working together with the promise of social mobility, there was now a series of business from outside of the area with little knowledge or care for local customs introducing working environments far removed from life on the mill floor.

Diversification was a parallel process to the attempts to revitalise the cotton industry that were discussed

¹¹⁵ D. Hall, *Working Lives*, (London: Corgi, 2004), pp. 165-166.

¹¹⁶ J. Hill, *Nelson*, (Lancaster: Carnegie, 1997), p. 133.

¹¹⁷ Fowler, *Cotton Operatives*, p. 10.

in the previous chapter. The combination of both concepts acting concurrently, and of mixed messages locally and from the government created a paradox where Lancashire cotton was both vital to national importance, and its workers a focal point of pride, yet also an out-dated industry which needed to be replaced. When the use for cotton was exhausted, the operatives were dropped as elder generations had warned, with little long-term alternatives.

CONCLUSIONS

Central Heating

It was bitterly cold in the mill and the shop steward approached the manager. "Yon weavers are frozen stiff. Can't yo do summit to warm 'em up abit?"

Manager: "Aye, aw'll send t' ware-house lad t' shop for two ounce o' them throat-warming tablets."¹

In December 1954, Louis B. Hogan of 34 Cross Street, Harle Syke, submitted the above joke to the *Burnley Express*. Despite the cotton industry moving through periods of downturn, respite, and then acceptance that the decline was permanent, ordinary people still submitted regular jokes to the local press. Such jokes were rooted in the local culture, which although threatened by the changes in industrial and communal life, remained as representations of local identity. The use of dialect, and the common mill setting belied the seriousness that decline would have on north east Lancashire, but the submissions were not composed in ignorance, rather they were vignettes of a shared culture, and the remnants of the basic elements of everyday life which bound the people of north east Lancashire together. Griswold has argued that in places with a strong regional identity 'an input of resources that help connect people to one another can make a big difference. For example, this can occur by producing a critical mass of relationships that created the occasions in which a perhaps pre-existing collective identity was articulated.'²

Hogan's joke typifies the goals of this thesis: to explore the changing concepts of identity and community in north east Lancashire from c.1890-1950. In doing so, the thesis has established a level of complexity and variation often overlooked, generalised or ignored. It has explored how communities reliant on the cotton industry sought to establish, define and characterise themselves through periods of success and decline, as well as how these factors impacted on these communities, and what effect this had on individual people and groups. It has shown how the culture of the area provided parameters upon which people's expectations rested. Through this culture people of the area shaped, as much as they were shaped by the cotton industry. The thesis has therefore presented a study of an area hereto little understood in both academic literature and general public consciousness, far removed from the notion of 'dark satanic mills'.

Although change has been an important element of the study, so too has been continuity. Across north east Lancashire, identities were varied, and frequently changed. Allegiances to the mill, to the family, and to the locality often overlapped with other interests, but were overwhelmingly confined to the dominant culture of the area. How these identities reacted to changes in the cotton industry has therefore been a recurring theme throughout the thesis. As Griswold argues: 'collective identities are always multiple and overlapping, the fewer direct contradictions that exist between one dimension of collective identity and

¹ *Burnley Express*, December 25, 1954.

² W. Griswold, 'History + Resources= A Sense of Place', *Maine Policy Review*, 11, 1 (2002), pp. 76 -84.

others, the stronger that dimension will be.³ Therefore, at times of economic hardship especially, the recurrence of people to fall back to established cultural traits is clearly evident. As the first half of the thesis showed, the general success of cotton allowed for local intricacies to develop, interpreting the shared culture according to individual circumstance. The dominance of this culture thus established a set of societal 'norms' that acted as parameters which ordinary life worked within. When the stability of the industry was seriously threatened after the First World War, the dissonance between the established culture in a changing economic and social environment led to a great deal of soul-searching amongst local populations, and the problems discussed in the second half of the thesis. How the family, the ability to save money and facilitate social mobility and the ability to have an active role in the local industry was challenged thus created tensions and ultimately distress.

As a general contribution, this thesis offers a bridge between the disparity between local histories, oral archives, and the general narratives for the cotton industry. Primarily in the case of the 'country districts', it reveals a genuinely alternative vision and understanding of what it meant to be part of industrial Lancashire, contradicting notions such as the overwhelming dominance of trade unionism and also challenging narratives over social structures. Indeed, in some of the settlements discussed here, mill owner and worker were segregated, and did see each other hierarchically. Yet in other instances, they lived door-to-door, shared similar backgrounds and morals and were perhaps members of the same chapel or social club. There was therefore an extended familial feeling amongst some mill communities that was further strengthened by intermarriage between families.

A key aim of this thesis was not to treat people as mere figures or statistics. In doing so, a number of results have been found which as well as being genuinely surprising, offer key insight into understanding the reality of life through the pinnacle and decline of the cotton. No industry had been so dynamic, or achieved such world domination, and the community was not a brake on this, but an active participant.

The thesis has shown that cotton operatives across Lancashire were not a single homogenous entity. Although it shared similarities the rest of the county, north east Lancashire had many differences. An important element of the area's mentality was the influence of Nonconformist and Liberal ideologies, which as well as remaining significant much later than many would believe, very clearly permeated into the particular brand of Labour politics. The influence of both also dominated the local trade union movement, and resulted in a patchwork of ideas absorbing new influences and combining with the area's unique history. The success of the cotton industry allowed people to explore these ideas, but ideologies were always linked to local contexts. With the right conditions, it was thus not a restrictive, antagonising force, but one that allowed for an array of opportunities to develop.

The subsequent impact the collapse of cotton had has largely determined the narrative that surrounds perceptions around the industry. However, the negative image in itself is confused and influenced by external opinion as much as local feeling. In the larger more urban areas, the mill buildings which still stand offer a very visible reminder to past successes, and for many towns such as Burnley a reminder of

³ Griswold, 'History + Resources', p. 80.

almost constant decline interrupted by short-term reprieve. As was shown in the second half of the thesis, in a restructuring world, trying to survive in cotton weaving was an unwinnable fight. By 1953, the *Burnley Express* was openly questioning whether the day of the 'small textile firm', upon which so much of the town's 'glories' had been built, was over:

Whilst the "small men" did much to place the Lancashire textile industry on top of the world – can they find a place in the fight against the growing competition from countries who are entering the field, and equipping new factories with the latest machinery?⁴

The psychological impact this decline had cannot be overstated. As evidenced by the disproportionately high suicide rates Burnley, which by 1956 was twice that of Sheffield and Leeds combined, removing cotton from local life was a devastating blow.⁵ What remained following depopulation was an ageing demographic, living in what was described as 'a goldfish bowl of despair'.⁶ As Stengel and Cook argue, 'It must be assumed that the urge to die was more intensive in Burnley'.⁷

The efforts to save the industry, through to the attempts of recruitment in aid of the export campaign, were built upon promises that could not be kept. This meant that with increased economic hardship, the idea flourished that the difficulties of cotton were due to external sources, and that Lancashire had been 'betrayed'.⁸ So strong was this motif, Ernest Canney used the title *Lancashire Betrayed* famously in 1929, and so did the British Union of Fascists a decade later, who believed the county was 'the best potential soil for revolutionary action'.⁹ Yet revolution never materialised, and never came close to doing so. Indeed, the result was to turn inwards for blame. As Evelyn Corrin explained, the reason for the lack of unions in Harle Syke when she entered the mills in the 1950s was the belief that 'If the unions had been any good, we'd still be weaving'.¹⁰ Carried through to today, these sentiments still resonate, as outlined by Jeremy Seabrook in his analysis of the situation in Blackburn, but attributable to the whole area.¹¹ He highlights how the sense of involvement was removed from local communities:

The upheavals of the last 50 years took place not only without consent, but also without any discussion with the people who lived there ... The heart and psyche of the north- defensive and proud in the certainty that, however grimy and gloomy the mill towns, this was where the real wealth was created – took a real blow with the decay of their social function ... they have never been consulted on anything that has happened to them. People who worked in the mills were scarcely taken into the confidence of those companies that ended their operations in Blackburn, stranding skilled spinners and weavers and others working in textile industry ... A historic deficit continues: social and economic change remains unchosen. Whoever voted for globalisation?¹²

The later attempts to reinvigorate the industry resulted in a range of ideas such as shift work (which was introduced in Yorkshire earlier), automatic looms, and, when workers could not be found, cheap labour in the form of immigrant workers, firstly from displaced Europeans, and then from the former Empire. Yet,

⁴ *Burnley Express*, June 14, 1953.

⁵ E. Stengel and N. Cook, 'Contrasting Suicide Rates in Industrial Communities', the *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 107, 451 (1961), pp. 1011-1019.

⁶ *Manchester Guardian*, October 18, 1956.

⁷ Stengel and Cook, 'Contrasting Suicide', p. 1018.

⁸ E. Canney, *Lancashire Betrayed: Essays on Cotton Trade Politics*, (Manchester: J. Heywood Ltd. 1929).

⁹ N. Barrett, 'The Anti-Fascist Movement In South East Lancashire', in T. Kirk, and A. McElligott, *Opposing Fascism: Community, Authority and Resistance in Europe*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 58.

¹⁰ Interview with Evelyn Corrin, author's own collection, and also available through the Lancashire Museum Service Archives. Also similar sentiments are expressed in B. Jackson, *Working Class Community*, (London: Pelican, 1972).

¹¹ See D. Goodhart, 'A Tale of Three Cities' For a Discussion of the Development of Immigration In Textile Towns', *Prospect Magazine*, June 20, 2011.

¹² *Guardian*, December 30, 2002.

each of these came with serious drawbacks. When Christine Green interviewed the older mill hands towards the end of our study period, they spoke of how the industry had changed. The community atmosphere had gone for many of them. The immigrant workers struggled to speak English, and not only could not speak 'meemaw',¹³ but also had different customs and an alien culture. Shift patterns meant that friendship groups were split up, whilst the changes to technology meant that an increased professionalism was introduced, and the relationships with tacklers became strictly pragmatic. Indeed, one person details how in previous years, the office parties once involved tying the tacklers to a post and chasing them around the mill with mistletoe at Christmas, but now the parties were for the managers in the office who had little contact with the mill staff.¹⁴ In some smaller mills slower to change over, these older forms of relationships remained, but these were in effect an archaism to the present state of the industry. Further to this, the younger generations coming into the industry had little in common with the older workers and did not share the older familial connection, leading to generational misunderstanding and a feeling that with a lack of workers in the industry, liberties could be taken, in the knowledge that there was employment in other mills. One old hand lamented that:

It used to be smashing at work ... I think when a lot of this older end have gone there won't be a lot of this atmosphere about it because all these younger ones that's coming they don't mix like the older ones do. They keep themselves in groups.¹⁵

The change on the mill floor was mirrored at the municipal level, as towns wrestled with legacy of being a 'cotton town'. Thus, much was done to distance north east Lancashire from 'King Cotton'. The industry hence itself became an archaism, in an area desperately trying to 'deMOLish the cloth cap and cobbles image.'¹⁶ Mill work, and weaving especially became a job for those deemed to be unsuitable for retraining or redeployment, be it through age, circumstance or intelligence, despite the attempts to provide higher wages and modern facilities. The problems locally were compounded by the lack of true integration following the arrival of the migrant workers. The arrival of foreign workers further separated the mills from their communities. The results are still felt today, as argued in a survey of three former textile towns- Burnley, Bradford and Oldham- in *Prospects Magazine*:

Burnley which is like a big village nestling in the gentle Pennine hills, is the weakest and most isolated of the three economies ... All three towns are still studded with the relics of past industrial glories, empty mills and grandiose Victorian civic buildings. Today's inhabitants can seem like people camping in the ruins of a once-great civilisation ... White people knew the immigrants had not caused the decline of their towns, yet decline is connected to their arrival, so the whole thing got off on the wrong psychological footing.¹⁷

Yet, in some areas, this relationship continued to be more complex. The country districts generally had less need for immigration, mills remaining open longer, and some carved out niche positions for themselves, partly through maintaining a sense of control their isolation brought, and partly due to new industries favouring the sites in larger settlements. This in turn created a less abrasive attitude to the industry in some of these areas, the best examples being Queen Street Mill, which maintained operation until 1984 but was revived as a museum in part through local action, and Bancroft Mill in Barnoldswick,

¹³ Meemawing is the act of lip reading whilst working on looms.

¹⁴ C. Slater, *All Bed And Work: Looking At Lives Of Lancashire Textile Workers: Burnley 1975*, (Lancashire: Christine Oppong, 2013).

¹⁵ Slater, *All Bed*, p. 79.

¹⁶ 'Home and Industry' (1968), Promotional supplement to *Burnley Express, Nelson Leader, Barnoldswick and Earby Times and Colne Times*, Burnley Library Archives, LM06/HOM,.

¹⁷ *Prospect Magazine*, June 11, 2011.

which wove until 1978 and was partly reopened as a museum in 1982. Indeed, the levels of commitment people have to maintain in addition to staffing such sites reinforces just how different places like it were to the general perception. Thus of the remaining museums that house original (or semi-original) working pieces of the industry, their locations - Queen Street Mill in Harle Syke, Helmshore in Rossendale, Bancroft Shed in Barnoldswick, Gayle Mill in Gayle, Stott Park Bobbin Mill at Newby Bridge, and those in other locations – are primarily away from what sense would consider the ‘heartlands’ of the industrial period.

How these buildings fit into the story of the cotton industry, both in the larger and smaller settlements, is all a part of our understanding the reality of living through the rise and fall of the cotton industry. This thesis has examined several settlements and several themes, but there is still much work to do to reconcile north east Lancashire and its heritage. As this thesis has shown, the strength of character of the local people is the key to adding the flesh to the bones of understanding the relationship between the people and the cotton industry, and making sense of local knowledge and general narratives.

Despite the need to avoid generalisations, some overall broad conclusions can be drawn from the thesis. On the whole, the cotton operatives of north east Lancashire’s main concern was their families and, by extension, their communities. The role that this sentiment had primarily meant that the majority of workers had a vested interest in the prosperity of both their mill and the industry as a whole. As has been shown, in some areas this extended to literal interests via shares. Within smaller areas, the attachment manifested in smaller, close-knit, and more family-oriented workforces, which continued to dominate the local industry. In larger, more urbanised settlements, the influence was to primarily result in an almost codification of rights and wrongs. When such values were challenged, disturbances and problems were obvious, primarily as this was a threat to the notion of the family wage. Therefore, operatives understood the structure of the industry and worked within - and at times pushed to the limits - certain parameters set by the realities of mill life. Employers too understood this, and equally looked to push these boundaries, often for profit, but sometimes merely from a paternalistic position, in a sense of trying to limit the damage to a community or group. The changes after the First World War removed much of the established structure and added a ‘cut-throat’ edge to competitiveness, which with unstable work and the need to reduce costs just to maintain operation threatened much of the societal norms that had come to be expected.

In exploring the shifts, the ability to work both with the Lancashire Museum Service and to forge links with local history groups enabled this project to access sources that would otherwise be out of reach. From primary sources to local and familial knowledge, these sources have aided in building a context for much of the empirical research conducted. Although some of this information must be treated with caution, as with all oral testimony,¹⁸ the scope and detail of what has been passed down and continues to be disseminated by groups such as the Briercliffe Society and Burnley Historical Society has been of overwhelmingly positive benefit. The structure of the thesis was partly influenced by these relationships

¹⁸ See S. Caunce, *Oral History and the Local Historian*, (London: Longman, 1994), p. 21.

and despite being unconventional, has allowed for the main goals of the thesis to be explored over what could have been seen as broad events. It could be argued that a more conventional approach would benefit such a thesis, however, as has been argued, the nature of fluctuating concepts of identities at certain times would likely have resulted in a superficial treatment of the area and the narratives which have been so evident in much previous work.

This thesis has opened up the area to further study and has highlighted a wealth of potential subjects, both in terms of identity and communities from a multidisciplinary perspective. The arguments here are therefore open to challenge, but in turn help to enhance the wider levels of subject knowledge. Further analysis can be made of the experiences across the whole of the Lancashire. Indeed, the scope for comparison with the wider textile industry and with the other industries of the area further highlights the need to treat each settlement on its own terms. The cotton workers of north east Lancashire are just one part of a very large network of people, and the area does not, despite years of external bodies stating so, exist in isolation. Thus, in terms of popular subjects with national significance - such as the birth and growth of labour politics, the changes in trade unionism, women's suffrage, etc. - the area contributes to these debates, whilst in some cases challenging them. Again to quote Griswold: 'Place matters, but it may matter more in some places than in others.'¹⁹ It is hoped that the approach taken in this thesis can be utilised to help build a patchwork of studies offering real insight into the reality of the county and its people, and in broader terms, local regional and national identities.

¹⁹ W. Griswold, 'Do Some Places Really Have More Than There?: The Persistence and Variation of Regional Culture in the Heartland', *American Sociological Association*, 2004 Annual Meeting, San Francisco, pp. 1-16.

APPENDIX MATERIAL



Figure 28: The Parish of Whalley, Source: British History Online

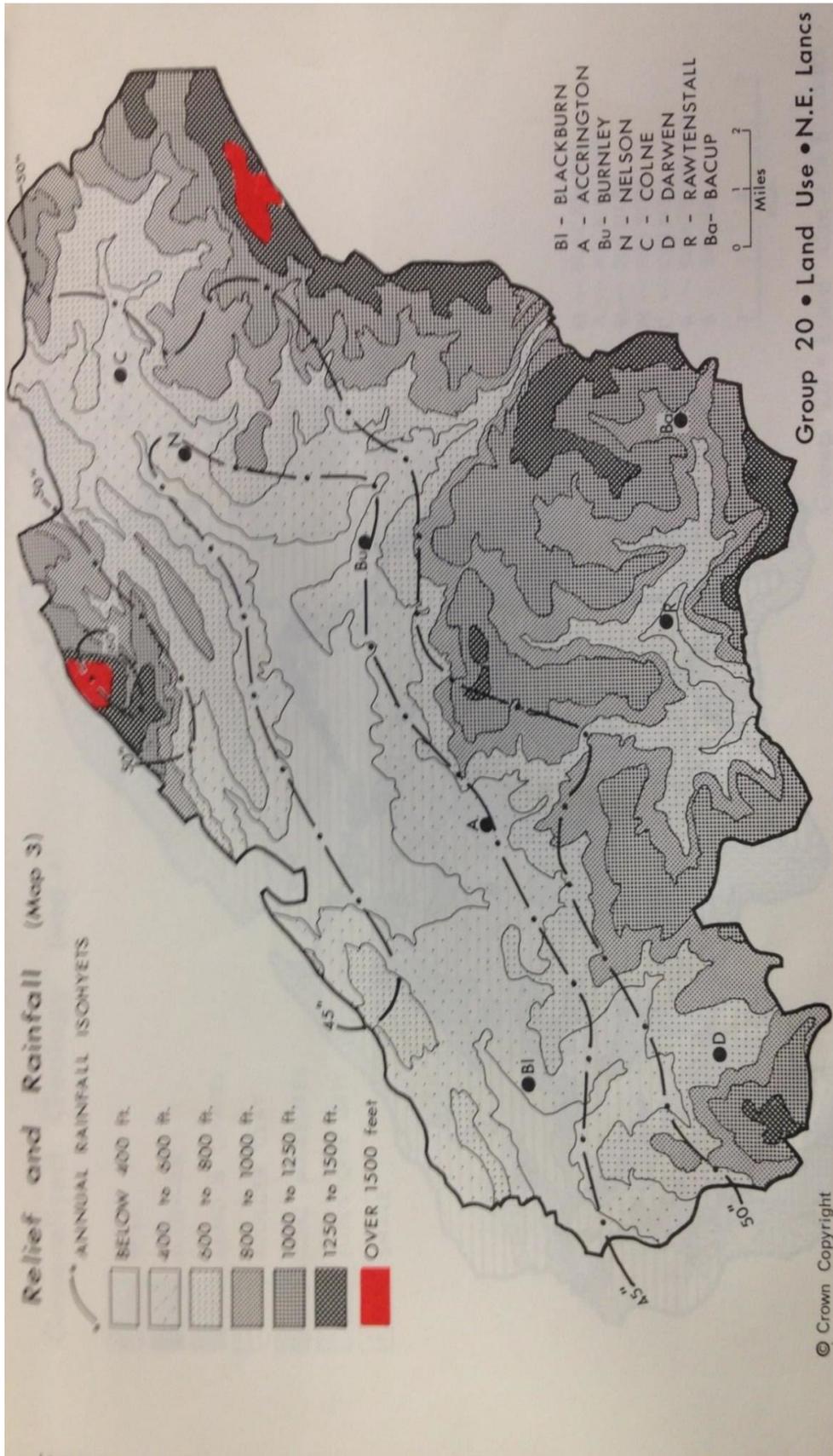


Figure 30: Average rainfall in north east Lancashire. 'North East Lancashire Regional Planning Report' (Burnley: Joint Town Planning Advisory Committee, 1929), LRO/ D1NOR.

Table 23: Positions of main political figures in north east Lancashire.

	Shackleton c.1902 ¹	Nelson LRC 1910 ²	Burnley SDF 1910 ³	Albert Smith ⁴	Kay-Shuttleworth c.1895
Common description	Independent Labour			Supporter of the Liberal-Labour Program	Gladstonian Radical / Friend of Labour
Views on central power	In favour of further powers being given to county, town, district and parish councils.	Fullest possible Labour representation locally.	Establishment of Cooperative Commonwealth.		In favour of 'village voices' running local matters. Reform and devolve powers from the commons.
Housing and care etc.	In favour of the compulsory construction of healthy dwellings by public bodies and also for the period of repayment of loans being extended to 75 years.	Municipal ownership of land.	Extension of and improvement of Old Age Pensions.	Better care of old people, the destitute and the unemployed.	
Electoral reform	In favour of proportional representation providing a workable scheme can be produced. In favour of the second ballot. Canvassing, if practicable, should be made illegal.	The abolition of political disabilities. Securing the affiliation of local trade unions to LRCS and the national LRC.		Home Rule for Ireland. Against a 'super-tax and land-tax' but in favour of an 'accumulative tax put on great landlords, so that the more a man has the more he would have to pay.'	More powers to local councils. Simplification of taxation and conferring of municipal rights for all.
Economic policy etc.	In favour of the nationalisation of land, mines and minerals, and railways, believing that we should seek to obtain national control of all monopolies.	The creation of municipally controlled industry and agriculture, with maintenance of fullest employment throughout these enterprises.	The establishment of Co-operative farming.	'The right to work'	Tackle Primogeniture.

¹ *Burnley Express*, 16 July, 1902.

² From the Nelson LRC prospectus, 1910.

³ From the SDF Burnley pamphlet, 1910.

⁴ *Burnley Express*, 18 August, 1912

Children and family wages etc.	Against increase of working age to 16 believing that the increase should be made gradual and brought about according to the wishes of the people affected.	A minimum wage and working week.			Investment in technical schools. A tightening of regulations on compulsory laws passed that were not being adhered to in more rural districts.
Working class political participation etc.	In favour of the payment of members of Parliament, Boards of Guardians and County Councils, the Payment of official expenses of elections out of public funds and of adult suffrage.	Universal Adult Suffrage		Reversal of the Osbourne Judgement.	
Education etc.	Free secular and technical education, giving all classes equal opportunity. Free maintenance of children in schools found to be not properly fed.		The state maintenance of all children in the public schools.	Feeding of hungry school children.	Continued improvements in educations. Encouragement of lectures and 'self-improvement'.
House of Lords	Strongly in favour of the abolition of the house of lords, believing that a second chamber, as at present constituted, is entirely at variance with the principle of government by the people.		Opposition to House of Lords as 'a commoner', and opposition to 'House of Capitalists' as a 'friend of the people'	Abolition of the House of Lords.	Reform the House of Lord to become a 'helpful partner of the people's representations.'
Trade	Pro Free trade			Free trade for the cotton industry	Pro Free trade

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Dundee Courier

Dundee Evening Telegraph

Hull Daily Mail

Illustrated London News

Leeds Mercury

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