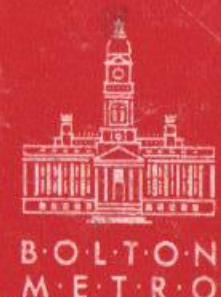


WILL YO' COME O' SUNDAY MORNIN'?

In 1896 factory-owner and landlord Colonel Richard Henry Ainsworth closed the road from Smithills to Belmont because he didn't want the people of Bolton intruding upon his grouse-shooting.

The people of Bolton responded in their thousands by marching over the moors on the weekends of September, 1896 in a valiant attempt to reclaim the right of way.

This is their story ...



The Lancashire Loominary Series
Published by Transport Research
& Information Network

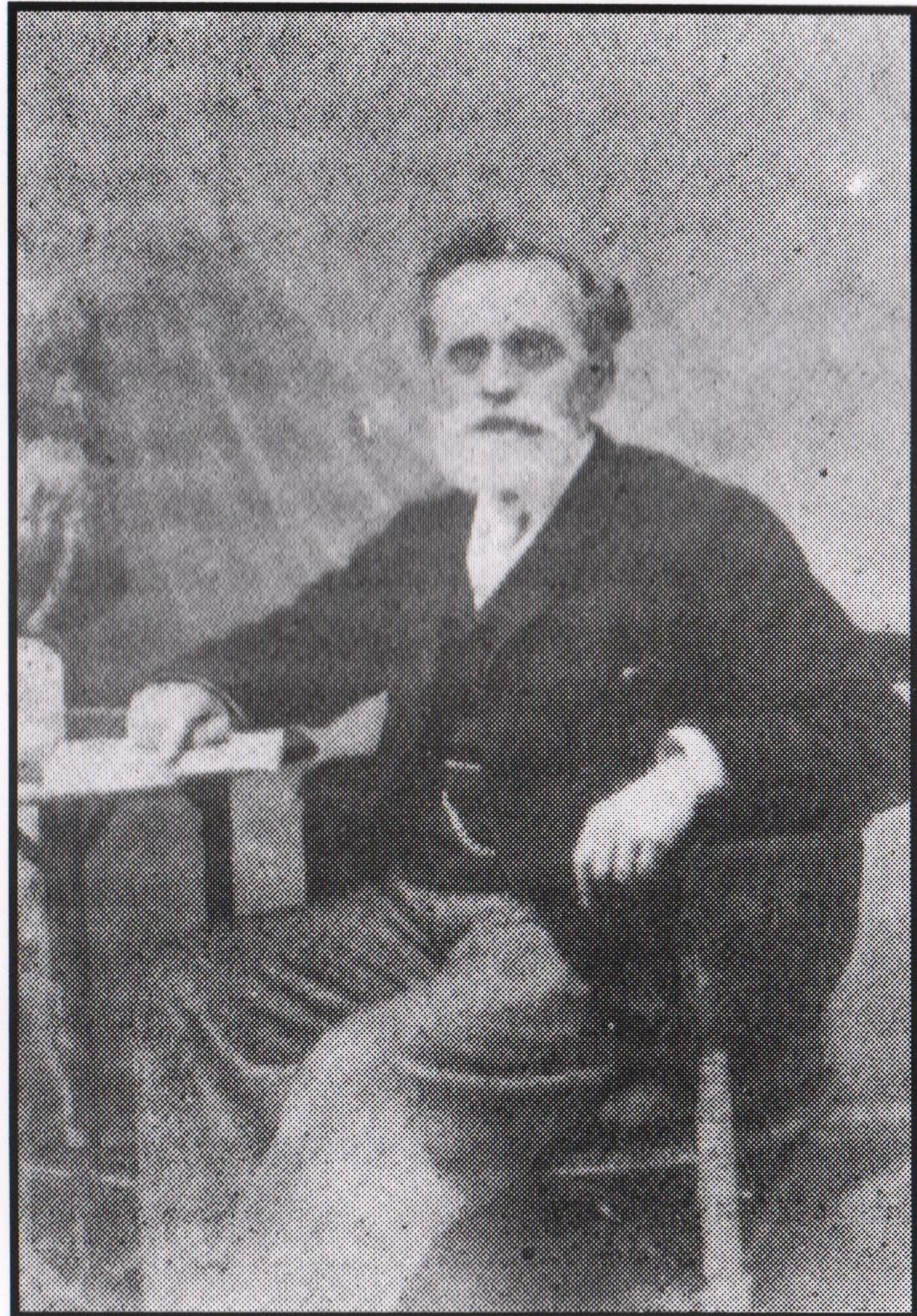
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The 1896 Battle for Winter Hill



Paul Salveson



Above: Solomon Partington - 'as disinterested a champion of liberty and justice as ever used a pen on behalf of the robbed and oppressed' - Allen Clarke

WILL YO' COME O' SUNDAY MORNIN'?

The 1896 Battle for Winter Hill

Paul Salveson



The site of the disputed gate on Coalpit Road

The Lancashire Loominary Series
 Published by Transport Research & Information Network
 with the assistance of Bolton M.B.C.'s Department of
 Education and Arts and Bolton's City Challenge
 September 1996
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Contents

Preface	4
1 Introduction: The Bolton Moors	5
2 People	10
3 'Extraordinary demonstration on the Halliwell Moors'	13
4 'Extraordinary developments follow in rapid succession' ..	19
5 'A Huge But Peaceful Procession'	21
6 Ainsworth Acts	24
7 The Trial	28
8 When the Dust Had Settled	33
9 Happy End?	37
10 Halliwell as it is and as it will be	40
Appendices:	
Bill Spriggs an Patsy Filligan o'er Winter Hill. Likewise Bet. by Teddy Ashton (Allen Clarke). First published in <i>Teddy Ashton's Journal</i> September 26th 1896 and October 3rd 1896	42
T'Moor by Brian Clare (1982)	48

Front Cover:
 The 1982 commemorative march arrives at the site of the
 disputed gate. (Bolton Evening Post)

Preface

This pamphlet is a celebration of events which took place in Bolton a hundred years ago, but also marks the successful conclusion of the struggle for the freedom of the moors. A century after thousands of people marched up Winter Hill to claim a right of way, Bolton Council agreed in June 1996 to dedicate the disputed road as a public right of way.

Will Yo' Come o' Sunday Mornin'? was first published in 1982 and this is a new edition. Our thanks to Bolton Council's Department of Education and Arts and to Bolton City Challenge for their generosity in making its publication possible.

The story has given inspiration to many groups and individuals who have worked hard this year to properly mark the centenary of this important event. This year will see a whole range of events marking the 1896 'mass trespass' including a centenary procession over Winter Hill. We hope that the publicity surrounding this year's celebration will encourage more people to enjoy 'the gleesome saunter o'er fields and hillsides' and to remain vigilant over the continuing threats to public access to our countryside.

Stuart Murray
Secretary,
Winter Hill 100 Committee

1 Introduction - The Bolton Moors

The moors around Winter Hill and Rivington form an area of incomparable beauty. For generations, Boltonians have tramped 'up t' th' Pike' on a Good Friday to survey the breathtaking panorama stretching from the Welsh mountains across to the Lake District. In ancient times, Pike Fair attracted thousands. As kids, we always used to delight in spotting Blackpool Tower on the horizon. In contrast to the relaxed, often carnival-like, atmosphere of Rivington Pike, Winter Hill has always seemed more forbidding. To walk across from the Pike was not always the easiest of tasks, with bogs and deep grass doing their best to ward off strangers from the Hill.

The legend surrounding the death of the Scots packman, Henderson, who was killed in suspicious circumstances in 1838, adds a further touch of menace to the scene, although there is some doubt as to whether he was murdered or the victim of a shooting accident.

Around Winter Hill are the remains of Lancashire's earliest civilisation, in the Bronze Age. Just to the west of the TV masts lies an ancient cairn, with another on Noon Hill. Some of the finds from an excavation of the Noon Hill site can be seen in Bolton Museum.

We know little of the lives these ancient people led - though it's certain that they regarded these hills as having magical properties. Areas like Winter Hill, Turton Heights and other local peaks had great astrological significance.

In more recent times, these hills have seen other forms of spiritual use. The sixteenth-century martyr, George Marsh, used to worship on Winter Hill with his co-religionists, these isolated, windswept slopes providing one of the few places where they could practise their worship undisturbed.

This is the story of a more recent event. In a sense it is a story which began a hundred years ago and came to a conclusion this year, 1996. It's the story of a local community's fight for the right to roam on land which has for centuries been regarded as belonging to 'the people'. This is the land which rises above the terraced houses and cotton mills of Bolton, ascending to the breezy slopes of Winter Hill and Rivington Pike.

Like all good stories, it has heroes and villains. Men such as Solomon Partington, journalist, councillor and historian, figure large. Allen Clarke, the Bolton dialect writer who was better known as 'Teddy Ashton' helped immortalise, in hilarious ways, the struggle for the moorlands in his newspaper sketches of the time. There were plenty more heroes and heroines: the thousands who marched up Winter Hill on those heady Sunday mornings of September 1896 to claim what was rightfully theirs.

As for the villains....well; Colonel Ainsworth started the whole thing off by closing a moorland track. He was hardly a 'model employer' either, if contemporary accounts of life in his bleach works are anything to go by. But all things change and the reputation of the Ainsworths has, happily, been salvaged by modern generations.

But let's go back to the nineteenth century (as some politicians would like us to do). Winter Hill was a place of industrial and political activity. Allen Clarke, in his *Moorlands and Memories*, refers to the Five Houses, long since demolished but on the road up to Winter Hill, as providing a secret Chartist meeting place. I can find no evidence of Chartist activity around there, but we do know that they drilled on the moors above Bolton with their pikes. One of the Five Houses may well have provided a gathering place for them (at least one was an illegal drinking den) before they went on their nocturnal manoeuvres.

Coal mining was carried on for centuries on the slopes of Winter Hill - probably from as early as the sixteenth century. Many old pit shafts are still visible, and nineteenth-century ordnance survey maps refer to the old mines at Wildersmoor, Holden's, and on Winter Hill itself. Most of these were closed by the mid-nineteenth century, though Montcliffe pit struggled on to the inter-war years of this century. As the name suggests, Coalpit Road, which figures prominently in this story, used to serve many of these old collieries.

Quarrying was also a major industry in the area, and many remains can still be seen. At Hole Bottom the tile works provided work for many local people for decades until its closure.

Handloom-weaving was carried on in these parts well into the last century. A character called 'Owd Reynolds' wove from his cottage called 'Newspaper Hall' and sold gingerbread and ale as a sideline; or, to be more accurate, he sold gingerbread and gave away the ale, to get round the licensing laws!

Another cottage nearby (see map) was Black Jack's, marked on old maps as Cottage on th' Moor. Black Jack - who may have been called Tootill - was a stone-waller by trade, though he also sold his gingerbread, with ale, to weekend walkers.

The cottage had been built by a man called Morris who, by all accounts, had some odd habits. It was said that he once threw a loaded pistol on to the cottage fire. The fireplace was demolished and the cottage left a shambles. They made their own entertainment in those days!

Clearly, walking on the moors for recreation is no recent innovation. All these moorland characters profited from passing walkers, most of whom would be working-class people from the town. The Lancashire handloom weavers were great lovers of the countryside and a walk over the moors of a Sunday would be a common activity. You would also see bleachers, miners and spinners making their way up tracks like Coalpit Road on a Sunday afternoon. Many of these would be naturalists; like Fletcher of Westhoughton, a miner who specialised in botany. Others would write poetry or watch the curlews and snipes in flight, never thinking, unlike their cultivated 'betters', that it might be 'sport' to shoot them.

Many of these people would have lived in the Halliwell area of Bolton, which borders onto Smithills Moor. Here, people wove, spun, toiled in Ainsworth's bleach works, or worked in foundries and engineering shops. Going up Halliwell Road today some of the old weavers' cottages can still be seen, and the road has not changed a great deal since the last century; many of the huddled terraced streets still remain. Falcon Mill still towers over the top end of Halliwell, heroically resisting the depressing tide of mill closures.

Anyone looking at the pictures of Halliwell in the 1890s would little imagine that some of the most beautiful countryside in Lancashire was a few minutes' walk away.

Partington is fond of quoting the lines of Edwin Waugh:

"I've lingered by streamlets that water green plains
I've mused in the sunlight of shady old lanes
Where the mild breath of evening came sweetly and slow
From green nooks where bluebells and primroses grow
But oh, the wild hills that look up at the skies
Where the green bracken waves to the wind as it flies!
Sing hey for the moorlands."

- in *Bolton's Augean Stable*

2 People

Colonel Richard Henry Ainsworth

The Ainsworths are an old Bolton family who made good in the eighteenth century from profits in the West Indies slave trade. They became bleachers, and the site of the works is in the dip of Smithills Dean Road, shortly after the traffic lights. By the mid-nineteenth century the Ainsworths were pre-eminent in the Lancashire bleaching trade and large landowners.

They purchased the Smithills estate, which includes the disputed moorland area, in 1801 - for a mere £21,000. This included Smithills Hall - a desirable residence by any estate agent's standard!

Of course, their workers had to live in considerably inferior accommodation, though some of the 'tied cottages' for the bleach workers were probably better than the hovels inhabited by the declining numbers of handloom weavers.

During the 1850's, conditions in Ainsworth's bleach works were the subject of much controversy. James Staton, in his weekly newspaper *The Bowtun Luminary*, ran a long campaign in support of the bleach workers' struggle for improved conditions. An editorial for 18th February, 1854, goes:

"The operative bleachers appear to have lately fawn in for mooar than their share of bad traytment ... the bleachers ... a body of whom little wur once yerd ... have made a prominent appearance on th' public stage, as principal grumblers in't great drama of life. Un their complaints are not the mere creashuns of grievance mongers; they are aw too well founded."

It was not until 1870 that Richard Henry Ainsworth took over as 'lord of the manor' at Smithills. He began to make a name for himself as a strong opponent of radicals and socialists, and an upholder of traditional proprietorial values. Solomon Partington in his pamphlet *Bolton's Augean Stable* has this to say of him ...

"Mr Ainsworth is a firm believer in the divine right of the squire:

God bless the squire and his relations
and teach us all our proper stations:

this was a charming sentiment of old-time servility and decayed feudalism, behind which lay a festering spirit of ignorance, oppression and want. It prevails as a relic of the pernicious Truck system once existing in his petty kingdom."

An interview in the *Bolton Chronicle* had him saying "we have heard too much talk and space devoted to 'the people's rights' and too little consideration being shown to the landowner." (19 September, 1896).

When Tom Mann, the socialist organiser, was in Bolton in 1888, Ainsworth emerged as the leading opponent in the socialist's campaign to open the public library on Sundays.

By 1896 Ainsworth was probably the most rabidly anti-socialist and anti-union employer of any size in the town. He was fervently supported by his wife and by the Smithills chaplain, Rev. Standen.

Ainsworth's chief agent was Joseph Walch, who had day-to-day control over the estate, in which he was assisted by his son and a group of other gamekeepers. Unlike his father John, Colonel Ainsworth was a keen 'sportsman' and was fond of taking his fellow gentry on shooting expeditions on his land. In the early 1880's he had a shooting hut built, adjacent to Coalpit Road, and here he would take lunch with his guests. The hut - still standing today - was carefully segregated for masters and servants.

The main targets of Ainsworth's gentlemanly pastime were grouse. According to his Game Book for 12th August 1896, he and his friends (Colonel Bridgeman and others) managed to wipe out over 120 of these fine birds, with a few snipe as well. His entry reads:

"Started driving at Two Lads, about 10.30. Scotch mist till about 3 o'clock when it cleared up and was very fine. Mrs Coombes, Raud Lancaster, Col. Bridgeman and his son came up to lunch - 58 brace."

Ainsworth's relentless pursuit of grouse was a major factor in his decision to close Coalpit Road. The road diverged from the Hole Bottom Road near Gilligants Farm, and climbs towards Winter Hill past the Shooting Hut. It passed through some of Ainsworth's favourite shooting land and he didn't want his fun being disturbed by the likes of colliers and weavers going for a stroll.

Eventually, once the Ainsworths had made their pile, they decided to sell off the entire estate. Bolton Corporation bought the land in the late 1920's, ending one sordid instance of private landlordism.

Solomon Partington

Partington was a journalist who edited the *Leigh Journal* from 1887 up to his transfer to the *Bolton Evening News* in the early 1890's. In Leigh, he was a prominent Liberal and received a presentation from the party upon his move to Bolton. He lived in Bolton for most of his working life; for some time in Russell Street near Chorley Old Road and then at 145 Cope Bank. Shortly before the outbreak of the First World War he moved to Grange Over Sands to enjoy a well-earned rest, and he lies buried in the cemetery there.

He is one of the most interesting figures in our town's history. He played a major rôle in the events of 1896, working closely with the local socialists. Following the 1896 struggle he carried on virtually a one-man campaign for public rights of way over the moors, and launched a twenty-year-long vendetta against Ainsworth. Every attempt by the Colonel to further restrict access to his land got a withering rebuke in the local press from Partington, with no holds barred in his denunciation.

Partington's *Truth* pamphlets (he published six in all) deal with the history of the moors and the roads over them. He also wrote under the pseudonym 'Historicus' in the local press, looking at aspects of Bolton's history. It must be said that some of the conclusions he draws from his own evidence are highly questionable, particularly over his attempt to show Coalpit Road as the ancient 'Causey' of the sixteenth century.

In 1904 he was elected on to Bolton Council, running on a 'public rights' platform. He served the people of West Ward, with a respite for one year, until 1911. His pamphlet published in 1907, *My Three Years' Councillorship for West Ward*, fulminates against class privilege, landlordism, corruption and - the £300 he still had to find from the 1897 court case!

In addition to his public rights campaign, Partington was a great lover and defender of the Lancashire dialect. After his move to Grange he turned his pen against the Board of Education, denouncing their 'anti-dialect' campaign. His two books on the dialect - *The Future of Old English Words* and *Romance of the Dialect* - are detailed expositions of Lancashire words and phrases.

Partington was also a keen co-operator and published a history of the co-op movement in Middleton, which includes a history of the town. He died in Silverdale in 1927, at the age of 83. His death cut short the completion of what he intended to be the definitive work on the Lancashire dialect.

Partington was a great Boltonian and deserves more than this brief sketch; I'm sure that, given his own biblical bent, he would have agreed that the prophet is seldom honoured in his native land. Let's hope that a full-scale biography emerges to do him justice.

Joseph Shufflebotham

A shoemaker by trade, Shufflebotham was the leading figure in the Bolton Social Democratic Federation for a number of years during the 1890s. He frequently contested local elections in Derby ward; in his first fight in 1887 he came bottom with 314 votes. However, in 1891 he won 12,187 votes in the School Board elections; he served on the board for some four years and did a conscientious job. He fought for free school meals, free education, and the payment of union rates by firms which supplied the Education Board. In 1893 he produced a pamphlet entitled *Something Attempted and Something Done* which chronicles his work on the Board.

He was also closely involved in trade union struggles of the day. He took an active part in the Great Engineers' Strike of 1887 which drastically changed the face of Bolton politics. Eight 'working men' candidates were elected at the November council elections on a Trades Council slate. During the period of 'new unionism' amongst the unskilled in 1889, he helped organise the carters' union in Bolton.

Shufflebotham was also a member of the Bolton Socialist Party - the present-day Socialist Club. The BSP had very close links with the SDF, and was affiliated nationally to the organisation.

Eventually, perhaps through being so heavily involved in political activity, his own business collapsed, and this revolutionary clogger fades from the scene. His grand-daughter recalled a not entirely sympathetic character, neglecting his family whilst travelling the country on political crusades. Her main memory was of his drowning her pet cat!

William Hutchinson

Hutchinson seems to have shared Partington's political creed as a radical Liberal. He was also a strong Unitarian and was an active member of Bank Street Chapel. He had a small shop on Mill Street, Church Bank, which was demolished in 1953. Partington speaks glowingly of him as 'a self-sacrificing patriot' and a 'Stalwart Hampden'. He had the misfortune of having to shoulder the burden of the costs arising from the court case along with Partington.

His son, along with B F Davies and Don Davies, provided the new Scotchman's Pillar on Winter Hill in 1912; this was to mark the right of way over Winter Hill and to commemorate the 1896 struggle. He died in 1928 and is buried at Rivington Chapel.

Matt Phair

The 1896 struggle brought to the fore a great range of individuals involved in radical politics in Bolton and whose names will reappear in the next few pages. Phair, of Tower Street (long demolished) is one of the more colourful characters in the story. In the late 1880's he set up a 'co-operative commonwealth', an early attempt at a workers' co-operative. He was also involved in the SDF, the Labour Church movement and the Independent Labour party. He was well-known as a speaker on the Town Hall steps on Sunday evenings.

Allen Clarke

Otherwise known as 'Teddy Ashton', Clarke is one of Bolton's greatest sons. He produced Lancashire's first Socialist paper, *The Labour Light*, in 1891. He edited *Teddy Ashton's Journal* and then the *Northern Weekly*. In 1900 he ran as joint SDF/ILP parliamentary candidate in Rochdale. He published several novels including *The Red Flag* about Socialism in Bolton and *The Knobstick* about the 1887 Engineers' Strike. His *Moorlands and Memories* is a paean of praise for the Bolton moors. He also wrote numerous dialect sketches, poems and articles. He died in Blackpool in 1936. Sad to relate he lies in an unmarked grave in Marton Cemetery. He deserves far better. Perhaps the people of Lancashire will finally recognise his worth.

3 'Extraordinary Demonstration on the Halliwell Moors'

- Bolton Journal, 12 September 1896

In the late summer of 1896 Ainsworth decided to close Coalpit Road, a track leading up to Winter Hill beyond Smithills Dean Road. A gate was erected where it diverges from the road past Holden's Farm to Hole Bottom, between Green Nook and Gilligant's Farms. In addition, Ainsworth employed extra hands to warn people off his property and erected a 'Trespassers Will Be Prosecuted' sign at the gate.

His action caused consternation in the town. Smithills Parish Council met on September 2nd to discuss the issue - by all accounts a lively meeting, since Ainsworth was chairman of the body! Despite all the prestige Ainsworth possessed, and a speech which bordered on the hysterical, the Parish Council decided to form a committee of inquiry into the matter.

On the same night a small advert appeared in the Bolton papers inviting the public to join a demonstration over the Winter Hill Moor the coming Sunday, September 6th. It was the joint initiative of the Social Democratic Federation and the Bolton Socialist Party. The SDF was the national Marxist party in Britain, under the leadership of Hyndman, a wealthy aristocrat who had popularised Marx's *Capital*. Locally, as we have seen, Bolton SDF was led by Joe Shufflebotham and Matt Phair. The Bolton Socialist Party had very close links with the local SDF and many people were active members of both organisations. The BSP had its own premises, used as a social club and meeting centre, which at the time were on Lorne Street. By the year 1905 it had moved to what are its present premises on Wood Street, for amazingly the BSP exists to this day. Its minutes for 1st September, 1896, contain the following historic declaration:

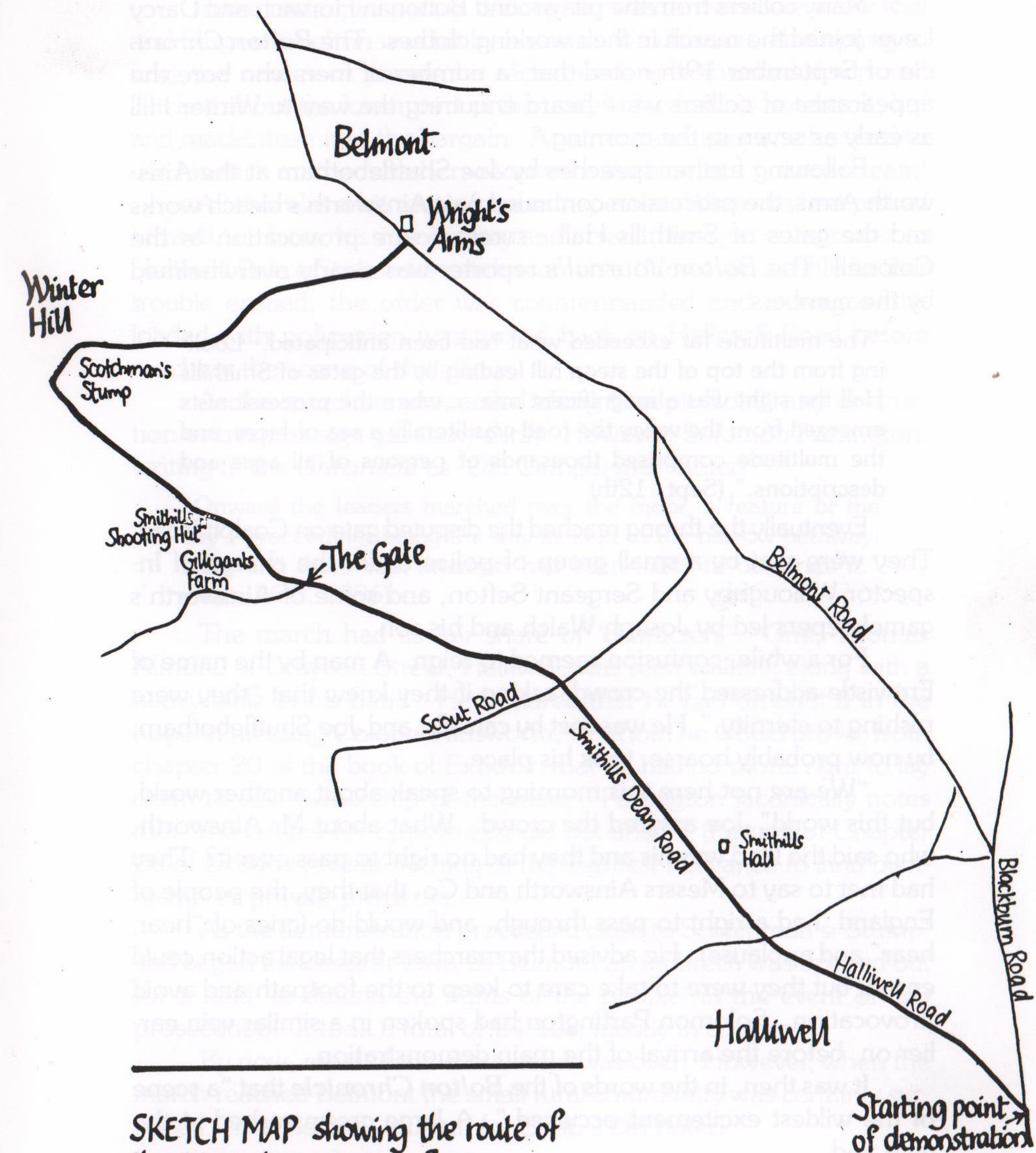
"That the branch advertise in the local paper that they intend to test the right of way over the moors to Winter Hill and members to meet at the bottom of Halliwell Road at 10.00 prompt on Sunday next, September 6th."

Justice, the paper of the Social Democratic Federation, contains no advance notice of the planned demonstration. It does, however, carry a feature on the success of the people of Darwen in winning the freedom of their moorlands. On the same day, September 6th, a celebratory procession was to take place from Darwen town centre to the hill top, where the Jubilee Tower now stands. The procession was a seemly affair, with all the members of the corporation, numerous brass bands, trades unions, religious and civic bodies taking part - 15,000 people in all. It was supremely ironic that as the people of Darwen were celebrating the corporation's taking over of their moors, the people of Bolton, a few miles away, were embarking on a long struggle to win that same freedom.

The junction of Halliwell Road and Blackburn Road looks a lot different today from what it did in 1896. The Waterloo pub, the corporation weighing machine and most of the rows of terraced houses in Waterloo Street and Moss Street have gone. The crowd on the Sunday morning assembled outside the weighing station, about 1000 persons listening to speeches by Joe Shufflebotham and Matt Phair. Shortly after 10 o'clock they set off up Halliwell Road, in no particular marching order. As they progressed through this densely built-up working-class area, thousands more flocked from the side streets off Halliwell Road to join in. Looking back on that morning over fifty years later in an interview with the *Bolton Evening News*, Mr B. F. Davies recollects:

"I have asked my wife what stands out most in her recollection of Eskrick Street (a street off Halliwell Road - P.S.). Ours was the memory of seeing crowds of men going up Halliwell Road on their way to re-establish the public right of way over Winter Hill. A week or two before this demonstration I myself had been turned off the disputed road; this had the effect of turning me from the family Toryism."

By the time the demonstration had reached the top of Halliwell Road - the Ainsworth Arms - it was estimated that at least 10,000 people were on the march. Who were they? The core of the marchers was undoubtedly drawn from the local socialists. They would have accounted for a couple of hundred. The vast majority of the marchers were local people from the Halliwell area - Eskrick Street, Horace Street, Brownlow Fold, Draycott Street. Many would have worked for Ainsworth in his bleach works; others were mill workers, engineers and bakery workers.



SKETCH MAP showing the route of the 1896 demonstration from Halliwell to Belmont via Winter Hill

Many colliers from the pits around Bolton in Horwich and Darcy Lever joined the march in their working clothes. The *Bolton Chronicle* of September 19th noted that "a number of men who bore the appearance of colliers were heard enquiring the way to Winter Hill as early as seven in the morning."

Following further speeches by Joe Shufflebotham at the Ainsworth Arms, the procession continued past Ainsworth's bleach works and the gates of Smithills Hall - surely a sore provocation to the Colonel! The *Bolton Journal's* reporter was clearly overwhelmed by the numbers

"The multitude far exceeded what had been anticipated. Looking from the top of the steep hill leading by the gates of Smithills Hall the sight was a magnificent one ... when the processionists emerged from the valley the road was literally a sea of faces, and the multitude comprised thousands of persons of all ages and descriptions." (Sept. 12th)

Eventually the throng reached the disputed gate on Coalpit Road. They were met by a small group of police under the charge of Inspector Willoughby and Sergeant Sefton, and some of Ainsworth's gamekeepers led by Joseph Walch and his son.

For a while, confusion seemed to reign. A man by the name of Entwistle addressed the crowd, asking if they knew that "they were rushing to eternity." He was met by catcalls, and Joe Shufflebotham, by now probably hoarse, took his place.

"We are not here this morning to speak about another world, but this world" Joe assured the crowd. What about Mr Ainsworth, who said the land was his and they had no right to pass over it? They had met to say to Messrs Ainsworth and Co. that they, the people of England, had a right to pass through, and would do (cries of "hear, hear" and applause). He advised the marchers that legal action could ensue, but they were to take care to keep to the footpath and avoid provocation. Solomon Partington had spoken in a similar vein earlier on, before the arrival of the main demonstration.

It was then, in the words of the *Bolton Chronicle* that "a scene of the wildest excitement occurred." A large group rushed at the gate and ...

"Amid the lusty shouting of the crowd the gate was attacked by powerful hands, and it is said a saw was also brought into requisition; but however this may be, short work was made of the wooden barrier, and with a ring of triumph the demonstrators rushed through onto the disputed territory."

In the melee, Inspector Willoughby was thrown over a low wall and Sergeant Sefton was hit by a stone. Walch's son, attempting to take the names of people he recognised, was knocked down and "kicked about the lower part of the body". He lost his notebook, hat and mackintosh into the bargain. Another gamekeeper who tried to use his stick on the marchers received a ducking in a nearby stream!

All this was a bit much for the Inspector. When he had picked himself up from his involuntary somersault, he sent a message to Halliwell Police Station for reinforcements. However, as little further trouble ensued, the order was countermanded and a 'wagonette' loaded with policemen was turned back on Halliwell Road before reaching the scene of the affray.

As the marchers proceeded along Coalpit Road, any obstruction or trespass sign got short shrift. However, Solomon Partington, writing in the *Chronicle* as 'Old Campaigner' noted

"Onward the leaders marched over the moor, a feature of the day's proceedings being the way all kept to the narrow pathway. Here and there vain attempts had been made to obliterate it." (Sept. 26th, 1896)

The march had its fair share of 'characters'. One, Thomas Almond of Draycott Street, Halliwell, was seen walking along with a heavy bible in his hand. He declared that he had brought it in the hope of meeting Colonel Ainsworth, to whom he would prove, from chapter 20 of the book of *Exodus*, that he had no moral right to lay claim to sole ownership of the moor. Partington laconically notes that "the longed-for opportunity did not arise." (Perusal of Chapter 20 of *Exodus* reveals nothing of the slightest relevance to land ownership or private property).

As the demonstration proceeded close to Scotchman's 'Stump' and began the descent towards Belmont an umbrella was opened out for a fund 'to defend the rights of the people' in the event of any prosecution. It took a total of £4 10s, mostly in coppers.

By now, most of the excitement was over. However, when the march reached Belmont the small rural community was certainly surprised. The *Bolton Journal* for Sept. 12th noted

"Thus ended a demonstration perhaps unprecedented in the history of Bolton, a great majority returning to the town, and the remainder besieging the local hostleries for refreshments. The demand was said to be so great that the wants of the hungry and thirsty ramblers could not be satisfied; and the appearance of such a mighty host naturally created much excitement in the village."

The *Chronicle* observed that many returned via the same route; in the meantime the landlord of the Wright's Arms did "a roaring business". "Altogether" it commented

"it was a scene to be remembered. Never in the lives of the present generations of Halliwellians, or probably any of their progenitors, has such a spectacle been witnessed in that district, and it is doubted whether its like will occur again"

That evening the socialists of the SDF and BSP held a mass meeting on the steps of Bolton Town Hall. No doubt they celebrated their success afterwards with pints in the BSP's club in Lorne Street. It was announced that a public meeting would be held that coming Tuesday evening at the Coffee Tavern on Bradshawgate to discuss the next moves, though plans were already in hand for a further march the following Sunday.

THE DISPUTED GATEWAY ON WINTER HILL



The above sketch, which is from the pen of Mr. Hilton Towers, shows the disputed gateway and road leading up to Winter Hill. The gate is missing, and also the notice post, the sketch having been made on the spot after the besieging crowd had passed over. The roadway to the left leads past Gilligan's farm, and is admittedly a public one.

From the Bolton Journal & Guardian, 26th September, 1896

4 'Extraordinary Developments Follow in Rapid Succession'

- Bolton Chronicle, September 19th, 1896

Bolton was now buzzing with excitement. The events of Sunday were virtually the sole topic of conversation in Bolton pubs, mills and factories. The local press - the *Evening News*, the *Chronicle* and the *Journal* - was full of it, with letters, editorial comment, news, stories and features.

The meeting on the Tuesday evening was well attended. William Hutchinson was elected to chair the meeting and the socialists were at pains to get as broad a representation as possible on the Defence Committee, which was formally established. "Now we wish to leave the matter in the hands of the people of Bolton" said Shufflebotham "so that the public, and Mr & Mrs Ainsworth in particular, could not say it was the socialists, and the socialists alone, who were testing the right of way." (*Justice*, Sept. 19th)

This was certainly an intelligent move on the part of the SDF. Subsequently, Ainsworth was to do his utmost to isolate the socialists from the much wider sympathy they had gained in the town. The meeting agreed to establish a defence fund, on the basis of the money they had already collected on the Sunday, and to hold a further demonstration that coming Sunday. Partington was elected Secretary, with Shufflebotham as Assistant Secretary. Hutchinson became Treasurer.

On the same evening, the BSP held their own meeting, at which it was agreed to support the coming Sunday's demonstration. Collecting sheets were obtained for the Defence Fund, and monies passed on to the SDF Treasurer. A song was commissioned, to be written by J Bell, with 5000 copies printed and sold at 1/2d each.

Sadly, printed copies of the song do not seem to have survived. It would seem to have been one of many compositions on the event; another (or it could have been the same) appeared in part in the *Bolton Journal* for September 12th:

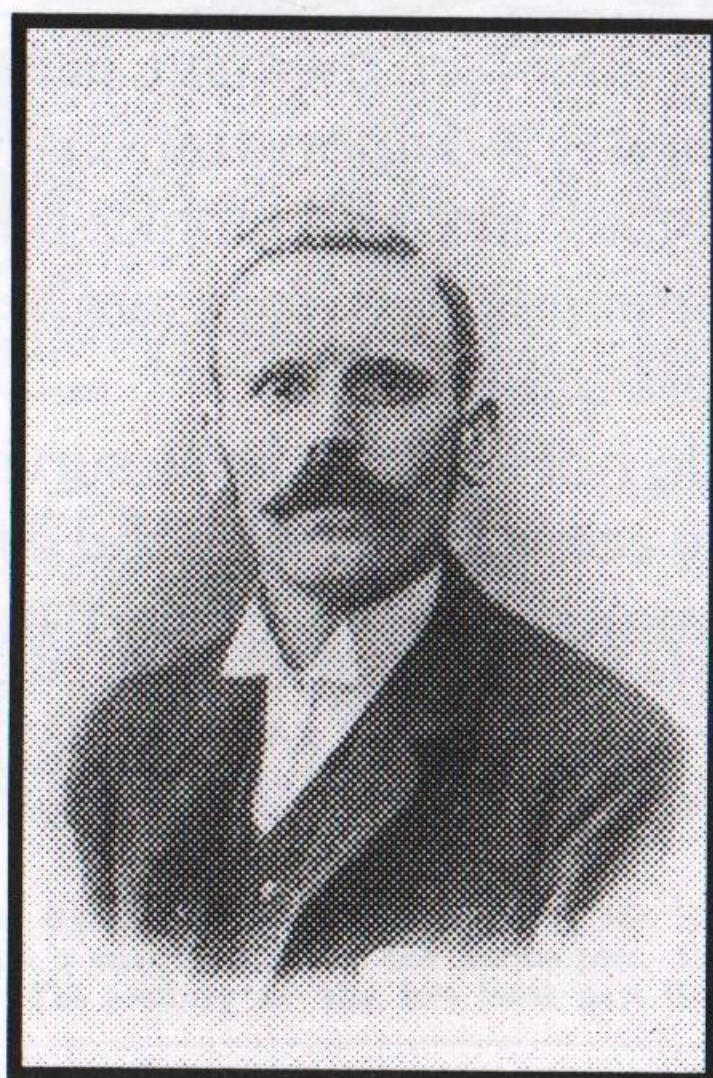
"O'er Winter Hill the people say
there's always been a right of way
where working folks could go and look
on heathered moor and rippling brook.
But one good Christian now, alas,
says 'O'er this moor you must not pass:
Tis mine!' But they in bold array
Walked o'er and this to him did say

Ta ra ra etc."

That's all that survives of it - it may have been the song written by Bell but it's impossible to say. What we do know, however, is that Allen Clarke, alias Teddy Ashton, published an excellent dialect sketch in his *Teddy Ashton's Journal*, which is reprinted in full at the back of this pamphlet. The main characters - Bill and Bet Spriggs, Patsy Filligan and Teddy Ashton himself - were the stock figures in his *Tum Fowt Sketches* which brought roars of laughter to many a Boltonian around the earlier part of this century. There is a great song in it, part of which runs as follows:

"Will Yo Come O Sunday mornin
Fo a Walk O'er Winter Hill
Ten Thousand went last Sunday
But there's room for thousands still
O the moors are rare and bonny
An the heather's sweet an fine
An the road across this hill tops
is the public's - yours and mine"

On the next Sunday, thousands more did come



Joseph Shufflebotham (left) and William Hutchinson

5 'A Huge But Peaceful Procession'

Bolton Chronicle, September 19th

The weather on the first Sunday had been fine, giving lovely views of the surrounding country from the top of Winter Hill. A further, unorganised, march took place on the Wednesday afternoon for those such as shop assistants who had the half-day off. The weather held and the hundreds on the afternoon march had a pleasant and unobstructed walk.

On the morning of the 12th they weren't so lucky. In the words of the *Chronicle* it was "miserably wet". Despite the rain, to which was soon added thunder and lightning, 2000 had gathered at the bottom of Halliwell Road by ten o'clock. The *Chronicle* reporter arrived to find

"a crowd of people of something like 2000 persons attentively listening to the speeches of socialist leaders, who were holding forth from the driver's box of a four-wheeler. Rain was still falling, but despite this fact the crowd increased in density every moment, Halliwell Road for a time being completely blocked. The utterances of the speakers were certainly interesting, if the language used was not always choice or judicious." (September 19th)

In the cab were Joe Shufflebotham, William Hutchinson, Tom Almond, Matt P'nair and J. Leyland. Each of them spoke, emphasising the peaceable nature of the demonstration and the need to keep to the path. One speaker interestingly challenged Ainsworth's title to the land, claiming that it was in fact "held by a poor woman in Bolton."

Once again, the procession was swelled tremendously by Halliwell people pouring out of the side streets to join in. Eventually, it was reckoned to be 12,000 strong. Most of them, according to the *Chronicle*, were "respectably attired, though some were in working garb, and young lads formed no inconsiderable part of the company. Females were few and far between."

Shufflebotham, writing in *Justice*, commented:

"Looking back on the serried phalanx of human pedestrians marching on and on with determined gait, the line stretched as far as the eye could see and it was computed that not less than 12,000 people were in this procession in the wet."

However, as they proceeded up Smithills Dean Road - at a cracking pace by all accounts - the sun broke through and produced 'a vast amount of perspiration'.

The 1982 Commemorative March



(Above) The 1982 march sets off from the bottom of Halliwell Road

(Below) Eagley Band leads it up Halliwell Road

(Top Right) The procession approaching the site of Smithills Hall, on Smithills Dean Rd

(Bottom Right) Benny Rothman, leader of the 1932 Kinder Trespass, on Coalpit Road

(photographs courtesy of Bolton Evening Post)



"Looking back on the serried phalanx of human pedestrians marching on and on with determined gait, the line stretched as far as the eye could see and it was computed that not less 12.000 people were in this procession in the wet." -

Joseph Shufflebotham



6 Ainsworth Acts

On the Saturday morning of the third demonstration, James Walch, son of Ainsworth's land agent, hurried round Bolton in a hansom cab delivering writs to ten persons 'forming part of a procession that passed over Col. Ainsworth's land on Sunday the 6th inst.' and warning others 'against so conducting themselves in future.' Clearly, the timing was intended to take the wind out of the sails of the afternoon's march. The defendants' names were as follows: William Hall, William Leyland, James Galloway, John Henry Bell, Alfred Burns, Thomas Almond, Solomon Partington, Matthew Phair, Joseph Shufflebotham and William Hutchinson.

In the event, 5000 turned up for the afternoon's procession. Partington explained the fall-off in numbers by pointing to the bad weather once again, the change of day, fear of prosecution and perhaps the toning-down of enthusiasm or waning of curiosity by some. Apparently a band had been booked - St Marie's - but they didn't turn up due to many of the players' being ill. Despite these setbacks, in Partington's words 'shorn of the merry strains of music the army marched at a pace which would put many a foot regiment to shame.' A slightly surreal touch was added to events later in the day. Two men joined the demonstration bearing 'sandwich boards' with inscriptions reading 'I am not going to have my grouse-shooting spoiled', 'trespassers will be prosecuted' and 'We demand the right of way over Winter Hill for ourselves and our children.' One detects the hand of Tommy Almond in this.

At the gate Inspector Willoughby was standing by, along with James Walch and a number of gamekeepers. The demonstration was not obstructed, but the police took the names of a number of marchers - mostly 'respectably dressed men' rather than the young lads on the march.

On the return of the demonstration many hundreds passed through Joe Shufflebotham's shop on Bath Street to read the writ. Perhaps he sold a few clog irons into the bargain. Be that as it may, Ainsworth now had the bit between his teeth and issued a further 32 writs to those whose names were taken on the Saturday. Despite the issue of the writs hundreds walked over the road on the Sunday and more names were taken. Joe Shufflebotham wrote in *Justice* for 26th September:

"On Sunday (i.e. the 20th) I took my wife and three children ... but about 200 were afraid of losing their names and turned back - but of course they were not socialists. No socialist can be afraid of paper warnings"

Ainsworth's solicitors, Holden and Holden, were used as an instrument to try and split the unity between socialists and non-socialists. The extra 32 who had writs issued were asked by the solicitor's clerk 'if they were socialists.' If the answer was in the negative they were informed that the writ would be withdrawn providing they didn't 'trespass' on Ainsworth's land again. By the 10th October seven or eight had 'begged pardon', and over the next few months more were withdrawn by Ainsworth, leaving the original ten.

A large public meeting was organised by the Defence Committee for Sunday September 30th in the Spinners' Hall. The veteran radical James Kirkman, then aged 79, took the chair. He himself had used the road regularly as a boy, and it had always been one of the favourite 'outs' for the weavers of the town. As recently as four or five years ago he had taken some town councillors over the road and had not been stopped. Press reports do not mention other speakers - presumably Shufflebotham, Partington and Phair would have spoken but it does not appear any outside speakers were invited. Kirkman's son, John, played a very active part in the campaign, despite having lost his wife early in September.

The Committee made a decision to discontinue the demonstrations and devote their energies to raising funds for the forthcoming trial at Manchester Chancery Court. Balshaw and Challinors were chosen as solicitors to represent their interests.

By late October there appears to have been a fall-off in direct activity around Winter Hill. However, the Committee did issue a number of appeals, including the map illustrated in this pamphlet. Certainly a branch of the Footpaths Preservation Society was formed by James Bleakley and a Mr Brown, as a spin-off from the events.

It was in the wider political sphere that developments now occurred. During the Autumn many leading figures of the socialist movement visited the town; Keir Hardie, H.M. Hyndman, Eleanor Marx and Edward Aveling, and many others. All the working-class political organisations were enjoying a boom in membership. An SDF branch report for October 31st in *Justice* comments: "Bolton is now an A1 Lancashire town for socialist propaganda ... hurrah for the revolution!"

Interestingly, a demonstration over Winter Hill took place on Christmas Day of 1896, with many hundreds taking part. A large force of police was on hand but the marchers did not go over the disputed road.

7 The Trial

The trial opened at Manchester Chancery Court on March 9th 1897 before Vice Chancellor Hall. Ainsworth was represented by Messrs Maberley and Grant, the ten' by Richard Pankhurst and Herbert Cunliffe. Mr Ormerod Evans 'held a watching brief' on behalf of Bolton Town Council. The object of Ainsworth's action was to restrain the ten from trespassing on Ainsworth's land 'especially that portion called Smithills Moor'.

Maberley claimed that Coalpit Road had been built by the Ainsworths to serve the pits at the start of the century. This in itself is questionable given the much earlier history of mining in the area; more likely Ainsworth could have widened and improved an already existing track. It was further asserted that keepers had long been employed to keep people off the moor - not in itself a contentious point, since the argument was over use of the road, not access onto all the moor. Similarly, Maberley's reference to a 'No Road' sign is not in itself a denial of public footpath rights existing. Maberley made much of the 'disturbances' on September 6th, and Hall certainly seems to have viewed the demonstration with displeasure, asking Pankhurst at one stage if he justified the SDF involvement.

A further highly questionable assertion was made when it was stated that Coalpit Road ended at a wall near Black Jack's; Maberley contended that public rights could not exist unless there was a connection between two public highways! Even Hall found that a bit hard to swallow. There was one amusing interlude when Maberley outlined the events on September 6th after the crowd had broken through the gate:

"When the people got there (*the start of the disputed part of Coalpit Road - P.S.*) they broke down the gate and went on to the track. They then lost the track on this alleged road to Winter Hill. A Mr Almond undertook to put them on the right track but instead of finding their way to Winter Hill they turned down on to the Winter Hill Road and made their way to Wright's Arms (laughter). That was the happiest day the publican had had for a long time, except for the following Sunday when there was another procession ..." (Report in *Bolton Journal*, 13th March 1897)

Pankhurst replied, challenging the prosecution's attempt to prejudice the case by making much of the SDF's involvement. If the road was private in every sense, even as a footpath, it seemed odd that there was a stile at the start of the disputed road near Gilligant's Farm. The wall which Maberley had referred to at Black Jack's - the council boundary wall, in fact - had, for many years, had steps over it and was an ancient, well-established footpath. Ainsworth had set out to close the path by stealth over a period of years. What it boiled down to was the Colonel's attitude of "I don't want my grouse-shooting spoiled". Pankhurst continued:

"... the path existed in olden times, and from time immemorial had been used by foot passengers openly and continuously, and there had been no interference with their rights. It was said that in the shooting season Colonel Ainsworth had had keepers there. The grouse-shooting was the secret of the whole matter, because along Coalpit Road there were places constructed where the marksmen might hide themselves while the brave birds were passing in order that they might kill them. It was quite obvious for sport of that kind that the public user of this road way would be very inconvenient." (*Journal*, 13th March 1897)

Witnesses were then called: 44 for the defence, 33 for the prosecution. What is quite remarkable, and excited much comment at the time, was the very high number of prosecution witnesses who either worked for Ainsworth or were his tenants.

The testimony of the numerous witnesses gives a fascinating picture of the social and industrial life on these moors in the nineteenth century. It would be impossible to cover all of them, but some stand out:

John Reynolds was the son of "Owd Reynolds" who had built Newspaper Hall. He referred to his father's practice of selling gingerbread, with free ale, to passing walkers.

James Kirkman, the old radical, recalls going on the moor as a boy. "When I was a boy there were no cheap trips, so we went on the moors and nobody interfered with us." Kirkman refers to 1842 when many houses in Bolton were empty because rents couldn't be paid due to a severe slump. Many like Owd Reynolds went on to the moor and built their own houses.

Joseph Bullough, a surveyor and 'nuisance inspector' for the Council, had known Coalpit Road all his life. His uncle was the old Rural Surveyor and he often used to accompany him up the road, past Black Jack's, over the wall and down to Belmont. Women frequently went up the road to pick whimberries and were sometimes warned off by the keepers. Bullough's uncle maintained that they had no right to do this since 'there were public roads there'.

Thomas Heaton, then aged 72, formerly lived at Hole Bottom Cottages as a child. His family was turned out of its cottage because his father struck some of Squire Andrews' (the landowner) voters off the voting list! He had used Coalpit Road without interruption for many years.

Charlie 'Beawt-Shirt' was an old beggar known to Heaton who also used the road regularly. He was so named because "if he was given a shirt one day, he would be 'beawt it' the next!"

William Fletcher, a bricklayer of Chorley, often used Coalpit Road and recalled a ladder over the boundary wall. It got broken and projecting stones were put there in its place. It was Fletcher who told the tale about Morris at Black Jack's throwing the pistol into the fireplace. He lived in a cottage near 'The Two Lads' for many years and sold gingerbread with ale himself. Once he ran out of ale and got a fresh supply from Owd Reynolds at Newspaper Hall. There were always plenty of people on the moor on Sundays and he could get shut of plenty of ale, especially at holiday times.

Virtually all the defence witnesses had personal recollections of using the road without hindrance. One, however - Henry Diggle, an engineer from Bolton - was stopped by a keeper in 1885. He was warned from going over the road but insisted on his right to do so. The keeper then replied "Seeing that you know the road I cannot stop you, but I beg you, for my sake, I am expecting Mr Ainsworth and a shooting party, not to loiter on the hill but hasten over, because if he should see you then it is more than my job is worth."

Other witnesses mentioned the great activity on the moor at the time of the Pike Fair, when hundreds would cross from Belmont for the junketings.

The prosecution witnesses are less colourful than some of the defences'. Most of them recalled warning people off the land and Luke Morris, son of Morris of Black Jack's, said that very few people used the road other than those coming to the cottage.

Samuel Farnworth, a mole keeper and watcher for Ainsworth - despite his age of 75 - recalled having been stopped when going over the wall at Black Jack's. Many of the witnesses who weren't directly employed by Ainsworth got occasional work as watchers, usually on Sundays.

During the hearing Hall decided he would visit Winter Hill personally. He took the train to Bolton and was then escorted by trap to the moors. It seems that Hall was not accustomed to the rough moorland country. In *Bolton's Augean Stable* Partington laconically describes the visit:

"That was a bad omen for the public claim when Vice Chancellor Hall decided to visit Smithills Moor on a murky, sloppy day, shod in what were virtually slippers ... Nothing but an adverse verdict was expected to the public when his Honour got his poor feet wet on that miserable day, and naturally costs followed the event."

Right at the end of the hearing Ainsworth's barrister produced evidence which suggested that he was not the direct owner of the land - only the trustee. This technicality - which, strictly speaking, should not have been accepted by the defence - helped win the day for Ainsworth.

In Grant's summing-up for the prosecution he denied any intention of Ainsworth and his progenitors to dedicate the road to the public, and the evidence of keepers stopping people on the road confirmed this. Pankhurst, in a summing-up which lasted for four-and-a-half hours, returned to the issue of the stile at Gilligant's. He accepted that the road was a private occupation road for carts going to and from the pits but there also clearly existed public footpath rights. Well before the building of the Belmont to Bolton road, Belmont village had been a busy handloom-weaving community. People would use the road to get to Bolton itself, to Dean, and to Rivington and Horwich. There had been continuous use of the path for a great number of years and this in itself gave the road public footpath status, regardless of any intention to dedicate on the part of the landowners.

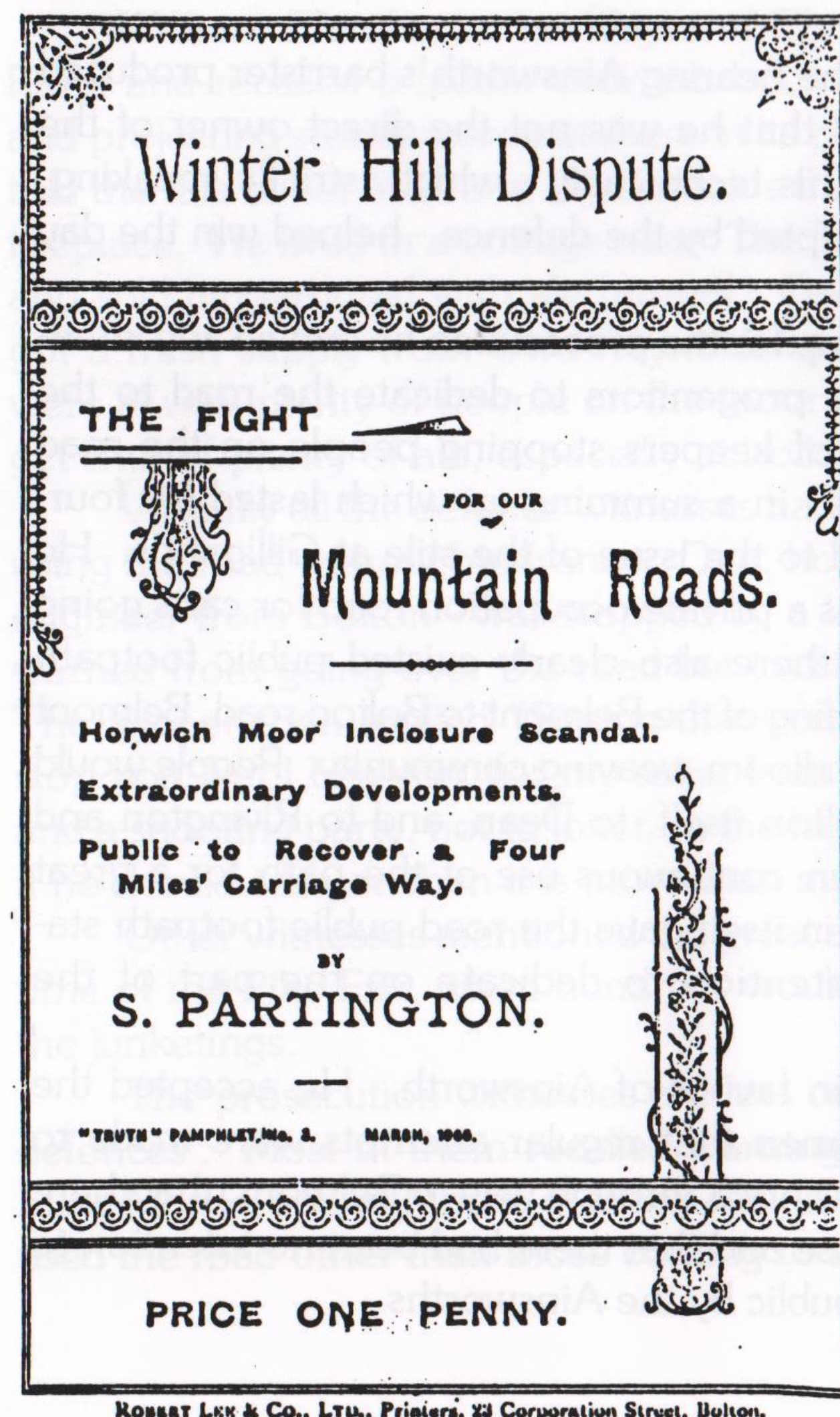
Hall's verdict went in favour of Ainsworth. He accepted the evidence of Ainsworth's men that regular attempts were made to stop people, that there was not a through way to Belmont, that there had been no continuous use and that there had been no intention to dedicate the road to the public by the Ainsworths.

The ten men had injunctions served on them restraining them from 'trespassing' on Ainsworth's land. Two, Partington and Hutchinson, had costs awarded against them, totalling over £600.

Records in the *Evening News* office say this of the sequel:

"On the immediately following days, particularly on the Sunday, hundreds of people made their way to the junction of the roads and the points of the dispute were eagerly discussed. It was noticeable that tenants on the Estate and at Colonel Ainsworth's works made a general display of flags and bunting."

In the words of Solomon Partington "a characteristic epidemic of pity" broke out on the estate, "a sure sign of weakness, overweening vanity and obstinacy, proof that King Ainsworth was not embarrassed either by twinges of conscience or a sense of shame." (*Bolton's Augean Stable*, p.22)



The cover of the third in Partington's series of Truth pamphlets

8 When The Dust Had Settled

The lapse of time between the September events and the actual court case had allowed a waning of enthusiasm. The Defence Committee was unable to maintain the enthusiasm and mass activity which it had sustained in the autumn. When the case went against them it appears to have led to a collapse of morale and little further cash was actually raised, despite widespread sympathy for Partington and Hutchinson.

However, Partington was made of sterner stuff and he wasn't to be cowed. Over the next twenty years he was to be a nagging thorn in the side of Colonel Ainsworth. He produced his series of six *Truth* pamphlets examining rights of way over the Bolton moorlands and a countless number of letters and articles in the Bolton papers attacking Ainsworth and others like him.

The *Truth* pamphlets are fascinating pieces of research but must be read with extreme caution. Partington amassed a large amount of historical material which he throws at the reader in a completely unstructured shape, drawing conclusions which simply don't follow from his own facts! He could, using the material he had, develop a strong case over the closure of well-used roads which were undoubtedly public - Lomax Wives Road, Forest Road, Moorgate Road and many others. Unfortunately, Partington suffered from a surfeit of historical imagination, so that the ancient 'Houghton Causey', referred to in the Halliwell Township books, is by a Partingtonian sleight of hand transformed into Coalpit Road! At other times, Lomax Wives Road becomes the 'Causey'. In fact, it is questionable as to whether Houghton Causey went anywhere near this area at all, and no proof one way or the other has ever been produced.

On the other hand, the *Truth* pamphlets are masterpieces of withering invective against Ainsworth, landowners in general, and a town council which was either supine or positively corrupt in its handling of the rights of way questions at the time. They do, also, reveal a wealth of historical research and knowledge by Partington.

The council did appoint a Committee of Investigation to look into the whole issue, and Partington submitted his fourth *Truth* pamphlet as an open letter to the committee. It was published in 1900 and amidst his vaporisings on Houghton Causey he makes several sound suggestions, including the re-opening of Coalpit Road and re-opening of the road past Lomax Wives towards Longworth Clough as a public footpath. The road through Moss Bank and Barrow Bridge should also be claimed as a public road (it eventually was) and, more generally, he suggests that the moors as a whole should be purchased by the town. By May 1901 the Committee had not reached any decision - indeed, it hadn't met since August! This resulted in Partington's most caustic statement yet - his fifth *Truth* pamphlet, *Bolton's Augean Stable*, in which he well and truly turns his guns on the council:

"For nearly five years" he fulminated, "we have been treated with unprecedented meanness and malignity by the Town Council and its minions ... Will the Council any longer hesitate? Animated by the proper spirit it will not. At any rate it will be an ineffaceable blot upon the escutcheon of the people of Bolton should they permit it."

Ainsworth comes in for a lashing; he is compared to George III: "the soul of a despot without the vision of a wise despot; he loved a tyranny that was petty and mean; was strong in will and not squeamish about his methods" and further on is the passage quoted at the end of the previous chapter.

Partington goes on to suggest a new campaign - more mass demonstrations over Coalpit Road and the running of 'right of way' candidates in the local elections. However, Partington was very much an individualist and would not be tied to any organisation. The work behind the 1896 action was done by the SDF and BSP; one individual could not hope to mobilise the sort of forces they did. No demonstrations took place, but Partington himself was elected on to the Council in 1904 on a 'rights' platform. Before that, however, the Council Investigation Committee had finally ended its enquiries, and to all intents and purposes supported Ainsworth! Perhaps the occasionally intemperate language of *Augean Stable* had prejudiced some of the councillors against Solomon. We do not know.

However, when in 1914 the Council tried to take powers to close some footpaths on Turton Moor, it got its fingers burnt. The outcry was so great, with numerous references to 'another Winter Hill' that they had to back down.

Some of Partington's work on the Council did bear fruit. In his pamphlet *My Three Years' Councillorship for West Ward* he refers to the Council's Streets Committee as "to a man, Tory, Liberal and Labour, for the assertion of public rights". Cllr Gillow, a Tory, is singled out as 'an equally zealous colleague' on rights of way issues. Clearly a major change had occurred since 1896. In the same pamphlet he accuses the Council in those days of "truculency, class favouritism, corruption, exemplified by the Caucus and Tammanyism rampageous in this borough in 1896/7".

The £300 owed by Partington remained a festering sore for him; frequent letters to the press allude to the question of the costs arising from the court case. He tried long and hard to get the Council to pay the outstanding costs - on the legitimate grounds that he had been acting in the public interest. He never got any money and as far as can be ascertained he and William Hutchinson had to find the money for themselves.

Partington carried the banner of radical liberalism, in alliance with Dr Thornley, in the Council Chambers up to his retirement in 1911. He kept up the barrage against Ainsworth, and in 1909 got national press coverage for his campaign. An article in *The Daily News* for September 24th publicised Partington's claim that Smithills Moor had never been legally enclosed:

"Dr Thornley JP and Mr Partington, both members of the Town Council, have most zealously studied the question of ownership, examining old rate books, maps, histories, etc., and their conclusion that the land has never been legally enclosed seems to be borne out by the Board of Agriculture."

In fact the moor had been in private hands long before Peter Ainsworth bought it in 1801. The neighbouring Horwich Moor was indeed enclosed in 1815, but Partington here seems to have been barking up the wrong tree. Little more was heard of the issue in the press.

He kept up the pressure on Ainsworth until his retirement from the Council in 1911. He moved to Grange over Sands and later to Silverdale. Partington had many faults as a politician and even more as a historian; nonetheless he was a deeply honest man and was even known in Leigh as 'the children's friend.' He belongs to that honourable tradition of British radicalism stretching back to the Diggers and Levellers of the seventeenth century, to Tom Paine, and to the Chartists. Yet alongside the relatively 'modern' socialist politics of Joe Shuffelebotham he seems almost an anachronism; indeed, radical liberalism had become a spent force by the First World War.

The Bolton right of way movement was neither a total failure nor massive success. The mass movement of 1896 died off, being channelled into legal battles fought out on the hostile terrain of the British legal system. Apart from the Christmas Day demonstration, there was little organised activity in the run-up to the trial. The demonstrations of September certainly gave a shot in the arm to the local socialist movement; both the SDF and the ILP made major gains in terms of votes and membership. Probably the key to the success of the left in mobilising so many thousands had been their commitment to a broad, united mass campaign, obviously including many non-socialists like Partington. However, that unity was always fragile and Ainsworth's supporters identified this as the 'weak link' in the right of way movement.

It seems that after the March 1897 judgement the SDF backed out of the struggle leaving Hutchinson and Partington to soldier on with the burden of costs. Little further reference to the issue appears in the minute books of the Bolton Socialist Party after January 1897. In October the Party regrets the position the two men are in, but does not commit any funds in their favour.

One of the problems of the 1896 campaign was that it emerged almost as a spontaneous movement in response to Ainsworth's action. The support which the SDF and BSP built up during September amazed themselves and everyone else. Once they had won the support they did not know what to do with it. The obvious course would have been to build a mass 'rights of way movement' in Bolton and the other northern towns. Instead, the struggle was confined to Bolton and became narrowed down into a legal battle over use of Coalpit Road. In contrast, the Kinder Trespass of 1932 was part of a planned mass movement over 'access' waged by the British Workers' Sports Federation.

9 Happy End?

One hundred years after the 'extraordinary events' of 1896, the people of Bolton enjoy unrestricted access to Winter Hill. In June 1996 Bolton Council declared Coalpit Road a public right of way. This was celebrated in September 1996 with a weekend of events culminating in a mass procession over Winter Hill.

The journey from 1896 to today is a long and complicated one. The demonstrations of 1896, though their memory remained in the popular consciousness of successive generations of Boltonians, did not get the historical recognition which, for example, the Kinder Scout Mass Trespass of 1932 received. The events of 1896 were 're-discovered' through the author's reading of Allen Clarke's *Moorlands and Memories*, which contained a short account of the demonstrations. This led to further research in the local press, and enough material was found to justify a talk on the subject to Bolton People's History Group, at Wood Street Socialist Club in June 1982.

After the talk, local railwayman Harvey Scowcoft suggested a commemorative march. This was agreed, and a small committee was formed to progress the idea. We expected perhaps a couple of hundred, if we were lucky. In the end, nearly 2000 marched over Winter Hill on September 5th 1982, accompanied (at least as far as Moss Bank Way) by Eagley Band and Rivington Morris. Amongst us were Benny Rothman, leader of the Kinder Scout Mass Trespass, comedian Mike Harding, and Geoffrey Hutchinson, great grandson of William Hutchinson. Before setting off up Halliwell Road, a few speeches were made by a strange mixture of folk. Neil Duffield of Bolton Trades Council rubbed shoulders with Jessica Lofthouse, the late authoress and rambler. Andrew Bennet MP spoke, together with Chris Hall of *Countryman* magazine. The *Bolton Evening News* laconically noted that some speeches 'were of an obviously political nature'.

In the run-up to September 5th a play was written by Les Smith about the events of 1896, in the style of a Victorian melodrama. Street theatre events took place in the Town Hall Square, with a ferocious Colonel Ainsworth, played by actor James Hennessy, terrifying the occupants of Macdonald's burger bar. Other luminaries of Bolton Socialist Club 'did their bit': Denis and Wendy Pye, Paul Blackburn, and Stefanie Astin as the delectable heroine. So sad to say, Stefanie died in 1994.

Nat Clare, who enjoyed the unenviable distinction of being the author's table prefect at school, put the words of *Will Yo' Come O' Sunday Mornin'?* to music, and a gradely job he did of it too, which is more than could be said of his distribution of custard. Neil Duffield built the gate, and Eileen Murphy directed the show. It were a reet good do. The whole thing was organised on a shoestring. We didn't have a penny of public funding, and the cost of printing posters and leaflets, and paying for the band, was met through a bucket collection on the day. I think it raised about £147!

After 1982 the story goes into abeyance. It was hard work organising the event, and the idea of having a commemoration every year was not greeted with enthusiasm. However, we agreed to give it a go in 1996. That seemed a long way off and we could all get on with other things in our lives. People like Don Lee and Benny Rothman made sure no-one forget about the promise, and a meeting was convened at - where else? - Bolton Socialist Club to discuss ways of organising things. We managed to discuss the arrangements for celebrating Walt Whitman Day, on May 31st, at the same meeting!

The 1996 organisation has been a lot more professional, and respectable, than the 1982 effort. Bolton Council have been enormously helpful, and Halliwell City Challenge team have given the whole event a major boost through media relations and funding. Councillor Stuart Murray has acted as secretary of the 'Winter Hill 100 Committee' and proved himself a worthy successor to Solomon Partington. To what higher accolade could any politician aspire? In Partington's words, 'his heart never quailed, his zeal was always sustained'.

Don Lee played an important part in persuading, cajoling and bullying Bolton Council to adopt Coalpit Road as a public right of way. In the end, they did it without telling him! Jacqueline Dagnall has worked tirelessly to get Bolton Council to recognise the importance of the events of 1896, with obvious success. Joan Manville and Shirley Marsland have done brilliant work to ensure the success of the 1996 commemoration, 'their energy did not abate when others became lukewarm and absented themselves from meetings'! So many more people have helped in different ways: the Octagon Young People's Theatre, the Halliwell Community Theatre Group, Bolton Mountain Rescue Team, and very many more.

1996 will soon fade into obscurity, and people will get on with enjoying the moors without obstruction or impediment. There'll be plenty more things to keep the malcontents and trouble-makers of Bolton Socialist Club busy, be it road protests, limiting the damage of rail privatisation, the on-going fight for rights of way both locally and in other parts of 'forbidden Britain', or any number of other equally important causes. All power to their elbows!



Colonel Ainsworth and his faithful gamekeeper harangue shoppers outside Bolton's Wimpy Bar in 1982 ... or was it just a cheap publicity stunt for Les Smith's play?

10 Halliwell as it is and as it will be

A hundred years on you would expect Halliwell to look a lot different since the time of Shufflebotham and Partington. Funnily enough, it doesn't look that much altered. The long straggle of terraced houses, punctuated by the occasional pub or shop, is still there. As you climb up the road you can still see Falcon Mill looming ahead, with the view of the moors enticingly beyond. A lot of the mills have gone and no longer can you stand at the top of Smithills Dean and get the awesome panorama of dozens of chimneys shooting up from the streets below. With the closure of the mills, a lot of the jobs which sustained life in Halliwell have gone. They have been partly replaced by low-paid employment in the 'service sector' and a variety of jobs characteristic of the 1980s and 1990s: bad working conditions, poor wages, no union, no security.

Halliwell is poor. Government would have us believe that poverty is a thing of the past, but it is a living reality for many Halliwell residents suffering from unemployment, low pay and the hardship of living on welfare benefits. In this sense, nothing much has changed. Poverty is relative, and certainly people are better off in some ways than in 1896, but a lot of the injustices Partington, Shufflebotham, Sarah Reddish and their comrades fought against are still there.

Yet there's something very special about Halliwell Road. It has a definite culture which you can compare with the strong community identities of, say Belfast's Falls and Shankill Roads, parts of Liverpool 8, and some of the proud working class communities of Glasgow and inner London. Unlike some urban communities, it is a mixed culture, with a large Asian population living alongside white neighbours. It has its share of racism like anywhere else, but it doesn't seem to permeate the area as it does, depressingly, in some places.

It isn't all gloom and despondency. Some positive things are happening which are starting to put new life back into the community. Bolton's City Challenge is centred on Halliwell and has led to 1,250 new jobs in the area. Some of the surviving mills, rather than be demolished, have been refurbished with good quality work space provided. Over £1.5 million has been spent on Halliwell Mill. Another 13 mills in the area have been refurbished and given a new lease of life. It is planned to link them up as part of a fibre-optic telematics network, which will take the mills into the next century.

The Tonge Valley, adjacent to Halliwell, is being redeveloped for business, industrial, and leisure purposes and is ideally located to provide jobs for Halliwell people.

In any major regeneration project such as City Challenge it is easy for the needs of the local community to be side-lined and ignored. This isn't, fortunately, happening in Halliwell. City Challenge has recognised that the level of community involvement in the area has been low, and is working with local people to change that. A Community Forum has been established which will play a major role in bringing communities together and initiating activity. It has representation on the City Challenge Executive with full voting rights. In addition, a Halliwell Fund has been set up to provide resources for self-help initiatives managed by the community and voluntary sector.

City Challenge will not usher in Utopia. But it is helping to turn round the fortunes of an area which has suffered more than its fair share of deprivation. If it can be the catalyst for further development into the twentieth-first century which combines good quality employment with a pleasant, human environment and an active, involved community, it will have achieved a success which is rare in inner-urban areas.



Appendix

Bill Spriggs an Patsy Filligan o'er Winter Hill Likewise Bet by Teddy Ashton

I went o'er to Blackpool on a day-trip to fot' Bill Spriggs back. I fun him havin a camel-ride on t' sands wi Mayor Card'll and six teawn councillors, just after some roarin adventures on t' Big Wheel; but that tale yo shall have later on.

"Come off that bloomin' camel, Bill" says I "an horry back to Trotterteawn wi me: for there's desperate fun gooin on, an it's thy duty, as a Tum Fowter to be in it!"

"What's up this time?" axed Bill.

So I towed him abeaut Winter Hill, an heaw Colonel Ainsworth an his happy men were tryin to stop gradely folk fro' gooin across t'moors.

"That'll never do" said Bill. "Th' public mun have reaum for their honest feet. I'll come an willin. A wed chap fears neither police nor prison."

We'll, Mayor Card'll an t' six councillors tried to persuade Bill to stop wheer he were; but he wouldn't be coaxed.

"Neow, neow" says Bill, "duty fust, Blackpool second."

Then Mayor Card'll an t'six councillors pood their pocket handketchers eaut an wept-wi one eye on t' November elections. While they were wipin their noble een Bill an me slip away, and were soon on eaur road back to Trotterteawn as fast as the L & Y could carry us: which is abeaut as swift as Tommy Piggy's courtin, what's been walkin a girl eaut ten year neauw, an seeams no ner t' weddin yet.

As t' train flew alung at a wonderful snail-gallop I towed Bill th' history o' t' Winter Hill affair; heauw Colonel Ainsworth claimed t' road as his, an heauw t' public said it were a public road an allus had been; an heauw Colonel Ainsworth put a gate up an a sign, an heauw a creawd o' folk t'other Sunday upset that gate and scattered that sign to t' four winds of heaven an t' thirty-nine winds o' Winter Hill; and heauw Colonel Ainsowrth were gooin t' prosecute t'ringleaders; an heauw t'public said they'd have their road an t' Winter Hill road too, an' wouldn't be done eawt of a footpath by Colonel Ainsworth or any other mon, nor wife an chaplain noather.

"This'll never do" said Bill. "I've run up that road mony a time to get away fro' eaur Bet's rowlinpin; an is one o' my best roads of escape fro' matrimony to be snitched off me i' this landlord fashion? Never! I'll stick up for my reets if I dee for it as lung as I live!"

"Go lad! Bill" said I, "theau't a gradely good patriot."

"Neaw look here, Teddy" said Bill, "durn't be cawin me no names. A bit o' friendly chaff's aw reet, but there's such a thing as gooin too far, as Muggy Rinkle said when he seet off for Moses Gate and geet in a hexpress train fust stop Salford, an as Colonel Ainsworth said when he put his bloomin gate up. Durn't caw me that name no mooar, Teddy."

"But it's a compliment" said I.

"Aw reet" said Bill, "say no mooar."

We geet in Trotterteawn by dinner-time or theerabouts.

"We mun hunt up Patsy Filligan" said Bill. "He mun have his feet i' this job."

"He's been ill" said I.

"I know" said Bill "but he'll be weel enoof for this merry game. Patsy's only ill when there's hard wark knockin abeaut."

We fun Patsy readin Smiles' *Self-Help* in t' coal-hole, an he greeted us wi sweet smiles.

"Look here Patsy" said Bill, "we're gooin t' do summat for eaur fellow-men this afternoon. There's a road wants makin' over Winter Hill. Thee an me's just geet t'feet t'do it wi. Joe Shufflebottom's been an tried, but though he manages to put his toes in a lot o' things, his sole's not big enoof for this job. He's left a mark on Winter Hill wheer he's walked, but he's no feet for makin a public highway, has he hek as like! So thee an me ull do it, Patsy! Put on thy biggest shoon an come alung!"

Patsy jumped up and skrieked "Filliloo! boys! Is it agen' the landlords ye're goin? Then I'm one of ye - nay, I'm a dozen of ye! If it's anythin agen a landlord, I'm in it! My great shoes, Bridget: the pair wid the howlin hobnails! - the pair that'll do for either dancin on a landlord or his land!"

"Let's have a bit o' dinner fust" said Bill.

"Where's the belabourin Betsy?" asked Patsy.

"Left her at Blackpool" said Bill.

"Doesn't she know you've come?" asked Patsy.

"Neow" said Bill wi a grin; "it doesn't do to let wives know too much neawadays."

After dinin' on red-herrins an coffee we seet off for Winter Hill; takkin t' tram up Halliwell Road. We'd a job to get Patsy's shoon in t'tram; an once we thowt he'd ha't poo 'em off, an have 'em sent after us on a lurry; but at last we managed to squeeze 'em through t' doorhole after rubbin 'em weel wi a peaund o' tallow candles.

We geet off t' tram at th' Ainsworth Arms an walked bouldly up Halliwell Road. When we reiched t' top we had five minutes rest an a smook. Then Patsy tightened his shoe-laces an we seet off again.

"There's nobody abeaut" said Bill, "we han it to eaurself. It's bonny up here, isn't it? It's a dal shame that anybody should try to keep t'folk off this pleasant stretch o' moor. Is a mon to have noather freish air nor nice walks because he's poor? What reet's any one mon to aw this, I'd like to know? Owd Ainsworth will have a job to get through t'needle's eye o Scriptor wi aw this on his back, weren't he? No one mon owt to have mooar land than he con look after wi his own honds. Come on Patsy, bring them little feet forrud, and we'll soon make a road."

We went on past t' place wheer t' gate an sign had been pood deaun; but met nobody. Then we looked behind and seed two fellows comin after us. We sat deaun an waited on em.

"Yo're trespassin" said one on em, as soon as they geet up to us.

"So are yo" said Bill, "be off wi you whum."

"We're Mester Ainsworth's men" said t'chap.

"I'm sure yo're noan God Awmighty's men" said I, "if looks is owt to goo by."

Th' chaps stared an said it were no use fawin eaut.

"It would be a bad job for you if you did" said Patsy, glancin deaun at his feet. Th' men looked at Patsy's shoon an fair dithered. Then one of em went on to say wi a wink, that they geet three bob a day to come an tak t' names o' trespassers, an they were farmers, but this were a better job, an they hoped t' bother would last a lung while, an they'd tak it as a favour if Bill an Patsy would give em their names, just to show they were doin summat for their money.

Bill an Patsy lowfed. "We're happy to oblige yo" said Bill.

"Yo can have our names wid pleasure" said Patsy. "It'll do your master good to see 'em. Out wid your book an write 'em down."

"Will you write 'em deawn for us?" said one of t' chaps, pooin' eaut a penny note book.

"Why?" said Patsy.

"Because noather of us two con read or write."

Well, at this confession we aw lowfed till we freetent a million grouse away.

"That's rich" said I, "gettin three bob a day to tak names, an corn't write! I think yo'd better tell yore gaffer that it would look better on him to spend his brass i' education an noan i' blockin foot-paths up. Heawever, bring yore book here."

They gan me t' book an I wrote deaun Bill Spriggs M.P., Patsy Filligan, gent, and Teddy Ashton, author.

"Neauw give your mestur them names" said I "an watch him oppen his een when he sees 'em. Good afternoon."

An on we went; an I sung t' followin song I'd made for th' occasion, Bill and Patsy jeinin t' chorus wi aw their din.

Will Yo Come O Sunday Mornin?

Will yo come o Sunday mornin
For a walk o'er Winter Hill?
Ten thousand went last Sunday
But there's room for thousands still!
O the moors are rare an bonny
An the heather's sweet an fine
An the road across the hill tops
Is the public's - yours an mine

Chorus - So come o Sunday mornin
For a walk o'er Winter Hill
Ten thousand went last Sunday
But there's room for thousands still
Oh shame upon the landlord
That would thrutch us up in town!
Against such Christless conduct
We will put our feet firm down!
Ay we'll put our feet down strongly
Until we've clearly showed

Twenty thousand feet each Sunday
Can soon mark out a road!
Must poor folk stroll in cinders
While the rich cop all the green?
Is England's but the landlords?
Who locks up each pretty scene?
If they only could these tyrants
Would enclose the road to heaven!
So let us up an fight 'em
Even seventy times and seven!

Chorus - So come o Sunday mornin
For a walk o'er Winter Hill
Ten thousand went last Sunday
But there's room for thousands still

"Is aw that eaut o' thy own yead, Teddy?" asked Bill.

"Ay" I said, "eaut o' my own yead an t' dictionary."

"I durn't think Ainsworth's a bad soart" said Bill. "I darsay if us three went an talked to him ..."

"We'll consider it" said I.

We geet deawn to Wright's Arms, an were busy at t' pump, when we yerd a greight din on t' moor. Lookin reaund we seed a chap that looked like Col Ainsworth's chaplain - fleein as if for his life. Then aw at once a woman coom i' seet, chasin him. Hoo had a rowlin-pin in her hand. It were Bet Spriggs i' search of her husband.

Bill an Patsy crept eaut o' their hidin-places an watched Bet chase t' parson-lookin chap.

"By gum!" said Bill, "eaur Bet's on t' job too, Patsy. If hoo gies that fellow just one whack wi t' rowlin-pin he'll feel that he's been wed twenty year, by gow, will he!"

"She's a-doin it beautiful" said Patsy. "Notice the elegant trotters she has for runnin, Bill. Let us go to her. Ye needn't fear the missis today, Bill; for all appearances point to the happy circumstance that she is on our side. I believe she has come to help us an not to oppose us."

"I think Patsy's reet for once" said I.

Th' mon as Bet were after were neaw hawe-a-mile away, an Bet gan up t' pursuit. Hoo hadn't wind enoof.

Bill an Patsy an me went up to Bet.

"I compliment ye, Mrs Spriggs" said Patsy.

"I'll talk to thee in a bit" said Bet; then to Bill, "What are ta doin up here?"

We coom a makin a highway" said Bill, "public duty."

"Mooar like public-heause duty" said Bet. "Owt for an excuse for a gallivant an a spree. Makin a highway, eh? Such characters as thee an t' company theau keeps con make nowt but a low way, I'm certain."

At this peint up coom t' two men that had tan Bill's name, an Patsy's an mine.

"They'n took Bill's name" said I to Bet.

"Han they" said Bet, "then they better give it him back un be sharp abeaut it."

"I think so too, Bet" said I. "For it's t' name he gan thee when he wed thee; an if they tan it an keep it, wheer will theau be?"

"Noan much wuss off" said Bet, "for he gan me nowt but his name when I wed him. Heawever ..."

"We want yore name, missus" said one o t' chaps to Bet.

"Oh, done yo?" said Bet. "Wheer will ta have it, eh? In t' yerhole or across t' jaw? Tak thy feaw face whoam an keep it theer for th' health o' thy country. It's enoof to gie one t' diarrhoea."

"I want yore name" said t' chap. "Ye've no reet here."

"Who says so" demanded Bet.

"Colonel Ainsworth."

"Fot him here an I'll talk to him" said Bet. "Theau't noan havin my name. Hastn't ta geet one o' thy own? What done they caw thee on they own hearthstone? Bug-peawder, wha? Goo and dreawn thysel an do a good turn to thy wife an family if theau has one. Be off neaww, while theau't safe". An Bet pood her rowlin-pin eaut.

"Why, it's Bet Spriggs!" gasped booath o t' men at once, an seet off runnin like Owd Ned's racin-dugs. They never stopped till they geet to Rivinton Pike.

"Well Bet" said I, "Come on an I'll trate thee. Theau't a brick."

"Aw reet, Teddy" said Bet, "come on, Bill. Thee an me agrees for once, so's heaw; theau't in t' reet on it to come across t' moors. I durn't see why anybody should want to stop us. Yo seed that chap as I were after wi t' rowlin-pin? Let's get sid deawn, an I'll tell yo aw abeaut it; it's a rare tale. Come on, Bill, I'll let thee off to-day, seein as theau's shown a bit o' pluck."

"He put a bowd front on" said I. "Has to forgeet that do, Bill?"

Bill grinned.

"Oh, but I've summat to settle wi him yet" said Bet. "Abeaut that big wheel at Blackpool. But we'll let it stond o'er for to-day. Come on, Teddy."

T'Moor

Cum! wandther foak o'er memrie's stile
Un make yer road up Coalpit loan
No lunger is it Ainsworth's pile
It's mine un yores, eaur very own!

Treyd pads lung clooast tu common feet
Weer warkin men fund't bar unt gate
Weer brids wer bred fert guns ut rich
Unt mesther held his heigh estate

Twer men like Partington un Hutch
Aye! un Shufflebottom un aw.
Who fowt fert reet to treyd th'owd moor
Un tak ther rest bit dreigh stooan waugh.

It's neaw nigh on uh hunthert yer
sin't trespass storr'd up Bowton Teawn
Un fot Keir Hardie, Hyndman, Eleanor Marx
Un other foak uh greyt reneawn

But ordinary foak like me un thee
back't tut th'hilt eaur trespass lads
Un paid ther fines un sowdger't on
Tu finally free eaur moorland pads

Se neaw wi may, in eaur own good time
Wandther heigh oer Winter Hill
Tu stond in't th'awf-leets solitude
Un harken layrock's sweetnin trill

Wi con lie in't dawn's faint risin glow
Watch't rappits skither i ther play
Un make eaur thanks tut feightin lads
Who made th'owd moor uh reet uh way

So gather reawnd, yo Bowton foak
Fust Sunday come September time
Let mony un theaw-sund lay uh foot
Weer walkin once't wer cawd uh crime.

Brian Clare

