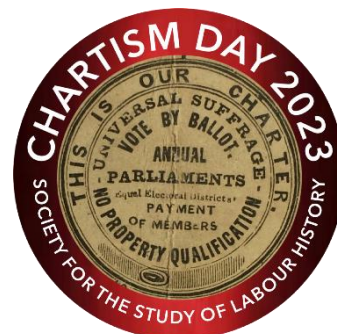


Chartism Day

Sheffield Hallam University, Saturday 17 June 2023



Abstracts

Women, late Chartism, and the Land Plan in Nottinghamshire

Matthew Roberts

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This paper explores the relationship between working-class women and Chartism, focusing chiefly on Nottinghamshire. It argues that the opportunities for women to participate in the movement were much more varied and enduring than previous historians have often supposed. One of the reasons why women were so prominent by the time of Chartism in the 1840s was because of a tradition of political participation, which reflected the crucial role played by women as wage earners and defenders of their families and communities. Even by the period of late Chartism (post-1842), women were still participating in popular politics, and nowhere more so than in the Land Plan, a scheme to resettle urban workers on the land. Drawing on a database of some 2,300 Nottinghamshire members of the Land Plan, the evidence suggests that the region's women were more likely to join, and on their own volition, have their own jobs and possess a degree of independence that was not the case elsewhere.

'My Dear Chinery...' Feargus O'Connor and the business of Chartism

Mark Crail

The presentation looks at a brief note written by Feargus O'Connor in 1847. The letter runs to little more than fifty words and is of slight intrinsic historical significance, but by deciphering O'Connor's handwriting and unravelling each quickly scrawled phrase, it is possible to see how he kept his hold over every aspect of Chartism, addressing mass meetings and writing his weekly editorial in the *Northern Star* while simultaneously dealing with the legal and financial aspects of the land plan. It shows that, nearly a decade on from the birth of the Chartist movement, O'Connor was maintaining a physically and mentally punishing day-to-day way of life in pursuit of the cause.

Memory and Chartism's paper pantheon deconstructed

Joshua Dight

Edge Hill University

Chartism's culture of commemoration has provided an important record of how political radicals like Thomas Paine and William Cobbett were remembered by ordinary working men and women. Recent scholarship has acknowledged this record as a 'paper pantheon' - a register of the many eulogies to radical heroes who had suffered, or been destroyed, in their pursuit of political rights. For my paper, I wish to take this construct further. So far in identifying its existence, scholars have emphasised its ability to be practiced through rituals and invented traditions, such as anniversary banquets. I wish to further this conversation by looking at the meanings and outcomes produced from these activities. Newspapers, like the *Northern Star* boasted how anniversary celebrations were numerous and practiced around the country. Whilst much of the detail has been lost, either to journalistic decisions or time, enough survives to highlight how the oppositional commemoration of men like Thomas Paine was multidirectional. Portrayals of radical heroes were reiterated in different parts of the country, showing how a familiar language existed. However, representations of the same personality also differed. There were layers of representations to those who were pantheonized. In this way, Chartist remembrance helps to draw out the complexities of memory, its fluidity as well as the different emotions it evokes. By exploring these nuances, my paper will compare newspaper reports of local commemoration to highlight the symmetry and variation oppositional commemoration produced during the Chartist period.

Mr Cooper and Citizen Engels: What went wrong?

Alison Denham

In August 1845, 'it was moved by Mr. Cooper and seconded by Citizen Engels, that a public meeting of the Democrats of all nations, be called to consider an association ... getting by this means a better knowledge of the movements for the common cause going on in their respective countries, which resolution was carried unanimously' (*Northern Star*, 23 August 1845). In July 1846, a letter from the German Democratic Communists of Brussels, noted 'Thomas Cooper, the would-be respectable's calumnies' including 'propounding such base ... doctrines as that of non-resistance' (*Northern Star*, 25 July 1846). What happened in the intervening year? Cooper's criticism of the Land Plan is well-documented but here I want to discuss Cooper's conversion to pacifism. Cooper set out his views in March 1846 in 'Two Orations against Taking Away Human Life' (London: Chapman Brothers, 1846). I will explore the influences on his thinking with a focus on his friendship with the 'radical Unitarian' William Johnson Fox. Lastly, I will use the detailed reports

of public meetings in the *Northern Star* to suggest why the views of Thomas Cooper and Friedrich Engels might have increasingly differed over that year.

'Command will, with the progress of years, relax into persuasion': Communitarian idyll in Thomas Cooper's *Captain Cobler*

Duncan Hamilton

University of Manchester

In recent years, medievalism has emerged as a subject of interest in Chartist studies. In particular, *Subaltern Medievalisms* (2021) contains three chapters (by Knight, Basdeo, and Sanders) which reflect directly on Chartist medievalism and a fourth (by Roberts) which examines one of its foundational texts, Cobbett's *History of the Protestant Reformation* (1824-1826). This paper contributes to this emerging debate by concentrating on Thomas Cooper's first novel, *Captain Cobler* (written 1839/44, published 1850). The paper begins by considering *Captain Cobler* as a response to a key work of elite medievalism, Augustus Pugin's *Contrasts* (1836). It demonstrates that Cooper borrows freely from Pugin to underpin both his depiction of medieval life and his analysis of the political causes of the Reformation. It continues by arguing that Cooper also uses medievalism as a way of thinking about the problems facing the Chartist movement. In particular, I show how the pioneering use of "hospitable spaces" as a narrative device in *Captain Cobler* offers both a marked contrast to the polemical diatribes found in later Chartist novels by T.M. Wheeler and Ernest Jones, and a striking example of Chartist praxis with regard to the movement's social ideals. The paper concludes with a consideration of the relationship between *Captain Cobler*'s communitarian vision and other examples of Chartist medievalism with a view to demonstrating the politically ambivalent nature of a cultural form which constructs medievalism as both nostalgia for a lost communitarianism and as a utopian prefiguring of the Chartist world to come.

Edouard Dolléans: Chartism's first modern historian?

Kevin Morgan

University of Manchester

When Edouard Dolléans (1877-1954) published *Le Chartisme* in 1912-13 it was the first large-scale treatment of the subject since Gammage's in the 1850s. Dolléans went on to a long and varied career, both scholarly and political, and was a founder of the post-war French social history paradigm centring on Paris's Institut d'histoire sociale. He revisited Chartism on several occasions including a new edition of *Le Chartisme* (1948) that was reconfigured in ways anticipating some of the key debates in its later historiography. Even in France, Dolléans has received surprisingly little scholarly notice. This paper will argue that this should be redressed.

The *Northern Star*, the Land Plan, and the 1848 revolution: traces of the Chartists in France

Fabrice Bensimon

Sorbonne Université, Paris – Institut universitaire de France

When Chartist workers went overseas for work, some tried to maintain their involvement in the movement. Sources suggest a number of locations in France in the 1840s where this was the case, including in the North, in Normandy, in Brittany, and probably elsewhere. Meetings were held, songs were sung, and recitations were delivered. Chartist newspapers were circulated, and the *Northern Star* was read aloud in a Breton linen workshop. Land Plan branches were created, gathering some 104 subscribers, including 10 women, and Feargus O'Connor could rejoice that his 'little work [...had] crossed the seas'. However, the political regime of France, a 'foreign despotism', was different to that of Britain. There was less freedom, democrats were persecuted by the July monarchy, and in February 1848 a revolution broke out. Following in the footsteps of a few migrant workers, from John Sidaway to George Good, this paper will consider how Chartists adjusted to the French context.

Northern Herald Books

We are pleased to be able to welcome Bob Jones of Northern Herald Books to today's event. The bookstall will have a range of titles for sale on socialism, labour & economic history, economics, industrial relations, women's history – and, of course, Chartism. <https://www.pbfa.org/members/northern-herald-books>