

## HISTORY & SOCIAL ACTION NEWS

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### FEEDBACK

Thank you for the supportive feedback on the first issues (11 February). e.g. 'It promises to be very useful.' 'I passed the newsletter onto some friends.' 'Well done, especially your review/summary of the Equiano event on 9 Feb. Can I use it if asked by friends who were unable to attend?' 'What a fascinating collection!' 'Many thanks for your interesting newsletter. I have since ordered from the US a copy of The Soldier Who Wasn't'. 'Many thanks for the newsletter ... - some really interesting things going on.' Some readers have asked me to send future issues to additional people and organisations.

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John Tradescant, The Elder  
© Ashmole Museum

### LONDON EVENTS

**March. Oval House Theatre** at Kennington Oval continues to provide a wide-ranging and imaginative programme of plays. The March programme includes:

- "Chodzenie - Siberia" about the Poles released in Siberia by Stalin and expected to make their own way to Iran.
- "The African Company presents Richard III" about the 1821 New York black theatre production.
- "The Day After" about Arklow, a young Catholic firebrand, recruited in 1605 for a plot to kill King James I, and his love affair.

Full details on [www.ovalhouse.com](http://www.ovalhouse.com)

**1 March. 2pm. Colin Waugh. Talk. Independent Working Class Education From the Plebs League.** 9 Lucas Arms, 245A Grays Inn Rd, London, WC1, nr. Kings Cross Station. Organised by the North London Group of the Alliance for Green Socialism. [www.greensocialist.org.uk](http://www.greensocialist.org.uk). Colin Waugh's pamphlet on independent working class education was mentioned in 11 February issue of this Newsletter.

**5 March - 13 September. *Soft Lights and Sweet Music: Photographs of Elisabeth Welch.*** National Portrait Gallery. The Gallery recently acquired a group of vintage prints of Elisabeth

Welch from her biographer Stephen Bourne. These photographs were taken in New York and London in the 1930s and 1940s by Carl Van Vechten, Humphrey Spender, Cannons of Hollywood and Paul Tanqueray. The photographs will be displayed in the NPG's Room 31, together with items from Stephen's private collection of Elisabeth Welch memorabilia. Stephen's *Elisabeth Welch: Soft Lights and Sweet Music* (Scarecrow Press, £15.99) will be on sale in the NPG's Bookshop.

[www.npg.org.uk/whatson/event-root/soft-lights-and-sweet-music.php](http://www.npg.org.uk/whatson/event-root/soft-lights-and-sweet-music.php). See also 19 March below.

**5 March. 11am to 12pm. Southwark Council's Blue Plaque Unveiling for Una Marson, 17 Brunswick Square, Camberwell, SE5.** March 8 is International Women's Day. The plaque will commemorate the work and contributions made by the Jamaican poet, playwright, campaigner for equality and the first black woman programme maker at the BBC, Una Marson (1905-1965).

**14 March. Labour Heritage AGM and Talks.** See below.

**19 March Elizabeth Welch.** Stephen Bourne will share some of his personal memories of the singer in the National Portrait Gallery's Ondaatje Wing Theatre at 1.15pm (admission free) (see also March above.)

**21 & 22 March. 1-5pm. Nubian Weekend.** Museum of London Docklands, West India Quay, E14. Nubia Museum's Deputy Director Mrs Thanaa Hassan Mousa will lecture on Queen Nefertari, and other Nubian women. The programme includes performance poetry and Louis Buckley's film *Nubian Spirit*; and other features. Admission Free. Presented by the Equiano Society in association with the Museum. Contact: [arthurtorington@hotmail.com](mailto:arthurtorington@hotmail.com)

**27 March. 5.30-7.30pm. What is the state of public history today?** Historians discuss the current state of public history and how it should develop in the future. Speakers: Patrick Wright (Nottingham Trent), Hilda Kean (Ruskin College, Oxford), John Siblon (City and Islington College), Toby Butler (Raphael Samuel History Centre). The session will also celebrate the launch of two books: *People and their Pasts: Public History Today* (ed. Hilda Kean and Paul Ashton) and a new edition of *On Living in an Old Country* by Patrick Wright. Venue: Wolfson Room, Institute of Historical Research, Senate House, Malet St. Open to all, no tickets or booking required. For more information, email [k.pettit@uel.ac.uk](mailto:k.pettit@uel.ac.uk), or visit [www.rafael-samuel.org.uk](http://www.rafael-samuel.org.uk). Sponsored by the Institute of Historical Research, University of London and the Raphael Samuel History Centre (University of East London/Birkbeck/Bishopsgate Institute)

**April to July. Festival of Small Nurseries** at the Garden Museum (see below).

**June. Wandsworth Heritage Festival.** Wandsworth Council is organising a Heritage Festival for June. In addition to its own programme of talks, walks and workshops, a number of organisations are considering what activities they want to put on. I am consulting with a number of individuals and organisations about events we might collectively organise or contribute to on such topics as mutuality and labour movement history, evacuation, and Black and Asian heritage. Further details in future issues as the programme becomes clearer.

**2/3 July. Anglo-American Conference of Historians 2009: Cities.** Institute of Historical Research, Senate House. Papers include:

- Marc Matera (Northern Arizona University) - *Black Internationalism and Cosmopolitan London in the 1930s and 1940s*.
- Joanna Herbert (Queen Mary University of London) - *Ugandan Asians in the city: identity and belonging*.

For full Conference details see: [www.history.ac.uk/aac2009/index.html](http://www.history.ac.uk/aac2009/index.html)

Matera's paper comes from the manuscript for a book entitled *London and the Rise of Black Internationalism*. A global city and the capital of the far-flung British Empire, London became the frontline in the black struggle against British imperialism and racism during the 1930s. Caribbean and African intellectuals, university students, artists and activists in London formed

organisations that became homes away from home, centres of cultural and intellectual exchange, and new means of voicing social commentary and political dissent. Through them, they influenced the political imagination of British colonial officials, politicians, and others interested in Africa and the colonies, contributing to the major fluctuations in colonial policy in the final decades of imperial rule. Many Caribbean and African men and women embraced black internationalism as an expression of the spirit of the age and a necessary counter to the resurgence of virulent nationalisms and the potential internationalisation of imperialism for the first time within the city's cosmopolitan environs. From the West African Student's Union in Camden Town to cramped apartments in Euston and Hampstead, from the university seminar to Soho's nightclubs, London played a central role in the development of black internationalism because of the conversations, alliances, and boundary crossings which only the metropole made possible. This history transforms our understanding of the development of anticolonialism as well as the cultural landscape of late imperial London.

## EVENTS OUTSIDE LONDON

**12 March. 2-5pm. African Connections and English Football.** Centre for the International Business of Sport (CIBS) seminar. Humber Lecture Theatre, Coventry University. Speakers: Chris Nathaniel (founder of NVA Management and sports agent e.g. to Rio Ferdinand), Cyrille Regis (football agent, The Stellar Group), and Professor John Ocho, Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations, University of Warwick. [www.coventry.ac.uk/researchnet/d/691](http://www.coventry.ac.uk/researchnet/d/691)

**21 March. 10am-5pm. Manchester Histories Festival.** Manchester Town Hall. Brings together a wide variety of institutions in celebrating the idea of 'Manchester, the original modern city'. The day offers talks, walks and screenings of archive film footage. It is free, and open to everyone. The Working Class Movement Library will have a stall there. More details at [www.manchesterhistoriesfestival.org.uk](http://www.manchesterhistoriesfestival.org.uk)

**16 May. Chartism Day Conference.** Lalafur, the Welsh People's History Society. See [www.llafur.org/events.htm](http://www.llafur.org/events.htm)

## MISCELLANEOUS

**Olaudah Equiano.** In the 11 February issue of this newsletter I reported on the service dedicating the plaque to Olaudah Equiano. A report and the full booklet accompanying the service are now on the Westminster Abbey website:

[www.westminster-abbey.org/search/36254?query=macey&x=10&y=6](http://www.westminster-abbey.org/search/36254?query=macey&x=10&y=6)

[www.westminster-abbey.org/pdf/09-02-](http://www.westminster-abbey.org/pdf/09-02-)

[09%20Olaudah%20Equiano.pdf](#)

**Julian Proudman.** Some readers will remember Julian Proudman, a Wandsworth Labour Councillor 1971-1984, the last two years with me in Farirfield Ward, before he left to work in Wales. Julian died in St George's last Saturday aged 63. There was an announcement in the *Guardian* on yesterday. The funeral will be at Mortlake Crematorium on Tuesday 5 March at 11.30am.

## STOCKWELL COMMUNITY BUILDINGS

Tuesday 17 February saw a good attendance at the Stockwell Partnership event reporting on the outcome of the European funding programme that came to an end last year, the forward vision and practical project ideas to put that vision into effect, the future of neighbourhood forums and community engagement, and a short explanation by me of the report I did evaluating Stockwell's

community buildings. At the event I handed out an A3 folded flier with the following explanation about the study, key dates in the long history of the area's community, faith and social action, explaining my freelance work and advertising the History & Social Action Publications pamphlets.

'Stockwell has a thriving network of

organisations managing community buildings. These provide a very wide range of activities and projects and which can host a wide range of social, worship, education, arts and other events. The common linking motivational drive is to address the continuing problems of social inequality, and to help local residents achieve a greater quality of life. No single report like the one I have done can do justice to this community and social action work.

The experiences of community buildings have been shaped within an ever changing context of social, economic, political developments. As elsewhere in the country the Stockwell area has had a rich history of community initiatives since the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century, particularly involving faith led social action and working class, artisan and lower middle class mutual organisation. From the late 1960s a wide range of community action campaigns and organisations developed, including those representing the needs and aspirations of people of African, Afro-Caribbean and South Asian heritage and other ethnic minority

communities. There is now a highly diverse community and voluntary sector in Stockwell.

All community and voluntary organisations, especially those running buildings, are vulnerable to funding problems, especially for repairs and modernisation to remain attractive places that members of the public will want to use the services provided and attend organised events in them. They are also vulnerable to the problems of funding their running costs. With the recession and the credit crunch there is going to be less and less funding from central and local government and from charitable trusts for the whole range of community and voluntary organisations. Therefore it is possible that Stockwell organisations will find they will have to reduce their services and activities and some may even have to close.'

**I will be facilitating a Stockwell Partnership meeting on 23 March to look at the report and recommendations with a view to action on them.**

## **LAUNCH OF BLACK ROSE FOUNDATION, STOCKWELL**

As part of the study I undertook on Stockwell community buildings I interviewed the Head and Deputy Head of Stockwell Park High School, a Business and Enterprise College and Training School, about its current use for community activities, its re-building programme, and the planned provision of facilities that would be available for community use. Because of wider issues that were emerging in the study it seemed to me that there could be some useful partnerships between the School and a number of community and voluntary groups.

On 3 March the School will be launching the Black Rose Foundation an idea devised and developed by a team of pupils to harness children's creativity in developing their potential. The pupils were conducting research in response to the national *Make Your Mark Challenge* during Enterprise week. They aimed to devise a product or service based on the Olympic values of determination, excellence, friendship, courage, respect, inspiration and equality. The team decided to develop a product that would recognise children's concerns about street safety and crime, but would also emphasise young people's creativity

in finding positive solutions to problems. Inspired by the Poppy Day Appeal, the team came up with the idea of designing a pin badge which could be worn as an emblem in a similar way to the poppy. The Black Rose Badge would commemorate young people who had been victims of knife and gun crime. Wearing the badge would symbolise a commitment to opposing violence. Black Rose Month will be celebrated annually and The Black Rose Foundation will be established to promote the creativity of other pupils in London. The funds raised will help to develop sustainable projects for young people who will be able to apply for scholarships and bursaries to develop creative and enterprising pupils in their schools and communities. Pupils involved in Black Rose also plan to give advice to children at other schools about how to set up and run a campaign and business. The launch will take place in the John Major Room at the Brit Oval Conference Centre, Kennington SE11 5SS on Tuesday 3 March 2009 at 2pm when pupils will present their project to an invited audience and guests. Enquiries about the launch of the Black Rose Foundation to [theheadteacher@stockpark.lambeth.sch.uk](mailto:theheadteacher@stockpark.lambeth.sch.uk) or telephone 020 7733 6156 ext 222.

## GARDEN HISTORY

It is funny how one's interest in a particular subject area grows. Garden History is one such. Why? In my case it is because of:

- visiting National Trust, English Heritage and private run properties and gardens over the years.
- gardening in public and commercial venues like parks and pleasure gardens.
- the links with colonial expansion and the profits from involvement in the slavery business.
- the influence imported vegetables and fruits have had on British diet and cuisine.
- the importance of North Lambeth with the Tradescants and Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens
- Ann, my wife, doing the Garden History course at Birbeck
- the Museum of Garden History and Roots & Shoots participation in the 2005 and 2006 Lambeth Riverside Festivals
- the financial help Riverside Community Development Trust gave to the publication for the 2006 Festival by

Parabola Trust of the John Tradescant guided walk and map from South Lambeth Rd to St Mary's Church, written by Jon Newman of Lambeth Archives.

The Museum of Garden History, based in the former St. Mary's Parish Church opposite Lambeth Bridge, has relaunched itself as the Garden Museum. It has re-modelled the interior to create more display space. The North Lambeth history exhibit put together by Danielle Arnaud of Parabola Trust remains an important feature for local people and children to visit. On Monday 16 February Christopher Woodward, the Director, gave a fascinating talk to the Friends of Durning Library on Kennington Lane, about the Museum and garden history. He illustrated it with images from the Museum's collection of paintings, prints, photographs and postcards, revealing a very diverse range from formal gardens to allotments, from cigarette cards to garden gnomes.

## FESTIVAL OF SMALL NURSERIES

The Garden Museum is running a Festival of Small Nurseries celebrating Britain's wealth of small specialist nurseries, run by plantsmen who commit time and energy to producing exquisite plants. Many of these could not be cultivated within the commercial environments necessary to large garden centres and other outlets, and would not be available to gardeners without the expertise of these nurserymen. The Garden Museum recognises the invaluable contribution these nurseries make to British gardening and has decided to support and celebrate their work by offering the Museum as a venue where London's gardeners can meet expert growers and buy connoisseur plants.

- 26 April. Annual Spring Plants and Gardens Fair 10.30am to 5pm
- 28 April. Auricula Theatre Opening 11am to 5pm
- May 7-9. Riot of Roses 10.30am to 5pm each day
- June 13 & 14. Lavender Festival 10.30am to 5pm both days. Dr Simon
- July 18 & 19. Wildflower Weekend 10.30am to 5pm both days.

**For further information** including about the Museum's opening times, exhibitions, cafe, admission charges, group discounts and guided tours, travel and parking, see [www.gardenmuseum.org.uk](http://www.gardenmuseum.org.uk).

## JOHN TRADESCANT'S REST WALK GUIDE

On behalf of Riverside Community Trust I am selling *John Tradescant's Rest. A Historical Walk Guide* by Jon Newman (Lambeth Archives). It is a highly personalised introduction by Lambeth's leading local historian, to a walk retracing the journey of John Tradescant the Elder's funeral cortege in 1638 from the site of his South Lambeth house to his tomb in St Mary Lambeth Churchyard by Lambeth Bridge. The guide was published as part of the Parabola Trust exhibition *Repatriating the Ark* at the Museum of Garden History at St Mary's Church held during the Lambeth Riverside Festival (8-22 July 2006) and continued until 29 October 2006. It was commissioned and published by Parabola Trust and funded by Riverside Community Development

Trust. Price £3 & p&p. Copies can be ordered from Agenda Services, 18 Ridge Rd, Mitcham, CR4 2ET. [sean.creighton@btinternet.com](mailto:sean.creighton@btinternet.com). An invoice will be supplied with copy. Why not also buy one of the History & Social Action Publications pamphlets - see 11 February Newsletter?

## HISTORY WEBSITES

### Tolpuddle London Demonstration Commemoration

Further to the item in the 11 February issue on the plans to commemorate the demonstration in support of the Tolpuddle Martyrs you can keep up-to-date through:

<http://tolpuddle.wordpress.com/>  
[www.thecnj.co.uk/islington/2009/012309/inews012309\\_13.html](http://www.thecnj.co.uk/islington/2009/012309/inews012309_13.html)  
[www.thecnj.co.uk/islington/2008/111408/inews111408\\_09.html](http://www.thecnj.co.uk/islington/2008/111408/inews111408_09.html)  
[www.kingscrossenvironment.com/2009/02/tolpuddle-its-hot-stuff.html](http://www.kingscrossenvironment.com/2009/02/tolpuddle-its-hot-stuff.html)

### Working Class History Websites

In the same issue I included a note on websites

relating to working class history. The following websites can be added:

<http://tolpuddlemartyrs.online-today.co.uk>  
[www.unionancestors.co.uk](http://www.unionancestors.co.uk)  
[www.mytimemachine.co.uk](http://www.mytimemachine.co.uk)  
<http://gerald-massey.org.uk>  
[www.cottontimes.co.uk/index.html](http://www.cottontimes.co.uk/index.html)

### New Local History Website

A new history website to promote community and local history has been set up. It appears to be linked to History Press Ltd, but worth having a look at as a vehicle for promoting local and community history groups.

[www.britishlocalhistory.com](http://www.britishlocalhistory.com)

## CHARTISM

The Chartist movement continues to attract both academic and popular interest.

### Websites on Chartism

[www.chartists.net](http://www.chartists.net)  
[www.thepeoplescharter.co.uk/index.htm](http://www.thepeoplescharter.co.uk/index.htm)

### Malcolm Chase's *Chartism: A new history*

This book by one of the leading historians of the early nineteenth century labour movement and Chartism was published by Manchester University Press in 2007. It reviews the entire chronological spread from 1838-58 with a series of Chartist lives: Abram and Elizabeth Hansom, Patrick Brewster, Thomas Powell, John Watkins, Samuel Holberry, Elizabeth Neesom, Richard Pilling, Ann Dawson, and William Cuffay. A review posted in November 2008 is on the Institute of Historical Research website:

[www.history.ac.uk/reviews/paper/saundersr.html](http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/paper/saundersr.html)

### Continuing Debates

The February Newsletter of the Society for the Study of Labour History contains a short report

on the Chartism Round Table held at the Institute of Historical Research on 24 November, the acquisition by the University of Leeds Brotherton Library of a bound volume of the papers of the Chartist poet and labour activist John Bedford Leno, and a report on the Chartist Conference held in Newport on 7 and 8 June 2008. The Society's 2010 annual Chartist Conference will be held in Paris. Lalafur, the Welsh Peoples' History Society, is holding a Chartist Day Conference on 16 May 2009. To be a recipient of the Newsletter you need to be a member of the Society: [www.sslh.org.uk](http://www.sslh.org.uk)

### Merlin Press Chartist Studies Series

The titles in this series which continues to be added to can be seen on:

[www.merlinpress.co.uk](http://www.merlinpress.co.uk)

### William Cuffay *Medway's Black Chartist*

I am delighted to be able to report that Bruce Aubry who I corresponded and talked with in the 1990s about William Cuffay, has published *William Cuffay. Medway's Black Chartist*. Cuffay was baptised in July 1788 at Chatham's Parish Church, his father from St. Kitts working at the Dockyard, his mother an English woman.

Three brothers and a sister were born between 1789 and 1799. The sister Juliana was to marry George Chaney, a Dockyard labourer. Having served his apprenticeship as a tailor William moved to London. He married three times: 1819 Ann Marshall, 1825 Ann Broomhead both at St. Martin-in-the-Fields Church, and Mary Ann Maxwell in 1827 at St James, Piccadilly. The first two died young. William and Ann Broomhead's daughter Ann Juliana was baptised in Gillingham.

In 1827 he lived at 2 Cornwall Rd, Narrow Wall, in Lambeth. By 1848 he was living at 11 Hollins St, Wardour St in Soho. For his part in the 1834 General Strike organised by the Grand National Consolidated Trade Union, he was blacklisted and found getting work difficult although his reputation as a tailor was high.

He became a member of the Metropolitan Tailors' Charter Association, and by 1840 was a delegate on the Metropolitan Delegate Council. In February 1842 he chaired a large tailors' meeting supporting the Charter petition to Parliament. As a London Chartist leader he supported the physical force wing and opposed co-operation with other radical movements. He was a delegate to the 1845 Chartist conference in Manchester, which backed Feargus O'Connor's land scheme. Cuffay was elected as an auditor for the Chartist National Land Company. Between 1846 and 1848 he was actively involved in several other committees including the Democratic Committee for Poland's Regeneration and for a Metropolitan Democratic Hall.

At the Chartist National Convention in April 1848 Cuffay took a hard-line position with regard to some of the other delegates. Bruce does not discuss in detail the demonstration on Kennington Common which Cuffay organised and chaired, though he reproduces the *Illustrated London News* image. He concentrates on the disagreement about its holding and its abandonment in the face of the large force of police, army, special constables and military pensioners mobilised to prevent it reaching Parliament. He became Secretary of a militant Committee in August which met at the Orange Tree Tavern, near Red Lion Square. He and ten other leaders were arrested there on 16 August. He was found guilty of plotting an uprising and sentenced to transportation. He was taken to Hobart on Van Diemen's Island

(Tasmania). At first his wife was refused Government funding to enable her to join William, and she went to live in Chatham. Later the Home Office and the Medway Guardians agreed to fund her passage to Tasmania in 1853. William was pardoned in a general amnesty for Tasmanian political prisoners in 1856. His wife died in 1869 and he died in 1870.

An Appendix reviews Chartism in the Medway towns. Another reproduces an extract from William Makepeace Thackeray's poem *The Three Christmas Waits* which refers to Cuffay. In the course of the pamphlet Bruce discusses where he thinks other writers on Cuffay have been in error, inc. Joyce Bellamy and John Saville in *Dictionary of Labour Biography*, Peter Fryer in *Staying Power* and Malcolm Chase in his article *Chartism's Black Activist (History Today, October 2007)*.

The pamphlet can be obtained from The Pocock Press, 17 Mayflower House, Valetta Way, Rochester, Kent, ME1 1FA. Tel: 01634 263316. £2 plus p&p. Readers who know Marika Sherwood of Black & Asian Studies Association can also buy copies through her.

Bruce has also written:

- *Red Flows the Medway: a Labour History of the Medway Towns* (Pocock Press)
- *The Development of Independent Working Class Politics in the Medway Towns, 1859-1914* in *Government and Politics in Kent, 1640-1914*. H. C. F. Lansberry. Boydell & Brewer, 2001
- *In The Thick of It - Medway Men and Women in the Boer War, 1899-1902*. With Brian Joyce (Pocock Press)

#### **1848 Chartist Demonstration on Kennington Common**

Friends of Kennington Park have been producing a series of short booklets on aspects of the history of the Park, which was created in the 1850s out of Kennington Common. The latest is *The Springtime of the Peoples* on the 1848 Chartist Demonstration on the Common led by William Cuffay, written by Rob Pateman. While the booklet is available free, the Friends would appreciate a donation. To order: [friends@kenningtonpark.org](mailto:friends@kenningtonpark.org)

## KENNINGTON COMMON AND RADICAL HISTORY

In 2005 when I was co-ordinating the Lambeth Riverside Festival Stefan Szczelkun was physically incapacitated and unable to lead the planned walk of Kennington Park telling the story of the Common and the Park. I stepped in at the last moment writing my notes based on his work and additional research. Fortunately Stefan was able to do the walk in the 2006 Festival. Stefan's work on the Common and Park can be seen on:

[www.past-tense.org.uk](http://www.past-tense.org.uk)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kennington\\_Park](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kennington_Park)

[www.variant.randomstate.org/4texts/Stefan\\_Szczelkun.html](http://www.variant.randomstate.org/4texts/Stefan_Szczelkun.html)

Stefan creates digital videoworks: [www.stefan-szczelkun.org.uk](http://www.stefan-szczelkun.org.uk)

### Other Radical Uses

The Common was used for many political meetings between 1800 and 1848, although not all were able to take place. My continuing researches into the history of the area has identified the following:

- In response to the repression of radical activities a lot of activists went underground operating in a conspiratorial world. In November 1800 handbills called upon 'Tradesmen, Artizans, Journeymen, Labourers, &c., to meet on Kennington Common'. This was prevented by 'a show of military strength.' (Edward Thompson. *Making of the English Working Class*. P. 516).
- A radical demonstration was planned for the Common in 1819, but members with military experience advised that if the military were used against them the demonstrators would not be able to protect themselves. They decided not to go ahead. This decision turned out to be prudent because the day before the cancelled demonstration the Peterloo Massacre took place in Manchester.
- With the National Charter Convention due to sit, the Wandsworth and Clapham, Mitcham and Putney Workingmen's Associations decided in April to elect Charles Westerton as the delegate for East Surrey. A meeting of organisations in Surrey was held on the Common. The London Democratic Association dominated this meeting and elected its nominee, Joseph Williams, not Westerton.
- In 'The General Strike of 1842' (1980) Mick Jenkins records that on 'Monday 22 August 1,800 police were mobilised for the meeting organised for Kennington Common, under the command of four superintendents, supported by a company of artillery. They took control of the bridges. By six o'clock 6,000 people had assembled. As speakers proposed adjourning and continuing with the meeting "the four superintendents, fully equipped and mounted, accompanied by twelve of the mounted patrol of the P. Division and backed by a squadron of about 500 police were seen advancing towards the crowd... As the police neared the crowd the pace was quickened and orders were issued by Superintendent Maclean to clear the common instantly ... The whole body of officers moved simultaneously against the crowd.'" They had little difficulty in clearing the common. Several Chartists were arrested.' (p. 170)
- At the beginning of April 1848 the Common was used by the Chartists to demonstrate their support for the latest French Revolution.

## SLAVERY & ABOLITION: NESAG NEWSLETTER 5

The fifth issue of the newsletter of North East Slavery & Abolition Group is now available from me. All five issues are on the Tyne & Wear Archives website (publications section): [www.tyneandweararchives.org.uk](http://www.tyneandweararchives.org.uk). The contents of the issue are:

Editorial - The Work Continues; The Fly - Newcastle's Slave Trading Ship; Albert Lewis,

'Coloured Vagrant' at Belford and Glendale Workhouses; Wills Relating to Jamaica of Testators with North East Connections; Talks; Researching on the Web; Newcastle City Council Tracts Catalogue on the Web; Stockton Area Connections; Chaloner Ogle; The Middletons of Belsay; Carrs in Barbados and Newcastle; 18thC and early 19thC 'Vulgar' Words and their Meanings; J C Clark,

Abolitionist Printer; *Sharp Practice*; Collingwood in the West Indies; William Wells Brown's Panorama; George Thompson and the North East. Smaller miscellaneous notes cover: Newcastle and Chelsea Hospital, Newcastle and Tar, The Crowleys, The Tonyns of Berwick and Florida, Edward Ward, The West Indies and Abolition, North East Colonists to & Traders

with America, The Ships List Website, Ogles on Ebay, Naval Role in Seamen's Strikes on Tyne, Lord Howick, Captain Charles Stuart, Negro Hymn Singing 1840s, Myrtilla Miner School in Washington, Frederick Douglass and Newcastle, Rev. William Newton, Books and Papers of Interest.

## THE CO-OP, BOB DYLAN & FOLK AMERICA

The reason the Co-operative chose to use Bob Dylan's *Blowin' in the Wind* as the music for its ethical promotional TV and cinema advert, is explained on [www.co-operative.coop/aboutus/bobdylan](http://www.co-operative.coop/aboutus/bobdylan). "The song poses a series of rhetorical questions through philosophical lyrics on how to bring about social change, the answers to which are right in front of us yet most of us choose not to see." Dylan's prolific song output has been extensively covered by other artists: obvious ones like *Tambourine Man* by artists like Lulu, but also *All Along the Watch Tower* by Jimi Hendrick and XTC, as show on a recent programme in BBC 4 TV's series *Folk America*. This series has shown the rich musical of the United States, including folk and blues. ([www.bbc.co.uk/music/tv/folkamerica](http://www.bbc.co.uk/music/tv/folkamerica)) The film of performances and interviews at Newport Folk Festivals shown featured Odette,

the Freedom Singers, Pete Seeger, Bob Dylan, Sun House, Paul Butterfield Blues Band, Joan Collins, Joan Baez, Howling Wolf, Peter, Paul and Mary, Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee and many more. The connection between white and black was 'freedom'. Without being explicit it showed how song and music helped forge civil rights support across the race divide. The showing of extracts from the Folk America Greenwich Village Revisited Concert at the Barbican on 22 January ([www.barbican.org.uk/music/event-detail.asp?ID=8421](http://www.barbican.org.uk/music/event-detail.asp?ID=8421)) compered by Billy Bragg had three high points for me. Firstly, the continuing purity of Joan Collins singing of *Anaetha*. Secondly, Bragg's reworking of *I Thought I Saw Joe Hill Last Night* one of my favourite songs by Paul Robeson - *I thought I saw Phil Ochs Last Night*. Thirdly, the singing of *Amazing Grace* led by Joan Collins.

## LABOUR HERITAGE AGM & MEETING. SATURDAY 14 MARCH 2009

Conway Hall, 25, Red Lion Square, Holborn, London WC1. 1.30pm. Speakers from 2pm Alan Spence on John Burns - Trade Union Militant & Parliamentary Socialist; John McDonnell, MP on the Left's response to the Depression in the 1930s and now; and John Grigg on the 1929 Labour Government and the start of the Great Depression.

Labour Heritage's Spring Newsletter has just been published. It contains:

- report on its October 2008 joint annual Convergence held with the Essex County Labour Party at which Stan Newens spoke on Robert Owen, Mary Davis on votes for women and the significance of Sylvia Pankhurst, John Macnicol on the establishment of the NHS in 1948 and John Grigg on the background to the formation of the NHS.
- report on its November annual West London Labour History Day, at which Stephen Schifferes discussed John Wheatley, Ann Pollden the Putney Debates, John Grigg the Twickenham elections and by elections 1925-1935, the latter being most of what John said.
- report on the Society for the Study of Labour History's AGM and workshop on British War Resisters 1914-9
- article on Dick Stopes and the Ipswich by-election by Ian Grimwood
- review of the Battersea Labour Party history DVD 'Red Battersea'

To join Labour Heritage or to buy a copy of the newsletter see: [www](http://www).

## NEWCASTLE, OTHELLO AND PAUL ROBESON

The Royal Shakespeare Company took their production of Shakespeare's *Othello* to Newcastle's Northern Stage 17-21 February. Directed by Katherine Hughes it starred Patrice Naiambana as Othello. On Friday 20 February. Tony Howard, specialist lecturer in Shakespeare and Performance, led a pre-show discussion exploring Paul Robeson's career. He drew on MI5 and Special Branch secret files relating to Robeson's activities, as well as comments from local left-wing contacts in Newcastle and Gateshead in 1949. He also presented rare recordings of Robeson's performance as Othello. An exhibition of Robeson's career and legacy was also on show alongside the production of Othello. The *Northern Echo's* Review of the play can be seen on [www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/leisure/4138487.print](http://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/leisure/4138487.print)

### Robeson in Newcastle

When I was researching Paul Robeson's life culminating in my talk *Politics and Culture. Paul Robeson in the UK* at the School of Oriental & African Studies/Black & Asian Studies Association Birth Centenary Conference in 1998 I found the following information about Robeson in Newcastle.

In 1935 he was trapped in his hotel 'lift for sometime when it stuck between two floors.' 'When he was finally released' he told local journalist Richard Martin: "Civilisation at last." (*Evening Chronicle*, 24 January 1976).

When he visited Newcastle in 1958 a capacity audience filled the City Hall in Northumberland Rd, at 10/- per seat on Thursday, 13th November, at 7.30pm. A local newspaper reported it was a triumph before an 'enthralled' audience.

'Neither his voice nor his personality seem to have changed during the ten years since he last performed in this country. His deep, resonant voice is intense and compelling whether he speaks or sings, and his smile is infectious

He dominates the evening with artistry and sincerity as few others could.

His audience was completely captivated - he even managed to get them to talk Chinese. He

sang in English, German, Russian, Yiddish and African.'

### Simplicity of Melody

He must have departed or added to the programme in Newcastle:

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

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

Scores of people had to be turned away because the hall was full. Let us hope that he will be back again soon so that others too, can hear that voice which since 1922, has thrilled British audiences. He was brilliantly accompanied by Lawrence Brown. - T.E.B.' (undated, unattributed news cutting in Newcastle City Library's Local History Archive.)

One of those in the audience wrote on their programme 'Thanks to God for sight and hearing. Grateful for return of so talented an artist. 7.30pm, 13th Nov. 1958.' (Copy of programme in Newcastle City Library Local History Archive).

When he died in 1976 the *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* report of 24 January headlined 'Robeson - the man driven into exile', and published a picture of a smiling Robeson holding a pen from his visit to Newcastle in 1958.