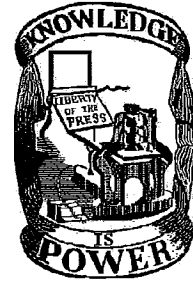


Shelf Life



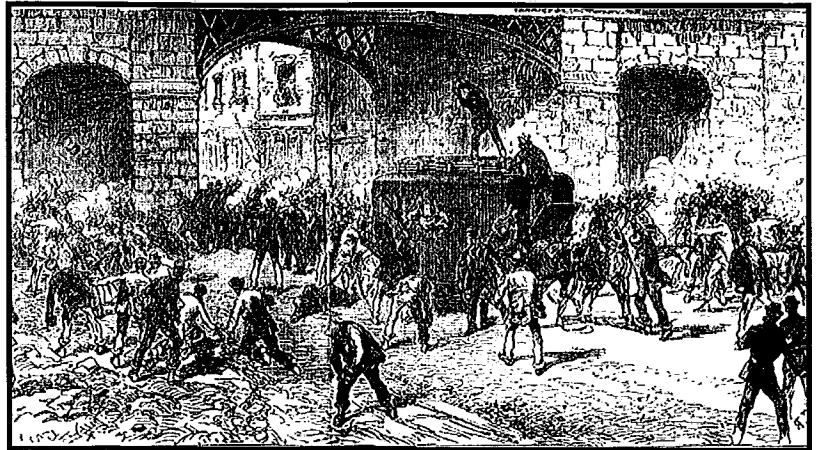
The Newsletter of the Working Class Movement Library

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Manchester Martyrs Remembered

Coinciding with the 140th anniversary of the hanging of Fenians William Phillip Allen, Michael Larkin and Michael O'Brien the library is to host a one day conference, jointly with the University of Central Lancashire. On 23 November 1867, the three Irish nationalists were hanged in Salford for their part in the accidental shooting of a policeman two months earlier. Although the three men were known to be Fenians, none of them were responsible for the killing of P.C.Brett. Consequently, they became known as the 'Manchester Martyrs'. Their hanging brought thousands of people onto the streets of Manchester to protest about their sentence. Their deaths also had international repercussions, extending from North America to Australia. Arguably, the hanging of the Manchester Martyrs was the single most



important incident that occurred during the Fenian uprisings in 1867.

The speakers include Professor Christine Kinealy, whose publications include *This Great Calamity: The Irish Famine 1845-52* (1994 and 2006) and *A New History of Ireland* (2004), and Michael Herbert, author of *The Wearing of the Green: A Political History of the Irish in Manchester* (2001).

Banner Rolling Day



Visitors to the library will no doubt have noticed our display of banners in the NALGO room and in the stairwell. Even though our title implies we hold a collection of books we have also, amongst many other things, accumulated well over 100 banners over the course of time, and they're still coming in. In order to preserve them, and change the display, during the summer we held a 'banner rolling' day. We took down many of those which had been hanging for some time, since exposure to sunlight and dust is not good for their long-term preservation. Volunteers, under Alain Kahan's instruction, learnt how to roll the banners around cardboard tubes, wrap them in acid-free tissue and cover them

with calico to aid their preservation. We then put a new set of banners from our collection up on display, each of them on the theme of peace. It looks quite splendid, do come and take a look.

The Frows On Tape

We are very fortunate in having several cassette tapes with Ruth and Eddie Frow, the founders of the library, speaking on them. One of our volunteers, Chris Clark, has been sorting out just what we've got. She says it's wonderful being able to listen to them, sounding so clear and as interesting and relevant as on the days that the tapes were recorded. There is a fascinating radio programme with Ruth and Eddie talking about establishing the W.C.M.L. This includes how they came to be involved in politics and working class history and how they met.

On some of the tapes Eddie talks on a particular subject, and Ruth reads extracts from documents illustrating the points that Eddie is making. We have one such tape with Eddie giving a talk at a meeting on the subject of the General Strike in 1911, with Ruth reading extracts from the relevant documents. We have Eddie talking about Trade Unions and the Communist Party during and after the Second World War and about victimisation of union officials. There is also a tape of Ruth and Eddie interviewing the daughter of Shapurji Saklatava, a former communist M.P. And trade union activist who is talking about her father and his involvement in politics.

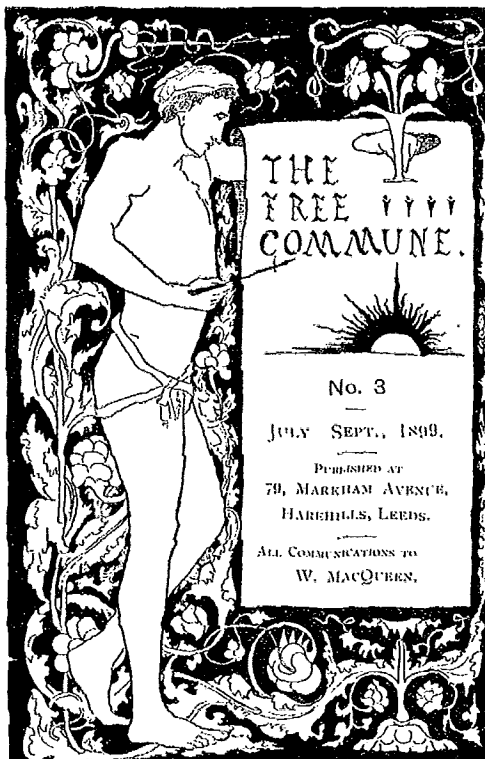
Perhaps the cassettes that are even more interesting are those which were made when Ruth and Eddie led guided walks around Salford and Manchester. The themes include Manchester Radicalism in the 1790s, the Peterloo Massacre, Trade Union history, Co-operative Societies, the working class history of the Ardwick district of Manchester, and the Poor Laws. This last includes a delightful poem read by them both, with Ruth being the "hard working factory girl", and Eddie the young man bowled over by her.

This bare outline gives an idea of the priceless collection of audio-visual material that we have at the Library.



As True Today

A lovely piece from the journal of the Leeds Free Communist Group at the end of the 19th century.



FREE COMMUNE.

THAT BLACKGUARD THE STATE

- It takes £120,000,000 a year in taxes - to protect us from robbery.
- It keeps thousands of armed men - to prevent violence.
- It has arsenals filled with bomb and explosives - to prevent order and peace.
- It kills black men with maxims and even dynamite in order to steal their country - in the interest of Christianity and civilisation.
- It sends police, and often soldiers to intimidate and terrorise strikers - in order to protect the weak against the strong.
- It protects monopolies of land, coal, iron, and raw material - to ensure equal rights and prosperity to all.
- It keeps magistrates, gaolers, floggers, and executioners - to suppress brutality.
- It enables speculators and company promoters to get rich by gambling and thieving - for the furtherance of honesty.
- It allows children to starve and be killed by over-work - to encourage parental responsibility.
- It gives the people a vote *i.e.*, the power to choose masters, who flout them - in order to show them that they rule the country.
- It teaches people to hate other people because they belong to another race or country - to further Christian love.
- It supports a system of robbery, slavery, and degradation in the cause of progress.

Away with it!

THE HAMMERER.



One of the leading figures in the Chartist Movement, Ernest Jones (pictured), has been remembered by the Greater Manchester Association of Trades

RECENT ACQUISITIONS

Councils. In conjunction with the Memorial Exhibition Society they have commissioned a reprint of a lecture on 'The Slave Holder's War' given in 1863 to the Union and Emancipation Society in Ashton-under-Lyne. It shows how opposition to slavery was not only the preserve of religious and middle class radical groups, but also the concern of many working class people. Jones was so popular that over 100,000 working people lined the route of his funeral cortege in 1867.

100 copies of the reprint have been issued as a limited edition and donated to local libraries and educational institutes. Fortunately we are one of the recipients and our copy will join other material we already hold on this tremendous influence from the 19th century.

This is an excellent initiative by the CATC and will help to show that it wasn't only Wilberforce who fought against slavery. We congratulate them. Perhaps others could consider similar ventures, even working with us on a joint venture using material from our collections.

Organised Friends

Readers may recall that along with the last edition of 'Shelf Life' we issued an appeal for supporters to help us resurrect a friends support group. We are particularly looking for people who can assist in raising the profile of the library and fostering a sense of connection with the library. We had a

good response to our appeal, and a meeting with respondents living within reasonable travelling distance of Salford has been arranged for early October when the re-establishment of a Friends' Committee and how it could assist in the promotion of the library will be discussed.

librarian's lines

As Ruth Frow often says, 'we are a library so we don't collect films or tapes'. We are very grateful to the North West Film Archive, who have taken away the cans of 8mm and 16mm film which have - despite this firm statement of Ruth's - been sitting for a long time in our cellar. The films depict industrial disputes and union and local history, amongst other topics. The Archive staff will look after these on our behalf, and will also provide us with copies on DVD which from our point of view is a much

more helpful medium to store and view the contents.

We have also recently received copies of about 30 cassette tapes back from the North West Sound Archive in Clitheroe, who work on the same basis as the Film Archive. They are already the custodians of nearly 300 tapes from our collection and have been pleased to help us look after this new batch, which takes in interviews with union activists including Ruth and Eddie (see elsewhere in this Shelf Life).

The Library opened over the Heritage Open Days weekend, 8-9 September, as did many other buildings in Salford, to encourage first-time visitors in to see 'behind the scenes'. One of the elements of our bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund - the results of which we're still anxiously awaiting - is money to provide better display facilities in the lobby at WCML. We want to be able to offer, to visitors who just 'drop by', a place where they can browse more items from our collections, and learn something of the history of the library.

Trade Union Support



Vital support from the trade union movement continues. Unity, the former Ceramic and Allied Trades Union, CATU, a long time supporter of the library, has again made an annual donation. Incidentally the library is the home for many of the union's archives. The NASUWT has again pledged its commitment to the library with its third annual substantial donation. Old friends from regions and branches of ASLEF, the FBU, GMB, NASUWT, the T&GWU section of Unite, and UNISON have also given help. We are happy to report that two new regions of the AMICUS section of Unite are also now giving financial support, for which we are very grateful. We realise that resources in trade unions are not plentiful and directing some of them our way shows a commitment to preserving the

history of our movement and confidence in the library as a suitable repository. As the library adjusts to its new 'independent' status the Trustees will try to repay this confidence by developing as one of the few educational resources that reflect the true nature of the movement and the force for good it has always been and always will be.

We've had a visit from activists of the Nottingham University branch of UNISON who travelled across country to explore the building and the many books and archives we possess. We hope they enjoyed their day and were suitably impressed. They have since become supporters of the library and we hope that this friendship will continue for a long time. As we have said before, we would welcome visits from any trade union to show that what we say about the collection is true. We would love it if you took up the offer.

Tolpuddle Presence

Five representatives from the WCML were among the record 10,000 people who gathered at Tolpuddle in July for a weekend's commemoration of the six farm labourers transported in 1834 to the Antipodes for having the temerity to form a trade union.



The Library had a stall in the Martyrs' Marquee which attracted many old friends and some new ones. Our banner was raised, along with hundreds of others, when the Grand Procession took to the streets of Tolpuddle led by the Musicians' Union Great Western Jazz Band. There were debates and discussions on two stages, and music from Chumbawumba, Billy Bragg and many others. There was also a performance of Shelley's 'Mask of Anarchy', and the story of the martyrs told through song by the children of Puddletown Primary School. Although rallies and events were held earlier, the present Festival, organised by the TUC, took shape on the centenary of the arrest of the six men in 1934 when a row of six cottages were built to house retired members of the Agricultural Union. These now form a backdrop to the Festival which, apart from the war years, has taken place annually ever since.