Upon this Rock: The Organisation and Identity of the

Peterborough Divisional Labour Party, 1900-1951

A *Spatial-institutionalist* Approach

Contents

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Abbreviations

ASE – Amalgamated Society of Engineers

ASLEF – Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen

ASRS – Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants

BSP – British Socialist Party

CLP – Constituency Labour Party

CPGB – Communist Party of Great Britain

CVLU – Colne Valley Labour Union

CW – Common Wealth

DLP – Divisional Labour Party

ECALSHU – Eastern Counties Agricultural Labourers and Small Holders Union

EMRC – East Midlands Regional Council

GMC – General Management Committee

GNR – Great Northern Railway

IDTC – Ipswich and District Trades Council

ILP – Independent Labour Party

IWCE – Independent Working-Class Education

JP – Justice of the Peace

LCM – Labour College Movement

LRC – Labour Representation Committee

LRL – Labour Representation League

MB – Municipal Borough

NALU – National Agricultural Labourers Union

NARWC – Northamptonshire Agricultural and Rural Workers' Council

NCC – Northamptonshire County Council

NEC – National Executive Committee

NFWW – National Federation of Women Workers

NFTC – Northampton Federation of Trades Councils

NUAW – National Union of Agricultural Workers

NUBSO – National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives

NUBSRF – National Union of Boot and Shoe Rivetters and Finishers

NUJ – National Union of Journalists

NUR – National Union of Railwaymen

PDLU – Peterborough District Labourers' Union

PLP – Parliamentary Labour Party

PPC – Prospective Parliamentary Candidate

PSS – Peterborough Socialist Society

PTUC – Peterborough Trades Union Council

RCA – Railway Clerks' Association

RD – Rural District

SDF – Social Democratic Federation

SLP – Socialist Labour Party

SPCC – Soke of Peterborough County Council

TDTLC – Thrapston and District Trades and Labour Council

TGWU – Transport and General Workers' Union

TUC – Trades Union Congress

UD – Urban District

WU – Workers' Union

Abstract

Labour's sub-national organisational and ideological development has been under-theorised. This thesis addressed this gap via the construction and application of a novel *spatial-institutionalist* framework focusing on four key areas of analysis (i.e., party emergence and formation; party organisation; candidate and organiser selection; and policy *curation* and *issue positioning*). The previously overlooked Peterborough Divisional Labour Party (DLP) from 1898 to 1951 was used as the case study and was examined within a multi-scaled context. Thus, the organisational and ideational character of the Peterborough DLP was distilled via spatial iterations (i.e., national, regional, and local) of Labour's development. This exercise revealed the distinctness of the Peterborough case to be located in its formation at the crossroads of reforms and re-organisation (i.e., the 1917-1918 Boundary Commission and Review, 1918 Representation of the People Act, and Labour's 1918 Constitution) whose effects, particularly the extensive redrawing of divisional boundaries that melded urban (the City of Peterborough) and rural (the Soke of Peterborough and North Northamptonshire) spaces together, permeated the *practices* of the Peterborough DLP from its inception and throughout the period under study.

Industrial change in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw the coming of significant railway and engineering interests to the City of Peterborough, these would play an important role in animating the Peterborough DLP. This was expressed in the varying neighbourhood strengths of Labour, with its main concentration in the city's North Ward. Additionally, the selection and organisational experiences of prospective parliamentary candidates (PPCs) and party organisers demonstrated attempts to reconcile as well as frustrations concerning the division's semi-rural composition. These patterns percolated through to the framing of party messages. Despite the best efforts of local activists, the party never completely reconciled the two elements of its split (urban/rural) personality.

Figures

Introduction

'Not in the great northern cities, the Welsh valleys or crumbling urban estates. Not in places with great political

traditions and dramatic folklore'. Philip Gould on where he learnt his politics in *Unfinished Revolution.*[1]

'[To] represent miners and…to fight for working people and socialism'. Dennis Skinner on his rationale for

involvement in politics in *Sailing Close to the Wind.*[2]

'And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.' Matthew 16:18.[3]

Given earlier attempts at labour representation, the delegates to the 1899 meeting of the Trades

Union Congress (TUC) could not have known the long-term implications of their decision to

pass the resolution on the creation of the Labour Representation Committee (LRC). Neither

could they have predicted the quantity of literature published about Labour and related topics.

The historiography concerning the national party, party leaders, Labour in government and

opposition has grown exponentially.[4] The interaction of international and national scales has

occupied the attention of some analysts.[5] The passing of time has also seen the emergence of a

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[1] Philip Gould, *The Unfinished Revolution: How the Modernisers Saved the Labour Party* (London: Little, Brown & Company, 1998).

[2] Dennis Skinner, *Sailing Close to the Wind: Reminiscences* (London: Quercus Publishing Ltd., 2015).

[3] *The Bible: Authorised King James Version* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[4] This is a select bibliography, for a more extensive list of contributions to this area see the bibliography: Tim Bale, *Five Year Mission: The Labour Party under Ed Miliband* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Charles Clark and Toby S. James, eds., *British Labour Leaders* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2015); Patrick Diamond, *The British Labour Party in Opposition and Power, 1979-2019* (Taylor & Francis, 2021); R.M. Douglas, *The Labour Party, Nationalism and Internationalism, 1939-1951* (Routledge, 2004); Steven Fielding, *The Labour Party: continuity and change in the making of 'New' Labour* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); John Gaffney, *Leadership and the Labour Party* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); J. Macintyre and M. Hasan, *Ed: The Milibands and the Making of a Labour Leader* (Biteback Publishing, 2012); Ralph Miliband, *Parliamentary Socialism: A Study in the Politics of Labour* (London: Merlin Press, 1972); Robert Pearce, *Attlee's Governments, 1945-51* (London: Routledge, 1994); Ben Pimlott, *Harold Wilson* (London: Harper Collins, 1993); R. Prince, *Comrade Corbyn: A Very Unlikely Coup: How Jeremy Corbyn Stormed to the Labour Leadership* (Biteback Publishing, 2016); Andrew Rawnsley, *Servants of the People: The Inside Story of New Labour* (London: Penguin, 2000); Andrew Rawnsley, *The End of the Party: The Rise and Fall of New Labour* (London: Penguin, 2010); R. Seymour, *Corbyn: The Strange Rebirth of Radical Politics* (London: Verso, 2016); Kevin Theakston and Timothy Heppell, eds., *How Labour Governments Fall: From Ramsay MacDonald to Gordon Brown* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Chris Wrigley, *Arthur Henderson* (Cardiff: GPC Books, 1990).

[5] Paul Corthorn and Jonathan Davis, eds., *The British Labour Party and the Wider World: Domestic Politics, Internationalism and Foreign Policy* (Tauris Academic Studies, 2012).

sizeable literature on local Labour parties and labour movements, analysed at either divisional or regional levels.[6] That said, many "regional" studies failed to penetrate beyond discussion of England, Scotland or Wales as regions of the UK, albeit with some exceptions.[7] Nevertheless, the appearance of multi-level or cross-scale work has added to the knowledge base, though the intentions of such works mean in-depth discussion of specific areas or divisions is limited.[8] These have shown the rich diversity of identities and cultural expressions within Labour's "broad church," something which the introductory quotes from Philip Gould and Dennis Skinner began to hint at. However, despite acknowledgement that a full recognition of Labour requires an appreciation of its 'variegated character', there remain substantial gaps.[9] This is particularly so where case studies of the development of local Labour parties in mixed urban/rural divisions are concerned, even more so where radical boundary changes were thrust upon a fledgling Divisional Labour Party (DLP).[10]

This imbalance, which tends to give primacy to the national, is unfortunate. In the political science literature, this issue is endemic.[11] However, studies that address the party's

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[6] For examples, David Clark, *Colne Valley: Radicalism and Socialism: The Portrait of a Northern Constituency in the Formative Years of the Labour Party 1890-1910* (London and New York: Longman, 1981); I. Donnachie, C. Harvie and I. Wood, *Forward! Labour Politics in Scotland, 1888-1988* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1989); Michael Savage, *The Dynamics of Working-Class Politics: The Labour Movement in Preston, 1880-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); D. Tanner, C. Williams and D. Hopkins, eds. *The Labour Party in Wales, 1900-2000* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000).

[7] Coree Brown Swan and Michael Kenny, "'We Can't Afford to be a Branch Office': The Territorial Dynamics of the British Labour Party, 2015-2019," *Parliamentary Affairs* 77 (2024): 109-128. For examples of good regional studies of Labour, see D. Rolf, "Labour and Politics in the West Midlands between the Wars," *North Staffordshire Journal of Field Studies* 18 (1978): 42-52; and Maureen Callcott, "The Nature and Extent of Political Change in the Inter-war Years: The Example of County Durham," *Northern History* 16, no.1 (1980): 215-237.

[8] Martin Pugh, *Speak for Britain!: A New History of the Labour Party* (London: Vintage, 2010); Matthew Worley, ed., *The Foundations of the British Labour Party: Identities, Cultures and Perspectives, 1900-1939* (Ashgate, 2009); and Matthew Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate: A History of the British Labour Party Between the Wars* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005).

[9] Matthew Worley, "Introduction," in: *The Foundations of the British Labour Party: Identities, Cultures and Perspectives, 1900-1939*, ed. by Matthew Worley (Ashgate, 2009), 2.

[10] John Gyford, "Introduction," in: *Labour in the East: Essays in Labour History in Norfolk, Suffolk & Essex*, I. Grimwood, John Gyford, Don Mathew, Stan Newens and Matthew Worley (London: Labour Heritage, 2009), 5.

[11] Leon Epstein, *Political Parties in Western Democracies* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1967); M. Ostrogorski, *Democracy and the Organisation of Political Parties* (London, 1912); Angelo Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organisation and Power* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Thomas Quinn, *Modernising the Labour Party: Organisational Change since 1983* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Øivind Bratberg,

sub-national layers have demonstrated the vital contribution of local activists in building up the party from the grassroots and acting as footsoldiers come election time.[12] That said, we should avoid the trap of thinking that local Labour parties were purely electoral machines, or that '[l]ocal party units and regional groupings exist[ed] for little more than administrative convenience'.[13] Party candidates, agents, and organisers undertook important division-based maintenance, educational and other work between elections. Additionally, Labour activists were at the coalface of embodying and projecting the party's identity.[14] However, understanding this aspect of party organisational life within divisional boundaries is incomplete.

Time can be the best healer. Writing this thesis in the 2020s brings certain advantages. Most notably, over thirty years have passed since the publication of Savage's classic account of the emergence and development of neighbourhood politics.[15] The time elapsed has seen the publication of many local studies concerned with unpicking the general and specific dynamics at play (chapter six). These have been invaluable in allowing the present author to embark on a wide-ranging comparative analysis of the Peterborough DLP, our case study, situating it in national, intra- and extra-regional contexts. This exercise in comparativism has enabled the distillation of Peterborough's distinctiveness.

Peterborough Division

Multi-level politics and party change: a study of three British parties since devolution (PhD Dissertation: University of Oslo, 2010); Jonathan Hopkin, "Party Matters: Devolution and Party Politics in Britain and Spain," *Party Politics* 15, no.2 (2009): 179-198.

[12] Kenneth D. Brown, "The Edwardian Labour Party," in: *The First Labour Party, 1906-1914*, ed. by K.D. Brown (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 12; Paul F. Whiteley and Patrick Seyd, "Local Party Campaigning and Electoral Mobilisation in Britain," *The Journal of Politics* 56, no.1 (1994); also, John P. Frendreis, James L. Gibson and Laura L. Vertz, "The Electoral Relevance of Local Party Organisations," *The American Political Science Review* 84, no.1 (1990).

[13] Epstein, *Political Parties in Western Democracies*, 34.

[14] Matthew Worley, "Building the Party: Labour Party Activism in Five British Counties Between the Wars," *Labour History Review* 70, no.1 (2005): 73-95.

[15] Savage, *The Dynamics of Working-class Politics*.

The final introductory quote is taken from the *King James Bible*. More prosaically, "upon this rock" is the motto of Peterborough United Football Club. While the rock in the gospel of Matthew refers to the person of Peter, here it captures the materiality of dealing with a physical territory. As such, the Peterborough Division is the rock upon which was built the Peterborough DLP. Both are chronically absent from most studies of Labour development, save for a few passing references.[16] This is unfortunate as Peterborough presents the researcher with a peculiarity that has not been analysed in earlier studies and concerns the circumstances of the Peterborough DLP's formation and subsequent organisational and ideational trajectory. *The Peterborough DLP was formed at the crossroads of franchise reform; boundary reform, which massively expanded the pre-1918 boundaries of the municipal borough; and the introduction of a new Labour constitution.*

Briefly recapping the momentous changes of 1918, the Representation of the People Act (Reform Act) increased the electorate from eight to 21 million and gave most women over 30 the vote. The 1917-1918 Boundary Commission and Review orchestrated the creation, abolition or merging of divisions. The new Peterborough Division represented the merger of the bulk of the old North Northamptonshire (North Northants) division, including the Soke of Peterborough (the Soke), and the borough division of the City of Peterborough (Peterborough). It is a major argument of this thesis that this change substantially impacted the organisational character and identity of the Peterborough DLP between 1918 and 1951, imbuing it, at times, with a split personality that had to be constantly navigated. The boundary change's organisational and ideational shaping power is evident across multiple areas of party *practice*, namely (structural) organisation, candidate and organiser selection, as well as policy *curation*

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[16] There exist a handful of studies where Peterborough has been mentioned, such as Worley's *Labour Inside the Gate*.

and *issue positioning*. Therefore, Peterborough provides a valuable case study and contribution to our understanding of Labour.

Spatial-institutionalism

However, the Peterborough DLP did not emerge and evolve in a vacuum. Its developmental trajectory and *practices* are best understood within a wider national context and amongst peers, both regional and further afield. This raises a corollary question concerning how best to investigate party development. Here, it is useful to look outside the discipline of history. Political scientists have tended to study internal power dynamics.[17] At an atomic level, these are studies of organisational and individual actions or *practices* – the present study is an extension of this. However, it is contended here that parties' actions cannot be solely explained by reference to power dynamics. To better understand parties' organisational and ideological development, the search for explanatory factors must be expanded. Additionally, while political scientists have covered the national and regional scales thoroughly, theorisations or approaches to local or divisional parties have received relatively scant attention. This omission does not stand up to scrutiny; while local parties are smaller constituent parts of a whole, this does not justify their consignment to the role of addendum.

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[17] To provide a few examples of what is an extensive literature: Bratberg, *Multi-level politics and party change*; William Cross, "Understanding Power-Sharing within Political Parties: Stratarchy as Mutual Interdependence between the Party in the Centre and the Party on the Ground," *Government and Opposition* 53, no.2 (2018); Alona O. Dolinsky, "What Determines Parties' Choice of Incumbent-Renomination Methods? The case of the UK Labour Party, 1979-2019," *Journal of Representative Democracy* 58, no.4 (2022); Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties: Their Organisation and Activity in the Modern State* (Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1967); Robert Harmel and Kenneth Janda, "An Integrated Theory of Party Goals and Party Change," *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 6, no.3 (1994); Jonathan Hopkin and Jonathan Bradbury, "British statewide parties and multilevel politics," *Publius: the journal of federalism* 36, no.1 (2006); Martin Laffin and Eric Shaw, "British Devolution and the Labour Party: How A National Party Adapts to Devolution," *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 9, no.1 (2007); Martin Laffin, Eric Shaw and Gerald Taylor, "Devolution and Party Organisation in Britian: How Devolution has changed the Scottish and Welsh Labour Parties," Paper prepared at *Strathclyde University, Strathclyde, January 2004*; R.T. McKenzie, *British Political Parties: The Distribution of Power within the Conservative and Labour Parties* (London: Heinemann, 1963); Robert Michels, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., [1915] 1959); Ostrogorski, *Democracy and the Organisation of Political Parties*; and Panebianco, *Political Parties*.

Investigation of sub-national party development requires reframing the current debate. A major argument and innovation of this thesis is that a methodologically-driven focus on the specificities of *place* can both enlighten and enrich our understanding of party *practices*.[18] The novel *spatial-institutionalist* approach attaches a premium to *place*, offering a comparative framework that can be applied to draw out the organisational and ideological character of local Labour parties through contextualisation across multiple geographical scales (i.e., (inter)national, regional and local). In other words, organisational and ideational development, as with politics, are part of a 'spatialised process'. Put another way, the perspective adopted here is to see *place-as-context*.[19] This concept is interpreted as containing a temporal dimension. It is inherently historical as neither *place* nor context materialise out of thin air; they are grounded in a past and a present which need to be comprehended to grasp party *practices*.

Research Questions

As a research question, the above could be formulated in the following fashion:

1. How do you account for local Labour parties' organisational character and identity?

Several related sub-questions addressing the historiographical and organisational gaps are listed below:

1. How has local party development been accounted for in the theoretical literature?

2. How has local Labour party development been accounted for in the historiographical literature on the party?

3. Do local Labour parties possess their own distinct organisational character and identity?

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[18] For example, James Scott and Jane Wills, "The geography of the political party: Lessons from the British Labour Party's experiment with community organising, 2010 to 2015," *Political Geography* 60 (2017): 121-131.

[19] John Agnew, "Mapping politics: how context counts in electoral geography," *Political Geography* 15, no.2 (1996).

Structure of the Thesis

Chapter one provides a spatial biography of the constituent parts of the Peterborough Division following the 1917-1918 Boundary Commission and Review, namely Peterborough, the Soke and North Northants. This sets the scene for everything that follows, dealing as it does with the *location* and *locale* of our case study. The opening sections address the new spatial realities of the redrawn divisional boundaries, the emerging urban-rural dynamic being a pronounced feature that animated Labour's subsequent development. Additionally, an illustration is provided of the industrial bases, class structure, and political and electoral traditions that characterised this area from 1900 to 1951, reference being made to years before 1900 for further context. The contrasts between the two areas highlight the mixed nature of the division and the key heartland/hinterland dynamic.

Political scientists and scholars in associated fields have furnished researchers of party development with a substantial theoretical offer. Chapter two examines this offer and concludes that the predominance of national or regional scales of reference continues to occlude a complete understanding of local dynamics. Addressing this imbalance is the objective of chapter three, which introduces and details a novel *spatial-institutionalist* methodology. *Spatial-institutionalism* has multi-disciplinary roots emanating from political geography, most notably the work of John Agnew, historical sociology, and Historical Institutionalism. Equally important has been the insight of existing studies of Labour, particularly where an overarching framework of analysis has been enunciated, as in the case of Savage's *The Dynamics of Working-Class Politics*, though full discussion of this and other work is taken up in chapter six. Regardless, *spatial-institutionalism* draws and builds on all these strands to produce a transferable approach for local party studies.

More specifically, the chapter charts the framework's emergence from the coding of local party and secondary material, philosophical underpinnings and core components. Of particular note is the utilisation of Agnew's conception of *place* and its constituent parts of *location*, *locale* and *sense of place*, as well as the power afforded to the researcher when politics, organisational development, and identity formation are viewed as a 'spatialised process' across multiple geographical scales (i.e., (inter)national, regional, and local). Combined with an understanding of party actions or *practices* in the past and present, as derived from local Labour studies and Historical Institutionalism, *spatial-institutionalism* allows for a rich understanding of local party organisational character and identity that goes beyond strictly electoral approaches to their function. Furthermore, the rationale for selecting a case study approach is addressed, as are methods of data collection, document analysis, and interpretation.

Chapter four marks the first of those dealing with scale. Here, the geographical scale of reference is the *national*. As such, a national-level historiography is offered, as well as details of key national and party developments from 1900 to 1951, alongside several key thematic threads, such as Labour's *practices* in the countryside, which are particularly pertinent to the case study. That the national is the scale of reference *par excellence* for scholars of Labour is well established. Making this case is not an argument to dismiss that body of literature. Instead, that work is embedded into the overarching *spatial-institutionalist* framework. Thus, the principal events and processes in the party's organisational and ideological development are mapped and compared against the Peterborough DLP's developmental arc, revealing instances of alignment and differentiation and the drivers of those particularities.

Chapter five moves the discussion to the regional scale. Peterborough's geographical location means it is difficult and contentious to place satisfactorily in a specific region. Nevertheless, this analysis is vital in drawing out Labour trends in proximal areas, allowing for

diagnosis of (dis)similarities. The bulk of the chapter investigates the ingredients of party formation and the enduring marks left by that formative material as demonstrated through party *practices*. The Peterborough labour movement and DLP are compared with its East Anglian and East Midlands peers, bringing into sharper relief what made each distinct. The discussion highlights the complexity of the Peterborough Division, the commonalities it shared with predominantly urban *and* predominantly rural constituencies, and the need to draw on insights from Labour in towns and cities and in the countryside to establish a firm purchase on party *practices*.

The local or divisional level is the focus of chapter six. Broadening the discussion beyond the confines of East Anglia and the East Midlands, attention is given to studies of areas further afield, these again being mined for their insights into dynamics within Peterborough. However, this chapter serves a dual purpose that feeds into the overarching *spatial-institutionalist* approach. The discussion on doing local Labour studies is designed to establish a comparative framework enabling the identification of organisational and/or ideational (in)distinctiveness. Academics and researchers who have conducted local Labour studies have not always been explicit about how they carried out their enquiries, with a concomitant absence of a consistent approach.

Examining Labour's development across a wide range of areas emphasises the necessity of granularity. This exercise revealed sub-divisional "Labourspheres." This concept is used to denote the social, political and electoral influence of the Labour party within a spatial unit of a wider division and the extent of its local influence beyond that. A single party nucleus or several nuclei can often be located in a division, an area, such as a ward, where the local Labour party is comparatively stronger than other areas. For instance, as we will see in chapter seven, the nucleus of the Peterborough DLP can be sited in the North Ward of the municipal

borough. This is a crucial insight as understanding this locality within a locality, its social and industrial composition, goes some way to comprehending the essence of the divisional party.

Chapter seven brings us to a detailed discussion of party developments in Peterborough. Previous chapters helped to identify areas of organisational and ideational convergence and divergence. In terms of emergence and formation, the experience of the Peterborough DLP aligned with that of many other areas where WWI and Labour's decision to go it alone outside of the Progressive Alliance sparked a flurry of local organisational activity, though in circumstances where there was pre-1914 support for independent labour representation, especially at the municipal level, but insufficient strength to breakaway completely from the Liberal party and contest parliamentary elections under the banner of Independent Labour. The significant trade union presence, particularly of railwaymen and engineers, contributed heavily to the composition of the Peterborough DLP and the moderate path it trod for much of the period from 1918 to 1951.

The discussion of party organisation and organiser selection and recruitment point to distinct conditions in the Peterborough Division and the DLP's attempt to wrestle with them, painting a picture of a party trying to reflect the interests of urban and rural voters. The relationship between the city and countryside is key to understanding the party's development. At times, these relations were fraught, the party minutes indicating a breakdown of communications from time to time. On the other hand, the party was genuine in its attempt to be relevant to the whole division, combining its urban core of activists with a party organiser of vast countryside experience. Furthermore, these efforts highlighted the party's dependence on activists from the municipal portion of the division, particularly railwaymen. Regarding this final point, much has been gleaned from municipal elections, local candidates, and spatial distribution and concentration of Labour's electoral and organisational strength, allowing for identification of the Peterborough DLP's geographical nucleus.

Similarly, there were areas of divergence and convergence concerning the Peterborough DLP's approach to election campaigning, policy *curation* and *issue positioning*. Notwithstanding areas of alignment, the Peterborough DLP's *curative* and *positional* efforts illustrated the enduring influence of the boundary review. Conscious attempts were made to adapt party messaging depending on the locality of intended consumption. Nevertheless, there were occasions when the party convinced no one that it was anything but a "thing of the town." The case of Frank and Winifred Horrabin's engagement with the Peterborough DLP and Division highlights the requirements of effective campaigning in a large semi-rural division, and the challenges faced by Marxists in the Labour party engaged in the day-to-day of practical divisional politics, as such, making it a valuable contribution to the literature in its own right. Bringing the story up to 1951, it is apparent that, even with the passage of time, Labour was never completely accustomed to operating within the boundaries set in 1918.

Original Contribution

In summary, the research makes several theoretical and empirical contributions to the current state of play. This thesis:

- Introduces, develops and applies a novel *spatial-institutionalist* methodology to the topic of local party organisational character and identity.

- Constructs a transferable comparative framework to highlight developmental particularities of the Peterborough DLP and where it aligns with regional and/or national trends.

- Sheds light on the impact of spatial-type reform (i.e., boundary review) and its enduring effects on party organisation and identity.

- Provides the first doctoral thesis-length account of the Peterborough DLP utilising party minutes covering 1918 to 1951.

- Adds to the literature on the organisational effects of party constitutions. Until now, research into their meanings have focused on *national* meanings – the present study is corrective in that it examines and explains spatial variation in their applications and outcomes.

Chapter 1: A Tale of Two Divisions: A Social Geography of Peterborough and North Northants, 1885-1951

Introduction

This chapter sets the scene or *location* of the present study via a spatial geography covering industrial composition, the growth of the local labour movement, and political dynamics at parliamentary and sub-parliamentary levels from the latter part of the nineteenth century through to the middle of the twentieth. It is a tale of two divisions as the 1917-1918 Boundary Commission and Review created an electoral space encompassing the pre-1918 North Northants and Peterborough divisions. In industrial terms, the municipal workforce was dominated by those in transport, chiefly railwaymen, and engineering. Workers associated with these two industries animated the Peterborough DLP. Women were often employed as domestic servants, though a sizeable number were employed as corset-makers and, in subsequent decades, clerks and typists. This contrasted with North Northants. While railway and metal workers were present, agricultural workers outnumbered them, many working as labourers.

The spread and strength of trade unionism and trade councils, which constituted the primary foundations of the Peterborough DLP, varied, with the local labour movement's beating heart located in Peterborough and to a much lesser extent in the small market towns of Thrapston and Oundle, though the patchiness of surviving evidence means there is much we can only speculate on. The primary driver of political and civic labour activity was the Peterborough Trades Union Council (PTUC). The work of Hazel Perry has enabled a description of its organisation, activity and shifting ideological persuasions. As with other such

bodies before 1914, the PTUC was strongly influenced by its Liberals members and Liberalism. Some delegates demonstrated more socialist leanings; however, municipal and general election results in this period indicate that only a minority of the local electorate was committed to the socialist creed. While there were signs of separation before the outbreak of war, it took that conflict and its political consequences to terminally rupture Liberal-labour relations locally. The impact and legacy of the PTUC on the Peterborough DLP's development receded in the 1920s as it focused on its civic functions.[1]

Efforts were made to organise workers in the vast rural areas of North Northants and the Soke. However, this met with limited success; this becomes especially apparent when compared to developments in Norfolk (chapter five). The gravitational centre of the local National Union of Agricultural Workers (NUAW) and the Northampton Federation of Trade Councils (NFTC), was the town of Northampton. There was a trades council working out of Thrapston, but no documentation has survived and we are limited to references in the local press. Electorally, the Conservatives held sway in many of the division's rural wards. Furthermore, the municipal and rural evidence creates the impression of a male-dominated labour movement.

In terms of the political and electoral traditions, results for the period 1885 to 1918 show North Northants to possess a Unionist/Conservative default, whereas Peterborough Division was more inclined towards the Liberal party. From 1918 to 1951, the Division can be described as a Conservative marginal, returning Labour candidates when the electoral winds were generally favourable (i.e., 1929 and 1945). County and municipal election results present a fascinating picture of the spatial distribution of Labour's strength. The most significant development was the shift of the municipality's North Ward, home to many of Peterborough's

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[1] Hazel Amanda Perry, *Peterborough Trades Union Council 1899-1979: A Forgotten Arena for Working Class Politics* (PhD Dissertation: De Montfort University, 2022), 3.

railwaymen, from the Liberals in the pre-1918 era to Labour post-1918. It would prove an enduring stronghold for Labour during the interwar period and beyond, demonstrating where and when the party benefitted from Liberal decline in Peterborough and the centrality of the railwaymen to the Peterborough DLP's advance. County and Soke elections presented slim pickings for Labour throughout much of the period under analysis, the number of unopposed returns for the Conservatives partly demonstrating this, though this should not imply that Labour experienced no success in these arenas.

1917-1918 Boundary Commission and Review

While the impact of the reconfiguration of the parliamentary boundaries on the organisation and identity of the Peterborough DLP is taken up in chapter seven, it is necessary to introduce the Review and redrawing at this stage as it delimits the *location* and *locale* on which this study is focused. The literature on boundary reform does not lay much emphasis on the impact of such changes on local party organisational arrangements. The gaze of much writing has tended to be on the technical aspects of boundary reform, such as ensuring equal division size. Others have been concerned with the winnability of upcoming elections in light of changes to a division's physical extent – that is winnability from a national perspective. Elsewhere, it is a commentary about the conservation of community identities as paramount in the drawing up or proposals of new or revised boundaries. The voices heard, expressing their agreement or disagreement with a proposed change, are often national or parliamentary level.[2]

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[2] For example, see Ron Johnston, Charles Pattie and David Rossiter, "MPs' Responses to a Proposed New Constituency Map: Electoral Prospects, Community Ties and Party Organisation," *Journal of Legislative Studies* (2014); D. Rossiter, R. Johnston and C. Pattie, "Representing People and Representing Places: Community, Continuity and the Current Redistribution of Parliamentary Constituencies in the UK," *Parliamentary Affairs* 66, no.4 (2013); Ron Johnston, Charles Patter and David Rossiter, "'Somewhat more disruptive than we had in mind': The Boundary Commission for England's 2011 Proposed Redistribution of Parliamentary Constituencies," *The Political Quarterly* 83, no.1 (2012) and Colin Rallings, Ron Johnston and Michael Thrasher, "Changing the Boundaries but Keeping the Disproportionality: The Electoral Impact of the Fifth Periodical Reviews by the Parliamentary Boundary Commissions for England and Wales," *The Political Quarterly* 79, no.1 (2008).

Like those before it, the 1917-1918 Boundary Commission was set up to consider the redistribution of parliamentary seats. However, it departed from previous Commissions in important ways. Pre-1918 reforms were *ad-hoc*, with much involvement from politicians.[3] From 1918, redistributions were conducted by independent Commissions.[4] The commissioners were instructed to keep the number of seats at their current level. However, in terms of population per division, the seats were to be distributed more equitably, save for areas like the City of London. The Commissions, there were three (England and Wales, Ireland, and Scotland), used Ordnance Survey maps to draw up provisional boundaries; these were then advertised in local newspapers. Wherever possible, existing administrative boundaries were used to determine where the lines were drawn.[5] To fulfil their duties appropriately, it was acknowledged that it would be necessary to hold 'a large number' of Local Inquiries to ascertain the views of those who were interested. In total, 120 inquiries were held, covering 465 divisions. The commissioners commented that their provisional recommendations 'proved acceptable' in the 'great majority of cases'. However, the commissioners were compelled to add 'thirty-one more territorial members'.[6] Despite the addition of members, several smaller boroughs, including Peterborough, actually lost representation.[7] Furthermore, and despite the Local Inquiries, there remained 'laments about the damage to historic traditions'.[8] The implications for the Peterborough DLP extended beyond laments. As such, this case provides a slight corrective to Pugh's contention that 'revising constituency boundaries…disrupted the other parties' organisations more than Labour's'.[9]

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[3] D.J. Rossiter, R.J. Johnston and C.J. Pattie, *The Boundary Commissions: Redrawing the UK's map of parliamentary constituencies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 1-44.
[4] *Ibid.*, 44 and 51.
[5] Report of the Boundary Commission (England & Wales) Vol. I. Report and Appendices (1917), 14. See, in particular, Instructions, 2-6.
[6] David Butler, *The Electoral System in Britain since 1918* (Westport, 1986).
[7] Rossiter, Johnston and Pattie, *The Boundary Commissions*, 57.
[8] Butler, *The Electoral System in Britain since 1918*, 5-7
[9] Pugh, *The Making of Modern British Politics, 1867-1945* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 161.

Under the review, the Peterborough Division was greatly expanded beyond the confines of the City of Peterborough and even the Administrative County of the Soke of Peterborough in time for the 1918 General Election. Rather than the City of Peterborough that returned members to parliament as far back as the 1540s, from 1918 the new division would be of a mixed character, taking in the city as well as vast tracts of rural space. Figure 1 illustrates the extent of the division. Accordingly, the Peterborough parliamentary division would consist of:

> '…the Administrative County of the Soke of Peterborough, the Rural Districts of Easton-on-the-Hill and Gretton, the part of the Rural District of Oundle which is within the Administrative County of Northampton, that part of the Rural District of Thrapston which is within the Administrative County of Northampton and is not included in the Wellingborough Division, and the Urban District of Oundle.'[10]

Unlike before 1918, parties working out of Peterborough, particularly those newly established, would have to decide how to organise in the historic market towns of Thrapston and Oundle, not to mention the numerous Rural Districts (RD). To achieve electoral success, so party activists believed, they would need to forge an identity and define what Labour meant in this part of the world.

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[10] Report of the Boundary Commission (England & Wales) Vol. II, 1917, 138.

Figure 1. Boundary Commission 1917 – Peterborough Division[11]
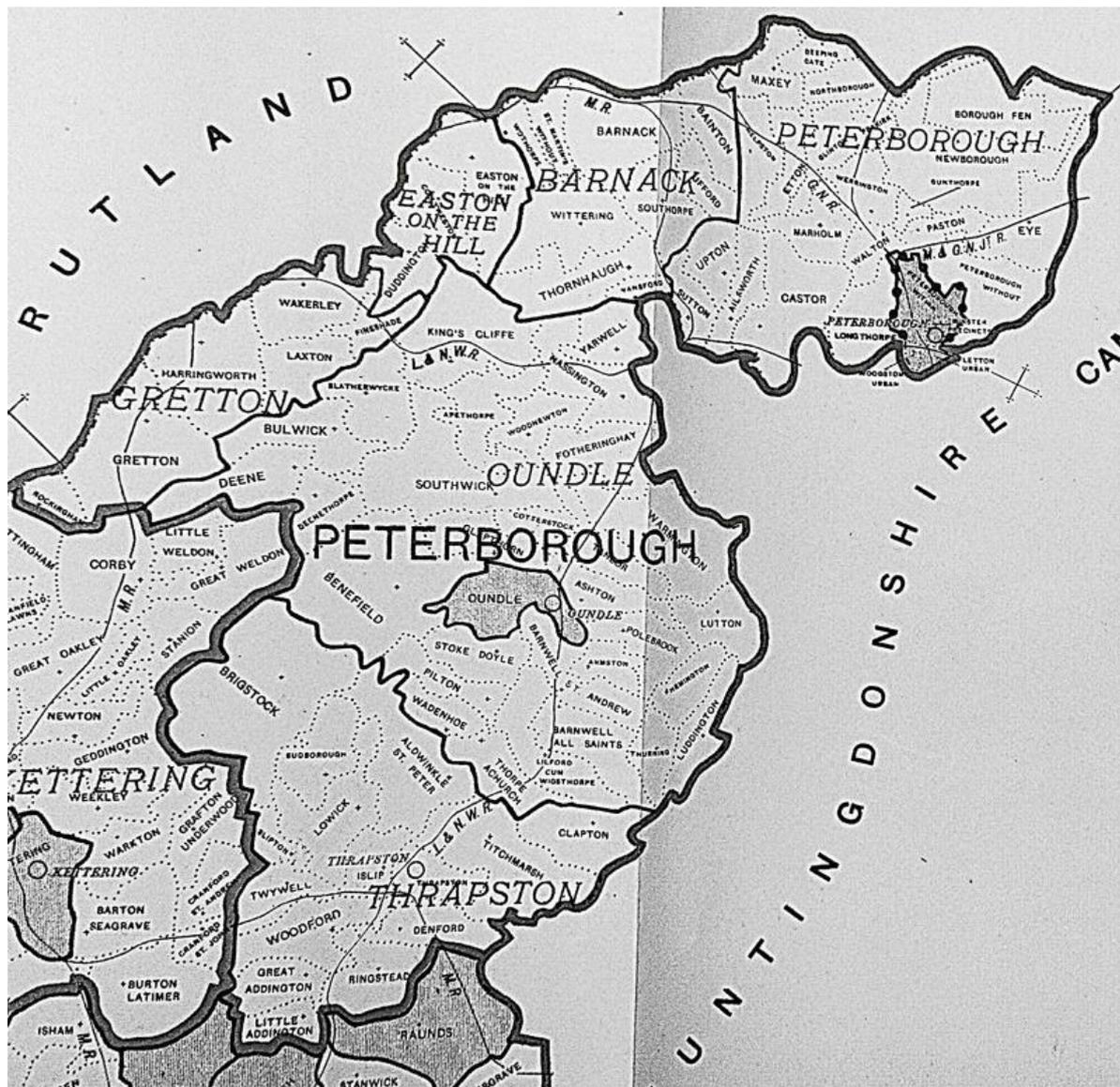
Industry and Class: Peterborough and North Northants, 1901-1951

Male employment patterns in municipal Peterborough

Peterborough is an English city north of London and set at the crossroads of the East Midlands

and East Anglia and, more contentiously, the north and south of England. The economic,

industrial, political and social development of Peterborough in the second half of the nineteenth

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[11] Report of the Boundary Commission (England & Wales) Vol. I, 1917.

century and into the twentieth is inextricably linked to the coming of the railway.[12] Pelling

listed Peterborough along with Bletchley, Wolverton, and Swindon as important railway

centres in a region whose most important non-agricultural industry was 'long-distance

transport.'[13] Particularly, the passing of the Great Northern Railway (GNR) line from London

to York triggered the city's transformation, establishing it as 'a nationally important railway

centre'.[14] A similar point was made by Samuel Sidney, who commented that by an 'accident

of situation', in an otherwise 'dull and inhospitable city…greatness was thrust upon

[Peterborough] in a most extraordinary manner'.[15] The railways were the harbinger of jobs and

growth, including the building of 260 houses specifically for railway workers in what became

"New England" in the North Ward of the city.

Census records further amplify the numerical importance of the male workforce on the

railways before and during the interwar period, though figures for 1951 suggest that the

industry's centrality was not static. It should be noted that in terms of class structure throughout

this period, the majority of those employed in railway-associated work were operatives. In

1901, some 25% of the adult male population were employed in the industry.[16] In 1911, the

figure for the Soke as a whole stood at 22%. In 1931, 3,559 or 22% of the Soke's employed

male workforce were engaged in transport and communication occupations, 3,203 being

recorded as 'Railways'.[17] The 1921 report on the Soke discussed the relatively high proportion

of railway workers compared to many other counties on account of their 'noteworthy

concentration in Peterborough M[unicipal].B[orough]., where 1,885 were enumerated (141 per

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[12] Elizabeth Davies, Julia Habeshaw and Ben Robinson, *Peterborough: A Story of City and Country, People and Place* (Pitkin Unichrome Ltd., 2001), 26; D. Brandon and J. Knight, *Peterborough Past: The City & the Soke* (Phillimore & Co. Ltd., 2001), 58; R.L. Greenall, *A History of Northamptonshire* (Chichester: Phillimore & Co. Ltd., 2000), 113; and History of the Trades Union Council. PAS/WTB/13/1. Peterborough Archives.
[13] Henry Pelling, *Social Geography of British Elections 1885-1910* (London: Macmillan, 1985), 107.
[14] Davies, Habeshaw and Robinson, *Peterborough*, 23.
[15] Brandon and Knight, *Peterborough Past*, 38.
[16] Davies, Habeshaw and Robinson, *Peterborough*.
[17] Census 1931, 112-121.

1,000).'[18] Regarding Peterborough MB, the number of men employed in 'Transport and Communication' was 2,560 in 1921, and 2,701 in 1931. However, in 1951, 2,467 'Transport' workers were recorded, inclusive of 1,406 'Railway transport workers' and 736 'Road transport' workers.[19]

The presence of good railway links could economically and industrially enhance an area; it was Leicester's better position in the railway system that meant it was able to overtake Northampton as a 'provincial shoe-making and distribution centre'.[20] Driven by the potential offered by the railways, Peterborough soon developed as an engineering centre. New industries and major employers of the future arrived on the scene in the 1900s. Most notable was the arrival of Baker Perkins and Peter Brotherhood Ltd., both manufacturers of industrial machinery.[21] Westwood Works, Baker Perkins' base of operations in Peterborough, was located close to the GNR line. The importance of the railways to Baker Perkins' settling on Peterborough as the site of their re-location is depicted in Muir's *The History of Baker Perkins*: 'Although it [Peterborough] was a small agricultural town, it had the advantage of being on a busy railway line and not too far from the raw materials of iron, steel and coke'.[22] However, Tebbs maintained that in the early twentieth century, and despite the railways, Peterborough remained 'a market town based on agriculture where engineering was becoming more important'.[23]

Nevertheless, the engineering industry would grow in importance throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Numerically, the number of men employed as metal workers of varying descriptions grew, in 1921 there were 2,623, falling to 2,434 in 1931, before

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[18] Census 1921, xxx.
[19] Census 1921; Census 1931; and Census 1951.
[20] Greenall, *A History of Northamptonshire*, 114.
[21] Davies, Habeshaw and Robinson, *Peterborough*, 26; Brandon and Knight, *Peterborough Past*, 61.
[22] Augustus Muir, *The History of Baker Perkins* (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Son Ltd., 1968), 50-51.
[23] H.F. Tebbs, *Peterborough: A History* (Oleander Press, 1979), 182.

experiencing a rise to 4,877 in 1951.[24] By the late 1920s, Peterborough was confident in its place and identity as an engineering centre. For example, at the annual dinner of the Peterborough Engineering Society in 1928, the *Peterborough Standard* reported that attendees 'could claim that the engineering industry of Peterborough was known throughout the world.'[25] The engineering concern of Peterborough was further expanded in 1932 with the addition of Perkins Engines, diesel engine manufacturers, to the area.[26] In addition to accounting for much of the local male workforce, the ready availability of such work for skilled men may have had a moderating effect on *practices* pertaining to industrial action and revolutionary activity. The 'uninterrupted decline' experienced by industries like textiles and coal was not shared by the metal trades that actually employed 60% more men in 1951 than they had in 1921.[27]

Several other industries were based in and around Peterborough Division. Brick-making was a feature of the area. From the early 1880s, bricks were produced on mass in Fletton, with the London Brick Company controlling most of the brickyards by 1920. The 1921 Census records 144 men as 'Makers of Bricks, Pottery and Earthenware', with a further 101 in the RDs while 778 manufacturers of brick were recorded in 1931.[28] The case of brick-making further illustrates the importance of the railways which were crucial to the transport of house bricks. As it turned out, it was the railway workers and engineers who were to play the most prominent role in the development of the Peterborough DLP.

Male employment patterns in rural districts

However, the Division was not restricted to the urban centre at Peterborough. In geographic terms, the area beyond the MB was enormous, with the total acreage of the rural portion of the

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[24] Census 1921, 38-53; Census 1931, 243-251; Census 1951.
[25] *Peterborough Standard*, 20 January 1928.
[26] Brandon and Knight, *Peterborough Past*, 58.
[27] Ross McKibbin, *Cultures and Classes: England 1918-1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 106-107.
[28] Census 1921, 38-53; Census 1931, 112-121.

Soke amounting to 51,586 acres of rural land against 1,878 urban acres.[29] The Soke was part of the historic county of Northamptonshire. A contemporary observer of Victorian Northamptonshire would likely have identified that footwear was the only industry of any size in the county. Between 1780 and 1820, the industry expanded from Northampton to locations such as Wellingborough, Kettering, Daventry and Rushden, among others. The shoe-making industry was particularly dominant in Northampton. In 1831, one in three were engaged in the footwear trade; in 1871 it was two in five. The town also dominated the trade in the county, with 40% of shoemakers concentrated there in 1831 and a similar proportion in 1901.[30] However, agricultural work continued to occupy many in the county. As Greenall attests:

> '…compared with the 42,000 shoemakers and the *11,600 agricultural workers in 1901*, the numbers engaged in engineering, clothing, quarrying and iron production…were very small.' [My italics][31]

Consequently, it is important that the footwear industry not be over-exaggerated as an agent of change in the county, with the rural profile and Conservative political traditions of the county persisting, particularly in North Northants, from the Victorian era through and into the twentieth century.[32]

The contrast between North Northants and the Soke and the footwear-making towns of Northamptonshire and the engineering works and railway sheds of Peterborough needs to be stressed. A poetic expression of this distinction can be found in the work of one of the Soke's most famous sons: the poet John Clare. Clare was born in Helpston (also Helpstone) to the northwest of Peterborough and wrote with reference and great affection for the countryside, rural life, fauna, and flora that surrounded him. In 1820, he published a collection of poetry

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[29] Census of England & Wales 1921, County of Northampton including the Soke of Peterborough, ix.
[30] Greenall, *A History of Northamptonshire*, 114-115.
[31] *Ibid.*, 119.
[32] *Ibid.*, 119.

entitled *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery* that included an idyllic visualisation of

his home village:

> 'Hail, humble Helpstone! Where thy vallies spread,
>
> And thy mean village lifts its lowly head;
>
> Unknown to grandeur, and unknown to fame;
>
> No minstrel boasting to advance thy name;
>
> Unletter'd spot! unheard in poets' song;
>
> Where bustling labour drives the hours along;
>
> Where dawning genius never met the day;
>
> Where useless ignorance slumbers life away;
>
> Unknown nor heeded, where, low genius tries
>
> Above the vulgar and vain to rise.'[33]

Geographically close to Peterborough, but a world away in terms of character and industrial

complexion. Other areas of the Soke shared a closer resemblance to Helpston than

Peterborough MB.

Thus, a significant portion of the local population was employed in agricultural work.

In the aggregated RDs, while 519 metal workers and 303 transport and communication workers

were recorded in 1921, 994 (25.4%) out of 3,915 men were listed as 'Agricultural Labourers,

Farm Servants'.[34] In 1931, 2,742 men in the RDs were recorded as in employment, 1,085

(39.6%) worked in agriculture.[35] On a more granular scale, agricultural labourers made up a

significant number of the male workforce in each of the division's RDs. Based on figures from

the 1921 Census, of the occupied male population of Easton-on-the-Hill (456), 104 or 23%

were agricultural labourers. In Gretton, the figure was 137 of 467 (29%), Oundle RD was 806

(37%) of 2,203, and Thrapston RD was 593 (17%) of 3,520.[36] Tracing employment pattern

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[33] John Clare, *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery* (London: 1820), 3.
[34] Census 1921, 38-53. The 3,915 figure refers to total male occupied population 12 years and over, 39.
[35] Census 1931, 112-121.
[36] Census 1921, 38-53.

changes to 1931, the proportion of the population engaged in agriculture rose to 31% in Easton-on-the-Hill, 35% in Gretton, 49% in Oundle RD, and 20% in Thrapston RD.[37] Thus, agricultural occupations remained an important source of employment in the Soke and North Northants throughout the period under analysis. 1951 data for the Soke places agricultural work within the top five occupational classifications, with 1,496 engaged in such work.[38]

Female employment patterns in the Soke and Administrative County of Peterborough

That local trade unionism was dominated by men can partly be accounted for by the significant number of women employed as domestic servants in urban and rural areas; a workforce that was notoriously difficult to organise. This was the predominant form of female employment throughout our period. While large numbers of women were listed as unoccupied, the figure stood at 13,894 for the Soke in 1911, of the 4,939 employed, 41% (2,031) were domestic servants.[39] By 1921, the Urban District (UD) of Oundle recorded the highest rate (71 per 1,000) of 'Persons engaged in Personal Service' in the whole of Northamptonshire.[40] The proportions of women employed in Personal Services, chiefly domestic servants, did not fluctuate hugely between 1911 and 1931, though there was a drop from 1931 to 1951. For instance, the raw number of women engaged in personal service in the Soke (i.e., Peterborough MB, Barnack RD, and Peterborough RD) was 2,031 (41.1%) in 1911, 1,957 (37.6%) in 1921, 1,998 (38.3%) in 1931, and 1,877 (24.8%) in 1951.[41] It is likely that any specific efforts to organise women in the Soke's RDs would have met greater difficulties compared to urban areas given the proportions of females in domestic service, 272 per 1,000 for the Soke as a whole and 440 per 1,000 for the aggregated RDs.[42] This point is brought into greater relief when we observe

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[37] Census 1931, 243-251.
[38] Census 1951, 273.
[39] Census 1911.
[40] Census 1921, xxxiv.
[41] Census 1911; Census 1921, 51; Census 1931, 250; Census 1951, 273.
[42] Census 1921, xxxiii.

condensed occupation lists for each of the Soke's RDs. In Easton-on-the-Hill, of the 97 females

in employment, 43 were engaged in Personal Service, in Gretton 67 of 161, in Oundle RD 383

of 604, and Thrapston RD 378 of 1,164.[43]

A very different kind of industry was to be found in New Fletton. Symington's corset

factory was opened in 1903 and was a major local employer of female workers; by 1911,

dressmakers and textile workers constituted 30% (1,496) of women in employment across the

Soke.[44] Mainly employed in Peterborough MB (701), makers of textile goods and articles of

dress constituted a significant number of female employees (795 for the Soke in 1921, 527 in

1931), albeit dwarfed by the numbers in domestic services.[45] There was also a growing number

of clerks and typists, reaching a rate of 97 per 1,000 in Peterborough MB in 1921, equating to

401 typists and 382 'Other Clerks'.[46] Furthermore, the two world wars transformed the

industrial roles of women. In Peterborough, many women worked at local engineering firms.

WWII drew women away from domestic service, which declined in numerical terms by over

60 per cent nationally between 1939 and 1941, never to recover.[47]

Building Blocks: The Local Labour Movement and the Development of Political Labour, 1898-1951

Peterborough: The Urban Labour Movement

'Indeed, it was only the Peterborough Trades and Labour Council which appears to have

succoured the local Labour movement.'[48] Given this argument, it is instructive to consider in

some detail the development of the Peterborough Trades and Labour Council or PTUC. In

short, trades councils were committees consisting of delegates representing the different trade

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[43] Census 1921, 38-53.
[44] Brandon and Knight, *Peterborough Past*, 65.
[45] Census 1921, 38-53.
[46] Census 1921, xxxiv and 38-53.
[47] McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, 109.
[48] Laybourn, "The Peterborough Laboru Movement, 1900-1951," 2.

unions in a locality, whether a town, city, or other spatial unit, whose primary industrial function was resolving worker-employer disputes. According to Perry, a key factor motivating their establishment was 'organising solidarity' within the trade union movement as well as the broader working classes.[49] The exact composition and nature of trades councils differed from place to place according to the configuration of local industry. Such councils often constituted important building blocks for local Labour parties, this meant that parties in different localities were constructed from varying materials which impacted their form and identity.[50]

The development of the Peterborough DLP post-1918 demonstrated its inheritance and divergence from the PTUC both organisationally and ideologically. The identity of the unions represented at the 1898 meeting called to discuss the potential of establishing a local trades council depicted the union landscape in Peterborough and the organisational prerequisites for Labour in the area. Delegates included members of local branches of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE), Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, the Operative Society of Bricklayers, Boilermakers, Basket Makers, Coachbuilders, as well as three contingents of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (ASRS).[51] In the years to come, the Peterborough DLP would draw from this local reservoir of the organised working class. John Mansfield, an ASE member and party secretary of the Peterborough DLP, was a vivid and direct example of this.

The mindset of delegates to the PTUC was influenced by the nature of the workplace. The largest delegation came from ASRS. For example, the society sent nine delegates in 1903 and 11 in 1905. Railway workers represented a diversity of roles and skills from foundry workers to railway engine drivers. The latter can be placed in the upper echelons of the labour

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[49] Perry, *Peterborough Trades Union Council 1899-1979*, 12-13.
[50] G.D.H. Cole, *A History of the Labour Party from 1914* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1948), 10-13.
[51] History of the Trades Union Council. PAS/WTB/13/1. Peterborough Archives.

movement, constituting what scholars have called a "Labour Aristocracy". In addition to railway workers, engineers, employed at a range of firms such as Peter Brotherhoods, supplied a steady stream of local trade unionists. In 1912, there were two branches of the ASE in Peterborough, with a third opening in 1914. The focus of these branches were issues including, 'fair wages, bonuses, apprenticeships and bullying foremen.'[52] In its origins, the ASE was a moderate union, prizing prudence in its actions and opposing the more radical ideas associated with Chartism.[53] In the case of unionised railway workers and engineers, the delegates to the PTUC represented 'the better off working class'.[54] Thus, the chief representatives of the local labour movement were skilled workers earning better wages than their semi- or unskilled peers. Such a position could incubate pride and promote the jealous guarding of relatively better-off workplace and financial conditions.[55]

Despite this apparent striving for respectability, Peterborough was not immune to strike action, particularly during the years of heightened industrial militancy between 1911 and 1914. In 1913, workers at the GNR foundry began industrial action after an employee was dismissed following the explosion of a blank cartridge brought to the foundry by a youth returning from a Territorial Army camp. The miscarriage of justice prompted 70 men to strike. However, the strike was unofficial and thus lacked the backing of the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR). Nevertheless, compared to other areas, Peterborough went 'largely unaffected' by this wave of labour militancy.[56]

The politics of the PTUC from 1898 to 1918 demonstrated a shift from Liberalism to isolated expressions of more socialistic propensities, before settling on the brand of labour

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[52] Perry, *Peterborough Trades Union Council 1899-1979*, 18, 88 and 130-135.

[53] Arthur Marsh and Victoria Ryan, *Historical Directory of Trade Unions, Vol.3* (Aldershot: Gower, 1987), 12-16.

[54] Perry, *Peterborough Trades Union Council 1899-1979*, 135.

[55] For example, see Peter Wyncoll, *The Nottingham Labour Movement, 1880-1939* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1985).

[56] Perry, *Peterborough Trades Union Council 1899-1979*, 137-138.

socialism exhibited by Labour, with the ideas of nonconformism infusing each to varying degrees.[57] Beyond the confines of the PTUC, municipal and general election results make it clear that rank-and-file trade unionists as well as the non-unionised electorate were not as inclined to socialism or even Labour before WWI. It would take that conflict and its political effects to finally break the voting allegiance of the working class to the Liberal party; when it came, the result was of direct benefit to the local Labour party.

It is undeniable that ideas associated with nonconformity and the Free Churches suffused the mindsets of some delegates to the PTUC. Perry identified several 'reformers from Christian and public health backgrounds'. For instance, charitable work was undertaken by PTUC representatives such as Herbert Charles Parkinson who was also an ASRS trade unionist. Charles Harribin of the ASE and the PTUC's first treasurer sat on Peterborough Infirmary's Board of Governors. Another railwayman and PTUC secretary, W.H. Hackett, was a nonconformist lay preacher who was involved in a local temperance organisation. Additionally, the Rev. Robert Frew of the Episcopalian Free Church was also president of the New England Railway Mission, which was established to tackle insobriety amongst railwaymen. Furthermore, analysis of the language used in public speeches by PTUC delegates found it to be infused with nonconformist ethos.[58] However, there are major questions about the significance and longevity of nonconformity's stimulus on Labour party development (chapter four); chapter seven will demonstrate that in the case of the Peterborough DLP, the immediate and long-term influence was negligible.

Undiluted socialism of the Marxist and Independent Labour Party (ILP) varieties had a fleeting and limited impact on the development of the Peterborough DLP.[59] Perry has made a

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[57] *Ibid.*, 103.
[58] *Ibid.*, 91-100.
[59] Laybourn, "Peterborough Divisional Labour Party."

strong case for the presence of socialist elements within the PTUC. For instance, individuals

of a socialist bent included A. Boyce who became PTUC secretary in 1906, H.H. Thompson

who was involved with the ILP, W. Martin who organised local Clarion Clubs, and Charles

Willam Popp, a bakery machine engine fitter at Werner, Pfleiderer and Perkins, PTUC

secretary from 1911 and member of the Peterborough Socialist Society (PSS). Furthermore,

local branches of the ASE, Postmen's Federation and Typographical Association and National

Amalgamated Union of Shop Assistants withdrew from the PTUC on account of what they

perceived as the body's 'socialistic tendencies'. Organisationally, there is local evidence of

Clarion Clubs and an ILP from 1906 with 12 members, as well as a short-lived British Socialist

Party (BSP) from 1911.[60] Perry concludes that the local socialist societies had a 'small but

committed membership' revolving around PTUC delegates. Beyond this circle, socialism

would appear to be relatively weak.[61] For example, Popp of the PSS stood against a

Conservative in the municipal elections of 1910 and lost. In the following year, he stood against

Walter Riseley, a co-founder of the PTUC and Liberal, and lost again. The contest is significant

in that it occurred in Peterborough's North Ward which would become the nucleus of the local

Laboursphere. Furthermore, the negligible impact of socialism in Peterborough is made

apparent via comparison with its provincial neighbours of Ipswich, Leicester, Northampton,

and Norwich where the ILP and other socialist organisations were significantly stronger

(chapter five). Additionally, the 'supportive' stance of PTUC delegates towards Syndicalism

may have indicated sympathy with its radical ideas. Alternatively, the support for Tom Mann

could stem from delegates' support for free speech and against what they perceived as unfair

imprisonment.[62]

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[60] Perry, *Peterborough Trades Union Council*, 113-117.
[61] *Ibid.*, 117-118.
[62] *Ibid.*, 121-122.

On the other hand, Liberalism had a strong influence over the PTUC and a quantifiable one over the local electorate (see below), with the rise of socialistic tendencies and the decline of nonconformity being symptoms of Liberalism's ebb and flow. One source of support for the PTUC's establishment was radical Liberalism, with two Liberal councillors, Richard Winfrey and Walter Riseley, being important supporters who acknowledged working-class interests and concerns such as the desire for better wages. Also, several PTUC delegates sat on the local Liberal Association. Additionally, before 1918, and contrary to the wishes of any proponents of direct independent labour representation, the PTUC backed Liberal candidates at the parliamentary level.[63]

However, all was not well in the Liberal house. The emerging notion that the working class themselves were their best representatives, rather than middle-class Liberals, was discernible in Peterborough in the late 1890s. Support for Liberals at the parliamentary scale was not repeated in the municipality. A. Boyce, a PTUC delegate from the Postal Clerks' Union, was the first independent working-class candidate in 1899.[64] He stood in Peterborough MB's West Ward, finishing bottom of the poll.[65] Other independent and Labour candidates contested municipal elections in the Edwardian period. Earlier we heard about C.W. Popp's unsuccessful attempt in the North Ward. However, labour candidates contested each of Peterborough's four municipal wards before 1914. In 1905, Boyce finished bottom of the pile in the West Ward, before finishing third out of four in the North Ward the following year, losing out to a radical Liberal. In 1910, labour candidates finished last in the East (E.W. Bench), South (J.T. Meehan) and West (G.W. Farmer) wards.[66]

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[63] *Ibid.*, 103-105.
[64] *Ibid.*, 105-106.
[65] *Peterborough Standard*, 4 November 1899.
[66] *Ibid.*, 4 November 1905; 3 November 1906; 5 November 1910.

On one pre-WWI occasion, Liberal divisions bubbled to the surface over the selection of the Liberal party candidate. Signs of friction within the PTUC and with the local Liberal Association were on display following the PTUC's recommendation of Ben Jones as Liberal party candidate in December 1901:

> 'Peterborough is a working-class constituency, and largely animated by the Liberalism of Mr John Bright and Mr Gladstone, therefore we do not hesitate to bring Mr Jones forward as an enthusiastic candidate, both for Labour direct and for real progressive Liberalism. We feel that Labour has a claim to be directly represented by these gentlemen.'[67]

The Lib-Lab leanings in this endorsement of Jones, including the reference to pro-Free Trade and Anti-Corn Law League co-founder John Bright, stopped short of advocating for *independent* working-class representation. Regarding Jones' selection, it was suggested that the PTUC invite the Executive of the local Liberal Association to make the choice. This did not go down well with one PTUC member and future Peterborough committee figure, Mr Popple, who commented that, 'It was no use looking to the so-called Liberals to see the interests of the working man. Some of them were the first to let a man down.'[68] The Peterborough Liberals reacted spikily to what they perceived as an imposition. Unsurprisingly, support for Jones' candidature was not forthcoming. In their view, endorsing Jones would mean effectively giving the seat to the Conservatives. They expressed their wish for a non-'sectional' candidate who would represent all sections of Liberal thought.[69] Perceptions of Liberal hesitancy to support working-men candidates may have only galvanised the views of people such as Popple regarding the Liberal's untrustworthiness.[70]

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[67] History of the Trades Union Council. PAS/WTB/13/1. Peterborough Archives.
[68] *Ibid.*
[69] *Peterborough Advertiser*, 29 January 1902.
[70] Michael Bentley, *Politics Without Democracy, 1815-1914* (John Wiley & Sons, 1999), 231-232.

Ultimately, Jones was not successful, with George Greenwood taking the nomination.[71] However, his nomination served only to bring divisions within the local labour movement into sharper relief. W.H. Hackett, PTUC Secretary, wrote to Greenwood informing him that the Council would oppose his candidature owing to 'his attitude towards Housing', as well as his reticence to introduce any legislation and instead 'vote for what the Liberal Party…forward'.[72] PTUC members would later meet with Greenwood to iron out their differences. The meeting was a success as the PTUC were now, according to communications, 'well satisfied that Mr Greenwood would be a valuable addition to the H[ouse] of C[ommons] after hearing his views…,' in particular his pledge to 'belong to the Labour group', as well as vote on and secure 'Social Legislation' as far as possible.[73] As one division among many in the Liberal landslide of 1906, Greenwood would win Peterborough; he was also successful in the two elections of 1910.

Perry has argued that the influence of the Liberal Association over the PTUC 'decreased rapidly' from 1902-1903.[74] Evidence confirms a shift in this direction. Hackett was supportive of the LRC and the PTUC's affiliation. In the early 1900s, he made a statement on his understanding of Peterborough's potential as a 'Labour const[ituency]': '…as soon as I can I will let you know the particulars of this constituency which I am convinced maybe made a Labour Const. if a propaganda is carried on [sic].'[75] Affiliation to the LRC came in 1903, though this was soon followed by disaffiliation in 1905 due to lack of funds and 'not through lack of sympathy'.[76] Despite this setback, the response of independent labour candidates at the 1910 round of municipal elections was also indicative of the growing loss of labour trust in the

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[71] Perry, *Peterborough Trades Union Council*, 106-110.
[72] LRC 5/3/10/1.
[73] LRC 6/315/1 and 2.
[74] Perry, *Peterborough Trades Union Council*, 112.
[75] LRC 8/295.
[76] LRC 28/405.

Liberals. In spite of his last-place finish, East Ward candidate E.W. Bench expressed that there was 'no reason why the Labour Party should not be a powerful force in Peterborough.' He went on:

> 'It is my honest opinion that the Labour party in Peterborough is much stronger than either they [the Liberal and Conservatives] or anyone else realise. We shall certainly not accept any patronage from the Liberal Party, for we realise that we have as much to expect from them as we have from the Tories, and perhaps less. We do not forget the fact that it was the Tories who gave us the Employers' Liability Act.'[77]

Reading this statement creates the impression that Labour was close to entering a parliamentary contest. However, and despite anti-Liberal sentiment, there was no independent Labour candidate for the Peterborough Division in December 1910. The alliance was breaking but it was not enough at this stage to trigger the formation of the Peterborough DLP.

As the PTUC's disaffiliation from the LRC in 1905 implies, finances prevented a complete pre-1914 break from the Liberals. The PTUC had intended to send delegates to Labour Conference in 1900. However, they were unable to do so, an apology letter noting that 'our finances are rather poor and our Council only very new we find the expenses great at our commencement.'[78] Thus, funding parliamentary candidates was out of the question. In the case of Greenwood's candidacy, Hackett confirmed that his expenses would be covered by the local Liberal Association.[79] There was no aligning of the stars for supporters of independent labour representation in Peterborough during the early years of the twentieth century. Circumstances would need to change for any Peterborough Labour party to establish a sure footing for itself electorally and organisationally.

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[77] *Peterborough Standard*, 5 November 1910.
[78] LRC 1/336.
[79] LRC 6/316/undecipherable.

WWI raised Labour's profile and that of the wider labour movement. There were clear echoes of this development in Peterborough. Most significantly, the PTUC came to be recognised as an 'authoritative body' accepted onto a variety of public and civic committees. The PTUC was involved in the District Munitions Committee and the setting up of workers' conferences; John Mansfield was one of the PTUC's delegates to the Committee. Additionally, delegates were requested in 1914 to sit on the Mayor's War Committee.[80] Perry implies that Labour's entry into the wartime coalition was when PTUC delegates took the party more seriously and turned *en masse* towards Labour and, consequently, away from the Liberals.[81] However, this must surely be only part of the story given the wider political context, particularly the deep chasms in opinion afflicting the Liberal party. Wartime developments and the organisational changes taking place within Labour marked the culmination of simmering trends from the late 1890s and early 1900s, the point where Liberal/Labour tensions boiled over and cleared the way for the organisational expression of independent labour's political interests.

The PTUC was vital to the emergence of the Peterborough DLP, but the foundational element it provided soon began to calcify, with the council ultimately receding from industrial and political matters to prioritise its civic functions. By the end of the 1920s, this process was all but complete. Following the creation of the Peterborough DLP in October 1918, the PTUC withdrew from all electoral functions, such as providing municipal candidates.[82] For the remainder of the interwar period and beyond, the fortunes of the PTUC and local trade unionism shared much in common with national trends. During the General Strike, the PTUC took on the role of local strike committee, with 5,000 men, mainly unionised railway workers, going on strike – the local engineers were more divided, some members such as those at Peter

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[80] Perry, *Peterborough Trades Union Council*, 144-150.
[81] *Ibid.*, 142.
[82] *Ibid.*, 124.

Brotherhoods stayed in work while others struck, such as members of the AEU and Boilermakers at Baker Perkins. The PTUC assisted in local strike action up until 1927 when anti-union legislation following the General Strike curbed their activities. For instance, by the time of the 1928 Celta Mill strike of women workers, the PTUC was notable by its absence; though Perry suggests that there may have been a gendered dimension to the male-dominated PTUC's lack of involvement. As elsewhere, unemployment presented a stubborn problem. The interwar campaigns of the PTUC focused on everyday working-class concerns, including housing, accessible health services, as well as the public ownership of industry. During WWII, the PTUC carried out many of its usual activities (i.e., meetings, passing of motions, and lobbying of Peterborough City Council), albeit with a more pronounced international focus and played their part, as in WWI, on various wartime committees. The coming of the first majority Labour government in 1945 and the increased confidence and authority of the TUC acted to pigeonhole the PTUC's functions as an 'administrative' body with predominantly 'civic responsibilities'.[83]

Despite the controversy surrounding the Celta Mill affair and while the PTUC was a male-dominated body, working-class women were able to cultivate their own and shared organisational spaces. Women could join the Workers' Union (WU) which set up a branch in Peterborough in 1916, with its centre on the brickworks. Furthermore, the National Federation of Women Workers (NFWW) had 40,000 members by 1914 and a branch in Peterborough; female workers at Symington corset-makers joined the NFWW. As elsewhere, with many local men joining the armed forces to fight on the continent, employment gaps were filled by women. In 1915, more women entered the engineering industry, though this was not without its local

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[83] *Ibid.*, 145-146, 160-177, 196-203 and 244-246.

tensions.[84] Women, if the founders of the Peterborough DLP could realise it, were an important pool in which Labour sympathies could be cultivated.

North Northants and the Soke: The Rural Labour Movement

The roots of agricultural labourers' organisation in the Soke and North Northants can be traced to the latter part of the nineteenth century. While the National Agricultural Labourers' Union (NALU) was established in 1872, the preceding decade provides insight into its constitution and *practices*. Horn's account is particularly instructive.[85] The key concerns of those who laboured the fields included (secure) employment, wages, food prices, and housing, the standards of which varied from region to region. As elsewhere in the Midland counties, food prices, and thus wages, were a chief concern and there is evidence in the late 1860s of farmworkers from the West Northamptonshire villages of Croughton and Evenley striking for wage improvements.[86] Stirrings of unionisation soon followed. With the impetus of the 1871 Trade Union Act and calls for a nine-hour day, labourers in Great and Little Brington made demands for a wage rise, though this was ultimately unsuccessful.[87]

Despite its name, the Peterborough District Labourers' Union's (PDLU) main base of operation was in Northamptonshire.[88] Formed on 9 May 1872, the PDLU was headed by Benjamin Taylor, 'the high bailiff of the County Court and a well-known Radical.'[89] It was soon agreed that those working on the land were eligible to join. One hundred working men were said to have signed up for membership after the PDLU's first meeting, as well as recruitment from the surrounding villages of Newborough and Eye. Additionally, Horn reports

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[84] *Ibid.*, 151-159.
[85] P.L.R. Horn, *Agricultural Labourers' Trade Unionism in Four Midland Counties, 1860-1900* (PhD Dissertation: Leicester University, 1968), 1-33.
[86] *Ibid.*, 25-26.
[87] *Ibid.*, 30-31.
[88] For example, a report from *The Bee-Hive*, 9 August 1873, references meetings in the North Northants villages of Lutton, Hemmington [sic], and Lowick, as well as the villages of Glatton and Northborough that were only a little further afield.
[89] Horn, *Agricultural Labourers' Trade Unionism in Four Midland Counties*, 57.

that a 'very high level of support' was found in the village of Warmington in North Northants.[90]

Moves in this direction provoked the ire of farmers and landowners. In Warkton, North

Northants, tenant farmers attempted, to no avail, to disrupt the formation of a union branch.[91]

Aligning with county-wide dynamics, there was unrest over wages across Northamptonshire

in 1873 and 1874, though these 'paled to insignificance compared with the situation in East

Anglia.'[92]

There were attempts around this time to bring the various organisations representing

agricultural labourers into a single national body. However, reluctant to the notion of central

control, the PDLU decided not to attend a meeting called by the leaders of the Warwickshire

Union to discuss the idea of a united organisation. That said, there were district organisations

in Northamptonshire connected with the NALU. Such decentralisation meant that

organisations like the PDLU could maintain their local flexibility. However, this source of

strength could also act as a weakness as these divisions meant that the scope for a collective,

national voice to emerge was extremely limited. Echoing the patterns of the NALU,

membership of the PDLU began to fall away from the mid-1870s.[93] As such, the PDLU was

unable to escape broader trends, with inter-union rivalries, to say nothing of internal issues,

undermining the agricultural labourers' cause. At the 1878 TUC, Taylor reported PDLU

membership as 2,000, in 1873 the union claimed 80 branches and over 8,000 members; figures

for 1879 were not given despite his attendance at that year's TUC, presumably as a result of

inexorable decline. As time passed, more and more moved from the countryside to the cities,

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[90] *Ibid.*, 58.
[91] *Ibid.*, 60.
[92] *Ibid.*, 94-95.
[93] *Ibid.*, 70, 77 and 82-85.

the railways of Peterborough and the footwear manufacturing centres of Northamptonshire providing an alternative outlet for employment.[94]

In addition to such rivalries, the PDLU and other similar Northamptonshire-based organisations encountered obstacles that were prevalent elsewhere. One challenge was the fear of victimisation at the hands of farmers or landowners. Horn provides one instance in Northamptonshire when three labourers complained about their dismissal by a bailiff because they refused to say they would vote for the Conservative candidate. The bailiff denied the claims and the case was dropped.[95] This was not only a nineteenth-century concern and might account for organisational challenges later faced by the Peterborough DLP in predominantly rural areas. Additionally, the fact that not all labourers were trade unionists presented difficulties. This may have been partly due to good and/or deferential relationships between farmworkers and employers, which reinforced the foundations of the landowning classes. Finally, the resurgence of agricultural labourers' trade unionism witnessed in East Anglia in the early twentieth century did not have an equivalent in size or influence in North Northants. This differential requires an explanation. That explanation (chapter five) illustrates why Labour's electoral performance in Norfolk in the first half of the twentieth century surpassed the party's performance in the semi-rural Peterborough Division.

Between the decline of the PDLU and the Eastern Counties Agricultural Labourers and Small Holders Union's (ECALSHU) move from Fakenham to London and its reimagining as the National Union of Agricultural Workers (NUAW) in 1920, the evidence on agricultural labourers' trade unionism specific to Northamptonshire is limited. References to regional organisers of the NUAW provide a broad brushstroke of developments. Many of the grievances

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[94] *Ibid.*, 70, 77, 84-141, 152 and 171; and Reg Groves, *Sharpen the Sickle! The History of the Farm Workers' Union* (London: Merlin Press, 1981), 68.

[95] Horn, *Agricultural Labourers' Trade Unionism in Four Midland Counties*, 232.

of agricultural labourers in Northamptonshire could be found elsewhere. Arthur E. Monks, NUAW organiser for Northamptonshire and adjoining counties, spoke at a TUC conference in Southport on the need for the reinstatement of the Agricultural Wages Boards. He went on to discuss the dire state of agricultural wages and his dislike of the Conciliation Committees, arguing that employers had taken advantage of them to drastically reduce wages.[96] Monks was succeeded by Arthur Holness. From his writings that appeared in the local press, we can surmise the challenges of organising agricultural labourers. One persistent concern of Holness was the subject of rural depopulation. In 1928, he was quoted in an article titled "Drift From Countryside", for which the only 'cure' was 'payment on a scale which compares with the urban standard'. In 1947, Holness returned to the subject in "Pre-War Drift From The Land", and rural depopulation between 1921 and 1938 and its reduction of rural settlements in Northamptonshire to 'places of pilgrimage for students of rural decay', compounded by the men returning from the armed services electing not to return to agricultural work.[97] The organisational challenges presented by chronic rural depopulation would also seem to suggest the countryside's diminishing electoral significance in the context of the Peterborough Division.

Despite these obstacles, the NUAW was active across Northamptonshire. The *Northampton Mercury* reported that between February 1919 and August 1920, Holness opened 60 branches of the NUAW in the county.[98] As an organiser, Holness's name appeared regularly in the NUAW journal, *The Land Worker*. These lists and brief reports offer some insight into the spatial prevalence and concentration of union meetings and activities, as well as its responses to WWII. Multiple NUAW meetings and other events were held across North Northants throughout the 1930s. The villages of Barnwell, Benefield, Bozeat, Easton Maudit,

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[96] *Northampton Mercury*, 8 September 1922.
[97] *Ibid.*, 20 January 1928 and 28 March 1947.
[98] *Ibid.*, 23 November 1923.

Great Addington, Harringworth, King's Cliffe, Polebrook, and Weldon, acting at one or repeated times as locations for NUAW activity.[99] These meetings provided NUAW organisers with opportunities to spread the union's message and recruit new members. Beyond such meetings, much NUAW energy was spent on the question of wages. This was especially evident with the advent of WWII and Holness's urging of the farmworkers to remain vigilant and not only 'maintain' but 'improve' their wage position through work on Agricultural Wages Committees.[100]

Evidence on farmworkers' trade unionism in the Northamptonshire-proper portion of what became the Peterborough Division in 1918 is limited. However, we can create an impression from the pieces of the puzzle available. In 1919, the Northamptonshire Agricultural and Rural Workers Council (NARWC) was inaugurated, though little information about this body has survived.[101] However, under the auspices of Wellingborough Labour Council, a meeting was held to form a 'Federation of Trades Councils for the Northampton area'. There were delegates from Northampton, Rushden, and Wellingborough; Kettering had appointed delegates but for whatever reason they did not attend. At that meeting on 23 February 1918, it was recommended that a federation be formed 'for the Northamptonshire area'. The object of the NFTC was for 'the consolidisation [sic] of the labour propaganda & organisation, in order to support the Labour movement in parts which need the assistance of the strongly organised centres…'[102] The NFTC focused on the distribution of labour propaganda, lobbying county and national government with questions concerning the formation of Food Committees, Income Tax, the construction of light railways, and bus services, as well as international issues

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[99] *The Land Worker*, April 1933; October 1933; December 1933; October 1934; December 1934; January 1936; March 1936; December 1936; March 1937, October 1937, December 1937; and December 1938.
[100] *Ibid*., October 1939.
[101] *Northampton Daily Echo*, 3 May 1919; and Northampton Federation of Trades Councils Minutes Books, 1918-1927, ZB1190.
[102] NFTC Minutes Book, 1918-1927, ZB1190.

such as the League of Nations and British intervention in the Russian Civil War (1917-1922).[103]

Of direct significance to agricultural labourers, the NFTC campaigned for the repeal of the

1920 Agriculture Act which amended the 1917 Corn Production Act and introduced the

controversial Conciliation Committees.[104]

The first meeting of the NFTC in May 1918 included delegates from Thrapston, the

only named location of a settlement within the boundaries of the Peterborough Division

attending NFTC meetings. The attendance and correspondence of Thrapston delegates was

patchy, the record going cold after the spring of 1923. However, we are provided with an

insight into the priorities of the Thrapston and District Trades and Labour Council (TDTLC,

established c.1917)[105] via a resolution passed by NFTC to 'emphatically protest' the Thrapston

Local Authority's ignoring of the claims of Co-operative Societies for direct representation on

Local Food Control Committees.[106] The TDTLC also campaigned on a range of local issues,

including the provision of housing and food supplies.[107] In the case of the latter, the issue was

discussed in class terms.[108] Activities of the TDTLC included the organisation of Labour Day

demonstrations, such as that which took place in May 1918, which included speakers F.O.

Roberts, secretary of the Midland Branches of the Typographical Association, and G.W.

Allinson, district organiser of the Federation of Blast Furnacemen.[109] There were Labour

sympathies within the TDTLC, Allinson being returned for Labour in 1925 at the

Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) elections. Post-WWI activities of the TDTLC spoke

of its political leanings. An event at the Old Boat House in Denford to hear from John

Mansfield, Peterborough Division's prospective Labour candidate, was attended by 'supporters

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[103] NFTC ZB1190, 16 January 1919; 31 June 1919; 13 December 1919.
[104] *Ibid.*, 17 September 1921.
[105] *Northampton Mercury*, 3 August 1917.
[106] NFTC ZB1190, 16 January 1919; *Northampton Daily Echo*, 6 October 1917.
[107] *Ibid.*, 25 April 1919.
[108] *Ibid.*, 16 August 1918.
[109] *Ibid.*, 10 May 1918.

and sympathisers from the surrounding neighbourhood.'[110] The challenges regarding evidence speak to the challenges of organising the farmworker population. However, their numbers constituted a significant portion of the local workforce and they would remain on the organisational and electoral radar of the Peterborough DLP from 1918 to 1951.

Strongholds Across Space and Time: Parliamentary, County and Municipal Elections, 1885-1951

Parliamentary Elections in Peterborough and North Northants

While the rise of the boot and shoe trade helped to transform towns such as Northampton and Rushden, representing a move away from the centrality of stately homes, and rural and farming communities, such dynamics were not mirrored in the historic market towns of Oundle and Thrapston.[111] Except for the Liberal landslide of 1906, North Northants, with its focal point in Oundle, a prosperous area, was dominated by the Conservatives from 1885 to 1918 (Figure 2) when the division was abolished.[112] In the words of one commentator, this illustrated the continuation of old 'squire-dominated arrangements,' where Burghleys and the representatives of other prominent local families were elected. The hostility of powerful local landlords to what was perceived as an increasingly radical Liberal party was a feature of rural divisions across Northamptonshire.[113] There was a victory for a Liberal in the 1880 General Election, but this was the exception rather than the rule, reflecting the fact that 'the forces of economic and social change had largely by-passed rural Northamptonshire.'[114] In this context, it is possible to

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[110] *Ibid.*, 18 July 1919.
[111] John Adams, "Politics in Late Victorian and Edwardian Northamptonshire," *Northamptonshire Past and Present* 61 (2008): 78-85. See also, Janet Howarth, "Politics and Society in Late Victorian and Edwardian Northamptonshire," *Northamptonshire Past and Present* 4, no.5 (1970/71): 269-274.
[112] A.K. Russell, *Liberal Landslide: General Election of 1906* (David & Charles, 1973).
[113] Pelling, *Social Geography of British Elections*, 122 and 124.
[114] Greenall, *A History of Northamptonshire*, 121.

speculate with some confidence that one thing that the various reform acts did not abolish was deference.[115] In the land of "spires and squires", the landed gentry still held sway.[116]

The 1906 General Election, as well as the two of 1910, were fought in the wider context of the 1903 Gladstone-Macdonald pact, an agreement which saw Labour and Liberal candidates not stand in opposition to one another in select divisions. That Labour fought none of these electoral contests illustrates that North Northants fell firmly into the Liberal camp – George Nicholls, the Lib-Lab candidate in 1906 leaned toward the Liberal side of this equation. Explanations for Liberal resilience and support for the party within the PTUC can be found in the local industrial composition. Despite a few local exceptions and amongst the union's leadership in the late 1890s, the influence of Lib-Labism was stronger than that of ILP socialism within the ASRS.[117] Furthermore, with many workers positioned in the upper-stratum of the working class and sharing commonalities, including political persuasions, with the lower middle class, this group may have contributed to the continued success of the local Liberals.[118]

Figure 2. General Election results for North Northants 1885 to 1918[119]

Election	Candidate	Party	Votes	%
1885	BROWNLOW CECIL (LORD BURGHLEY)	CONSERVATIVE	4,467	51.0
	James Carmichael	Liberal	4,296	49.0
1886	BROWNLOW CECIL (LORD BURGHLEY)	CONSERVATIVE	Unopposed	
Brownlow Cecil was appointed Groom in Waiting, prompting a by-election				
1886 (16/8)	BROWNLOW CECIL (LORD BURGHLEY)	CONSERVATIVE	Unopposed	
1892	BROWNLOW CECIL (LORD BURGHLEY)	CONSERVATIVE	4,505	54.0
	J.T. Stockburn	Liberal	3,836	46.0

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[115] Pugh, *The Making of Modern British Politics*, 81-85.
[116] Adams, "Politics in Late Victorian and Edwardian Northamptonshire," 78.
[117] David Howell, *British Workers and the Independent Labour Party, 1888-1906* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), 69-83.
[118] E.J. Hobsbawm, *Labouring Men: Studies in the History of Labour* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974), 272-315.
[119] F.W.S. Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results 1885-1918* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1974), 359.

1895	E.P. MONCKTON	CONSERVATIVE	Unopposed	
1900	S.G. STOPFORD-SACKVILLE	CONSERVATIVE	4,559	58.0
	F. Barlow	Liberal	3,303	42.0
1906	G. NICHOLLS	LIB-LAB	4,880	53.8
	S.G. Stopford-Sackville	Conservative	4,195	46.2
1910 (Jan.)	H.L.C. BRASSEY	CONSERVATIVE	5,520	55.5
	G. Nicholls	Lib-Lab	4,429	44.5
1910 (Dec.)	H.L.C. BRASSEY	CONSERVATIVE	5,272	55.5
	J.R. Wilkinson	Liberal	4,221	44.5

The addition of the rural areas of North Northants drastically altered the political proclivities of the Peterborough Division (compare Figure 3 and Figure 4). Indeed, changes to the Division's boundaries and the problems Liberalism encountered during WWI produced a directional shift towards 'orthodox Conservatism instead of their allies the Liberal Unionists.'[120] What is also clear and confirmed by Labour's post-war performance in other areas, is how the collapse of the Liberal party and vote opened up space for Labour, resulting in dramatic electoral improvements. Pre-1914, Labour struggled to establish even a municipal presence. Yet, from 1918 the party not only firmed up its municipal bases but comfortably beat the Liberals at every General Election between 1918 and 1951. Indeed, the fate of the Liberals in the Peterborough Division accorded with wider trends, such as the negative impact of the wartime split between Lloyd-George and Asquith branches of the party, the decision of Labour to go its own way, as well as the decline of religious Dissent. As the electoral tables indicate (Figure 4), Labour successes in the Peterborough Division in the period running from 1918 to 1951 align with the peaks and troughs of swings to and away from the party, winning as they did in 1929 and 1945.[121] Peterborough Division's default was Conservative.

Figure 3. General Election results for Peterborough, 1885 to 1918[122]

Election	Candidate	Party	Votes	%

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[120] Keith Laybourn, "The Peterborough Labour Movement, 1900-1951," (Peterborough Archives) (Unpublished), 1.

[121] Greenall, *A History of Northamptonshire*, 122-123.

[122] Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results 1885-1918*, 168.

1885	HON. W.J.W. FITZWILLIAM	LIBERAL UNIONIST	1,853	53.7
	S.C. Buxton	Liberal	1,595	46.3
1886	HON. W.J.W. FITZWILLIAM	LIBERAL UNIONIST	1,780	54.4
	G.G. Greenwood	Liberal	1,491	45.6
Death of Hon. W.J.W. Fitzwilliam prompted by-election				
1889	A.C. MORTON	LIBERAL	1,893	53.6
	R. Purvis	Liberal Unionist	1,642	46.4
1892	A.C. MORTON	LIBERAL	2,037	52.0
	R. Purvis	Liberal Unionist	1,879	48.0
1895	R. PURVIS	LIBERAL UNIONIST	2,259	52.8
	A.C. Morton	Liberal	2,020	48.0
1900	R. PURVIS	LIBERAL UNIONIST	2,315	51.8
	H. Stewart	Liberal	2,155	48.2
1906	G.G. GREENWOOD	LIBERAL	3,326	60.5
	Sir R. Purvis	Liberal Unionist	2,167	39.5
1910 (Jan.)	G.G. GREENWOOD	LIBERAL	3,308	53.5
	Sir R. Purvis	Liberal Unionist	2,875	46.5
1910 (Dec.)	G.G. GREENWOOD	LIBERAL	3,105	52.6
	Hon. H. Lygon	Conservative	2,802	47.4

In itself, Liberal decline does not explain Conservative predominance and consideration of the *locale* in which the Peterborough DLP operated is instructive. There are several explanations for this state of affairs and a combination of factors likely contributed to the regular return of Conservatives. Firstly, they were largely undeterred by the redrawn boundaries that joined the solidly Conservative North Northants with Peterborough. One exception was Henry Lygon, Conservative candidate for Peterborough at the December 1910 election, who resigned his candidacy partly on grounds that the new constituency was geographically unwieldy. On the other hand, the merger brought Henry Brassey to the expanded division. With him came his experience and rapport with the North Northants electorate and of organising in a largely rural division.[123]

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[123] *Peterborough Standard*, 23 November 1923.

Secondly, the shift towards a more orthodox brand of conservatism and rural patriotism played well with the local electorate; Peterborough was not alone in this pattern.[124] Criticising Free Trade, one Conservative candidate asked trade unionists why 'Germany and other European countries' should benefit and recover through free access to British markets.[125] Furthermore, that Brassey was a major in the British army meant that his patriotic credentials were believable. In 1918, he found local patriotism at fever pitch and ran a campaign that promised to "stick it to the Hun", achieving rapturous applause from an audience when he expressed that, 'I have never liked the Germans, I hate them more to-day than ever, and I think the less we have of them in this country after the war the better. (Loud applause).'[126] A fortnight later, he wrote of sending, 'the Huns who are here back to their crime-saturated fatherland.'[127] In 1923, Brassey would play on a similar theme. These views resonated with the local electorate as illustrated by Brassey's electoral victories in 1918 to 1924. Brassey was not the only Conservative candidate to successfully tap patriotic sentiments in the division. Lord Burghley, the Conservative candidate for 1931, stated that his candidature was driven by a 'patriotic desire to enter politics.' As if to hammer the point home regarding his nationalistic credentials, he commented passionately:

> 'Until a year and a half ago I was a solider…I have watched with the greatest interest the course this great nation and Empire of ours has been travelling…I saw a trading concern being used by a foreign power to incite this country to class hatred, revolution, and disaster; and rejoiced like all other true patriotic Englishmen when that country was sent packing neck and crop.'[128]

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[124] Laybourn, "The Peterborough Labour Movement"; Nicholas Mansfield, "Farmworkers and Local Conservatism in South West Shropshire, 1916-23," in: *Mass Conservatism: The Conservatives and the Public since the 1880s*, eds. Stuart Ball and Ian Holliday (London and New York: Routledge, 2015): 36-57.
[125] *Peterborough Standard*, 23 November 1923.
[126] *Ibid*., 30 November 1918.
[127] *Ibid*., 14 December 1918.
[128] *Ibid*., 9 January, 1931.

Lord Burghley and the Conservatives won the 1931 contest in Peterborough in the context of the fall of the second minority Labour government, and on a pro-Tariff platform.

Thirdly, local Conservative party organisation, as well as associated groups such as the Junior Imperial League, were effective in generating urban and rural enthusiasm and votes for the party including those from the many working-class voters who opted to support them.[129] Furthermore, the party was aided by a 'flourish[ing]' women's branch.[130] Female unionists undertook multiple roles from catering to canvassing, enabling access to 'many parts of the city, which have hitherto been outside the existing organisation'.[131] However, this should not create the impression of eternally perfect organisation, a report from party activists in Peterborough's East Ward in 1931 demonstrated this by stating that: 'Every ward was suffering from lack of coordination'. While certain of victory in East Ward, W. Braddock, organiser for the East Ward Unionist Association, was equally certain that it would not be won 'without hard work.'[132] Nevertheless, such critical self-reflexive-ness may have provided a useful check on complacency; East Ward remained solidly 'Anti-Socialist' throughout the 1930s.

Figure 4. General Election results for Peterborough, 1918 to 1951[133]

Election	Candidate	Party	Votes	%
1918	H.L.C. BRASSEY	COALITION CONSERVATIVE	9,516	44.1
	J. Mansfield	Labour	8,832	41.0
	T.I. Slater	Liberal	3,214	14.9
1922	H.L.C. BRASSEY	CONSERVATIVE	13,560	47.5
	J. Mansfield	Labour	8,668	30.4
	G. Nicholls	Liberal	6,290	22.1
1923	H.L.C. BRASSEY	CONSERVATIVE	11,634	43.4
	J. Mansfield	Labour	8,177	30.5
	D. Boyle	Liberal	7,014	26.1
1924	H.L.C. BRASSEY	CONSERVATIVE	14,195	50.4
	J. Mansfield	Labour	9,180	32.6
	D. Boyle	Liberal	4,786	17.0

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[129] *Ibid*., 17 May 1929.
[130] *Ibid*., 23 March 1928.
[131] *Ibid*., 30 March 1934.
[132] *Ibid*., 6 March 1931.
[133] F.W.S. Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results, 1918-1945* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1977), 438.

1929	J.F. HORRABIN	LABOUR	14,743	39.2
	H.L.C. Brassey	Conservative	14,218	37.7
	J.W.F. Hill	Liberal	8,704	23.1
1931	LORD BURGHLEY	CONSERVATIVE	26,640	65.2
	J.F. Horrabin	Labour	14,206	34.8
1935	LORD BURGHLEY	CONSERVATIVE	22,677	56.6
	E.A.J. Davies	Labour	17,373	43.4
Lord Burghley resigned upon his appointment as the Governor of Bermuda, prompting a by-election				
1943	VISCOUNT SUIRDALE	CONSERVATIVE	11,976	52.4
	S. Bennett	Independent Labour[134]		
1945	S. TIFFANY	LABOUR/CO-OPERATIVE	22,056	50.7
	Viscount Suirdale	Conservative	21,485	49.3
1950	HARMAR NICHOLLS	CONSERVATIVE	22,815	45.9
	Stanley Tiffany	Labour/Co-operative	22,671	45.7
	Wolf Isaac Akst	Liberal	4,180	8.4
1951	HARMAR NICHOLLS	CONSERVATIVE	24,536	48.1
	Albert Farrer	Labour	24,163	47.3
	Wolf Isaac Akst	Liberal	2,367	4.6

Beacons Lit and Unlit: County Elections in Northamptonshire and the Soke of Peterborough

Moving away from the city, the Soke was an administrative county from 1888 to 1964.[135] The Soke of Peterborough County Council (SPCC) consisted of 40 members, 10 aldermen and 30 councillors. The councillors represented 20 electoral divisions within the city and borough, and 10 in the rural divisions of Barnack and Peterborough.[136] As in other parts of the country, returns in the election of 1919 were reasonable for Labour, winning in New England No.2, Millfield, Gladstone Street and, a little further from the city centre, Glinton.[137] However, this modest success was not sustained, even in the urban divisions. Thus, while W. Rimes won Fletton for Labour in 1922 by 7 votes, they lost heavily in 1925; Labour's C.W. Pollard garnering 146 votes to G.W. Abbott's (Conservative) 260. In the same year, Labour lost Millfield to the Conservatives. Advances were not sustained, J.L. George (Labour) won

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[134] Bennett was supported by the Common Wealth Movement and the ILP. See Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results, 1918-1945*, 438.

[135] Tebbs, *Peterborough*, 56.

[136] Ministry of Health Report (1921), Peterborough Archives, 5.

[137] *Peterborough Standard*, 15 March 1919.

Millfield in 1928 before the Conservatives saw victory there in 1931, a year exemplified by damaging election results nationally and locally. Neither did the situation improve three years later, Labour losing the two contests. Furthermore, turnouts were often low, the only sentiment stirred being that of voter apathy.[138] That said, the conclusion of WWII appeared to have a similar boosting effect on Labour's local performance as WWI; the party made five gains within the city compared to a single rural gain. Once again, Labour experienced a retention problem, losing five seats in 1949.[139]

However, this does not tell the full story – the party situation in the urban divisions being rosy compared to rural areas. A regular feature of SPCC elections was uncontested seats and unopposed returns.[140] The *Peterborough Standard* noted in 1922 that the three contests in city wards, and one in the countryside, garnered 'very little interest' – the one rural seat, Helpston, was contested by two Unionists.[141] However, shafts of Labour light were to be seen from time to time; the party won the rural Glinton division in 1919.[142] In 1928, Labour fought two rural contests but was kept at bay by the Conservatives and the Liberals. In Castor, E.B. Holvey (Labour) finished bottom of the poll with 43 votes behind J.W. Harris (Conservative) on 136 and the Liberal Sir Richard Winfrey (88). In Glinton, L.T. Lenton (Labour) put up a good fight against W.S. Setchell of the Conservatives, the latter securing 260 votes to Lenton's 229.[143] In 1946, a year when Labour made six gains, the party lost four of the five rural wards it contested. As if to demonstrate its fleeting rural luminescence, two gains were accompanied

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[138] *Ibid.*, 15 March 1919; 3 March 1922; 10 March 1922; 6 March 1925; 9 March 1928; 6 March 1931; and 25 April 1934.
[139] *Ibid.*, 15 March 1946; and 8 April 1949.
[140] *Ibid.*, 10 March 1922; 6 March 1925; 6 March 1931; 19 February 1937.
[141] *Ibid.*, 10 March 1922.
[142] *Ibid.*, 15 March 1919.
[143] *Ibid.*, 9 March 1928.

by two losses in 1952.[144] Labour fires struggled for oxygen in the countryside, burning out soon after they were sparked into life.

The situation in North Northants was comparable to that in the Soke. Results from the triennial NCC elections do not, on the whole, read positively for Labour. The first elections to the NCC were held in 1889; however, it was in 1904 when the dominant Liberal and Conservative forces identified a common enemy in the Labour party. For example, in the Wollaston Division, Pratt Walker benefitted from the combined support of the Conservatives and the Liberals to defeat the Labour candidate.[145] In 1919, a good year in general for the party at the local level, Labour won six seats on the NCC, three in Kettering alone. In North Northants, Woodford returned G.W. Allinson for Labour, but lost out in Thrapston and did not contest Easton-on-the-Hill. For Northamptonshire as a whole in 1925, Labour fought ten divisions, but met with success in only three wards at Kettering previously held by Labour members; Allinson lost his seat to a Conservative.[146] On a positive note, this could be described as consolidation, but not an advance. Furthermore, the interwar years were not kind to Labour, reaching a peak of 11 members out of 82 in 1937 (Figure 5). Indeed, the political situation in rural Northamptonshire was comparable to that of the Soke. As Bradbury argued: 'despite the political hue and cry at elections time, apart from 1889 and 1946, the majority of divisions were left uncontested…The landed classes dominated the rural divisions.'[147] Labour's best performance came after WWII. Despite the dip in seats in 1949, Labour was resurgent in 1952, securing its highest ever seat total (28).

Figure 5. Party composition of NCC, 1889-1919 and 1937-1952[148]

Year	Conservative	Independent	Liberal	Labour	Other	Total

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[144] *Ibid.*, 15 March 1946; and 11 April 1952.
[145] Jonathan Bradbury, *Government & County: A History of Northamptonshire County Council, 1889-1989* (Bristol: University of Bristol Press, 1989), 11-12 and 18.
[146] *Northampton Daily Echo*, 9 March 1928.
[147] Bradbury, *A History of Northamptonshire County Council*, 24-25.
[148] *Ibid.*, 16 and 21.

1889	36	3	29			68
1892	33	2	33			68
1895	36	2	30			68
1898	33	2	33			68
1901	34	5	32		2	73
1904	32	5	34		1	72
1907	35	3	33		1	72
1910	37	4	31			72
1913	39	3	29		1	72
1919	29	6	23	6	8	72
1937	16	32	8	11	15	82
1946	9	37	8	21	6	81
1949	37	22	11	10	1	81
1952	33	19	8	28	1	89

Therefore, while many rural divisions remained shrouded in darkness as far as Labour was concerned, there were a handful of beacons that were lit. In the Soke, such an argument can be made for the Glinton division, which the party won in 1919 and contested in 1928, albeit unsuccessfully. However, a feature of both SPCC and NCC elections was the regularity with which rural divisions went uncontested, leaving the field open for the landed gentry and Conservatives to maintain their influence deep into the twentieth century. Labour's rural beacons could be lit and put out just as swiftly, or simply not lit at all. And while the level of organisation does not necessarily equate with electoral returns, results in the countryside do raise questions about the condition and *practices* of Labour in North Northants.

"A Stronghold Too Strong": Municipal Elections, 1898-1951

Peterborough became a municipal borough in 1874, initially electing six aldermen and 18 councillors from four wards (North Ward, East Ward, South Ward and West Ward).[149] North Ward and South Ward elected three councillors, while East Ward and West Ward elected six. In 1929, Paston Ward was added to the borough and elected three new members to the City

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[149] Davies, Habeshaw and Robinson, *Peterborough*, 25; Tebbs, *Peterborough*, 54-55.

Council.[150] Municipal elections from the late 1890s through to the commencement of WWI predominantly pitched Liberals against Conservatives; "Labour" was a bit-part player. This was reflected in the composition of the city council; before the 1901 municipal contest, the split was 10 (Liberal) to 14 (Conservative). The election would conclude with the Liberals losing one seat. The council would remain divided between the two parties, the gap in seats widening and narrowing throughout the pre-war period; in 1910, for example, the split was 17 (Conservatives) to 7 (Liberal).

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[150] Tebbs, *Peterborough*, 55-56.

Figure 6. Peterborough Municipal Ward Boundaries, 1921[151]
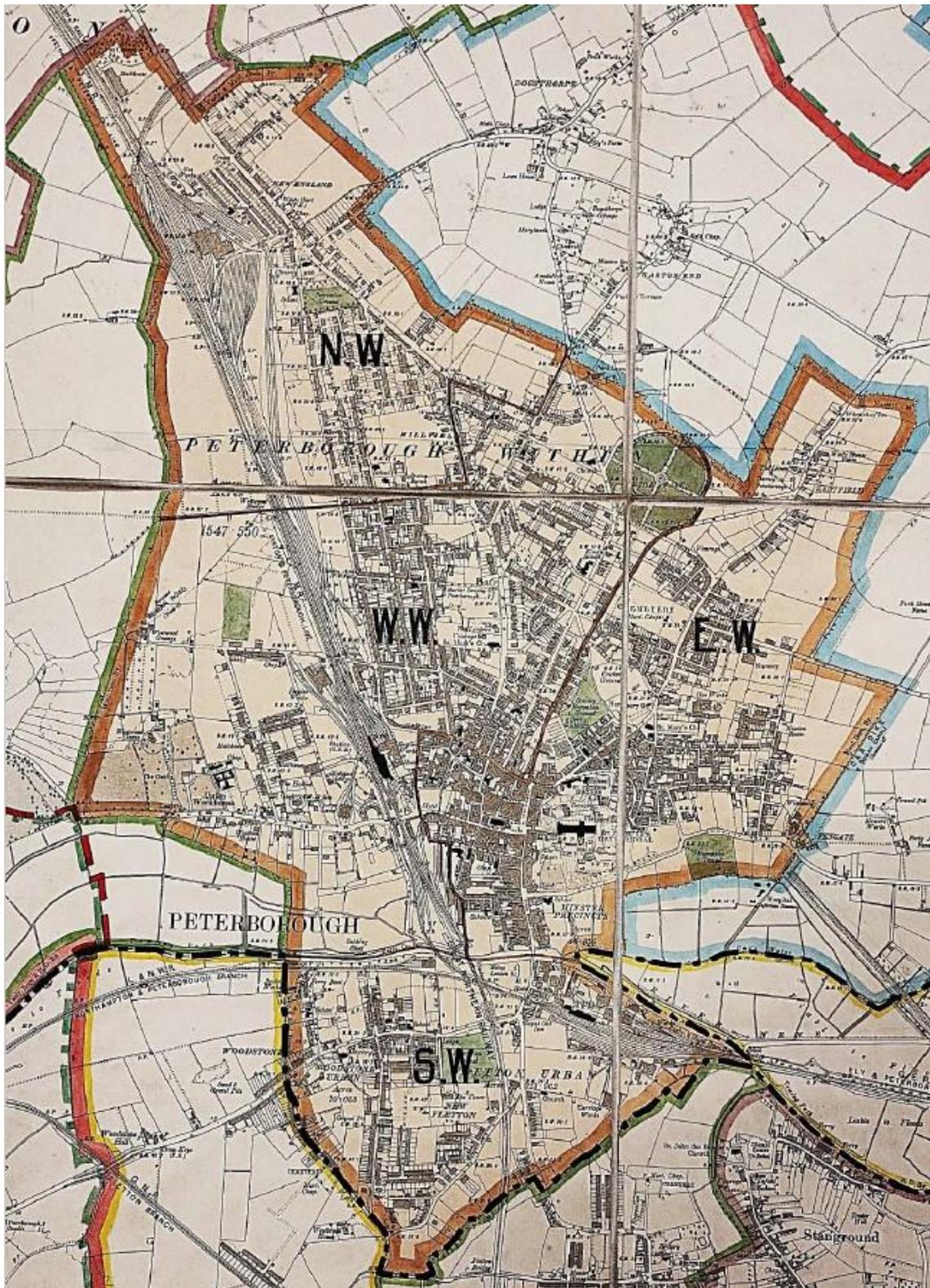
From 1898 to 1913, municipal elections in Peterborough were a two-horse race. On some occasions, there was no race at all with candidates returned unopposed; for instance, this happened in 1908.[152] Such occurrences may have reflected a combination of voter/party apathy and/or localised pockets of party predominance. For example, a Conservative was returned without opposition in the South Ward in 1901, a turn of events perhaps shaped by what a local newspaper described as a 'foregone conclusion' concerning Conservative victory in the ward the previous year.[153] However, this could change, and the South Ward returned both Liberals and Conservatives in 1904 and 1905.[154] Similar narratives can be told of the East and West Wards. For instance, East Ward was generally solid for the Conservatives, though this statement bears a "health warning." In 1898, ward electors returned two Conservative candidates for the two council seats available; the same outcome occurred in 1901, 1904 and 1910. However, while the ward had a Conservative default during this period, circumstances could make it more electorally propitious for the Liberals. Potentially profiting from the debate surrounding the Education Bill which was made a key issue via the action of the Nonconformist Free Church Council, the Liberals fared far better in the ward in 1902, when the party won two seats; T.C. Lamplugh repeated this success by being returned again in 1905, though this time alongside a Conservative.[155] The West Ward returned two Conservatives in 1899.[156] However, when seats were contested between 1900 to the outbreak of war, the West Ward often returned a Conservative *and* a Liberal.[157]

Independent labour candidates played a minor role before the outbreak of WWI. We have heard how A.J. Boyce contested municipal elections in 1905 and 1906, in the West and

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[152] *Peterborough Standard*, 31 October 1898.
[153] *Peterborough Advertiser*, 7 November 1900.
[154] *Peterborough Standard*, 5 November 1904; 4 November 1905.
[155] *Ibid.*, 8 November 1902.
[156] *Ibid.*, 4 November 1899.
[157] *Ibid.*, 3 November 1900; 8 November 1902; 5 November 1904; 5 November 1910; and 8 November 1913.

North wards, respectively. In 1910, the two "Labour" candidates finished last in the East, South and West wards. The 1911 round of elections demonstrated a similar feat, with "Labour" candidates finishing bottom in the North and West wards. Furthermore, they were often bottom by some distance. For example, E.W. Bench received 490 in November 1910, compared to the 1,172 and 1,171 received by the successfully elected Conservative candidates. Charles Popp's 356 against the Liberal Walter Riseley's 658 was still some way behind. The closest pre-WWI municipal contest from Labour's point of view came in the 1913 contest in the borough's North Ward, where G.S. Palmer (Labour) received 625 against Sir Richard Winfrey's (Liberal) 654. If independent labour was showing electoral promise anywhere in pre-1914 Peterborough it was in the North Ward.

Indeed, the most striking pattern regarding municipal electoral results in this period is the contrast between the city's North Ward and the rest. In 1898, Winfrey (414 votes) defeated his Conservative opponent J.W. Rowe (332 votes). In the following year, Riseley achieved a substantial margin of 331 between himself and his Conservative opposition in an election described as a 'handsome vindication of the policy of the Conservative and Unionist Party.'[158] G. Keeble's victory for the Liberals in the North Ward in 1900 was considered a certainty, with the *Peterborough Advertiser* commenting that: 'The Liberal party is unfortunately placed in having, strange though it may appear, a stronghold too strong.'[159] In those years when there was a contest, the North Ward returned a Liberal; this was the case in 1904, 1906, 1911 and 1913. Given what transpired following the end of wartime hostilities and Labour's absorption of the North Ward as its own "stronghold too strong," particularly when we consider the level of the neighbourhood, the Peterborough case adds further ammunition to the argument that Labour profited from voters' dissension from the Liberals and that the timing of that split came

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[158] *Ibid.*, 4 November 1899.
[159] *Peterborough Advertiser*, 7 November 1900.

after 1914, though the seeds for this break were maturing from an earlier date. It also highlights

the sub-divisional spatial differentiation of Labour support.

Figure 7. North Ward Municipal Boundary, 1921[160]
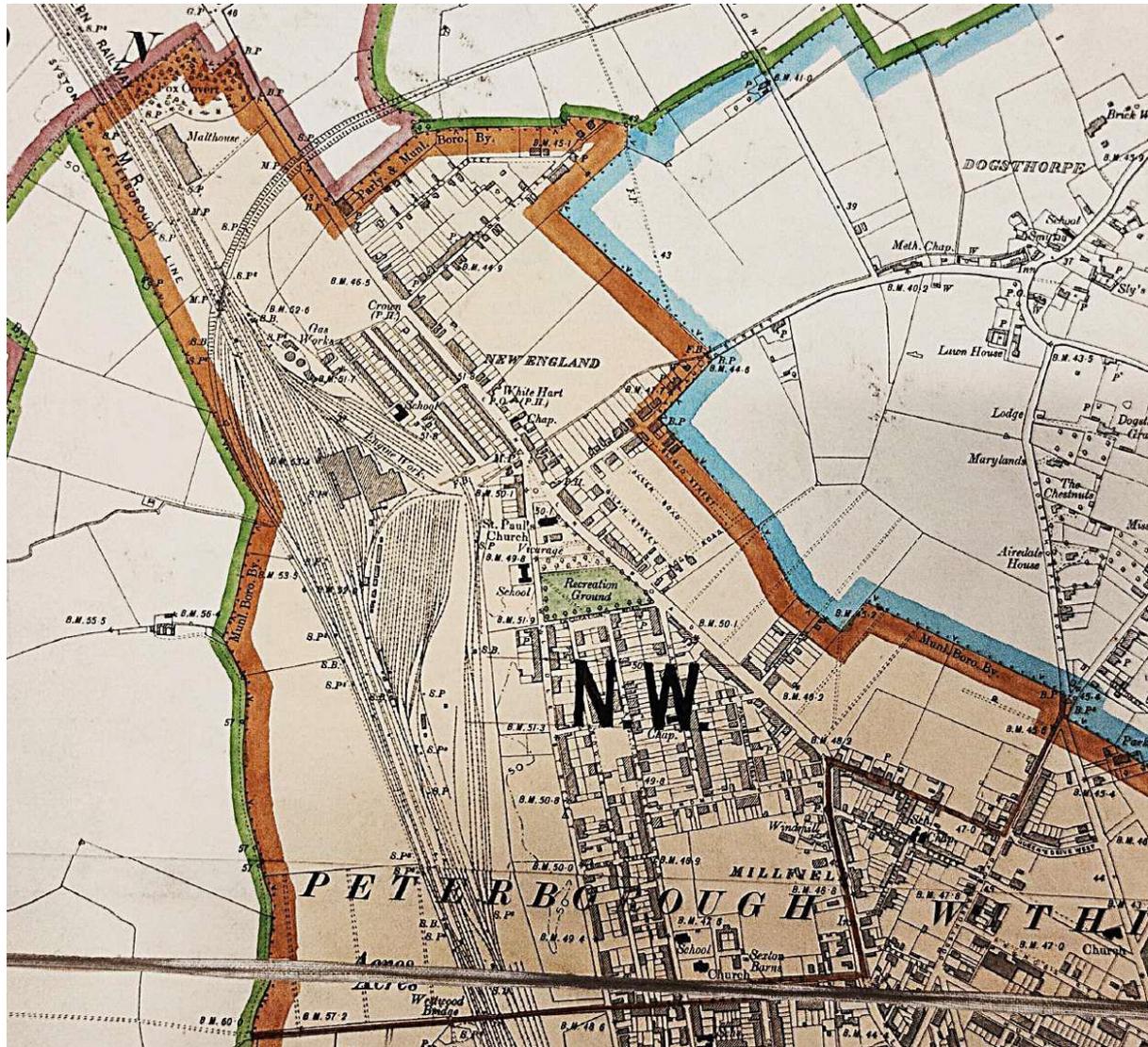
As was the case in other municipal areas, Labour performed well at the local elections

of 1919. In the North Ward, G.S. Palmer was returned unopposed, while C.L. Fletcher was

returned in a four-way contest in South Ward, finishing 345 votes ahead of his nearest

competitor. George Nicholls finished top of the polls in the double-member ward, ahead of

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[160] Ordnance Survey: Peterborough District (October 1920-October 1927). PAS/CBP/17/2/2. Peterborough Archives.

Unionist opposition by 723 votes; a by-election in the South Ward also returned W. Rimes for Labour, 504 ahead of his Unionist rival. Even the Conservative-leaning *Peterborough Standard* had to concede that, '[t]he honours rest, it must be granted, with Labour.'[161] The composition of the council at the end of 1919 read: Unionists (14); Liberals (5); Labour (5), the latter drawing level with the Liberals.

However, this performance was not to be maintained in subsequent elections. In 1920, Labour was successful in North Ward but failed to return candidates in East, West or South wards, support in the latter turning the way of the Unionists. Indeed, every Unionist who went to the poll was returned. It was a similar story throughout much of the 1920s, the only exception being the North Ward. Indeed, the North Ward was quickly standing out as a local *Laboursphere*. Labour councillor G.S. Palmer commented that, '[t]he Labour element in the North Ward is supreme', putting the 1920 success down to the solid vote of trade union members, especially those from the NUR and the ASE.[162] Labour was considered so firmly embedded in the North Ward that local Conservatives would refer to it as the "Red Ward".[163] This was an important departure from the early 1900s, when the Liberals had the ears and the votes of the railwaymen having, 'on many occasions', 'advocated the interests of Railwaymen and their Societies.'[164] Labour success in its local stronghold continued into the 1930s, with victories for John Mansfield (1930), G.S. Palmer (1931), Harold Kelley (1934), W. Seaton (1936), Mrs G.M. Benstead and Mrs M. Wood (1945), and Mrs M. Wood (1947). No other ward, except Paston between 1929 and 1945 could boast a similar record of Labour success.

In 1929, the new Paston Ward was contested for the first time. Adjoining the "red ward," the results of 1929 and subsequent elections in the 1930s, indicated that Peterborough's

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[161] *Peterborough Standard*, 18 November 1919.
[162] *Ibid*., 6 November 1920.
[163] *Ibid*., 9 January 1931.
[164] *Ibid*., 27 October 1900.

red wall was growing. While Labour finished bottom of the polls in the East, West, and South wards, they returned two candidates at Paston, albeit behind an Independent.[165] As intimated, between 1929 and 1945, Labour's performance in Paston was on par with the party's successes in the North Ward. Where there was a contest, a Labour candidate topped the poll. The break in this chain came in 1946 when the Progressive (Conservative) candidate displaced E. Pailing. Having successfully gained control of Peterborough City Council for the first time in 1946, the loss in Paston fed the headline in the *Peterborough Standard*: "Labour's Election Rout". From outright control, the composition of the council was now Progressives 17 and Labour 11.

Conclusion

The principal base of the Peterborough DLP was the local trade union movement and, more specifically, the PTUC. This was not especially unusual or distinct, with many DLPs built on trade union foundations. That said, the local configuration of the workforce, the predominance of railway workers and engineers in the city and agricultural labourers in the countryside, presented a breadth of organisational resources to draw on which would need to be balanced to keep all parties content. This mixed composition would turn out to be significant in many ways. As in other areas, cracks began to emerge in the Progressive Alliance in the early 1900s, though the cracks only became unbridgeable following WWI. In contrast to its regional peers (chapter five), socialism of the ILP and Marxist brands played a minimal role in the emergence and development of the Peterborough DLP, helping to understand the enduring influence of the Liberal party, particularly where municipal and parliamentary elections were concerned. The electoral picture for Labour consisted of light and dark spots. The lightest spot was in Peterborough's North Ward, which became the nucleus of the local Labour party, with its transition to the Labour fold illustrating how Liberal decline directly contributed to Labour's

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[165] *Peterborough Standard*, 29 March 1929.

rise. However, there were dark spots all around. The parliamentary default of North Northants was Conservative/Unionist, while county elections for NCC and SPCC exemplified much the same. This mixture of city and country would provide organisational opportunities and challenges for the Peterborough DLP.

We now have in place a spatial biography of the Peterborough Division, covering aspects of *location* and *locale*. This foundational work will be referred to throughout, as it highlights where the Peterborough DLP converged with or diverged from national, regional, as well as extra-local trends. In the next chapter, the theoretical foundations of the study are expanded upon.

Chapter 2: Parties and *Place*: An Assessment of Existing Theory

Introduction

In part, *spatial-institutionalism* was derived from an analysis of primary source material. Multiple read-throughs of party minutes and other texts highlighted local party *practices* as a potential area for further analysis and academic contribution, enhancing our understanding of the mechanisms of party development. This was complemented by deductive study investigating the existing theoretical landscape concerning (local) parties and their organisational and ideological development. This chapter is the product of that deductive study.

The theoretical study of party development and change has, to a considerable degree, been aspatial in nature, with even consciously territorial works falling short of addressing the mediative role of *place* on party form and *practice*. With much analysis conducted at national or regional scales, the divisional level has lost out in the hierarchy of scales.[1] Therefore, it is not so much a case of building on what has already been written but laying new foundations. Despite the paucity of theory directly pertaining to local development, insights from studies relating to national and/or regional scales are invaluable in constructing a framework applicable to local circumstances.

Research within political science focusing on the 'party in public office' (i.e., parliament) and the 'party in central office' (i.e., national headquarters) is plentiful. Following some tweaking, several of these were well-suited to deconstructing party *practices* at a granular scale.[2] The quarrying of the literary landscape for inspiration covered a range of approaches

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[1] Bratberg, *Multi-level politics and party change*; Hopkin and Bradbury, "British statewide parties and multilevel politics"; Hopkin, "Party Matters".

[2] Richard Katz and Peter Mair, "The Evolution of Party Organisations in Europe: The Three Faces of Party Organisation," *The American Review of Politics* 14 (1993).

including Rational Choice theory; political/electoral geography and the social psychology of *place*; sport philosophy (chapter three); history and environmental history; as well as comparative historical sociology and a range of institutionalisms, in particular Historical Institutionalism. Each approach is dealt with in turn, with their strengths and limitations being discussed. The most insightful elements of each approach were integrated into the overall approach.

An Assessment of Existing Theory and Approaches

Rational Choice Theory

Rational Choice applies ideas from economics to the study of politics to unpick decision-making processes.[3] Emphasis is placed on unearthing incentive structures or systems of reward and punishment. Provided the incentive structures are known, the theory posits that agents act in predictable ways to achieve goals and that these are informed by self-interest.[4] For instance, Downs argued that people are utility maximisers with ranked preferences that they adhere to consistently. Thus, parties that are interested in winning elections and maintaining power move to the political/ideological centre ground of their respective context to attract as many votes as possible.[5] Several major works have focused on the distribution of power within parties and how its arrangement influences how and what decisions are made.[6] The implication is that decision-making is patterned and predictable.

Investigation of incentive structures has appealed to numerous others. Schlesinger depicted elites as being in exchange with supporters, donors, stakeholders etc., offering

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[3] See Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper, 1957); A. Hindmoor, "Rational Choice," in *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, eds. David Marsh and Gerry Stoker (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Quinn, *Modernising the Labour Party*.

[4] Hindmoor, "Rational Choice."

[5] Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*.

[6] Panebianco, *Political Parties*, xii; Michels, *Political Parties*, 401.

collective goods, such as policies and rewards. By the author's reckoning, this model explains several facets of party development, including 'why parties are oligarchies.' As such, the unrestrainable force of power as an explainer of party organisation is posited.[7] Quinn's study of Labour from 1983 to New Labour adopted a Rational Choice approach, focusing on candidate selection, leadership election and policy making.[8] His thesis challenged Minkin's normative approach to understanding the link between the Labour party and the trade unions, instead putting the relationship down to a 'hard-headed, rational assessment by politicians and unions' over the nature of the exchange of money for influence over policy.[9] However, it will be demonstrated that local party organisation and identity were founded on more than power, incentives and rewards, though these are of course present – *place* lurks beneath.[10]

Rational Choice theory's recognition of the role of self-interest in party *practices* makes intuitive sense, and it may be particularly useful in accounting for short- and medium-term change.[11] As such, it can be applied to everyday actions and provide a plausible account of how and why a given decision was reached. While it may be contended that people make mistakes about their own self-interest, Rational Choice theorists reply that people make the most rational decisions based on the information available.[12] Therefore, the decision, whether it is deemed right or wrong in retrospect, is made in the moment.

However, there are fundamental problems affecting its application here. This includes its assumptions of 'perfect rationality', though this may be navigated as outlined in the previous paragraph, and the 'narrow instrumentality' of actors.[13] There are drawbacks in terms of

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[7] Joseph Schlesinger, "On the Theory of Party Organisations," *The Journal of Politics* 46, no.2 (1984).
[8] Quinn, *Modernising the Labour Party*.
[9] *Ibid.*, 1-2. See Lewis Minkin, *The Contentious Alliance: Trade Unions and the Labour Party* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991).
[10] Joseph A. Schlesinger, "On the Theory of Party Organisation," *The Journal of Politics* 46, no.2 (1984).
[11] Quinn, *Modernising the Labour Party*, 38.
[12] Hindmoor, "Rational Choice," 54.
[13] Colin Hay, "Process tracing: a laudable aim or high-tariff methodology?" *New Political Economy* 21, no.5 (2016), 503.

offering genuine explanations of social and political phenomena and it has been noted normative values may be underplayed.[14] Where Rational Choice may be a powerful approach in understanding short- to medium-term change, changes that occur over a longer timespan are less easily accounted for; it is here that recourse to alternative, context-rich approaches, such as Historical Institutionalism and/or comparative historical sociology may be more fruitful. This illumines further criticism: the relative dearth of context. By his own admission, Quinn noted that there was little by way of historical narrative in his work.[15] This is problematic for the present thesis, particularly given the nature of the sources available. These documents encouraged a serious engagement with the past to explain party *practices*. An account with little or no historical narrative risks leaving certain decisions half-understood or understood only in their immediate context. Therefore, Rational Choice represents an insufficient foundation upon which to build a narrative-rich account. Additionally, its aspatiality is incompatible with the inductive findings, precluding its application in isolation.

Organisational Development: Theory and Context

Theorists of organisation have scrutinised the features and drivers of their development, producing an array of conceptual tools with which to unpick the workings of local parties. Wellhofer, in a study of socialist-labour parties, offered the idea of 'organisational encapsulation', or 'the elaboration of party sub-units' to encompass the day-to-day activities of the party membership.[16] Three indicators were identified to measure *encapsulation*: 1) number of local party centres; 2) proportion of enfranchised population in the party; and 3) proportion of enfranchised with party membership in the principal economic organisation of

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[14] Colin Hay, "Theory, Stylised Heuristic or Self-Fulfilling Prophecy? The Status of Rational Choice Theory in Public Rawministration," *Public Administration* 82, no.1 (2004): 39-62.
[15] Quinn, *Modernising the Labour Party*, xix.
[16] E.S. Wellhofer, "The Effectiveness of Party Organisation: A Cross-National Time Series Analysis," *European Journal of Political Research* 7, no.2 (1979), 206.

the party.[17] The availability of this granular information has the potential to unlock insight into local organisational structure and identity. There is value in knowledge of the spatial spread of sub-divisional/branch parties and how this reflected the social geography, as well as the tailoring of party appeals and, thus, the spatial extent of its electoral ambitions. Additionally, the success or failure of local branches may provide clues as to the fertileness of the electoral soil within which local parties wished to plant their message and the gap between aimed for and actual party identity. Furthermore, Janda produced 27 indicators, including degree of organisation, centralisation of power, coherence, and involvement. The utility of such ideas for present purposes is evident if we consider the 'extensiveness of organisation' and 'frequency of local meetings' as indicators of *degree of organisation* or patterns of interactions including formal and informal rules and procedures. Provided there is an understanding of space and *place*, it may provide clues into organisational aspirations and identity. Spatialising the 'frequency' to the location or spatial occurrence of local party meetings again provides insights into organisational and ideational realities.[18] Such insights are valuable, the present task is to spatialise them, anchoring them in a more holistic framework.

One theme running through theories of organisational development is that of the influence on party structure of the wider institutional environmental. Organisations have a multitude of relationships with their external environment. However, there is a consensus that the electoral is the paramount environment occupied by parties. For instance, Panebianco's conception of the environment is restricted to the electoral and parliamentary arenas; his discussion of environmental influences occurs within the context of a debate on organisational adaptation to or domination of the external (electoral) environment.[19] Considered spatially, this

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[17] See also Kenneth Janda, "Cross-National Measures of Party Organisations and Organisational Theory," *European Journal of Political Research* 11, no.3 (1983): 319-332.
[18] *Ibid*., 325-330.
[19] Panebianco, *Political Parties*, 6, 164-165 and 208.

argument raises questions about adaptation/domination within and across scales. The framework amassed and utilised here moves away from Panebianco's limited definition, emphasising the importance of *place* in scalar and contextual senses.

Similarly, electoral *performance* can be a driver of party change. 'The poorer the party's performance, the greater the pressure for party change'.[20] This idea of change is heavily grounded in organisational theory, including discussion of Kaufman's (1985) notion of adjustment as well as Nadler and Tushman's (1989) typology of the scope and timing of change.[21] This paper makes several valuable contributions. It supports the notion that the performance and judgement of performance of other parties influences whether and what type of party change takes place. This is an important observation as it draws attention to the wider party system or *locale*.[22] Additionally, several independent variables of party change including *political system change*, which encompasses legislative change and reforms to the electoral system, leadership change and institutionalisation.[23] The latter, contrary to Panebianco, is measured in terms of party age, extent of leadership competition, as well as electoral and legislative stability. However, there are several drawbacks to this performance theory. Firstly, the theory does not appear to offer much space for agency; change is seen as the function of electoral defeat.[24] Secondly, the environment spoken of is, in essence, an electoral one. Thirdly, the paper falls into the trap of regarding the mass party type as *the* type of party from which others are deviations. This is significant as the idea that organisations (parties) are conservative and depend on certain social groups for appeal underpins the performance theory of change.

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[20] Kenneth Janda, "Toward A Performance Theory of Change in Political Parties." Paper presented at the *12th World Congress of the International Sociological Association Research Committee 18, Session 4, "Modelling Party Change," Madrid, Spain, July 9-13, 1990*, 8.

[21] *Ibid*., for discussion of Kaufman see 2, 4 and 12-13. For discussion of Nadler and Tushman see 2-4.

[22] John Agnew, "Space and Place," in *The SAGE Handbook of Geographical Knowledge*, ed. John A. Agnew and David N. Livingstone (London: 2011).

[23] Janda, "Toward a Performance Theory of Change," 11-17.

[24] *Ibid*., 7.

Historicising Party Development: Historical Sociology and Historical Institutionalism

The ahistoricism of Rational Choice theory was highlighted as a limitation hampering its application. The nature of the study, research question, and source material meant engagement with history was a necessity. The methodological approaches associated with comparative historical sociology offer perspectives and concepts enabling the theorisation and operationalisation of a novel approach to local party development.[25] Historical Institutionalism offers its own slant, particularly an emphasis on organisational origins and formative moments, and subsequent trajectories, in an organisation's development, degrees of institutionalisation (i.e., fluidity/solidity of rules and procedures), as well as the identification of critical junctures in explaining organisational change.[26] Nevertheless, there are broad commonalities, including an interest in history and its effects on the past, present, as well as implications for the future; an interest in social structures and processes; an appreciation of the role of agency in structural contexts, as well as the benefits of comparison.[27]

Practitioners of comparative historical sociology can be assigned approximately to one of three groups. These provide a useful starting point from which to critique seminal works in the field.[28] Firstly, those researchers searching for general sociological laws. Emile Durkheim spoke of the identification and classification of "species" or types of societies that were more

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[25] See Reinhard Bendix, *Nation-Building and Citizenship: Studies of our Changing Social Order* (New York, London and Sydney: John Wiley & Sons, 1964); Reinhard Bendix, *Kings or People: Power and the Mandate to Rule* (California: University of California Press, 1980); Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, *The Political Systems of Empires* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1963); Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (New York: Penguin, 1966); Edward P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin, 1991).

[26] Theda Skocpol, "Sociology's Historical Imagination," in: *Vision and Method in Historical Sociology*, ed. by Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Steinmo, "Historical Institutionalism," in: *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective*, ed. by Donatella Della Porta and Michael Keating (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[27] Skocpol, "Sociology's Historical Imagination."

[28] Theda Skocpol, "Emerging Agendas and Recurrent Strategies in Historical Sociology," in: *Vision and Method in Historical Sociology*, ed. by Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

permanent than historical phases.[29] Comparison acted as a facilitator for generating laws of

nature: '…to discover the laws of nature, one need only make a sufficient number of

comparisons between the various forms of a given thing'.[30] Eisenstadt posited a general theory

of the world economy in his *The Political Systems of Empire*, arguing that history and change

are functions of a wider system which can be classified.[31] In much the same way as a biologist

approaches the natural world, examination of the empirical evidence will lead to the

classification of real types "out there", which in turn leads to broader generalisations.[32]

Proximal to the topic at hand, Panebianco searched for generalisations in terms of paths of

development, with comparison serving the purpose of identifying similarities and contrasts in

such developments. Michels was even more explicit in his objective of discovering general

laws shaping social action.[33]

However, there are limitations to both Panebianco's and Michels' works. An approach

that promises to explain every instance of a phenomena (i.e., revolution) through the lens of a

single theory is appealing; however, the underlying search for general sociological laws is

problematic. Firstly, given the complexity of human society, is the discovery of irrefutable laws

of nature attainable? Society does not resemble the controlled conditions of a laboratory; this

makes isolating the conditions that researchers propose led to or caused any given phenomenon

difficult. However, the thinking and logic behind a proposed sociological law or model may

prove useful if serving a preliminary function before the conduct of case-study based empirical

study. Such theoretical abstractions or ideal types play an important role in highlighting

diversity. Secondly, there is the risk of searching for laws of nature and instead descending into

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[29] Charles Ragin and David Zaret, "Theory and Method in Comparative Research: Two Strategies," *Social Forces* 61, no.3 (1983), 734-735.
[30] Emile Durkheim quoted in Ragin and Zaret, "Theory and Method in Comparative Research," 736.
[31] Eisenstadt, *The Political Systems of Empire*.
[32] Gary G. Hamilton, 'Configurations in History: The Historical Sociology of S.N. Eisenstadt', in: *Vision and Method in Historical Sociology*, ed. by Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). 92-94.
[33] Michels, *Political Parties*, 401.

meaninglessness. Eisenstadt typified the danger of a theory of 'double determinateness' by producing a 'model by which everything and hence nothing can be explained'.[34] Positioning research on a high plane of abstraction means the richness of individual cases is overlooked, which is to the detriment of understanding. Furthermore, the authors discussed share a preoccupation with a national spatial scale, omitting sub-national scales that risk obfuscating the general laws of party development.

Those searching for causal regularities in history constitute the second group.[35] This cluster represents a median position between the search for universal laws and particularism and highlights the clarity that comparativism provides – space is afforded to the search for general processes *and* the role of meaningful human actions in driving history.[36] In a seminal work on modernisation and the negotiated transition from the pre-industrial to the modern world, Moore encapsulated the essence of a comparative middle way. In one passage the question of comparison is directly addressed:

> 'Comparisons can serve as a rough negative check on accepted historical explanations. And a comparative approach may lead to new historical generalisations…[However] [t]hat comparative analysis is no substitute for detailed investigation of specific cases is obvious.'[37]

Two purposes of comparison and one caveat can be extracted from this statement. Firstly, comparison serves as a barometer of the robustness of any given historical explanation. Secondly, comparison *may* lead to further generalisations, but this is by no means inevitable or even necessary. Finally, empirical research and careful examination of individual cases is priceless. Similarly, Skocpol, in shedding light on the ingredients and trajectories of social

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[34] Hamilton, "Configurations in History," 115.
[35] Skocpol, "Emerging Agendas and Recurrent Strategies in Historical Sociology," 374-384.
[36] Dennis Smith, "Discovering Facts and Value: The Historical Sociology of Barrington Moore," *Vision and Method in Historical Sociology*, ed. by Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 315.
[37] Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, x-xi.

revolutions, uses a combination of Mill's method of agreement and method of difference.[38] Instead of attempting to force cases into a theoretical straitjacket, comparison is used to both highlight and celebrate diversity.

The group classified as 'interpretive historical sociologists' represent the third division.[39] Here the perspective on the role of comparison is one stressing differentiation and unique developmental experiences. For instance, in his studies of authority relationship, Bendix demonstrated many of the features of this interpretive approach.[40] In rejecting what he saw as the assumptions of universalist and modernisation theories, Bendix adopted an approach to comparative research highlighting difference through contrast, or using 'the "visibility" of one structure by contrasting it with another'.[41] Thus, comparison serves the purpose of shedding light on differences rather than exposing similarities that might serve the basis of sociological laws.[42] Some historical institutionalists share the desire to emphasise distinctiveness over the search for generalisations.[43] This is more than a trivial issue of semantics as it strikes at the very heart of the underlying assumptions of comparative research.[44] This also ties in with questions concerning pure theory and pure empiricism, it is imperative to achieve this balance.[45] This final tradition presents an attractive approach for comprehending multi-scaled spatial and contextual influences on DLP development. However, one criticism levelled at Bendix was that he left unexamined his own theoretical propositions/presuppositions in

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[38] Skocpol, "Emerging Agendas and Recurrent Strategies in Historical Sociology."
[39] Skocpol, "Sociology's Historical Imagination."
[40] Bendix, *Nation-Building and Citizenship*; and Bendix, *Kings or People*.
[41] *Ibid.*, 14.
[42] D. Rueschemeyer, "Theoretical Generalisation and Historical Particularity in the Comparative Sociology of Reinhard Bendix," in: *Vision and Method in Historical Sociology*, ed. by Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2010), 133.
[43] Steinmo, Thelen, and Longstreth, *Structuring Politics*; Kathleen Thelen, "Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics," *Annual Review of Political Science* 2, no.1 (1999); and Paul Pierson, *Politics in Time: History, Institutions and Social Analysis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).
[44] Jonathan Hopkin, "The Comparative Method," in: *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, ed. by David Marsh and Gerry Stoker (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
[45] Bendix, *Nation-Building and Citizenship*. 11; Bendix, *Kings or People*. 16.

emphasising a putatively antitheoretical approach to comparative history.[46] An emphasis on distinctness not only provides the best fit for the evidence marshalled but has the potential to mesh well with theories of *place* and their acknowledgement of the uniqueness of *places.*

Many of the major works on parties, power and change demonstrate a strong Weberian influence in their acknowledgement of the role of history (genetics) in explaining party development.[47] Duverger argued that parties retained 'the mark of their childhood'.[48] He went on to draw a developmental line between 'interior' (i.e., parliamentary) and 'exterior' (i.e., extra-parliamentary) parties, arguing that whether a party was formed inside or outside parliament had an important bearing on its subsequent organisational direction. There is a link to be made here concerning the emergence of divisional parties and whether that emergence stemmed from the impetus of the (national) centre or more organically from the division or locality. Panebianco's three-phase model of party development sees parties move, though not necessarily smoothly or inevitably, from genesis, to institutionalisation, to maturity.[49] Careful attention is paid to the formative stages of party development, particularly on how incentive structures took shape. Parties are identified as having a multitude of aims, almost as many as their members.[50] While recognising ideational differentiation the jump is not made to examine whether differences of opinion have a spatial logic. Combining the study of party genetics and *place* raises the prospect of enriching our understanding of the factors shaping local developments.

Institutionalism has assumed multiple forms. One way to think about institutions is to see them as (in)formal structures of a society. For example, a formal structure could be a

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[46] Rueschemeyer, "Theoretical Generalisation and Historical Particularity in the Comparative Sociology of Reinhard Bendix," 159-160.

[47] See Ragin and Zaret, "Theory and Method in Comparative Research," 740-746.

[48] Duverger, *Political Parties*, xxiii.

[49] Panebianco, *Political Parties,* xiii-xiv.

[50] *Ibid.*, 7.

government department or legal framework, while an informal structure may be something less immediately tangible such as a 'network of interacting organisations' or 'shared norms'. Institutions are bigger than individuals and refer to 'patterned' and, in some way, 'predictable' interactions and relationships between groups of individuals that are stable over time.[51] Peters noted a third characteristic: institutions 'must affect individual behaviour.'[52]

Several types of institutionalism have been identified. It is helpful to address briefly the theoretical ground the numerous types cover as a means of identifying their core tenets, strengths, and limitations, as well as where *spatial-institutionalism* converges and diverges. Firstly, normative institutionalism focuses on institutional norms and behavioural expectations.[53] For example, an organisation exerting pressure on employees to act in a certain way. The logic of appropriateness model at the centre of this approach sees decision-making and behaviours following set behavioural expectations.[54] However, the equation for determining behaviour is perhaps more complicated than this. By introducing a notion of *place* into calculations we can attain a more nuanced understanding. Rational Choice institutionalists shift the focus towards incentive structures, whereby individuals look to maximise benefits for themselves. The strengths of this approach reside in the insights it provides into the shaping and manipulation of incentives; however, users of this strand come up against issues of ahistoricism.[55] Empirical institutionalists place their focus on government structures and how these affect policies. It is not too contentious to claim that institutions and rules shape human behaviours, and it is important to describe how different structures of government influence actions.[56] However, it is lightweight on theoretical insights or inspiration into how space and

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[51] B. Guy Peters, *Institutional Theory in Political Science: The New Institutionalism* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019), 23.
[52] *Ibid.*
[53] J.G. March and J.P. Olsen, "The New Institutionalism: Organisational Factors in Political Life," *American Political Science Review*, 78 (1984).
[54] Peters, *Institutional Theory in Political Science*, 51-52.
[55] *Ibid.*, 78-79; Quinn, *Modernising the Labour Party*.
[56] Peters, *Institutional Theory in Political Science*, 126.

place might shape human activity. Additionally, discursive institutionalism focuses heavily on ideas and change, how these are negotiated and contested internally among members and communicated externally to non-members. This approach has been praised for its flexibility but criticised for the diminished role given to structure.[57] Each institutionalism possesses strengths as well as limitations, answering some questions better than others. Furthermore, all the approaches discussed lack a distinct or explicit spatial component for comprehending individual and group action, which, it is contended here, is essential for understanding our case study.

Historical Institutionalism has been described as an 'approach' to studying politics and is well-equipped to aid comprehension of party development. Steinmo produced a concise description of a historical institutionalist approach. At the basic level, historical institutionalist scholars are interested in 'real world outcomes', how political outcomes and behaviours are structured by institutions (i.e., (in)formal rules and procedures), and see history as a serious analytical tool. In contrast to Rational Choice institutionalism, which sees institutions framing a human behaviour driven by a rationalistic cost-benefit analysis, and sociological institutionalists, who see actors as *satisficing* habitualists, Historical Institutionalism occupies a middle way with actors as norm abiders and self-interested. What matters is context and the ability of agents to learn from previous experiences. It is unlikely to satisfy the demands of statisticians and pure quantitative researchers as it does not lend itself as easily to questions of internal and external validity or falsification. However, what it lacks in statistical measurability it compensates for in "thick description" and thorough understanding of the case. There is also ample space for ideas. Some of most the interesting works in this sub-field have addressed how ideas, values and beliefs shape history and politics.[58]

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[57] *Ibid.*, 142-143.
[58] Steinmo, "Historical Institutionalism."

Legacies are a particular focus of historical institutionalist scholarship.[59] In historical institutionalist terms, this is described through the idea of path-dependency.[60] Bratberg contends convincingly that the nature of party change should be understood through a lens that looks back and draws out organisational and ideational lineages.[61] With this focus on the past comes a refutation of the idea that institutions simply, and rationally, change in response to their environment.[62] The focus on history allows the researcher to explain how internal and external stimuli can evoke different results that are contingent on organisational background.[63] This might lend itself to explaining the causes and outcomes of change within a single party or unit of a party, though it does not preclude comparative analysis. For those looking to generalise, this may be deemed problematic. This is not an obstacle for *spatial-institutionalism*, which aims to provide a toolkit applicable to cases of different natures and types.

Accounting for the "stickiness" of ideas is a serious consideration for historical institutionalist scholars.[64] Through their constitutions, policy programmes and manifestos, parties carry ideas that can be analysed to get a sense of organisational identity, and its contested meanings. They may also shape organisational structure.[65] Aligning with the line in Historical Institutionalism that history matters, ideas have a legacy. In an examination of 'rhetorical path dependency', Grube explained how rhetorical choices constrained subsequent choices, concluding that 'words are sticky'. This idea has been advanced beyond the study of political speeches, as in Bratberg's study. Within this is an analytically useful point about misaligned ideologies and how these are negotiated within an organisational context. For

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[59] Bratberg, *Multi-level politics and party change*.
[60] Colin Hay and Daniel Wincott, 'Structure, Agency and Historical Institutionalism', *Political Studies*, 46, no.5 (1998).
[61] Bratberg, *Multi-level politics and party change*, 21.
[62] *Ibid*, 28.
[63] *Ibid*, 26.
[64] For example, see D.C. Grube, "Sticky words? Towards a theory of rhetorical path dependency," *Australian Journal of Political Science* 51, no.3 (2016); and Bratberg, *Multi-level politics and party change*, 30-31.
[65] Bratberg, *Multi-level politics and party change*, 30.

instance, the case of the Peterborough DLP presents an opportunity to study how Frank Horrabin's geographical Marxist internationalism interacted with the practicalities of doing local divisional politics, alongside prevailing views within the local and wider party.

This raises important questions concerning structure and agency in party *positioning* and processes of change. Hay and Wincott warned of a degeneration of institutionalism if serious thought were not given to the relationship between institutions and behaviour or structure and agency.[66] Indeed, it was argued that some institutionalists saw the institution-human relationship as a one-way street with agents constrained by institutional(ised) rules with very little room for movement.[67] Historical Institutionalism has the potential to transcend the dichotomy.[68] In this sense, actors are strategic, though the decisions they make are not necessarily built on perfect or complete information. Actors must often make decisions 'in a context which favours certain strategies over others' and must rely on their perceptions of that context to inform their choices. Actors are thus both objects and agents of history, much the same can be said of institutions.[69] To capture the dynamic relationship between institutions and ideas, structure and agency, the concept of *dispositions* is introduced. When applied, it allows for an understanding of organisational and individual tendencies, structural and agential, that develop *over time* and become more or less pronounced depending on the decision-making context.

The literature and topics analysed in this sub-section did not constitute a single theoretical body of work. Nevertheless, commonalities made it feasible to praise and/or criticise the output. From the direction of Rational Choice theory there is criticism that

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[66] Hay and Wincott, "Structure, Agency and Historical Institutionalism," 953.
[67] Bo Rothstein, "Explaining Swedish Corporatism: The Formative Moment," *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 15, no.3 (1992).
[68] Hay and Wincott, "Structure, Agency and Historical Institutionalism."
[69] *Ibid.*; Thelen, "Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics."

historical sociology over-emphasises normative values.[70] The practice of comparative work, particularly in its qualitative and case-study-based form, may be time-consuming and more difficult to work through than readily available numerical datasets; there is, therefore, a risk of researcher overstretch. Also, how can researchers be sure that they are identifying the correct causative or associated links? This is less a criticism of comparative historical sociology or Historical Institutionalism in particular, and more a general warning about the dangers of poorly conceived theoretical assumptions and methodological practices. A criticism that has been levelled at Historical Institutionalism is its tendency for over-socialisation of the individual. Linked to this is the further criticism that ideas act as mere 'addendum to institutions'.[71] For the present research, a more serious criticism is its aspatiality, which precluded its wholesale application, as well as its unsuitability for handling organisational minutiae, which required a more flexible and granular approach. *Spatial-institutionalism* offers that flexibility but nevertheless remains indebted to the insights of Historical Institutionalism.

These drawbacks need to be balanced against the strengths of the approaches discussed. Those searching for causal regularities, interpretive sociologists and historical institutionalists demonstrate a sensitivity to historical development and desire to present a detailed and empirically-evidenced picture of events and processes. Relatedly, the case studies approach, especially when involving a small number of cases, is another strength as it allows the researcher to get at the particularities of historical underpinnings of development from place to place, as well as identify emerging patterns or trends. It also has the advantage of being relatable by not existing at a significant epistemic distance from the ordinary person.

Bringing Place into Party Development

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[70] Quinn, *Modernising the Labour Party*.

[71] Mark Blyth, ""Any More Bright Ideas?" The Ideational Turn of Comparative Political Economy," *Comparative Politics* 29, no.2 (1997).

The fields of political and electoral geography, as well as the social psychology of *place*, emphasise the importance of *place* in understanding political activities, as well as in constructing attitudes and meanings. The gaze of political and electoral geographers has often been trained on the campaign period and the spatial dimensions of voting patterns; the assessment here looks beyond the polling booth.[72] The concept of '*context-as-place*' captures the idea of 'the spatial situatedness of human agency'.[73] This approach positions space and *place* at the centre of analysis to the point where geography *per se* (i.e. space) becomes more than a background upon which human or institutional action occurs. In describing *place*, Agnew wrote:

> 'Place is defined as the geographical context or locality in which agency interpellates social structure. Consequently, political behaviour is viewed as the product of agency as structured by the historically constituted social contexts in which people live their lives – in a word, places.'[74]

Agency thus gives meaning to social structures and the organisation of society. Political behaviour, meanings and attitudes are structured by *places*, which themselves have a past. For example, in the case of the 1984-1985 miners' strike in Britain, Agnew found that the extent to which organisations formed the focus of collective identities depended on the extent to which 'mining settlements were geographically isolated, on local histories of work organisation, and on the character of local labour relations.'[75] *Place* had a direct bearing on political *practice*.

Scholars regularly use artificial divisions of space to structure their analyses. Despite being analytical useful, the separation of geographical scales is fallacious as it assumes or

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[72] Agnew, "Mapping Politics"; J. O'Loughlin, C. Flint, and L. Anselin, "The Geography of the Nazi Vote: Context, Confession, and Class in the Reichstag Election of 1930," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 84, no.3 (1994); C.J. Pattie and R.J. Johnston, "Embellishment and Detail? The Changing Relationship between Voting, Class, Attitudes and the Core-Periphery Division of Great Britain 1979-1987," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 15, no.2 (1990); and N. Ward, "Representing Rurality? New Labour and the Electoral Geography of Rural Britain," *Area* 34, no.2 (2002).
[73] Agnew, "Mapping Politics," 131.
[74] Agnew, *Place and Politics: The Geographical Mediation of State and Society* (Boston, MA: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 43.
[75] Agnew, *Place and Politics in Modern Italy*, 25.

implies neat spatial divisions where in reality there is a complex and inter-related whole. Instead, attention is placed on the co-dependence and co-evenness of geographical scales in shaping individual and organisational identity.[76] Agnew discussed this cross-interaction when he commented on:

> 'the hierarchical (and non-hierarchical) 'funnelling' of stimuli across geographical scales or levels to produce effects on politics and political behaviour. These effects can be thought of as coming together in places where micro (localised) and macro (wide-ranging) processes of social structuration are jointly mediated.'[77]

The differentiation between hierarchical and non-hierarchical funnelling of stimuli indicates that spatial influences do not need to be top down, they can also be bottom up or horizontal stimuli. The central point is that context is taken to mean a multi-scaled and integrated whole. Therefore, researchers should refrain from making specific scale commitments.[78] In doing so we are recognising that a chosen scale is contingent upon geographical scales within, around, above, below and across time, while all the time appreciating their inter-relation.

Political behaviour is structured by a range of factors. Individual lives are lived in interaction with a variety of wider influences i.e., families, associations, political organisations, churches etc., which work to socialise people into certain frames of reference. As such, executing *place*-based research involves searching for these networks in people's internal (*locale*) and external (*location*) spatial environments.[79] Politics is grounded in the 'workaday world'.[80] We lose something when we abstract people's belief systems or organisational characteristics away from the *places* they were formed or are embedded. For example, by paying close attention to the social division of labour we can grasp the spatial economic

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[76] *Ibid.*, 2.
[77] *Ibid.*, 132.
[78] *Ibid.*, 130.
[79] Agnew, "Space and Place."
[80] Agnew, *Place and Politics in Modern Italy*, 3.

relationships that shape class structure and the character of local and national politics.[81] Similarly, appreciating the landscape of local clubs, associations or other bodies can nuance our understanding of the character of local politics. Additionally, by considering a party's internal spatial distribution of resources, we can understand the drivers of centre-periphery tensions.

This also encompasses the domain of ideas, which may be differential in their spatial impact. Discourse is mediated through space, the differential resonation of political party manifestos from place to place is a demonstration of this.[82] Behaviour based on ideas can also be viewed as being mediated through space and *place*. Stedman adopted a definition of *sense of place* grounded in social psychology, referring to satisfaction, or attitude about a setting, and attachment, or identification with a setting. *Sense of place* brings together the physical attributes of a *place* as well as 'human social and psychological processes rooted in the setting'.[83]

A common refrain here has been that various schools of thought have been guilty of underplaying the mediative role of space and *place* when analysing party development. It is possible and helpful to spatialise or highlight the spatial qualities of concepts in the existing literature. The notion of a 'historically constituted social context' provides scope for bringing together aspects of *place* with Historical Institutionalism and comparative historical sociology, thus enhancing our understanding of party *practices*. For instance, by comparing examples of similar phenomena and placing the actions of political activists in a multi-scaled and historical context, we can understand developmental convergences and divergences, both horizontal and vertical.

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[81] Agnew, "Mapping Politics," 132.
[82] *Ibid.*, 133.
[83] Richard C. Stedman, "Toward a Social Psychology of Place: Predicting Behaviour From Place-Based Cognitions, Attitude, and Identity," *Environment and Behaviour*, 34, no.5 (2002), 562.

Furthermore, studies referencing the territorialism of party change provide an important platform from which to spring deeper into sub-national dynamics. Panebianco asked whether parties developed by process of *territorial penetration* (i.e., where the party centre controls or stimulates the development of the periphery), *diffusion* (i.e., where development is the consequence of 'spontaneous germination') or a mixture of the two and the implications of this in terms of power distribution.[84] The two concepts are inherently spatial and there is promising scope for their application to answer spatial-type questions, with diffusion suggesting a greater level of decision-making autonomy relative to forming through penetration. Hopkin offered a tentative framework to understand how denationalisation fostered intra-organisational tensions within statewide parties through the creation of multiple levels of governance. Thus, while the focus is on the national/regional level, territorial perspectives of party recruitment, electoral programmes and party behaviour in public office stand to enrich our understanding of divisional and sub-divisional party organisation.[85] For instance, how a sub-national party controlling their local authority but holding to policy stances in direct opposition to the national party resolves such conflict may aid the excavation of *place*-specific drivers of differentiation where *practice* is concerned.

The degree of autonomy exercised by sub-national party units is, in many cases, bounded by national parties seeking to control or centralise party *practices*. The friction this generates can produce centre-periphery tensions. Political parties are not 'unitary actors', with decisions made at different scales.[86] In this context, top-down decision-making does not always prevail. Local parties rarely possess absolute freedom to make decisions regardless of what other scales of the party think and desire and without consequences. Bratberg's research

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[84] *Ibid.*, 50.
[85] Jonathan Hopkin, "Political Decentralisation, Electoral Change and Party Organisational Adaptation: A Framework for Analysis," *European Urban and Regional Studies* 10, no.3 (2003).
[86] Katz and Mair, "The Evolution of Party Organisations in Europe," 593.

suggests that this is a competitive process, with party branches seeking to maximise 'their *autonomy from* and their *influence over* the statewide party…'.[87] It is, perhaps, the case that parties conform closely to an ideal-type stratarchical model in their intra-party decision-making, whereby no single level or scale of the party has absolute control.[88] Cross has recently added to this debate, arguing that a notion of stratarchy as 'mutual autonomy' does not capture the reality of the situation, instead proposing patterns of 'mutual interdependence'.[89] The *spatial-institutionalist* approach interprets these domains of local autonomy as sites of potential organisational and ideational distinctness.

Spatial insights are not the reserve of political science. Although environmental historians have said little directly concerning local party developments, their mental paradigm is applicable. Environmental history attempts to understand human beings, how they have acted and thought, in the context of the 'entire natural environment'. The natural environment is understood here as the Earth, its soil, water, weather, animals and plants. The arrangement of the natural environment can 'predispose' the direction of human development.[90] While the notion of predisposition might seem to preclude the possibility of agency, there is plenty of scope for the influence and shaping power of both structure and agency. Environmental historians stress the baselessness of the idea that humans are separate from or above their environment, emphasising the active and formative role played by natural and built environments in human history – environment is more than mere stage-dressing.[91] Thus, natural and human-created environments inform the actions of people, shaping and influencing all manner of events and processes ranging from policy, to organisational structure, to war.[92]

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[87] Bratberg, *Multi-level politics and party change*.
[88] Richard S. Katz and Peter Mair, "Changing Models of Party Organisation and Party Democracy: The Emergence of the Cartel Party," *Party Politics* 1, no.1 (1995): 5-28.
[89] Cross, "Understanding Power-Sharing within Political Parties," 204-230.
[90] J. Donald Hughes, *What is Environmental History?* (Cambridge: Polity, 2006), 1-17.
[91] *Ibid.*
[92] J.R. McNeill and William H. McNeill, *The Human Web: A Bird's-Eye View of World History* (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Co., 2003).

We can imagine a multi-scaled environment where human actors make decisions based on a multi-faceted matrix of factors including the geographical extent of divisional boundaries, its key industries, economy and political history. Panebianco offered a conception of environment that privileged the electoral environment.[93] The ambition here is to offer a broader notion of the environment that sustains it as an actor in human history, this requires a more detailed explication.

Agnew's *Place and Politics* was originally published in 1987 and received much critical attention.[94] Some have argued that his ideas about politics are more applicable to an earlier time, with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union instigating a social and political transformation. Agnew addressed this criticism in the same article.[95] Others highlighted the lack of generalisability that Agnew's ideas about *place* allow. This 'daunting prospect' means that the multitude of *places* in the world need to be studied and understood, always acknowledging that they are forever changing. However, the advantages of a *place*-based approach for understanding local development sketched out here, as well as the avenues to cross-disciplinary and cross-theoretical work it opens up, far outweigh any limitations.

Conclusion

This chapter has been wide ranging, taking in Rational Choice theory; Historical Institutionalism and comparative historical sociology, including its general and particularistic forms; environmental history; as well as political/electoral geography and the social psychology of *place*. In each case the strengths and limitations of each approach were drawn out. One common thread that emerged, excepting theories with a stronger space and *place* focus, was the scholarly *disposition* towards the (inter)national scale. The discussion

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[93] Panebianco, *Political Parties*.
[94] John Agnew, *Place and Politics*.
[95] John Agnew, "Classics in human geography revisited," *Progress in Human Geography* 27, no.5 (2003): 605-614.

highlighted that no theory alone offered all the answers. However, the strengths of each, if combined, had the potential to provide a means of better analysing and understanding local party *practice*. *Spatial-institutionalism*, the subject of the next chapter, is precisely an attempt to provide this amalgamation, offering a methodologically-grounded framework for understanding sub-national party development.

Chapter 3: *Spatial-institutionalism*: A Methodology for Tracing Party Practices

Introduction

This chapter gets at the heart of how to account for the development of local parties by tracing party *practices* and their histories. The theoretical literature review highlighted that, while much has been said about the development of parties at the national scale, our understanding of sub-national parties lags some way behind. Insights from the party-developmental literature and other disciplines were used here to inform an approach to tackle the study of sub-national parties and their *practices*. As such, this chapter details a novel methodology (used here to mean an overarching strategy, method choices, as well as analytical procedures) for unpicking the choices made by parties and party actors. It contends that by tracing the history and outcomes of party actions, researchers can gain valuable insights into local party organisational development and identity.

The opening section details the theoretical foundations, emergence and practice of *spatial-institutionalism for the purposes of studying and analysing local party development*. Qualitative research has been criticised for a relative lack of transparency in terms of methods and methodology when compared to quantitative research.[1] The philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of *spatial-institutionalism* are presented for complete transparency, whilst the discussion of its emergence, sandwiched between theory and operationalisation, invites the reader into the iterative and evolving thought processes that gave birth to this novel approach as it relates to the case study of local party development, introducing four key areas of analysis

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[1] David Silverman, *Doing Qualitative Research* (London: SAGE, 2022), 523-526.

in the process. This structure may seem unusual; however, it is true to the methodology's construction, and it is hoped that by the end of the chapter that the practice of *spatial-institutionalism* is all the clearer for adopting this approach.

The theory and operationalisation of *spatial-institutionalism* combines insights from inductive data analysis, fusing these with Agnew's writings on space, *place* and *place-as-context*, as well as aspects of historical sociology, Historical Institutionalism, and the philosophy of sport.[2] Stripped back, *spatial-institutionalism* is concerned with charting institutional development in the areas of organisation and identity. The institution may be a physical organisation or set of rules and procedures. It is spatial in the sense that it considers institutional development as bound up with *place*. Charting development is achieved by describing and explaining the genealogies and evolution of party *practices* across time and space. *(Dis)position*, a spatially mediated standpoint and/or view developing *over time*, acts as the glue binding Agnew's notion of *place* with institutional development and history.

The second section discusses the adoption of a single case study approach. Strengths, limitations and the rationale for settling on this approach are discussed. The third section opens with a brief discussion of the primary method adopted for this research: document analysis. This section also introduces the reader to the sources underpinning the research and makes the case for using party minutes as a springboard from which to understand organisational and ideational *practices*. Although this follows the discussion of the framework *per se*, it should be noted that *spatial-institutionalism* emerged to a considerable extent inductively as a product of the coding of primary sources before being supplemented by secondary material. This section

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[2] Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory* (London: Sage, 2014); G.B. Glaser and A.L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (Chicago: Aldine, 1967); G.B. Glaser, *Theoretical Sensitivity* (Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press, 1978); A.L. Strauss, *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

concludes with a note on research quality and credibility, and the academic rigour underpinning the methodology and its application.

Spatial-institutionalism: Emergence, Theoretical Foundations and Practice

This section details the emergence, theoretical foundations and practice of *spatial-institutionalism* concerning local party development. Emphasis is placed on its practical application to the topic at hand. Future research may mean that *spatial-institutionalism* comes to sit alongside the institutionalisms discussed in the previous chapter. However, it is not the intention here to make that case. Indeed, it is *spatial-institutionalism* as an applied method with a set of associated tools and steps that distinguishes it from existing institutionalist lore. Indeed, its evolution is illustrated from the point of exposure to the primary data, to immersion in that data, processes of data analysis and the emergence of key categories, to framework development and its practical application.

The Emergence and Theoretical Foundations of Spatial-institutionalism

Philosophical Foundations

Before establishing the ground rules of the present approach, it is helpful to first set some philosophical foundations. A line is often drawn between objectivism and realism on one hand and social constructivism and relativism on the other. This presents a brutal dichotomy between the two. Nevertheless, categorisation in this manner does help to delineate in broad brushstrokes the essence of different, if not opposing, ontological and epistemological positions. It also helps to unpick the debate surrounding the roles of structure and agency. Objectivism/realism posits that there is a real world out there that is capable of being studied and understood. Constructivism/relativism 'sees the world as socially constructed'; a "softer"

incarnation of constructivism's epistemological relativism is interpretivism.[3] This is a simplification of a wide body of thought and the strengths and weaknesses of either position, particularly at the extremes, have been well-discussed.[4] One major criticism of both perspectives and one which the intermediate perspective of critical realism aims to address, is that both positivist and constructivist positions 'reduce…reality to human knowledge' or limit our understanding solely to what can be empirically known.[5] In practice, purist positivist or constructivist positions are not reflective of the work researchers do and may be difficult to defend.[6]

The strategy adopted here occupies a space between positivism and constructivism/interpretivism, most closely approximating a critical realist position.[7] While it is maintained that a real world is "out there" which can be studied, it is also held that the real world is interpreted and filtered by and through human agency and that there are processes beyond human understanding. The view here is that ontology not be reduced to epistemology, and that we should not limit "reality" to what can be known in the empirical sense; at the same time accepting that our descriptions and explanations of the world are fallible.[8] The *spatial-institutionalist* framework is attentive to both the physical and structural world, and perceptions

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[3] Paul Furlong and David Marsh, "A Skin Not a Sweater: Ontology and Epistemology in Political Science," in: *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, eds. David Marsh and Gerry Stoker (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 185; Philip S. Gorski, "What is Critical Realism? And Why Should You Care?," *Contemporary Sociology* 42, no.5 (2013), 661.

[4] See A.J. Fletcher, "Applying Critical Realism in Qualitative Research: Methodology Meets Method," *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 20, no.2 (2017); and Furlong and Marsh, "A Skin Not a Sweater."

[5] Fletcher, "Applying Critical Realism in Qualitative Research," 182.

[6] Gorski, "What is Critical Realism?", 661-662.

[7] Fletcher, "Applying Critical Realism in Qualitative Research." See also Kathy Charmaz, "Constructionism and the Grounded Theory Method," in *Handbook of Constructionist Research*, eds. J.A. Holstein and J.F. Gubrium (New York: Guildford Press, 2008); Guba and Lincoln cited in Furlong and Marsh, "A Skin Not a Sweater," 190.

[8] Roy Bhaskar, "Philosophy and Scientific Realism," in *Critical Realism: Essential Readings*, edited by M. Archer, R. Bhaskar, A. Collier, T. Lawson and A. Norrie (London: Routledge, 1998). See also Fletcher, "Applying Critical Realism in Qualitative Research"; David Scott, "Critical Realism and Empirical Research," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 39, no.4 (2005), 635.

of agency, as well as being dextrous at drawing out the underlying mechanisms that shape organisational and individual decision-making and, hence, trajectories of development.

Thus, institutions such as parties, electoral systems and party organisations exist, yet it is equally so that, independent of human understanding, interpretation and action, these institutions have little or no social role or causal power. Similarly, geographical space and the social division of labour in space are real, but it is their interpretation by human agents that makes them meaningful. Additionally, in terms of knowing about the role of institutions or the influence of space and *place* on human or institutional *practices*, this is not something that can be categorically proven but is instead argued for.[9] These first principles are crucial as they have implications in terms of the methodology developed, the methods utilised, and the role of the researcher and the research findings.

Claimants to the Throne: Alternatives to *Spatial-institutionalism*

Identifying an appropriate research strategy and methodology meant careful consideration and dismissal of alternatives. *Spatial-institutionalism* sprouted directly from the primary material, and its explanatory power stemmed from this rootedness. Nevertheless, there were rivals to its crown. One such was Process Tracing and its associated methodologies.[10] Process Tracing has been described as a method for scholars carrying out small-N and within-case analysis, thoroughly immersing themselves in a single or handful of cases. Its strengths, according to its proponents, reside in its descriptive and evaluative powers and in its function in bringing qualitative research on to a level playing-field of rigour with quantitative research.[11] Its

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[9] Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*.

[10] James Mahoney, "The Logic of Process Tracing in the Social Sciences," *Sociological Methods & Research*, 41, no.4 (2012); David Waldner, "Process Tracing and Qualitative Causal Inference," *Security Studies* 24, no.2 (2015).

[11] David Collier, "Understanding Process Tracing," *Political Studies and Politics* 44, no.4 (2011); James Mahoney, "After KKV: The New Methodology of Qualitative Research," *World Politics* 62, no.1 (2010).

defining features are the four tests that users of Process Tracing carry out for causal inference i.e., *straw-in-the-wind*, *hoop*, *smoking-gun*, and *doubly decisive* tests.

However, it does not come without its challenges of application or explanatory value. Doubts may arise as to the most appropriate test to use, and there may be issues of measurement error which may be more difficult to locate compared to quantitative tools, particularly where they are mis-calibrated.[12] Furthermore, there is the claim that Process Tracing understates the messiness of the social world and the multiple interlocking factors contributing to a decision.[13] Thus, it was not felt that the present research would benefit sufficiently from the Process Tracing methodology to justify its wholesale adoption. However, *spatial-institutionalism* and Process Tracing share important features. Baked into the *spatial-institutionalist* approach is careful attention to the description of historical events and processes, as well as their sequential analysis.[14] Also, it covers several objectives of Process Tracing (i.e., establishing an event occurred, its outcome(s), and how the initial event or process can be linked to the outcome), albeit through different means.[15]

<u>The Deductive Foundations of *Spatial-institutionalism*</u>

In short, *spatial-institutionalism* embeds notions of space and *place* into calculations for understanding individual and group actions. The approach represents the coalescence of inductive and deductive stimuli. What follows is a detailing of the deductive influences informing the approach. It draws heavily on the notion of *place* as articulated by John Agnew. Utilising concepts such as space and *place* in research is about much more than simply *where* phenomena occur, it is about *how* they matter.[16] Thus, to understand the importance of *place*

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[12] *Ibid.*
[13] *Ibid.*, 828.
[14] James Mahoney, "Process Tracing and Historical Explanation," *Security Studies* 24, no.2 (2015).
[15] Mahoney, "The Logic of Process Tracing in the Social Sciences."
[16] Agnew, "Space and Place," 316.

and its impact on social processes, it is helpful to be clear about what is meant by the term. Admittedly, this has changed over time, but a useful starting point is to consider *places* as 'milieux that exercise a mediating role on physical, social and economic processes and thus affect how such processes operate'.[17] *Place*, therefore, is a facilitator of multiple processes, including organisational and ideational *practices*.

It could be argued, given increasing globalisation and so-called placelessness, exacerbated by innovations such as the internet and social media, that only the universal matters, and that the particularities of locality, region, or even nation are no longer relevant. Indeed, that scholarly focus on the latter is a product of nostalgia or yearning for "the way things used to be." However, as Agnew has pointed out, previous technological advancements were predicted to diminish the importance of *place*. In fact, *places* were 'remade and reconfigured'.[18] *Places*, their interrelation with other *places* and the meanings people attach to them remain important to individual, local, regional, national, as well as institutional identities and organisations.

Agnew offered a three-part breakdown of *place* (i.e., *location*, *locale*, and *sense of place*), each constituting part of an integrated whole. *Location*, like the idea of space, constitutes the site where an object or activity is located or takes place, as well as its interactions with other locations that define the function(s) or 'role[s] a place plays in the world'.[19] All political action is situated within a multi-scaled context. By multi-scaled context it is understood that different layers of space (i.e., international, national, regional, local, etc.) inform one another. This reasoning is extended explicitly to the argument that the interaction of spatial scales informs and influences decision-making and organisational development.

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[17] *Ibid.*, 317.
[18] *Ibid.*, 318.
[19] Colin Flint, *Introduction to Geopolitics* (London: 2006), 5.

However, it is recognised that geographical scales are a convenient means of categorising, simplifying and making sense of political action; they are constructed, and they are not autonomous.

Locale, the second part of Agnew's understanding of place, refers to the 'institutions that organise activity, politics and identity in a place', or the everyday settings of life.[20] By institutions is meant the groups and accompanying sets of rules and procedures that people are party to, these range from family units to workplaces and unions, to political parties and sports clubs. They are the venues of everyday life that provide structure for social interactions. The forms these groups assume are shaped in some way by how they filter and account for wider institutional and historical factors, such as parliamentary legislation or directives from the national headquarters of an organisation. This is what is meant by viewing politics as a spatialised process.[21]

The third part is *sense of place*. Agnew defined this dimension as 'identification with a place as a unique community, landscape, and moral order'. "Belonging" to a place, he writes, can be shown 'consciously', or by taking part in *place*-related affairs. Agnew is careful to highlight that places are not bounded but have become increasingly globalised.[22] Nevertheless, and exclusive of other identifications, it was possible to speak of the Peterborough DLP as having a *sense of place* as it regarded the wider party as well as the boundaries of the Peterborough Division, with party *practices* reflecting how the organisation understood its sense of belonging. As such, two understandings of *sense of place* or belonging are in operation: 1) as an affinity with a particular place, and 2) a self-consciousness of what it means

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[20] Agnew, "Space and Place," 326-327.
[21] Agnew, *Place and Politics in Modern Italy*, 16.
[22] Agnew, "Space and Place," 326-328.

to be part of a *place* or "fit in". The actions of local activists were shaped by both senses of *place*.

Through further engagement with the primary texts, it became evident that as a sense of belonging evolved patterns emerged. It was helpful at this stage to borrow a concept from the philosophy of football. This may seem an unusual place to take inspiration; however, sports are largely about making decisions or training to make the process second-nature or *dispositional*. In the context of football, 'dispositional play' has been defined as 'the tendency of something to act in a certain manner under given circumstances'.[23] Combining *disposition* with *sense of place* is analytically valuable as it allows for an understanding of identification with a *place* and its idiosyncrasies, while at the same time giving space for tendencies or ways of thinking to emerge. Contained within the notion of *disposition* is that of *position*.

Party *practices* do not emerge *ex nihilo* – they have a history. This statement hints at the historicism inherent within *spatial-institutionalism*. To fully comprehend a party *practice* is to understand how it relates to its spatial *and* temporal surroundings. Critical realism holds that we may never *fully* comprehend the world around us. However, there are helpfully primary and secondary sources concerning the period under study that helped to unearth the genesis of each action. As such, it was felt that the framework would benefit by taking inspiration from the core principles of Historical Institutionalism and comparative historical sociology, among others, which place a premium on the importance of history.[24] Aligning with Moore, this research supports the opinion that there is no substitute for empirical study of cases.[25] Deep contextualisation and historical narrative play a central part here, placing the approach at odds with some rational choice theorists.[26] For instance, one of the key decisions made by local

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[23] Marti Perarnau, *Pep Guardiola: The Evolution* (Edinburgh: Arena Sport, 2016), 106.
[24] Skocpol, *Vision and Method in Historical Sociology*; Steinmo, "Historical Institutionalism."
[25] Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*.
[26] For example, see Quinn, *Modernising the Labour Party*.

activists sympathetic to Labour came in late 1918 when the decision was made to form the Peterborough DLP and contest the division at the parliamentary level. The immediate context to this was the Reform Act, which widely expanded the electorate, and the 1918 Labour Constitution which set out the party's aim to be a nationwide party with a presence in every constituency. However, to truly understand the local decision to form and contest requires journeying through British political history, taking in sites such as the 1903 Pact between Herbert Gladstone and Ramsey MacDonald. History, like politics, can be viewed as a multi-scaled spatialised process.

Spatial-institutionalism also strikes a balance between structure and agency, institution and individual. When applying the framework to a *practice*, the researcher is asked to delve into its background, this requires an examination of both the role of agency in the process as well as influence of the wider environment. Rather than assigning each decision to the structure or agency basket, each action is understood from the perspective of the interaction of both. This does not necessitate an equality of influence – one *practice* may bear stronger marks of structure than agency, while another may have all the markings of being largely agency driven.

Additionally, the approach is comparative by design. Thus, while *spatial-institutionalism* is well-suited to case study analysis, the stress placed on scale encourages researchers to compare an individual case with developments at national, regional, and local levels. Doing so allows ideational and organisational essences to become more pronounced.

Operationalising Spatial-institutionalism

For reasons of applicability, particularly the text-heavy nature of the primary source material, the operationalisation of *spatial-institutionalism* was driven by inductive data analysis. The analysis commenced with a round of initial or open coding of the party minutes of the Peterborough DLP running from 1918 to 1951. At this stage, no pre-existing theoretical

perspectives were applied to the raw data, instead the focus was on data familiarisation, allowing insights to emerge organically. This involved reading through the collected data and making initial notes or labels (codes), line-by-line, in the margins. This produced a vast number of codes which were condensed via selective/focused coding.[27] This stage aided the identification of the 'most common codes' that revealed most about local party development.[28] However, even as these concepts and categories became more sophisticated and nuanced, they remained at the "empirical level;" this refers to those events and processes that are observed, experienced and interpreted by humans.[29]

The initial reading highlighted how the minutes acted as a recording and repository of party *practices*, decisions made, and their outcomes. With this notion in mind, a second reading of the party minutes was undertaken. Prior to carrying out the second iteration, the party minutes were transcribed from microfilms of handwritten notebooks into a digital document. This aided the process of coding by allowing for location, filtering and comparing of codes. By comparing initial codes, it was possible to identify broad areas of party activity where the minutes indicated that decisions were made. This resulted in three areas for potential further analysis: 1) party emergence and formation, 2) parliamentary candidate and local organiser recruitment, not only what this indicated about the degree of autonomy at the local party's disposal, but who was selected and why, as well as issues of retention; 3) party organisation (i.e., the geographical extent of a party's reach in a division, the impact of financial conditions on decisions, the location of various party meetings, personnel and party composition, as well as campaign types and organisation). The degree to which each local party could act autonomously in each of these areas constituted an underlying thread. The minutes also told of

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[27] Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 109-161.
[28] Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 569.
[29] Fletcher, "Applying Critical Realism in Qualitative Research; and Paul Furlong and David Marsh, "A Skin Not a Sweater," 183.

the outcomes of some of these decisions, for example, how efforts to secure a local candidate were often hampered by the financial state of the party, the size of the division and the work required to build and maintain an organisational presence, as well as perceived poor electoral prospects.

Reading the minutes often raised more questions than answers, necessitating an expansion of the sources to be mined for data. This broadening and deepening of the search led to an examination of the Peterborough Archives' holdings on the PTUC, local newspapers and British Newspaper Archive, the papers of Frank and Winifred Horrabin at the University of Hull archive centre, Northamptonshire Archives and Heritage Service, as well as relevant documents held at the People's History Museum, Manchester. In other words, the data collection and generation of code continued to be driven by an inductive approach. Comparing the focused codes derived solely from the party minutes against those from this wider body of sources produced corroboration (i.e., confirming the pertinence of the focused codes), elaboration (i.e., providing contextual information that might help to explain why a *position* was adopted), and further questions. Furthermore, this additional research produced a fourth area of analysis: policy *curation* and *issue positioning*.

With the integration of insights from the party minutes and other materials completed, the decision was taken to consult the secondary literature to contextualise and flesh out preliminary categories. The review took in the theoretical literature on party development, as well as work focused on the Labour party, which highlighted important areas for consideration when investigating parties, such as party formation;[30] the nature of leadership and leadership

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[30] Fielding, *The Labour Party*; Panebianco, *Political Parties*; Robert Taylor, "Out of the Bowels of the Movement: The Trade Unions and the Origins of the Labour Party 1900-18," in: *The Labour Party: A Centenary History*, eds. Brian Brivati and Richard Heffernan (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 2000).

change;[31] including candidate (re-/de-)selection;[32] policy-making;[33] electoral strategy and party campaigning;[34] finance and administration;[35] as well as power dynamics in each of these areas.[36] There was substantial cross-over between the inductive findings from the read-through of primary material and the secondary literature review, with one notable exception: organiser recruitment. Thus, in addition to candidate selection and retention, local organiser recruitment was included as a key area of analysis for understanding local party development and identity.

The categories of analysis identified in the secondary literature review were combined with the inductive findings to produce a set of overarching areas for analysis of local parties' organisational development and party identity:

1. *Party emergence and formation*. An understanding of the process of local party formation can provide insight into spatial and temporal dynamics that were favourable or unfavourable to party formation and electoral contestation. Formation covers the moment the decision was made to form a local party, examining which individual or groups made the decision and their rationalisations. As such, it asks whether the party emerged through 'territorial diffusion' or 'territorial penetration'.[37] Emergence refers to the backstory and history of the decision, they are traced by supplementing the party minutes with local and supra-local contextual information. It also refers to the pre-

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[31] Harmel and Janda, "An Integrated Theory of Party Goals and Party Change."

[32] Dolinsky, "What Determines Parties' Choice of Incumbent-Renomination Methods?"; Laffin and Shaw, "Devolution and Party Organisation in Britain"; Bratberg, *Multi-level politics and party change*; Shaw, *The Labour Party since 1979: Crisis and Transformation* (Routledge: London, 1994).

[33] Hopkin and Bradbury, "British statewide parties in multilevel politics"; Laffin and Shaw, "British Devolution and the Labour Party"; Bratberg, *Multi-level politics and party change*; Cole, *A History of the Labour Party from 1914*; Fielding, *The Labour Party*; and Shaw, *The Labour Party since 1979*.

[34] Hopkin and Bradbury, "British statewide parties and multilevel politics."

[35] Eric Shaw, Martin Laffin and Gerald Taylor, "The New Sub-National Politics of the British Labour Party," *Party Politics* 13, no.1 (2007).

[36] Laffin, Shaw and Taylor, "Devolution and Party Organisation in Britain"; Pieter van Houten, "Multi-level Relations in Political Parties: A Delegation Approach," *Party Politics* 15, no.2 (2009); Katz and Mair, "The Evolution of Party Organisations in Europe."

[37] Panebianco, *Political Parties*, 50.

formation ingredients of the party, most notably its organisational (i.e., trade unions, socialist societies, etc.) or other bases.

2. *Party recruitment and retention*. Local parties play an important role in the recruitment and retention of party candidates and local organisers. This thesis focuses on the process and rationale for the recruitment of PPCs, though could also apply to efforts to secure municipal candidates. The ability of a party to retain a candidate is not something the party necessarily has control over; for instance, a candidate may wish to move on for personal reasons. However, when candidates do give their justifications for resigning, we may be provided with a window into a party's organisational character and identity. A further emphasis is on the character or profile of candidates and whether there are patterns that indicate or illustrate party *disposition* or ideational trait. For instance, PPCs drawn consistently from the same trade union could imply that a party was essentially an adjunct of that organisation.

3. *Party organisation*. Party organisation is understood here as the geographical extent of branch party coverage; the state of party finances and fundraising and how funds are utilised for campaigning and other purposes; campaign methods; the structure of the party, including its various committees and sub-committees; any local party centre(s), ascertained, in part, by understanding where party meetings were held. This also covers who or what is eligible for membership. For instance, the Labour party from 1918 had a federal structure consisting of individual members, trade unions and socialist societies.

4. *Policy curation, campaign content and issue positioning*. Local parties sent delegates to Labour's annual Conference, however, policy-making powers rested with the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) and the party leader. As such, space was not afforded

to local parties in the arena of policy-making.[38] However, the minutes of the Peterborough DLP reveal that policy *curation* was a space in which the localities had some leeway for expression. Thus, *curation* or *framing* refers to ways in which local activists put their own stamp on the content of local election campaign materials.[39] This could be quite subtle, such as where local campaigns placed the emphasis in policies coming from above or where adaptations to the national party programme were made to effectively present ideas to the local electorate. Beyond party policy, sub-national units adopted standpoints or *positions* on a range of issues which could reveal (mis)alignment with those of other local, regional, or national expressions of the party.

Once identified, party *practices* derived from primary sources were run through Agnew's three dimensions of *place*. However, painting a comprehensive picture of (multi-scaled) *location* required consultation of a wide range of sources, including census reports, local histories and newspapers, and the archives of local and county trades councils, as well as secondary sources on the nature of the electoral system that parties conforming to democratic practices must work within to have any hope of securing a majority in parliament. The UK uses a first-past-the-post system for parliamentary elections. This simple-majoritarian division-based system lends itself to the construction of divisional parties or local bodies of support that can be called upon during election time to fight campaigns on behalf of the national party. When it emerged on the scene in 1900, the LRC (renamed the Labour party in 1906) decided to work within these parameters, establishing a network of divisional and sub-divisional parties from 1918; the Peterborough DLP emerged in this year. Here we begin to see the interaction

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[38] See McKenzie, *British Political Parties*; and Ross McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party, 1910-1924* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965).
[39] For instance, the former Labour MP Dennis Skinner produced his own campaign materials; see Skinner, *Sailing Close to the Wind Reminiscences*.

of several *locations*: the national parliament, Labour's central offices, and the party on the ground.

When we reach the point of trying to understand the *practices* and decisions of the party on the ground, a deeper more granular understanding of the *location* is sought through exploration of (historical) time and space. Reference is made to social and economic factors such as the division of labour, types of industry and demographics in the past as well as the present. For instance, the economy, geography and industry of Manchester is of a different nature to that of the predominantly rural South Norfolk.[40] Understanding of *location* forms a foundation for understanding *practice*. For example, if an activity identified in the primary data concerning desirable skills or experience in a parliamentary candidate then two courses of action are possible. Firstly, identification of the *practice* prompts the researcher to examine characteristics of the immediate and multi-scaled *location(s)*, which may help to comprehend why such skills are preferred over others. Secondly, if the historical and contextual work has been done, then the *practice* is run through the *location* filter to ascertain and explain the rationale underpinning such skill preferences. The empirical chapters demonstrate the influence of *location* on decision-making, both how actors negotiated their immediate environment, as well as how they filtered directives from other scales through local reference points to reach their own conclusions.[41]

Developing an understanding of *location* was aided through comparison with other *locations* as they spotlighted areas of organisational and ideological similarity and/or distinctness. The themes drawn out by the coding of the primary sources were compared against insights from secondary source engagement with different *locations*, both *vertical* and

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[40] See Declan McHugh, *Labour in the City: The Development of the Labour Party in Manchester 1918-31* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006); and for South Norfolk see George Edwards, *From Crow-Scaring to Westminster: The Autobiography of George Edwards, MP, OBE* (London: Labour Publishing Company Ltd., 1922).

[41] Agnew, *Place and Politics in Modern Italy,* 25.

horizontal to Peterborough. In practice, the procedure was a simple if time-consuming one. *Locational* observations taken from other divisional studies were compared to the Peterborough experience. *Vertical* comparisons consisted of taking, for example, a national scale decision such as the redrawing of divisional boundaries, before understanding impact variation from division-to-division. It was through highlighting the distinctiveness and similarities of party-developmental experience that the commonalities with other places and the idiosyncrasies of Peterborough came to the fore.

Moving to the *locale*, our primary focus here is on the Peterborough DLP and its attempts to organise political life in the Peterborough Division by building a viable party and by making appeals to the electorate to support the Labour cause. However, other organisations play a role in organising political and other aspects of local life. It has been noted that the existence of other political parties and their programmes, politics or interest representation are a vital consideration of other parties.[42] The influence and electoral strength of parties is spatially varied. For example, Pugh observed a thread of conservatism running through the Labour party, which was stronger in some areas than others, highlighting the need to be attuned to dynamics of the party system at different spatial scales.[43] This is important to consider as the local balance of parties and ideologies may affect campaign decisions and *issue positioning*. The action of agents is thus seen as being impacted by *place* and the everyday setting plays an active, mediative role in political decisions and organisational choices.

The third leg of the triad, *sense of place*, alongside the notion of *disposition*, tells us something about decision-making. The *practices* of local parties and individual activists may be driven by a collective party *sense of place* or (*dis*)*position* of a dominant personality, or a

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[42] See Janda, "Toward A Performance Theory of Change in Political Parties"; Martin Pugh, *Speak for Britain*; Katz and Mair, 'Changing Models of Party Organisation and Party Democracy.

[43] Martin Pugh, "The Rise of Labour and the Political Culture of Conservatism, 1890-1945," *History* 87, no.288 (2002).

combination of both. Broader party identifications with the division or the wider party were not necessarily replicated in every individual that interacted with *place* or party. Additionally, although political parties are positioned within Agnew's *locale*, one of the aims of *spatial-institutionalism* is to discern if something equating to a *collective*, as well as individual, *sense of place* can be uncovered. Understanding of individual or organisational *sense of place* is built on the thorough understanding of party *practices* and their *location(s)* and *locale(s)*, combining these elements enables an insight into how local parties and actors understood their place in the order of things, and thus the rationales for the choices they made.

The Rationale for Adopting a Case Study Approach

The *spatial-institutionalist* methodology is a broad-church in terms of strategy and method, and the selections of case study as research strategy and document analysis as method were not predetermined by the framework but were deliberate choices calibrated to the study at hand. Broadly, a case study is the term used to describe research that focuses on an 'individual, group or phenomenon',[44] or studies involving a 'detailed and intensive analysis of a single' or number of cases.[45] Furthermore, it represents a holistic approach as it attempts to explore the full sweep of contextual factors and processes that influence the phenomenon under analysis.[46] Case studies tend to fall into a particular research paradigm, though they do not have to in every instance. Where quantitative methods address questions concerned with what, how much, and how many, qualitative research prizes the how and the why – case studies often fall into the

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[44] A. Sturman, "Case study methods," in *Educational Research Methodology and Measurement: An International Handbook*, ed. J.P. Keeves (Oxford: Pergamon, 1997).

[45] Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 65.

[46] Sturman "Case study methods"; Adrijana Biba Starman, "The case study as a type of qualitative method," *Journal of Contemporary Educational Studies* 1 (2013).

qualitative camp. Neither do case studies come in a universal type and can be categorised in various ways.[47]

The aptness of the adoption of case study in this thesis was several-fold. One was the nature of the sources available. Focusing on a single institution in the early part of the twentieth century with only documents testifying to its existence and activities, a qualitative case study approach was deemed to be best suited. Case study was especially attractive owing to its amenability to inductive data collection and analysis.[48] The benefits of this approach as applied to a neglected organisation enabled the identification of new/overlooked variables in sub-national party development, due to its capacity to 'advanc[e] a field's knowledge base'.[49] Furthermore, case studies place a premium on context, crucial when attempting to build a detailed picture of a single *location* and *place* over time.[50] As with any approach, it has its limitations; however, many of these have been addressed by Flyvberg, with the weight of argument tipping the scales in favour of the usage of case study.[51] Concerns about generalisability and reliability (discussed below) may still be raised regarding case studies; however, it constituted the "best fit" for the present study, allowing for explanations as to why and how a party developed along a particular trajectory, and how the legacies of the past endured, shaping the decisions of agential and structural descendants. Combined with document analysis it has been possible to paint a detailed and contextualised account of a sub-national Labour party.

Methods and Sources Used

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[47] G. Thomas, "A Typology for the case study in social science following a review of definition, discourse and structure," *Qualitative Inquiry* 17, no.6 (2011); A.L. George and A. Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Science* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005).
[48] Starman, "The case study as a type of qualitative method," 37.
[49] André Queirós, Daniel Faria and Fernando Almeida, "Strengths and Limitations of Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods," *European Journal of Education Studies* 3, no.9 (2017), 377.
[50] Starman, "The case study as a type of qualitative method," 31-32.
[51] B. Flyvberg, "Five misunderstandings about case study research," *Qualitative Inquiry* 12, no.2 (2006).

Document Analysis

This thesis is built on literal and digital piles of documents. Any researcher wishing to tell a story of Labour's early local development is likely relying on documents to evidence their arguments.[52] While this has not always been the case, it is important to be explicit about this.[53] Document analysis involves the analysis of, mainly, written text to 'elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge'.[54] Furthermore, the applicability of this method to qualitative case studies has been noted.[55] As with all methods, document analysis has its drawbacks including the risks of 'insufficient detail' and 'biased selectivity'. Nevertheless, documents and their analysis present several benefits. For instance, tracking development over time; gaining insights on events where no contemporary informants remain; as well as being 'unobtrusive' in that they are not affected by the research process. These strengths, and its necessity, made documentary analysis a good fit.[56]

The minutes of the Peterborough DLP constitute the documentary evidence at the centre of this analysis. It is important to consider how and why they assumed this position in the research.[57] Minutes are a record of a meeting, typically one which is written. In their purist form, the purpose of minutes is not to record every word said, but to log what was done and decisions made.[58] In reality, minutes vary considerably in the level of background and detail of any decision. In the case of the Peterborough DLP, the course of a debate and differences of opinion were captured in some instances, in others the level of detail was light i.e., we learn who and what was proposed followed by a vote. Therefore, it is often the case that

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[52] S.B. Merriam, *Case Study Research in Education: A Qualitative Approach* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1988).
[53] Glenn A. Bowen, "Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method," *Qualitative Research Journal* 9, NO.2 (2009), 27.
[54] *Ibid*., 27.
[55] *Ibid*., 29; R.E. Stake, *The art of case study research* (Thousand Oak, CA: Sage, 1995); R.K. Yin, *Case study research: Design and Methods* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994).
[56] *Ibid*., 31-32.
[57] Silverman, *Doing Qualitative Research*, 523-526.
[58] Henry M. Robert *et al*., *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* (Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 2011).

understanding a decision requires background reading and knowledge – this is built into the *spatial-institutionalist* framework. What became clear through the iterations of data collection and analysis, was the window, sometimes only slightly ajar on the first read, that the minutes provided into *place*-based decisions pertaining to organisational structure and identity, as well as their legacies.[59]

Primary Sources

Putting the question as to why Peterborough was selected as the case study temporarily aside, descriptions of the sources pertaining to the area are provided to illustrate how the nature of the sources shaped methods of data collection and analysis. Thanks to the help of the archivists, a scan of existing sources held by Peterborough Archives, and others, relating to the local labour movement and labour politics unearthed numerous documents of interest:

- Archival holdings on the Peterborough DLP are held at the Peterborough Archives. These cover the years 1918-1952 and include the complete minutes of general and executive committee meetings; annual reports; details of candidatures and party organisers; some references to membership figures, particularly for the post-WWII years, and financial statements; and brief reports from numerous branch parties. Some information concerning regional women's sections have survived, as have numerous cuttings from local newspapers, campaign and other electoral material. Several maps are also held at the archives which detail the geographical extent of Peterborough Division, as well as ward divisions.[60]

- The archives also hold the minute books of the PTUC, including a history of the PTUC, which makes several references to the Labour party and the fledgling Peterborough

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[59] Bratberg, *Multi-level politics and party change*.
[60] Peterborough, Peterborough Archives, Peterborough Divisional Labour Party.

DLP. However, the minutes for the earlier years of the PTUC were destroyed by water damage. For this earlier period, the research relied on a history of the PTUC written by Tom Browning (1923-2003), a former PTUC secretary, local newspapers, and the doctoral work of Perry.[61]

- Back copies of the *Peterborough Advertiser* and *Peterborough Standard*. These cover a period extending from the late nineteenth century through to 1952 and have been used to add further contextual information about local issues, as well as reports on political party meetings and election campaign material.

- Material acquired from a research trip to the Labour History Archive and Study Centre at the People's History Museum, Manchester, have also been analysed and integrated into the thesis. This included correspondence between the PTUC and the LRC, as well as references to the Peterborough Division found in copies of the *Labour Organiser*, *Labour Woman* and *Land Worker*.

- Additional holdings relevant to the development of the Peterborough DLP were located in the Hull University Archives.[62] This collection covered papers and publications related to Winifred and Frank Horrabin; the latter became Peterborough's first Labour MP in 1929 and wrote numerous articles for *The Plebs* and the Socialist League. This made it possible to paint a detailed picture of the Horrabins' political ideology and how it interacted with the Peterborough Division.

- References to party development and the wider trade union movement, particularly where they concerned the North Northants portion of the Division, were located at the

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[61] Perry, *Peterborough Trades Union Council 1899-1979.*
[62] Hull, Hull University Archives, Papers and Publications relating to Winifred and Frank Horrabin, U DX283.

Northamptonshire Archives and Heritage Service. This included the minutes of the

NFTC running from 1918 to 1927.[63]

Accompanying these mainly qualitative sources was a body of statistical material consisting of

election results for the period 1900-1951. The figures collected pertained to parliamentary,

county (NCC and SPCC), and municipal elections (1900 to 1951). To fully contextualise the

development of the party it was necessary to chart the performance of national and local levels.

Compilations of parliamentary results simplified the task of data collection. For instance,

F.W.S. Craig, in addition to publishing a volume on British General Election manifestos,[64]

compiled tables of parliamentary election statistics.[65] Labour's offer to voters can thus be

tracked from 1918 through to 1945 and directly compared against those of the Liberals and

Conservatives. Additionally, chapter one drew heavily on census reports from 1901 to 1951.

Secondary Sources

Current research should never be in ignorance of existing research. Thus, the primary materials

were supplemented with insights from a large body of secondary literature. Authors working

in historical comparative analysis have made good use of a wide array of secondary literature

to support their accounts.[66] Similarly, secondary literature was utilised to compare the

Peterborough case with developments in other divisions; the fruits of this labour are particularly

evident in chapter four to seven. Of course, this means relying on the quality of research

conducted by others; thankfully, much of this is of a high standard. This existing research

constitutes a sizeable reservoir of material from which to draw out insights for comparison.

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[63] Northampton, Northamptonshire Record Office, Northampton Federation of Trades Council Minute Book 1918 to 1927, ZB1190.

[64] F.W.S. Craig, *British General Election Manifestos, 1918-1966* (Chichester: Political Reference Publications, 1970).

[65] Colin Rallings and Michael Thrasher eds., *British Electoral Facts* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2009); Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results 1885-1918*; and Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results, 1918-1945*.

[66] For example, Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*; and Bendix, *Nation-Building and Citizenship*.

Secondary sources were gathered via several avenues including a library search at the University of East Anglia, use of academic search engines, as well as the local holdings of Peterborough Central Library. In each case, the bibliographies of these texts were mined for further sources of information.

Finally, in terms of human capacity, the existence of other research in similar areas and on similar phenomena was invaluable. Time did not allow for consultation of every minute book from every local Labour party – the minute books and other miscellaneous materials of the Peterborough DLP (1918-1952) alone run to approximately 1,500 sheets.[67] If this figure were repeated for every constituency, we would be looking at at least 900,000 sheets, this is before we have even got to the secondary literature.

Research Quality and Credibility

It is worth opening with a quote to justify why a section on research quality is present and necessary:

> 'Qualitative research is frequently criticised for lacking scientific rigour with poor justification of the methods adopted, lack of transparency in the analytical procedures and the findings being merely a collection of personal opinions subject to researcher bias.'[68]

What has already been written constitutes an attempt to address precisely these issues associated with qualitative research, dealing in turn with *spatial-institutionalism*'s emergence, underpinning theory, and practice. However, there remain several outstanding points to be made regarding how the approach assures quality and credibility, as well as how it is appropriately assessed.

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[67] Peterborough, Peterborough Archives, Peterborough Divisional Labour Party.
[68] Helen Noble and Joanna Smith, "Issue of validity and reliability in qualitative research," *Evidence Based Nursing* 18, no.2 (2015), 34

Quantitative research comes with its own set of criteria against which its quality can be measured. These include reliability, generalisability, validity, and replicability, among others. However, quality in qualitative research is of an altogether different breed.[69] It is contended that a different vocabulary be called upon and applied to the assessment of qualitative research. Unlike the quantitative emphasis upon generalisability, qualitative researchers are generally more preoccupied with 'illumination, understanding, and extrapolation.'[70] Where quantitative researchers place great store in reliability, qualitative researchers think differently, emphasising the generation of understanding.[71] As a result, different criteria are proposed here against which *spatial-institutionalism* and the findings are to be assessed. These include credibility, consistency, completeness and stability.[72]

As text and written documents constitute the bulk of the primary material underpinning this thesis, it is helpful to address assumptions about the credibility and authenticity of such evidence. The view held here is that written testimonies can be analysed to tell us something interesting or useful about the past. When analysed closely, such sources can furnish the researcher with an understanding of what happened, when, how and why. To aid this process we can borrow from the historian's toolkit and ask questions about any given source's original purpose and the historical context within which it was produced.[73] This research used Scott's four criteria to assess the quality of documentary sources: 1) authenticity, 2) credibility, 3) representativeness, and 4) meaning.[74] For example, questions of provenance, location of the

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[69] Nahid Golafshani, "Understanding Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research," *The Qualitative Report* 8, no.4 (2003); and Y.S. Lincoln and E.G. Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1985).

[70] Golafshani, "Understanding Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research," 600, M.C. Hoepfl, "Choosing qualitative research: A primer for technology education researchers," *Journal of Technology Education* 9, no.1 (1997).

[71] C. Stenbacka, "Qualitative research requires quality concepts of its own," *Management Decision* 39, no.7 (2001), 551.

[72] Clive Seale, Giampietro Gobo, Jaber F. Gubrium and David Silverman, eds. *Qualitative Research Practice* (London: Sage, 2004), 377-378.

[73] Howell and Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods* (London: Cornell University Press, 2001), 17-19.

[74] For assessing documentary sources, see John Scott, *A Matter of Record: Documentary Sources in Social Research* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 19-35.

source in space and time, and whether the documents were originals or copies were asked of each source.

Consistency of coding was enabled through clear delineation of what each of the four key areas of analysis covered. Detailed definitions of these key areas contributed to their completeness and stability. The completeness of descriptions was ensured through close coding of over three decades of party material, supplemented by the secondary literature; this also added to conceptual stability, in terms of the information coded against specific nodes. Contrary to quantitative research where the statistical tool is the instrument, that position is assumed by the researcher in qualitative research.[75] Because of this, Golafshani commented that 'the credibility of a qualitative research depends on the ability and effort of the researcher'.[76] The researcher is indeed central to the process of identifying themes in the data, as well as coding that data. However, it is contended here that the method of identifying and accounting for a given *practice* outlined in the description of *spatial-institutionalism* establishes a set of conventions through which the researcher moves through to paint a complete explanation.

Conclusion

This chapter showed the evolution of *spatial-institutionalism* from primary source material through to deductive insights from the existing literature. The final iteration of *spatial-institutionalism* represents a combination of primary source insights, political geography, historical sociology and Historical Institutionalism, with some help from the philosophy of football. The product is a transferable method of data collection and analysis geared towards understanding local party *practice*. Space and *place* are afforded greater roles in the explanation of decision-making processes than is given in other approaches. The framework's

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[75] M.Q. Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2001).
[76] Golafshani, "Understanding Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research," 600.

application in the chapters that follow will demonstrate the value of viewing *practices* and decisions through this lens. The premium placed on history emphasises how all *practices* have a backstory which shapes the moment of decision as well as its outcomes.

Furthermore, a rationale was given for the adoption of case study as the research strategy and document analysis as the method. The primary driver for this selection was the nature of the sources which by necessity form the foundation of the thesis. Details were also provided on the different sources that informed the research, including newspapers, trade union and Labour party archives, election and census statistics, as well as secondary literature which animate the comparativism infusing many of the remaining chapters.

The immediately preceding section dealt with issues of research quality, credibility and the position of the researcher. Rather than put forward the case that the research should be measured against the same criteria as quantitative research, alternative assessment criteria were proposed. In terms of the position of the researcher, it was argued that the process for effectively carrying out a *spatial-institutionalist* project means consistent treatment of the evidence; hence the importance placed on being transparent about data collection and analysis processes.

Chapter 4: A National-Scale Historiography of Labour's Development, 1900-1951

Introduction

This chapter charts Labour's national development between 1900 and 1951, producing a framework against which regional and local developments can be understood and assessed. The story of Labour's development is a heavily caveated one. The party's foundations were spatially and chronologically heterogeneous, making it impossible to avoid reference to variation even at this upper level of analysis. For instance, trade unions were a crucial cornerstone of Labour's development in our period and beyond. However, not all trade unions responded in the same way or at the same time to overtures of independent labour representation; the variance between non-agricultural and agricultural workers' trade unionism highlights a further complexity to the overall picture.

Labour was an organisational and ideational mosaic. Below are discussed the assortment of organisational, spatial, attitudinal and ideological foundations that left deep imprints and informed the party's development during the interwar period and beyond. Later chapters demonstrate how local configurations of these foundational materials shaped the organisational and ideational trajectories of sub-national parties. The discussion highlights early Labour's tendency to develop in certain types of communities, as well as the spatial differentiation concerning the impact of the 1903 Gladstone-MacDonald Pact. Furthermore, from the vantage point of 1914, it was not guaranteed that Labour would go on to achieve second-party status in the 1920s; WWI had a transformative effect, as did the 1918 Reform Act and Labour Constitution of the same year.

Organisationally and ideationally, the years from 1918 to 1929 were ones of consolidation.[1] The increase in the number of DLPs from 1918 showed that Labour was extending its organisational reach. The period also saw the party head two minority governments. Conversely, the period covering the fall of the Labour government in 1931 through to the outbreak of WWII involved deep soul-searching and rebuilding, with the trade unions playing a more prominent role. Such periodisation is deceptively simple and conceals the convoluted nature and meanings of Labour's interwar experience. Adoption of a thematic approach helped penetrate this complexity, by viewing the period as one composed of several distinct yet interlinked narratives. These include discussion of the evolving relations between Labour and the trade unions, and those with the ILP, Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), and the Co-operative party; the role of women in the party's interwar organisational development; as well as the various ideological influences on the party. The 1926 General Strike was a setback for the trade unions, though the apparent futility of strike action that it exposed acted to further solidify the relationship between the unions and the party. Though the NUAW played a minimal role in the General Strike, the countryside was not quiescent; this was most evident during the Great Strike of 1923 in Norfolk. Indeed, rural discontent there convinced farmworker trade unionists that industrial action was no guarantee of positive change. However, Labour's rural organisational development did not proceed smoothly from this point, with successes being sparse and hyper-localised. Labour's relations with fellow travellers underwent important changes. The ILP and Labour grew apart, further strengthening the hand of the dominant Labour Socialism. Labour and the Co-operative party got closer, though not seamlessly and with consequences, while those with the Communists were always fraught. The national party did not expend a huge amount of energy contemplating issues relating to women specifically, with these being overshadowed during the 1930s by the

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[1] Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 48.

growing spectre of extremism in Europe. The picture at the grassroots was more positive, with women assuming various, if often gendered, party roles. Each narrative had more or less relevance for DLPs; however, it is precisely this variation in the impact of national to local filtration that makes this section so valuable. WWII presented Labour with organisational and ideological challenges, including contending with the issue of attempted CPGB affiliation and/or infiltration, and managing the strains produced by the wartime electoral truce.[2] Furthermore, Labour's time in government from 1945 to 1952 enhanced the role of the unions, though left-leaning members and politicians became increasingly frustrated with the direction of reform from 1947.[3] This discussion also highlights the importance of events and junctures that redirected organisational and ideational trajectories and could not have been predicted by an exclusive focus on foundational material. Subsequent chapters assess if and how these general patterns manifested in DLP *practices*.

Part I: The Development of the Labour Party, 1900-1918

The Foundations of Labour, 1900-1914

Organisational Foundations

Without the trade unions, it is difficult to imagine the Labour party.[4] The LRC, renamed the Labour party in 1906, was formed on 27 February 1900. The foundation meeting included representation from the trade unions, as well as three socialist societies (i.e., ILP, Fabian Society, and Social Democratic Federation (SDF)). The unions were motivated by a desire to shore up their legal position in the context of adverse legislation.[5] The 'new unionism' of the

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[2] Andrew Thorpe, *Parties at War: Political Organisation in Second World War Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[3] Stephen Brooke, *Labour's War: The Labour Party and the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

[4] Fielding, *The Labour Party*; McKenzie, *British Political Parties*; Panebianco, *Political Parties*; Taylor, "Out of the Bowels of the Movement."

[5] Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, 3.

late 1880s sparked fears amongst employers, triggering attempts to undermine the unions. In turn, legal rulings detrimental to union interests were enough to pique their concerns. The passing of unfavourable legislation did not cease with the LRC's establishment, though it did reinforce its necessity. The famous Taff Vale case (1900-1901) accelerated union support for the party. As Bagwell stated: 'Between 1900-1 and 1903-4 the number of trade unions affiliated to the LRC rose from forty-one with a membership of 375,931 to 165 with a membership of 969,800.'[6] The Osborne Judgement (1909) reinforced its necessity, further cementing the Labour-trade union alliance.[7]

There was also a political driver. Where previously the Liberals could be relied on to provide political support, there were growing doubts as to whether this remained true.[8] Despite pressure from the national leadership (Herbert Gladstone, the Liberal Chief Whip, was favourably disposed towards direct labour representation), local Liberal Associations displayed a reluctance to support working-class candidates, fanning the flames of disaffection. In one portentous instance, a manual worker named Keir Hardie stood as an Independent Labour candidate in the 1888 Mid Lanarkshire by-election. He did so not because he opposed the policies of Gladstone, but because of the process by which the local Liberal Association selected its candidates. In another episode, Gladstone had to intervene at Clitheroe for the 1902 by-election to ease out the Liberal party-approved candidate in favour of one supported by the local cotton weavers.[9] The rationale behind this reticence has been ascribed to several factors ranging from social snobbery to the financial costs to local Associations of supporting such

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[6] Philip S. Bagwell, *The Railwaymen: The History of the National Union of Railwaymen* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1963), 226.

[7] *Ibid.*, 231-232 and 241-257; Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, 1 and 9-10; Matthew Worley, "Introduction," in: *The Foundations of the British Labour Party*, 3; and Gerald Compton, "Lines of Division: Railway Unions and Labour, 1900-39," in: *The Foundations of the British Labour Party: Identities, Cultures and Perspectives, 1900-1939*, ed. by Matthew Worley (Ashgate, 2009), 37-38. See also David Howell, *Respectable Radicals: Studies in the Politics of Railway Trade Unionism* (Ashgate, 1999).

[8] Brown, "The Edwardian Labour Party," 11.

[9] Frank Bealey, "The Electoral Arrangement between the Labour Representation Committee and the Liberal Party," *Journal of Modern History* 28, no.4 (1956), 360.

candidates.[10] However, exceptions were to be found in areas with one predominant industry, such as mining districts.[11] Therefore, it is little wonder that rumblings of working-class discontent were contemporaneous with calls for independent labour representation.

The trade unions quickly came to occupy a powerful position within the LRC. That position, both in relation to its internal balance of power and organisational development, can be gleaned from reference to the LRC's central office and grassroots composition. In 1900, the LRC's Executive Committee had seven trade unionist representatives, one from the Fabian Society, two from the ILP, and two from the SDF. In truth, even this was an act of munificence on the part of the unions. Philip Snowden, a member of the ILP and future Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer, commented that the size of socialist representation on the LRC was an 'unexpected act of generosity on the part of the trade unions.'[12] Owing to its lack of individual membership prior to 1918, trade unionists constituted the bulk of the party's footsoldiers, as well as making significant financial contributions at all scales. Furthermore, given their numerical strength, the block votes of the unions allowed them, if they wished to collectively exert that power, to dominate Labour's annual Conference.[13] In reality, the relationship between the party and the trade unions was complex and contentious, reflective of what Minkin called 'subtle patterns of constraint and inhibition as well as weakness on the unions' side.'[14]

Railway trade unionism was critical in forging and maintaining the organisation and identity of the Labour party.[15] This example also highlights the complexity of union shifts from Liberal to Labour. This discussion focuses mainly on the ASRS; however, it was not alone among the railway trade unions in its affiliation to Labour. Other railway unions joined in the

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[10] Michael Bentley, *Politics Without Democracy*, 231-232; and Bealey, "Electoral Arrangement," 354.
[11] Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, 3-4.
[12] Philip Snowden quoted in Robert Taylor, "Out of the Bowels of the Movement," 21.
[13] Taylor, "Out of the Bowls of the Movement," 9-10.
[14] Lewis Minkin, *The Contentious Alliance*, xv.
[15] David Howell, *Respectable Radicals: Studies in the Politics of Railway Trade Unionism* (Routledge, 2017), Introduction, Kindle.

early 1900s, the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) in 1902, and the Railway Clerks' Association (RCA) affiliated in 1910; albeit eight years after ASLEF, the RCA was 'precocious for a white-collar organisation.'[16] The constant pressure to keep costs down has led some scholars to argue that the railwaymen were always likely to develop an interest in politics. However, it was not easy owing to efforts on the part of employers to ensure loyalty and deference as well as purges of union officials. Nevertheless, the ASRS was born in 1872, though moderation rather than militancy was a defining feature.[17] It played a significant role in the LRC's eventual formation; it was the union that brought the resolution on the establishment of the LRC to the TUC. It was also heavily involved in the Taff Vale and Osborne affairs.[18]

Various shades of opinion coexisted within the ASRS, with some favouring independent labour representation and others being of a more Lib-Lab persuasion, personified by the "Liberal-in-all-but-name" MP for Derby Richard Bell. Neither was it a simple binary split, the final years of the nineteenth century saw the growing influence of the ILP in the ASRS's higher echelons.[19] Thus, the notion of the ASRS as frontline advocates for socialism and independent labour is to stretch the truth. However, the situation becomes more convoluted when we consider the sub-national role of railwaymen ILPers. In many localities, ASRS members played an enthusiastic role in local initiatives, 'acting as socialist nuclei amongst less committed workers.' Viewed within and across scales, the organisational and ideational impact

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[16] Compton, "Lines of Division," 37.

[17] David Howell, *British Workers and the Independent Labour Party*, 69-83; and Howell, *Respectable Radicals*, Introduction, Kindle.

[18] Bagwell, *The Railwaymen*, 199.

[19] Chris Wrigley, "Labour and the Trade Unions," in: *The First Labour Party*, 131-132; Bagwell, *The Railwaymen*, 200 and 231-232. To further convolute matters, there were also regional shades of opinion. The Conservative-leaning branches of the ASRS in Lancashire opposed Edwad Harford, the general secretary, standing as a Liberal.

of railway trade unionism on the development of Labour is complex.[20] For brevity, we can say that the ASRS was a trade union with socialists in it, but it was not a socialist trade union.

The story of railway trade unionism also provides a window into the years of labour unrest before the outbreak of WWI. Events between 1911 and 1914 have led scholars of Labour, trade unionism and Edwardian Britain to label the period as the Great Labour Unrest.[21] Waves of industrial action and, in some instances, violence, were driven by numerous factors, including rising consumer prices alongside the failure of wages to lessen the impact of those increases, previous court decisions inimical to labour, dissatisfaction with the Liberal government of the day to satisfy the trade unions.[22] Anarchist and syndicalist ideas have also been noted as driving factors, though others have argued that their influence has been exaggerated.[23] It has also been suggested that the perceived failures of Labour in parliament encouraged industrial action. For example, the socialist ILP remained in the Labour fold, but lost many members to the SDF/BSP.[24] Nevertheless, the period also had favourable implications for Labour, particularly in terms of finance and organisation. The number of affiliations reached half a million by 1914, affiliations meant subscription and membership fees which could be invested in present and future organisational and electoral efforts.[25] Particularly, the 1913 Trade Union Act was of fundamental importance to the post-WWI Labour party, with the majority of trade union ballots agreeing to a political levy.[26] Conversely, the Liberals suffered detrimental consequences owing to the involvement of the Liberal

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[20] Howell, *British Workers and the Independent Labour Party*, 75-83.

[21] Yann Béliard, "Introduction: Revisiting the Great Labour Unrest, 1911-1914," *Labour History Review* 79, no.1 (2014): 1-17; and James Thompson, "The Great Labour Unrest and Political Thought in Britain, 1911-1914," *Labour History Review* 79, no.1 (2014): 37-54.

[22] Henry Pelling, *Popular Politics and Society in Late Victorian Britain* (London: Macmillan, 1968), 147-164; Alastair Reid and Henry Pelling, *A Short History of the Labour Party* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2005); Pugh, *Speak for Britain*, 87.

[23] Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, 21.

[24] Reid and Pelling, *A Short History of the British Labour Party*.

[25] Brown, "The Edwardian Labour Party," 4.

[26] Wrigley, "Labour and the Trade Unions," 151.

government in industrial disputes which acted as an effective recruiting tool for the labour movement.[27]

Dockers and seamen struck first; however, as the weeks and months passed, it spread to 'all types of transport.'[28] In the case of rail, the inter-linkages between the two industries, especially in port areas, meant proximity to the main theatres of action.[29] The railway strike of 1911 is largely attributable to the fall of real wages amongst the railwaymen and frustration at the slow pace of the Conciliation Boards in addressing their demands, as well as poor handling by the prime minister, H.H. Asquith.[30] The experience, particularly of the leaders being led by the rank-and-file, contributed to the merger of several railway unions into the NUR in 1913.[31] A further strike on the railways occurred in 1919 following the breakdown of negotiations over the standardisation of railwaymen's wages. Nevertheless, the railway unions have been noted for their respectability and 'stable system of collective bargaining', particularly following union recognition by most railway companies – they were not the revolutionaries they were sometimes made out to be. If they had to strike, it should be short and sweet.[32]

The trade unions were not the sole organisational foundation of Labour, and the party managed to grow even in divisions noted for their relative weakness in this area.[33] Thus, while Labour can at one level be labelled a trade union party, at another this nomenclature fails to capture sub-national variations and complexity. Alternative bases were to be found in the numerous socialist organisations. The precise significance of socialism in the development of

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[27] *Ibid.*, 149.

[28] Henry Pelling, *A History of British Trade Unionism* (London: Penguin, 1992), 126.

[29] Bagwell, *The Railwaymen*, 289-291.

[30] Frank McKenna, *The Railway Workers 1840-1970* (Faber and Faber, 1980), 58; and Pelling, *A History of British Trade Unionism*, 126.

[31] Bagwell, *The Railwaymen*, 325-335.

[32] Howell, *Respectable Radicals*, 9 and 310-311.

[33] Steven Cherry, *The Norwich Labour Movement in the Early Years* (Norwich Trades Union Council, 1986); Clark, *Colne Valley*.

Labour is contested, as is its place in the party.[34] Socialists and those further to the left certainly played their part, albeit not the part they necessarily envisioned; this goes for Peterborough (chapter seven) and many other localities.[35] The Fabian Society, who detested capitalism's inequalities favoured intelligent design, envisioning a key role for the state in rationalising and organising economic life. The most noteworthy socialist organisation in Labour's early development was the ILP, established in 1893. Before their involvement in the founding of the LRC, the ILP competed in 1895, not especially successfully, against the Liberals. This prompted a mental shift amongst ILP leaders, who came to recognise the potential benefits of allying with the trade unions. This realisation and the work carried out by the ILP in securing trade union support for the fledgling Labour party has been considered their greatest coup.[36] Indeed, Pelling has argued that the creation of LRC was demonstrative of a 'marriage' between socialists and trade unionists, rather than something fundamentally new.[37] Indeed, local members of the ILP helped persuade some trade unions to come over to support of Labour, filled numerous gaps in Labour's divisional organisation, and acted as Labour's 'major propagandist wing'.[38] This included rural areas, where it was ILP activists mounted on bicycles who assisted agricultural unions in Norfolk from their base in Norwich in the years prior to WWI.[39] However, the relationship was not always a happy one and WWI exposed deep differences between the ILP and many trade unionists.

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[34] Paul Adelman, *The Rise of the Labour Party, 1880-1945* (Longman, 1986), 10; Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, 5-8. For discussion of the place of socialist and far-left ideas in the Labour party, see Simon Hannah, *A Party with Socialists in It: A History of the Labour Left* (Pluto Press, 1918); and John Golding, *Hammer of the Left: The Battle for the Soul of the Labour Party* (Biteback Publishing, 2016).

[35] Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, 5.

[36] Pelling, *The Origins of the Labour Party*, 216-228.

[37] Reid and Pelling, *A Short History of the Labour Party*, 1-15.

[38] Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, 5-7; and Robert E. Dowse, *Left in the Centre: The Independent Labour Party, 1893-1940* (Evaston: Northwestern University Press, 1966), 207.

[39] Claire V.J. Griffiths, *Labour and the Countryside: The Politics of Rural Britain 1918-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 8-14.

Marxism and its various organisational expressions have been much debated in the literature. The Labour party was not a Marxist party, but there were Marxists in it. For example, Albert Arthur Purcell (1872-1935), one of the founding members of the CPGB, and, during the 1920s, a Labour MP,[40] among others.[41] As with much else, the organisational presence of Marxist outfits such as the SDF was spatially uneven; the SDF had its principal bases in London and Lancashire.[42] Founded in 1881, the case of the SDF is an instructive one in that it provides some insight into the interactional dynamics of transformational and reformist ideologies. The party pushed for a recognition of the realities of class war alongside a call for common ownership.[43] However, frustrated at the direction of travel of the LRC, the SDF withdrew from it in 1901 to pursue its own purist brand of Marxism.[44] This points us towards fundamental differences between the emerging Labour Socialist and Marxist doctrines. As MacIntyre summarised, the former was, 'ethical, empirical, constructive, idealist/educationalist, corporate [and] reformist,' whilst the latter was 'scientific, systematic, critical, materialist, oppositional [and] revolutionary'.[45] Labour members with Marxist sympathies had to come to terms with this or let the incompatibilities run free with the inevitable frustrations that entailed.

Spatial Foundations

Political developments aided the electoral growth of Labour and showcased the spatial variance in Labour's organisational and electoral advance. The 1903 Gladstone-MacDonald Pact

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[40] Kevin Morgan, *Bolshevism, Syndicalism and the General Strike: The Lost International World of A.A. Purcell* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2013).

[41] For example, Henry Mayers Hyndman (1842-1921), whose Marxist influenced SDF was part of Labour's forerunner, the Labour Representation Committee, before parting ways in 1901. John Turner Walton Newbold (1888-1943) was a member of the CPGB who stood for Labour in Epping in the General Election of 1929. Shapurji Sakltavala (1874-1936) had affiliations with both the CPGB and Labour.

[42] Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, 5.

[43] Hannah, *A Party with Socialists in It*, 5-7.

[44] Andrew Davies, *To Build A New Jerusalem: The British Labour Movement from the 1880s to the 1990s* (London: Michael Joseph, 1996), 45-48. As Davies notes, a noteworthy illustration of this "frustration" can be found in SDF member Robert Tressell's *The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists*.

[45] Stuart MacIntyre, *A proletarian science: Marxism in Britain 1917-1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 49.

marked an important turning point for the LRC. The Pact outlined divisions where Labour would not stand against Liberal candidates and split the progressive vote.[46] That the Pact could be struck and adhered to is, in some respects, indicative of the crossover of opinions between the Liberals and the LRC, though there were other drivers.[47] Sympathetic Liberal figures, such as Herbert Gladstone and George Cadbury, the Liberal chief whip's permanent secretary, recognised Labour's potential.[48] As such, a key question was where such agreements should be made. MacDonald believed agreements should be agreed locally and confined to double-member divisions, such as had happened in Derby in 1900, where Richard Bell stood alongside a Liberal.[49] This was not plain sailing, one challenge was convincing local Liberal Associations to play along. In the end, the LRC were given a free run in 30 divisions in 1906, showing reciprocal courtesy by not putting forward candidates in divisions where a split in the progressive vote risked undermining the Liberals.[50]

While the pact undoubtedly helped the LRC return 29 candidates in 1906, it revealed stark geographical variations in Labour's strength.[51] Figure 8 begins to paint this picture. Of the 50 candidates, 32 were presented with a straight fight against Conservative opposition. 62% were candidates for divisions in the north of England (North East, North West and West Yorkshire). 45% (13) of those returned would take their seats in parliament as representatives of divisions in the North West, 'in every instance as a result of an alliance between liberalism and labour.'[52] The 1906 General Election showed 'plainly the northern English bias of LRC strength. It was clearly a party rooted in the most heavily unionised areas, the heartlands of the

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[46] Andrew Chadwick, "A 'miracle of politics': the rise of Labour, 1900-1945," in: *The Labour Party: A Centenary History*, 323-327.
[47] Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, 11; Pugh, *The Making of Modern British Politics*, 115.
[48] Roger Moore, *The Emergence of the Labour Party, 1880-1924* (Hodder: Arnold, 1978), 94-95; and Bealey, "The Electoral Arrangement," 355.
[49] *Ibid.*
[50] *Ibid.*, 96; and Bealey, "The Electoral Arrangement," 372.
[51] Hugh W. Stephens, "Partisan Realignment and Electoral Arrangement in Britain: The MacDonald-Gladstone Pact of 1903," *Journal of Political Science* 9, no.2 (1982): 81-91.
[52] Bealey, "The Electoral Arrangement," 373.

industrial revolution.'[53] The financial pressures brought about by the 1909 Osborne Judgement reinforced this pattern. At the January 1910 election, 41 (53%) of the 77 seats contested were in the North East (8), North West (22), or Yorkshire (11). Owing considerably to financial constraints imposed by Osborne, the December 1910 election saw a 'sharp reduction' in the number of Labour candidates. 30 (56%) of the 56 seats contested were to be found in regions of the north: North East (6), North West (16), and Yorkshire (8). If 1910 is used as a yardstick by which to judge Labour, then it was a long way from being a *national* party.[54]

Figure 8. Seats contested and won by Labour at the 1906 General Election

Region	Seats contested by LRC candidates	Seats won by LRC candidates
East Midlands	1	1
East of England	1	1
London	4	3
North East	8	3
North West	16	13
Northern Ireland	1	0
Scotland	4	2
South East	2	1
South West	1	0
Wales	2	1
West Midlands	3	1
West Yorkshire	7	3
Total	**50**	**29**

The *ante-bellum* organisational and electoral strength of Labour tended to be located in certain types of communities. While we must be conscious of the pitfalls of geographical determinism, the dynamics of working-class politics and spatial change from the 1880s to the 1920s could create potentially propitious environments for the growth of labour movements and local Labour parties. For instance, one effect of middle-class migration to the suburbs, was the creation of working-class enclaves in city centres. This process proceeded at different times and paces from place to place, with implications for the character of local labour movements.[55] Indeed, the introduction of the railways in Peterborough produced a rate of growth not

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[53] Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, 22; see also, Fielding, *The Labour Party*, 18.
[54] Moore, *The Emergence of the Labour Party*, 119-134.
[55] Mike Savage and Andrew Miles, *The Remaking of the British Working Class, 1840-1940* (London: Routledge, 1994), 62-67.

experienced before, including a wave of housebuilding in the New England area where many of the city's railway-workers resided. Such housing development contained similar types of residents with similar occupations and formed a local milieux for socialising. Such neighbourhoods constituted environments or nuclei in which a common or collective working-class sense of belonging or *place* could develop. The exact shape of neighbourhood identity varied, though local clubs could undermine the traditional Conservative hold; the proliferation of Labour Clubs after 1918 suggests Labour appreciated the potential of such institutions.[56]

In its formative years, the LRC fielded relatively few candidates at general elections, expenses being a major deterrent. However, Labour candidates contested municipal elections in increasing numbers, as well as those for positions on local boards of guardians. The *practice* of contesting municipal elections placed and kept the cause of the LRC in the minds of the electorate.[57] Thus, in many instances, the foundations of Labour can be glimpsed via reference to municipal and other local activities. This is especially so for a party like Labour that developed through process of 'territorial diffusion'.[58] Overall, Labour experienced a 'steady' municipal advance in the early 1900s.[59] Analysis by Sheppard for the period 1901 to 1913 revealed increases in both the Labour vote and the number of Labour councillors returned. In 1901, Labour won 21 municipal seats and put forward 116 candidates. Jump forward to 1913, the party returned 171 candidates from 426. Unfortunately, London and Scotland were not included in Sheppard's analysis. However, the data does show that Labour's vote was concentrated in 'northern England, Yorkshire, Lancashire, Peak Don and the east and west Midlands.' This accounted for four-fifths of all municipalities fought. In terms of municipal

[56] Gareth Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); and Savage and Miles, *The Remaking of the British Working Class*, 65.
[57] Michael Cahill, "Labour in the Municipalities," in: *The First Labour Party*, 98.
[58] Panebianco, *Political Parties*, 50.
[59] Cahill, "Labour in the Municipalities," 98.

successes, Yorkshire and Lancashire proved most fruitful.[60] By 1914, parity with the older parties in places like Leicester and Leeds was achieved.[61] This was not replicated everywhere – Peterborough City Council remained a Liberal and Conservative affair. The above points to Labour's growing pre-WWI municipal strength and reinforces the reality of spatial variations in the party's electoral performance and begins to highlight Labour's organisational and electoral heartlands and hinterlands, prompting deliberations over the drivers of such differentiation. However, it has been contended that the analysis of the heartlands at a granular level reveals Labour to be in a 'fragile' position, with the party being a minority party on town and city councils and lacking the electoral support to take full control of local government.[62]

Bridging organisation and space, the late nineteenth century established the foundations of Labour's rural development. In numerical terms, agricultural work was performed by a sizeable population. In 1871, there were 922,024 agricultural labourers in Britain, making agriculture the 'single biggest employer of male workers in Britain'; the number of women in the sector totalled 33,153 labourers and 24,599 farm servants.[63] Despite the size of the workforce, organising farmworkers proved challenging. In many instances, landlord dominance prevailed from the 1830s to 1850s and it was not unusual for them to exert pressure over their tenants on how to vote; there were also fears about victimisation and eviction over political issues. Furthermore, a deferent belief in the natural order of things secured the aristocracy and gentry in their place as leaders of rural society.[64] Despite formidable obstacles, farmworkers' trade unionism surged into life in the 1870s from foundations in friendly and

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[60] *Ibid.*, 99.

[61] Phillips, "The British Labour Movement before 1914," in: *Labour and Socialist Movements in Europe Before 1914*, ed. Dick Geary (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1989), 44.

[62] Cahill, *Labour in the Municipalities*," 99-100. See also, M.G. Sheppard and J.L. Halstead, "Labour's Municipal Election Performance in Provincial England and Wales, 1901-13," *Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History*, 39 (1979): 39-62.

[63] Martin Empson, *'Kill all the Gentlemen': Class Struggle and Change in the English Countryside* (Bookmarks, 2018), 272.

[64] Pamela Horn, *The Rural World 1780-1850: Social Change in the English Countryside* (London: Hutchinson, 1980), 195-222.

benefit societies.[65] The gatherings of these societies provided opportunities for labourers to meet and discuss shared interests and concerns. Coupled alongside the circulation of affordable newspapers discussing broader developments, such as the growth of unions in towns and cities and the 1867 Reform Act that enfranchised urban householders but excluded rural ones, these dynamics raised labourer consciousness and considerations concerning the establishment of agricultural trade unions.[66]

The early 1870s witnessed the emergence and growth of the NALU which set important foundations for agricultural labourers' trade unionism's revival in the 1900s. The NALU (established 1872) and its regional competitors fought for increased wages and better working and living conditions. However, the NALU suffered from several disadvantages. Firstly, it did not cover all agricultural labourers nor all agricultural labourers' trade unions.[67] This latter point and the inter-union rivalries it produced, contributed towards the NALU's decline, which became apparent by mid-1875, with falling membership and branch numbers.[68] Secondly, it was not evenly spread across Britain. For instance, during a recruitment drive in 1890, membership of NALU rose to 15,000, with two-thirds hailing from Norfolk.[69] Nevertheless, simmering tensions pointed to the potential for independent labour organisations and electoral support in the countryside. Disagreements between employers and the employed could and did result in industrial action. The legal system often favoured employers.[70] Strike locations displayed spatial differentiation and the relative depth of local rural radicalism, with the major wave of strikes in 1873 having their epicentre in the Eastern Counties, though the momentum of such action then spread to other areas of the country, including Northamptonshire. NALU

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[65] Horn, *Agricultural Labourers' Trade Unionism in Four Midland Counties*.
[66] *Ibid.*, 18-20 and 23.
[67] *Ibid.*, 67.
[68] *Ibid.*, 82-84.
[69] Marsh and Ryan, *Historical Directory of Trade Unions*, 286-287 and 298-299.
[70] Horn, *Agricultural Labourers' Trade Unionism in Four Midland Counties*. 1-33.

faded away in the 1890s; however, this did not mark the end of farmworkers' trade unionism. The 1900s saw a revival centred on East Anglia that culminated in the establishment of what would become the NUAW.[71]

Furthermore, proponents of independent labour representation had to work for influence within rural trade unions. The NALU emerged in a political environment dominated by the Liberals and Conservatives; union leaders like Joseph Arch contested parliamentary seats as Liberals. Indeed, research by Lynch on the Liberal party and rural England between the Third Reform Act and December 1910 demonstrated that enfranchised rural voters did not necessarily respond to appeals stressing class conflict, but more 'old-fashioned' ideas of 'hardworking citizens menaced by aristocratic and clerical privilege' and a 'resolutely apolitical ideal of the harmonious village community.' Liberal or Conservative predominance was context-dependent, shaped by local religious and political traditions, proximity to industry, and the nature of the predominant farming type in a space. The relationship between the individual farmworker and his/her employer was also important, influencing the actions of both Liberals and Conservatives/Unionists. In many instances, this was largely uneventful, though this did not preclude flashpoints such as the imprisonment of workmen for breach of their employment contracts.[72] Many newly enfranchised rural labourers chose to vote for the Liberals, rather than deferentially to the Conservatives. In 1885, 'over half of the rural or semi-rural constituencies in England' returned Liberals, and while the Conservatives staged a comeback in 1886 and held many of those seats until 1906, an outcome that Lynch ascribed to Liberal 'disarray and neglect of rural reforms', when they did advocate for reform (as in 1906), many rural voters backed the Liberals.[73] However, it was the Conservative party that tended to dominate the rural divisions and English county seats before and after the Third Reform Act;

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[71] *Ibid.*, 293-294 and 349.
[72] *Ibid.*, 1-33.
[73] Patricia Lynch, *The Liberal Party in Rural England, 1885-1910* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 1-7.

in 1880, the party won 70% of such seats, and 67.5% in 1900.[74] Therefore, the weakness of agricultural labourers' trade unionism at the turn of the twentieth century and the embeddedness of the two older parties meant Labour faced an uphill struggle in regards to organisation and winning hearts and minds in the countryside.

Despite the continued electoral pull of the two main parties, the revival of farmworkers' trade unionism in 1906 was significant for the trajectory of Labour's rural development. Its influence was felt more strongly in some areas than others – the Eastern Counties Agricultural Labourers' and Small Holders' Union (ECALSHU), formed in 1906, was at the centre of this story and morphed into the NALRWU (1912) and NUAW (1920). 8,000 members joined NALRWU in 1913. By mid-1914, it had 360 branches in England and Wales, and a membership of 15,000, though this was only a fraction of those working the land.[75] As much of the narrative concerns East Anglia, detailed discussion shall be reserved until chapter five. The salient point is that growing dissatisfaction with Liberals and the Liberal party, including an unsatisfactory conclusion to strike action, contributed to the capture of the once Liberal-leaning ECALSHU executive by Labour-supporting members. Norfolk remained a stronghold of the agricultural labourers' movement throughout our period, marking an intriguing comparative case to developments elsewhere. However, it is important not to get carried away – it is the radical pioneers that have made their way into the history books. Thus, while labourers were becoming increasingly class aware in the 1896 to 1900 period, there are large numbers of farmworkers about which we know virtually nothing and who were not radical.[76] Additionally, even the relatively prosperous period from 1896 to 1914 and the theoretically fertile ground this laid for trade unionism did not mean that organisation was straightforward.

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[74] *Ibid.*, 219-225.
[75] Groves, *Sharpen the Sickle*, 143-144.
[76] Alan Armstrong, *Farmworkers: A Social and Economic History, 1770-1980* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1988), 154.

Despite the organisational experience and assistance of railwaymen, the structure of village life and relationships between master and men shaped political attitudes, while the subdivision and geographically scattered nature of the agricultural workforce contributed to the persistence of organisational challenges and trade unionism's perennially incomplete coverage.[77]

On the specific question of Labour organisation, the organic developmental process of 'territorial diffusion' resulted in varying degrees and types of organisation.[78] In 1901, an LRC committee, directed by Arthur Henderson, made recommendations on local organisation. Reporting back, the committee advised against any 'uniform system of organisation' at this stage, as 'some of our affiliated societies are already organised in certain constituencies, we think that these attempts should be encouraged by us, and be made the basis for a complete organisation later on.'[79] The situation had not drastically change by 1914, with Cole identifying seven types of Labour party organisation.[80]Additionally, prior to 1918, the party lacked a mass membership, which meant a reliance on the rank-and-file of the trade unions, alongside ILP activists.[81]

Trades councils formed the foundations of many parties. Unsurprisingly, the industrial heartlands where organised labour was concentrated, such as Yorkshire, South Wales, Lancashire and the North East were well served.[82] The East and West Midlands also fared reasonably well, with several local Labour parties, Trades and Labour Councils and Trades Councils, while the ILP was strong in areas such as Leicester and Northampton. The Liberal-leaning coalfields eventually switched to Labour in 1909. Labour organisation was light in the

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[77] *Ibid.*, 149; Groves, *Sharpen the Sickle*, 143-144; Bagwell, *The Railwaymen*, 200; Joshua Edgecombe, "The 1919 Railway Strike: The Government's Response," (MA by Research: University of Hertfordshire, 2017); and Compton, "Lines of Division."
[78] Panebianco, *Political Parties*, 50; Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, 9.
[79] Moore, *The Emergence of the Labour Party*, 98.
[80] Cole, *A History of the Labour Party from 1914*, 10-13.
[81] Taylor, "Out of the Bowels of the Movement," 9.
[82] Worley, "Introduction," in: *The Foundations*, 4 and 6-7; and Cole, *A History of the Labour Party from 1914*, 10-13.

Eastern region, though Ipswich and Cambridge had Labour parties and Norwich was notable for its lively ILP presence.[83] However, Labour had 'no organisation at all of its own' in a great many divisions. Light too was Labour organisation in the West and South West. Organisation in the coalfields of Scotland was covered by the Scottish Miners' Federation, in addition to several ILP and BSP branches, and Fabian societies. Outside Labour there was the Socialist Labour Party (SLP) at Clydeside.[84] Lastly, Greater London was home to five local Labour parties, four Trades and Labour Councils, six Trades Councils, as well as the London Trades Council which covered the inner London area. The Fabian Society had much of its membership in London and the ILP and BSP were 'fairly widespread'.[85] Cole did not mention Peterborough, if only to demonstrate the PTUC's pre-WWI political inclinations. As much of the above implies, early proponents of independent labour organisation and representation found it easier to organise in some areas than others. There were areas in the Edwardian period where Labour struggled to gain any sort of foothold; this was true of many rural areas.[86]

Attitudinal and Ideological Foundations

The changing attitude of labour to the Liberal party was fundamental to Labour's development.[87] The timing and drivers of the breakdown of the Liberal-Labour Progressive Alliance have been the subject of much debate. Without delving into its minutiae, one school of thought maintains that the Liberals were in decline before the outbreak of WWI, with Labour on an upward trajectory and poised to strike. Scholars sympathetic to this argument have cited the Boer War (1899-1902), labour unrest, Suffragette militancy, as well as the thorny issue of

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[83] Cole, *A History of the Labour Party from 1914*, 10-13.
[84] *Ibid.*, 10.
[85] *Ibid.*, 10-13.
[86] Brown, "The Edwardian Labour Party," 3.
[87] Geary, "Introduction", in *Labour and Socialist Movements in Europe Before 1914*; Phillips, "The British Labour Movement before 1914"; and Pugh, *The Making of Modern British Politics*.

Irish Home Rule as drivers of decline.[88] One author argued that the damaging effects of the above meant that 'by the end of 1913 Liberal England was reduced to ashes.'[89] There were also serious financial considerations, specifically the party's reliance on a small number of very wealthy industrialists; a factor which worked against the support of working class candidatures.[90] On the other hand, some contend that the downfall of the Liberals came in the war years, especially following the split personified by H.H. Asquith and David Lloyd-George, with the rise of Labour seeming some distance away in December 1910 when it garnered only 6.4% of the vote.[91]

The debate clarifies that there was no instantaneous shift of the working-classes from the Liberals to Labour, the process was a gradual and incomplete one. Many trade unionists, both leaders and the rank-and-file, continued to see value in the Liberals as a mechanism through which to communicate their political aspirations during the early 1900s and questioned the need for an *independent* Labour party.[92] This was also the case at the municipal level, where there was only limited electoral progress.[93] Part of the explanation resides in policy. Firstly, there was little to distinguish Liberals and LRC platforms, the latter owing much ideologically to nineteenth century radicalism.[94] Secondly, the social reformism of "New Liberalism" was popular amongst elements of the working-class.[95] This sentiment manifested in the election of

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[88] George Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1966); McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party*; Keith Laybourn, *The Rise of Labour: The British Labour Party 1890-1979* (London: Edward Arnold, 1988), 16-17.

[89] *Ibid.*, 14.

[90] Pugh, *The Making of Modern British Politics*, 94.

[91] For a helpful overview see, Pelling, *Popular Politics and Society in Late Victorian Britain*, 101-120; Trevor Wilson, *The Downfall of the Liberal Party, 1914-1935* (Collins, 1966); Fielding, *The Labour Party*, 19; and Duncan Tanner, *Political Change and the Labour Party, 1900-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

[92] Brown, "Edwardian Labour Party," 5; Geary, "Introduction," 2-4; and Phillips, "The British Labour Movement before 1914," 11-13.

[93] Cahill, "Labour in the Municipalities," 89-104.

[94] Brown, "The Edwardian Labour Party," 8; Chadwick, "A 'miracle of politics'," 322-323; and Pugh, *The Making of Modern British Politics*, 126-127.

[95] For example, P.F. Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971). Also, Pugh, *The Making of Modern British Politics*, 109 and 115-116.

Lib-Lab candidates; the first two were elected in 1874, by 1906 there were 24.[96] Thirdly, attitudes shifted at varying rates within the same industry. Thus, while the Lancashire and Cheshire miners affiliated in 1903, the more Lib-Lab leading miners of the East Midlands joined later, with many miners voting, albeit unsuccessfully, against affiliation in 1908. On the other hand, the Great Labour Unrest (1911-1914) perhaps suggests that reforms did not go far enough, instead revealing the cynicism of the Liberals who were more concerned with putting a leash on the Labour movement rather than narrowing the gaps between rich and poor, their reforms replicating benefits already available via trade unions and friendly societies.[97] This panoramic view depicts a messy image, though one in which attitudinal shifts within the unions steadily moved them in the direction of Labour.[98]

This debate intersects with that concerning the role of class and class consciousness. Some historians have maintained that class identity was predominant over ideology in the early development of the Labour party.[99] However, class consciousness did not necessarily equate to support for Labour, with class-aware populations content to remain in the Liberal fold.[100] For instance, the Co-operative Movement's continued Liberal leanings acted as a cork on shifting political allegiances.[101] During the 1890s, co-operators discussed the notion of direct representation in municipal and parliamentary bodies; however, there was no clear party allegiance – the most salient point was the fact that they were all co-operators. Indeed, the whole question of parliamentary representation did not appear to ignite unbounded enthusiasm. A decision in favour of representation was passed in 1897 only to be overturned in 1900. The divisions over support for direct representation were evident again in 1906, though there was

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[96] Wrigley, "Labour and the Trade Unions," 129; Chris Wrigley, "Trade unionists and the Labour Party in Britain: the bedrock of success," *French Journal of British Studies* XV, no.2 (2009), 60; and Pugh, *Speak for Britain*, 27-28.

[97] Selena Todd, *The People: The Rise and Fall of the Working Class* (London: John Murray, 2015), 14-28.

[98] Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, 4.

[99] McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party*, xiv.

[100] Lynch, *The Liberal Party in Rural England*, 219-225.

[101] Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, 9.

growing support for the LRC. The issue was to remain inconclusive until 1917. Internal debates between 1912 and 1913 produced no resolution, with some fearing the loss of conservative members should affiliation with the Labour party come to fruition, culminating in 1915 with what Carbery has called a further 'retreat from politics'.[102]

In the case of many Labour studies, Peterborough included, dating the attitudinal shift of the working-class from Liberal to Labour is significant for the light it sheds on the nature of the latter's development. However, Spence has argued convincingly that this line of argument 'make[s]…no sense' for areas such as outer south London, owing to the highly differentiated nature of the working class. Additionally, where the chief competitor on a politico-cultural level was conservatism, the focus on timing the occasion of working-class abandonment of the Liberals feels misplaced.[103] As in parts of the London suburbs, Labour had to navigate rooted traditions of working-class conservatism to garner support.[104] In general terms, Conservative appeals to the working-class focused on patriotism, Empire, and Protestantism. Reasons for the effectiveness of this approach vary. One is deference, which proved particularly powerful in rural areas.[105] This needs to be qualified – deference did not automatically produce Conservative allegiance, and Liberal landlords might also benefit electorally.[106] In urban localities, local studies have noted Conservative successes in the poorest wards, locations where the manufacture of munitions (i.e., Newcastle and Sheffield) was significant, or dockyard towns (i.e., Plymouth, Portsmouth, Southampton and Lowestoft). Additionally, conservatism could take the form of a 'working-class Protestant backlash', pitching local working people against Irish immigration. Evidence for such dynamics can be found in

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[102] T.F. Carbery, *Consumers in Politics: History and General Review of the Cooperative Party* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1969), 3-10.

[103] Martin Spence, "The Labour Party in Penge to 1919," *Labour History Review* 87, no.3 (2022), 251-252.

[104] Jack Reynolds and Keith Laybourn, *Liberalism and the Rise of Labour 1890-1918* (London, 1984); and Spence, "Suburban Labour."

[105] Pugh, *The Making of Modern British Politics*, 80-81.

[106] Adams, "Politics in Late Victorian and Edwardian Northamptonshire," 81.

Liverpool, West Lancashire, as well as Glasgow.[107] The same could be said of the unions. A simple split between Labour-supporting and Liberal-supporting trade unionists did not reflect the reality on the ground. There were those who were members of the Conservative/Unionist party, or at least gave their votes to them come election time.[108] Attitudinal shifts were complicated and spatially-dependent.

As an attitudinal foundation, the significance of the role of religion, particularly nonconformity, is contested ground. The influence of nonconformism in forming radical communities and furnishing them with a radical language was especially pronounced in rural areas. Joseph Arch, probably rural trade unionism's most recognisable nineteenth-century name, was a Primitive Methodist and radical preacher.[109] Horn's study of Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire and Warwickshire confirmed that most leading trade unionists were nonconformist chapel goers and often lay preachers.[110] Similar patterns can be found in that cradle of agricultural labourers' trade unionism: Norfolk.[111] However, since the 1980s, nonconformism's significance for Labour has been questioned.[112] For instance, the scepticism concerning the religious commitment of Labour MPs inducted in 1906.[113] The continued allegiance of nonconformist voters to the Liberal party, especially in rural areas, is a further proviso to any simplistic link between the Free Churches and local Labour development.[114] Furthermore, hallmark issues such as temperance, disestablishment, and secular education

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[107] Pugh, *The Making of Modern British Politics*, 81-85. Also, Don Mathew, "From Two Boys and a Dog to Political Power: The Labour Party in Lowestoft 1918-1945," in: *Labour in the East*, 58-95.

[108] Wrigley, "Labour and the Trade Unions," 136-137.

[109] Empson, *'Kill all the Gentlemen,'* 272.

[110] Horn, *Agricultural Labourers' Trade Unionism in Four Midland Counties*, 20.

[111] Alun Howkins, *Poor Labouring Men: Rural Radicalism in Norfolk 1870-1923* (London: Routledge, 1985); Simon Gooch, *Edwin Gooch: Champion of the Farmworkers* (Lowestoft: Poppyland Publishing, 2020); Edwards, *From Crow-Scaring to Westminster*.

[112] Peter Catterall, "Nonconformity and the labour movement," in: *T&T Clark Companion to Nonconformity*, ed. By R. Pope (London Bloomsbury T&T Clark).

[113] Kenneth D. Brown, "Non-Conformity and the British Labour Movement: A Case Study," *Journal of Social History* 8 (1975): 113-120.

[114] D.W. Bebbington, "Nonconformity and Electoral Sociology, 1867-1914," *The Historical Journal* 27, no.3 (1984): 633-656.

diminished in importance, while WWI relaxed social attitudes and broke up close-knit nonconformist communities.[115] Nevertheless, in some instances, it is possible to draw a near-direct line from adherence to nonconformist beliefs and first Liberal then Labour support and/or affiliation. Indeed, the case of Norfolk demonstrates (chapter five) that generalised arguments about nonconformity's long-term significance shroud its local influence.

Fusing elements of Christianity and socialism, various brands of ethical socialism manifested themselves in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[116] For instance, the Church Socialist League called for the means of production, distribution and exchange to be nationalised.[117] Subscribers to this ethical socialist tradition focused less on capitalism's inefficiencies and more on its moral unjustness. In *From Serfdom to Socialism*, Keir Hardie offered a valuable illustration of this belief system: 'Socialism, like every other problem of life, is at bottom a question of ethics and morals. It has mainly to do with the relationships which should exist between a man and his fellows'.[118] The moral and ethical argument for socialism carried from the ILP to the Labour party.[119] Indeed, contrary to its European counterparts, Labour eschewed ideation of revolutionary change, focusing on reform.

There was an aversion among some trade unionists to the organisation of women. This attitude was baked-in to the structure of some industries. For example, railway companies operated a 'marriage bar' before 1945 according to which women were required to resign once they had married. Furthermore, women were rarely recruited to higher grades and thus excluded vertically, this was matched by horizontal exclusion as the 'main operating grades

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[115] McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, 281-285.

[116] For example, in *The Review of Reviews* for 1906 several Lib-Lab MPs cited the Bible as an important factor in them becoming socialists. See Davies, *To Build a New Jerusalem*, 31; Duncan Tanner, "The Development of British Socialism, 1900-1918," *Parliamentary History* 16, no.1 (2008). See also, Ian Goodfellow, *The Church Socialist League 1906-1923: Origins, development and disintegration* (PhD Dissertation: University of Durham, 1983)

[117] Noel Thompson, *Political Economy and the Labour Party: The economics of democratic socialism, 1884-2005* (London: Routledge, 2006), 55-56.

[118] J. Keir Hardie, *From Serfdom to Socialism*, 36, in: Davies, *To Build a New Jerusalem*, 24.

[119] Thompson, *Political Economy and the Labour Party*, 63-73.

did not usually recruit women'.[120] Given the organisational and financial strength that Labour derived from its union connection, the failure to support further unionisation of women was an own goal. Of course, many women in the Edwardian period were employed as domestic servants, and were notoriously difficult to organise owing to the diffuse nature of employment and closeness of master-servant relations. Before the 1918 Reform Act enfranchised some women, the party paid limited attention to the distinct challenges they faced.

Labour and the Great War, 1914-1918

The impact and importance of WWI on Labour remains a subject of debate.[121] For instance, McKibbin underplayed the role of the war, seeing the foundations for Labour's post-war advance being laid in the years before 1914.[122] For others, the war was a key turning point, transforming Labour from a pressure group into a party with serious national clout.[123] Concurring with scholars who highlight the importance of war for Labour, the years 1914 to 1918 provided the party with a unique opportunity relatively early in its existence. The influence of WWI on Labour's development and thinking was profound as it enhanced the party's role in the wartime economy and furnished the trade unions with greater recognition and wage agreements.[124] This was not confined to Labour's "natural" urban and industrial constituency. Especially relevant to rural areas was the 1917 Corn Production Act, this legislation guaranteed cereal prices and set up Agricultural Wages Boards that regulated hours and wages proving security for agricultural labourers until their abolishment in 1921.[125]

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[120] Compton, "Lines of Division", 45-46.
[121] J.M. Winter, *Socialism and the Challenge of War: Ideas and Politics in Britain, 1912-1918* (Routledge, 1974); McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party*; Laybourn, *The Rise of Labour*.
[122] McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party*.
[123] David Rubinstein, *The Labour Party and British Society, 1880-2005* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2006), 41.
[124] Wrigley, "The Labour Party and the Impact of the 1918 Reform Act," 70-71; Laybourn, *The Rise of Labour*, 32. See also, Pelling, *A History of British Trade Unionism*, 139-172.
[125] Gooch, *Edwin Gooch*, 26; Howkins, *Poor Labouring Men*, 13; and Groves, *Sharpen the Sickle*, 164.

The war was transformational in numerous ways, such as bringing new groups into industry, driving trade union membership, and growing Labour's finances. Large numbers of women entered the industrial economy due to manpower shortages driven by volunteering and later conscription. The railways saw female employment rise from 4,500 in 1914 to 56,000 by the conclusion of hostilities. Additionally, the NUR made the wartime decision to reverse an earlier stipulation that refused union membership to women.[126] The transformation also told in trade union membership. In 1914, union membership stood at 437,000 women and 3,708,000 men. By 1920, over one million women and seven million men were trade union members.[127] This included farmworkers' trade unionism where, despite the departure of many young men for war, membership of the NALRWU and the agricultural section of the Workers' Union (WU) grew. For instance, branches of the former stood at 350 in 1914, but increased to 2,583 by 1919.[128] An increasing membership meant more money for the party's coffers.

Political events during the war years impacted Labour in various ways, their full effects coming to fruition in the post-war period. While outside the Labour party, the split within the Liberals had electoral ramifications from which they never fully recovered.[129] Labour experienced its own divisions, split roughly between those who supported the war effort and anti-war elements such as the ILP. However, it was able to navigate this terrain more successfully, aided by its federal structure and the War Emergency Committee which brought together delegates, opponents and supporters of the war, from different sections of the labour movement.[130] Additionally, the Liberals became associated with several decidedly illiberal pieces of legislation both before and during WWI, such as the Official Secrets Act (1911) and

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[126] Compton, "Lines of Division", 45-46.
[127] Todd, *The People*, 30-31.
[128] Groves, *Sharpen the Sickle*, 149 and 165.
[129] Paul Adelman, *The Decline of the Liberal Party, 1910-1931* (Longman, 1981).
[130] Adelman, *The Rise of the Labour Party*, 45-47; Chadwick, "A 'miracle of politics'," 327.

the Aliens Restriction Act (1914).[131] Also, measures such as compulsory military service and rationing kept oppositional feeling simmering within the Co-operative Movement.[132] Elsewhere, the resignation of Arthur Henderson from the war cabinet allowed him to focus his energies on reorganising the Labour party, and developing a coherent party programme (*Labour and the New Social Order*) that distinguished it from the Liberals.[133] By the war's end, Labour had gained experience and credibility in government and had a party programme that set it apart from the (now divided) Liberals and made the Gladstone-MacDonald Pact redundant and prompted a wave of CLPs and DLPs to be established from 1918 onwards; the Peterborough DLP was among these post-war creations.[134]

1918: A Crucial Year

It is difficult to overstate the impact of legislative and party organisational changes introduced in 1918 on the development of the Peterborough DLP from this point through to 1951. While the debate was Edwardian in origin, the 1918 Reform Act had implications for all parties.[135] Organisationally, it was far more important than the war *per se*. For instance, it compelled all parties to consider how to adapt and appeal to the expanded electorate, one which now included most women over the age of 30. The prominent Fabian Sidney Webb acknowledged the influence of the Act in 'New Constitution of the Labour Party.' Labour, announced Webb, was now a national party 'open to anyone of the 16,000,000 electors agreeing with the Party Programme.'[136] Similarly, Arthur Henderson, a central figure in the creation of the 1918 Constitution, acknowledged that if Labour was serious about securing parliamentary power,

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[131] Pugh, *The Making of Modern British Politics*, 152.
[132] Carbery, *Consumers in Politics*, 16-21.
[133] Worley, "Introduction," in: *The Foundations*, 4; A.J.P. Taylor, *English History, 1914-1945* (Penguin, 1981), 128-129.
[134] Chadwick, "A 'miracle of politics'," 327-329.
[135] Martin Pugh, *Electoral Reform in War and Peace, 1906-18* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), ix and 179-180. Chapter one explored the impact of the 1917/18 Boundary Commission and Review.
[136] Sidney Webb, "The new constitution of the Labour Party: a party of handworkers and brainworkers: the Labour programme and prospects," Labour party leaflets, New Series, 1, Labour Party, London (1918).

then the Act needed to be considered equally seriously.[137] This was acknowledged, as it compelled the NEC to seriously 'consider whether the present Party structure and machinery are adequate to cope with the new circumstances.'[138] The Act also cut party spending limits. This was advantageous to a financially cautious party, enabling Labour to put more candidates into the electoral field.[139]

1918 also saw the introduction of Labour's new Constitution. Party constitutions have been dismissed by some scholars as unworthy of a great deal of attention. Panebianco asserted the 'institutionalisation of deviation' from written rules and norms. This interpretation assigns to party rules an unpredictability in their implementation and enforcement. This line of reasoning led to the conclusion that party statutes constituted little more than a 'pallid trace' as 'a point of departure for the organisational analysis of political party'.[140] However, a reading from this angle omits any mention of the potential organisational and ideational importance of constitutional statements, as well as their instrumentalism as launch pads for political and organisational formation – implying something much more than a 'pallid trace'. Additionally, where party constitutions have been analysed seriously, it has been with a sole focus on the national.[141] The outline and later discussions of the 1918 Labour Constitution that follow demonstrate the inadequacy of this situation.

Labour's 1918 Constitution has been approached from a range of angles, with emphasis being placed on the power dynamics it institutionalised, particularly the role of the trade unions and the diminished influence of the ILP; the opening up of local parties to individual

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[137] Wrigley, *Arthur Henderson*, viii.

[138] *Report of the Annual Conference of the Labour Party Held at the Albert Hall, Nottingham on Wednesday, January 23rd 1918 and Two Following Days, and the Adjourned Conference Held in the Central Hall, Westminster, London SW., on Tuesday February 26th 1918* (1918) in Chris Wrigley, "The Labour Party and the Impact of the 1918 Reform Act," *The Parliamentary History Yearbook Trust 2018* (2018), 65.

[139] Wrigley, "The Labour Party and the Impact of the 1918 Reform Act," 72; and Michael Dawson, "Money and the Real Impact of the Fourth Reform Act," *Historical Journal*, xxxv (1992): 369-381.

[140] Panebianco, *Political Parties*, 35.

[141] Rodney Smith and Anika Gauja, "Understanding party constitutions as responses to specific challenges," *Party Politics* 16, no.6 (2010): 755-775.

membership; as well as the meaning and effects of Clause IV, the so-called 'socialist objective'.[142] These approaches, like others on the subject of party constitutions, begin and remain at the national scale.[143] In this instance, it is profitable to extend the analysis to party constitutions at sub-national levels. Despite being relatively neglected, Labour's Constitution can be read from a spatial perspective, with emphasis laid on the document's call for the creation of a nationwide network of local Labour parties.

The immediate backdrop to the Constitution was provided by Arthur Henderson's resignation from the War Cabinet in 1917. Henderson irked several of his colleagues in the Cabinet because of his insistence on sending delegates to a conference of socialist societies in Stockholm and was compelled to resign as a result. This left a bitter taste, so much so that A.J.P. Taylor argued that this was the moment that Lib-Lab died; Henderson channelled his energies into the reorganisation of the party.[144] The reorganisation saw the party restructured, according to Webb, 'on the double basis of national societies and constituency organisations.'[145] Henderson certainly felt that the reorganisation was necessary in organisational terms and to strengthen political democracy. The war, he argued, demonstrated 'the need for drastic change in the composition and organisation of political parties.' In the same work, Henderson elaborated on the organisational and political intentions of Labour's reorganisation:

> 'It [the new Constitution] contemplates the creation of a *national* democratic party, founded
> upon the organised working-class movement, and open to every worker who labours by hand
> or brain…the Labour Party will be transformed…from a federation of societies, national and

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[142] For example, Dowse, *Left in the Centre*, 204-205; McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party*; Miliband, *Parliamentary Socialism*; McKenzie, *British Political Parties*; and Matthew Worley, "Introduction," in: *Labour's Grass Roots: Essays on the Activities of Local Labour Parties and Members, 1918-45*, ed., by Matthew Worley (Ashgate, 2005), 3.
[143] See Smith and Gauja, "Understanding party constitutions as responses to specific challenges."
[144] Taylor, *English History*, 128-129.
[145] Webb, "The new constitution of the Labour Party."

local, into a *nation-wide political organisation with branches in every parliamentary constituency.* [I]n order that the party may *more faithfully reflect constituency opinion* it is proposed to create in every constituency something more than the existing trades council or local Labour party.'[146] [My italics]

This passage restates Henderson's belief that the Constitution defined a juncture in Labour's development, 'something more' in comparison to what came before. In this sense, it was about the spatial presence of the party and forging an identity that would 'more faithfully reflect' local opinion and, therefore, define where and what the party was an who it was for.

The transformation argument has had its proponents and detractors. Cole argued that the Constitution was transformational, as the party reorganised itself 'on a truly national basis.' Prior to this, Labour made sectional and spatially delimited appeals on a system occupied by the two traditional parties. Throwing away the spatial constraints that confined it to certain parts of the country, the Constitution made Labour an electoral presence in many more divisions.[147] On the other hand, McKibbin saw the Constitution primarily as an instrument for the distribution of power within the party, minimising Clause IV as an 'uncharacteristic adornment.' Furthermore, the new organisational rules were viewed merely as a 'formalised version' of a pre-existing state of play.[148] As evidence, and Cole would concur on this point, reference was made to cases where local Labour organisation was similar to the composition of the local trades' council. The juncture between the two rests in the argument that the "new" local Labour parties were essentially these older organisations rebadged. More recently, Henderson's organisational reforms have been interpreted as an attempt to take advantage of the changes brought about by the war and the expansion of the electorate. While Labour could make claims to being a *nationwide* party, in reality support and individual membership

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[146] Arthur Henderson, *The Aims of Labour* (London: Headley Bros. Publishers, 1917), 20.
[147] Cole, *A History of the Labour Party from 1914*, ix and 4-5.
[148] McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party*, 91-105.

remained 'unevenly distributed'. There were also risks associated with too much or too little affiliated or individual membership. Lack of the former could mean greater likelihood of financial difficulties, but too much trade union influence could mean alienating other sections of the electorate. As this implies, the composition of local parties varied from place to place.[149] This approach would seem to reinforce the notion of the potential for spatial differentiation in the outcomes of the introduction of the Constitution. What remains is to ascertain and explain the nature of change from place to place.

Part II: The Development of the Labour Party, 1918-1951

Short Stories: Developments in Organisation and Identity, 1918-1951

The National Labour Party: Issue *Positioning* and *Practices*, 1918-1939

The 1918 General Election resulted in a resounding victory for the Coalition, though the Conservatives far outnumbered their partners.[150] Optimists and pessimists can find arguments in their verdicts on Labour's performance. The party won few seats on its own, with 11 being returned unopposed. There were three victories in 'agricultural or partly agricultural seats', though Barnard Castle and Clitheroe were mixed mining-agricultural seats where Labour had earlier victories. Holland-with-Boston was primarily agricultural, the Labour candidate was the Conservative candidate in December 1910 and, after his death, the seat returned to the Conservatives and remained with them.[151] This was no rural breakthrough, rural and semi-rural constituencies remained essentially the reserve of the Conservative and Liberal parties. Nevertheless, Labour advanced in urban areas, drawing on the support of working-class

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[149] Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate*, 47-65.
[150] Pugh, *The Making of Modern British Politics*, 157 and 161.
[151] Michael Kinnear, *The British Voter: An Atlas and Survey since 1885* (London: Batsford Academic and Educational Ltd., 1981), 39-40.

neighbourhoods that had developed in the cities.[152] The general elections of 1922, 1923 and 1924 illustrated the geographical concentration of Labour electoral strength. Labour won 142 seats in 1922, 39 of the 82 party gains came in mining districts, and a further 28 came in Glasgow, Greater London, Newcastle, Gateshead and Sheffield. Conversely, Labour lost heavily in comparison to 1918 in the agricultural seats of the South Midlands, specifically the Northamptonshire divisions of Kettering and Wellingborough (though these were regained in 1923), and textile areas of East Lancashire and West Yorkshire.[153] An analysis of 1922 and 1923 electoral data showed that the Labour vote in most rural divisions peaked in 1922.[154] What is most striking, then, is that Labour managed to take the divisions of North and South Norfolk, pointing to *place*-specific dynamics.[155] 1924 witnessed the 'virtual elimination' of the Liberal party as it lost 119 seats, a figure including all of those in largely agricultural divisions. However, these did not automatically transition to Labour. Rather, it was overwhelmingly working-class urban divisions that voted for Labour.[156] The 1929 General Election indicated the spread of Labour's appeal beyond the heartlands, a process aided by the destruction of the Liberals at the 1924 election; the win in Peterborough at this election was the party's first.[157] Labour won two-thirds of borough seats, but only five agricultural seats. Two of these had significant mining populations, a further two were in Norfolk.[158] While Labour performed poorly in agricultural seats, 1929 nevertheless marked a breakthrough.

In some regards, the *practices* of Labour administrations manifested the organisational and ideological foundations of the party and its commitment to working-class interests. Labour

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[152] Savage and Miles, *The Remaking of the British Working Class,* 80.
[153] Kinnear, *The British Voter*, 40-41.
[154] C.P. Cook, *The Age of Alignment* in Kinnear, *The British Voter*, 161-170.
[155] Kinnear, *The British Voter*, 38-61. The 1923 vote share for Labour (57.6 per cent) in North Norfolk actually marked an increase from 1922 (52.2 per cent). In South Norfolk, Labour lost the 1922 contest to Unionist opposition, but won in 1923 with 51.9 per cent in a straight contest.
[156] *Ibid.*, 46.
[157] *Ibid.*, 46.
[158] *Ibid.*, 48.

headed two minority governments in the 1920s (i.e., 1923 to 1924 and 1929 to 1931). The first Labour government, which relied upon the support of the Liberals, demonstrated that the party was capable of governing and did not threaten wholesale social revolution.[159] The administration's record had its bright spots, with progressive benefit reforms, an increase in agricultural salaries, road-building, as well as a major programme of house-building being set in motion; Labour governed in challenging circumstances and did surprisingly well, though not flawlessly.[160] However, the inherent weaknesses of minority government, a resurgent Conservative party benefitting from Liberal implosion, coupled with the unpopularity in some quarters of support for good relations with Russia and the infamous Zinoviev Letter, all contributed to the government's downfall.[161] The second Labour administration saw the abolition of the much-maligned means-test, and while the test was reintroduced in 1931, Todd has argued that the people who came of voting age in 1945 and helped deliver Labour to victory, remembered the demeaning experience of the thirties.[162]

However, any achievement was overshadowed by the economic depression, Labour's inability to solve the worsening unemployment problem, and the events surrounding the departure of Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald and other leading Labour figures to head a National Government.[163] Running at 11% in the best interwar years, the unemployment rate rose to 23% of adult males and 20% of women following the Wall Street Crash.[164] The impact of the depression was spatially uneven, the worst affected were the "old" industries such as coal mining, heavy engineering, shipbuilding and textiles in the North, South Wales and

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[159] Fielding, *The Labour Party*, 20; David Torrance, *The Wild Men: The Remarkable Story of Britain's First Labour Government* (London: Bloomsbury, 2024), 258; Chadwick, "A 'miracle of politics'," 332- 335; Rubinstein, *The Labour Party and British Society*, 59.
[160] Torrance, *The Wild Men*, 251-258; Chadwick, "A 'miracle of politics'," 333.
[161] Chadwick, "A 'miracle of politics'," 333.
[162] Todd, *The People*, 64 and 74.
[163] Fielding, *The Labour Party*, 20.
[164] Todd, *The People*, 61-62.

Scotland.[165] The discontent caused by unemployment and the worsening financial situation filtered to sub-national layers of the party, with reports of falls in membership and finance between 1929 and 1931.[166] Attempts to address the problem fuelled divisions between orthodox and radical politicians and economists, financiers, the banking industry and the TUC and trade unionists, which proved irreconcilable.[167] The Labour Government's solution was a 10% cut to unemployment benefits. This proved to be the straw that broke its back, with MacDonald resigning as Prime Minister before agreeing to head a National Government, much to the chagrin of many within Labour.[168]

While 1931 was electorally devastating, it did not result in terminal decline organisationally or ideologically. Instead, it acted like a safe mode reboot, the party's recuperation being built on solid foundations, most notably the trade unions and DLPs. The National Government secured 554 out of the 615 seats available; Labour was reduced to a rump of 52, and key party figures, including Arthur Henderson, lost their seats. However, a retrospective assessment of 1931 and Labour's reaction reveals the events of that year to be damaging in the short- to medium-term but not life-threatening. One point of view is that Labour had to be 'painfully reconstructed' in the 1930s, though local studies offer serious challenges to this contention.[169] One outcome was reasserting the links between Labour and the trade union movement. Trade union leaders such as Ernest Bevin, Walter Citrine, Herbert Morrison and Hugh Dalton became more powerful within the party through mechanisms such as the National Joint Council and the NEC. Labour's local organisation proved to be resilient,

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[165] McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, 112; Todd, *The People*, 61-62.
[166] Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate*, 123-124.
[167] David Howell, *MacDonald's Party: Labour Identities and Crisis, 1922-1931* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 299-304; Ross McKibbin, "The Economic Policy of the Second Labour Government, 1929-1931," *Past & Present*, no.68 (1975): 95-123; and Robert Skidelsky, *Politicians and the Slump: The Labour Government of 1929-1931* (Penguin, 1967), 11-12.
[168] Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate*, 132-136.
[169] Rubinstein, *The Labour Party and British Society*, 51.

with divisional work continuing to be undertaken, much of it by active trade unionists.[170] This was also reflected in policy, alongside a stronger emphasis on planning, and manifested in Labour's *Immediate Programme* (1937), which called for direct state intervention and a targeted nationalisation of certain industries.[171] This reflected an ideological process rooted in Labour's past, with an emphasis on reformist rather than revolutionary change and the post-1918 narrowing of theoretical diversity within the party that culminated in a technocratic brand of political economy inspired by Fabianism holding sway, though never to the complete exclusion of alternative branches of thought.[172]

The 1935 General Election saw Labour win back some of the ground lost in 1931, though its parliamentary strength remained well below that of the National Government.[173] However, the thirties were increasingly dominated by the slide towards political extremes and war on the international scale.[174] Henderson and others became increasingly preoccupied by international affairs and the cause of peace.[175] The international preoccupations of those situated at the centre and peripheries of Labour politics also served to highlight areas of intra-party tension. This was particularly evident in relation and events surrounding with Popular Front.[176]

Labour in the Municipalities and the Countryside

The annual round of municipal elections gave Labour the opportunity to transmit its message to local electorates and gain traction in areas which could operate as foundations for building Labour cultures, identities and organisation or reaffirm their presence. Local issues came to the

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[170] Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate*, 139 and 142.
[171] Fielding, *The Labour Party*, 21; Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate*, 121.
[172] Thompson, *Political Economy and the Labour Party*, 1-2.
[173] Worley, "Introduction," in: *The Foundations*, 4-7.
[174] Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991* (London: Michael Joseph, 1994).
[175] Andrew Thorpe, "Arthur Henderson and the British Political Crisis of 1931," *The Historical Journal* 31, no.1 (1988): 117-139.
[176] Pugh, *Speak for Britain*, 247-248.

fore.[177] Labour's municipal performance was a qualified advance. In 1919, Labour made big gains, even in the context of a more restricted franchise. For example, Labour became the largest party on the council in Bradford, and took control of county councils in Monmouthshire, Glamorgan, and Durham, while representation was increased on other councils such as Sheffield, Manchester, Salford, Liverpool, Swindon, and London County Council; in the London borough elections of November, Labour won 572 seats compared to only 46 in 1912.[178] Thus, Labour's performance was strongest in certain types of communities, such as areas dominated by mining interests. So much so that Labour organisation *per se* did not have to be especially strong if votes for Labour could be secured through alternative sources, such as miners' lodges or trade unions.[179] However, the party was far from achieving anything approaching permanence, between 1918 and 1922, local parties struggled to keep hold of members or reach out to new ones, most notably women voters. Nevertheless, on the whole for the years from 1923 to 1929, Labour recorded a net gain of municipal representation.[180]

Post-1931 events proved the electoral and organisational resilience of DLPs. The shockwaves of the "1931 Betrayal" were deep, with Labour losing municipal ground in 1931 and 1932. However, 'heavy local election gains' in 1933 and 1934 indicated that a process of recovery was underway, though municipal performance for the remainder of the 1930s suggest that Labour had reached an 'electoral plateau' at this scale. Additionally, any talk of advance needs to be caveated by the fact that Labour was a minority on most local authorities, the formation of anti-socialist alliances in multiple areas contributed towards this state of affairs.[181] DLPs did not escape the centralising tentacles of the national Labour party which manifested

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[177] Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate*, 90-91.
[178] *Ibid*., 29-30; Pugh, *The Making of Modern British Politics*, 164.
[179] Worley, "Building the Party," 75-76 and 85.
[180] Worley, "Introduction," in: *The Foundations*, 4; Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate*, 30; and Chadwick, "A 'a miracle of politics'," 331-332.
[181] Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate*, 195.

in the desire to see greater regularisation in the conduct of local government, with the party

holding educational conferences and releasing standing orders on relations between council

groups and local DLPs. Centralising tendencies were in plain sight with the scrapping of the

Local Authorities Enabling Bill and the message this sent out concerning the downplaying of

local government. The war did not halt this trend, the nationalisation of selected industries

under the post-war Labour administration acted to further reduce the role of local

government.[182]

The Labour historiography has a pronounced urban/municipal bias; however, it would

be incorrect to assume that the countryside was perceived as unimportant.[183] The party

programme, *For Socialism and Peace*, stated the desire to secure majorities 'of those who

labour by hand or brain in the industrial centres, in the suburban areas, and in the

countryside'.[184] Establishing new and building on existing foundations of agricultural

labourers' trade unionism, Labour made concerted efforts in rural areas during the interwar

period. The 1920s were witness to nationally directed agricultural campaigns, alongside local

initiatives. These were deliberate efforts to, first, gain electoral support, and, later, to increase

rural membership, develop and grow rural organisation. As such, rather than limiting Labour's

campaigning efforts to the weeks and months before elections, the intention was to maintain

year-round involvement. Part of this entailed a 'scheme of national propagandists', one with a

particular focus on the countryside.[185]

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[182] Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate*, 195-196; Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, 46-47, 77, 78, 80 and 119.

[183] For example, but not limited to, see: Cahill, "Labour in the Municipalities;" Steven Cherry, *Doing Different?: Politics and the Labour Movement in Norwich, 1880-1914* (Norwich: Centre of East Anglian Studies, 1989); Sam Davies, *Liverpool Labour: Social and Political Influences on the Development of the Labour Party in Liverpool, 1900-1939* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996); McHugh, *Labour in the City*; and Savage, *The Dynamics of Working-Class Politics*. For an exception, see Ward, "Representing Rurality?".

[184] Griffiths, *Labour and the Countryside*, 8.

[185] *Ibid.*, 109-115.

However, the chipping away of those foundations presented further challenges to Labour's rural organisation. The NUAW was the main agricultural labourers' union in our period. Initially, the NUAW was buoyed by the 1917 Corn Production Act; wage increases towards the end of war and into the post-war period were conducive to increasing union membership.[186] In 1919, the NUAW could count 170,000 members in 1919, while the WU had 100,000. However, the horizon was bleak due to the swift recovery of agriculture on the continent, expansion in overseas production and consequent drop in world prices.[187] However, the cost of wartime financial guarantees prompted the Coalition Government to revoke them in June 1921, despite the promises within the 1920 Agriculture Act for their continuation.[188] The Act itself was not universally popular amongst farmworkers. It removed the Central Wages Boards and replaced them with Conciliation Committees, these were voluntary bodies, consisting of farmers' and workers' representation, that would agree minimum wage rates before submitting them to the Minster for Agriculture. Being voluntary, Groves scathingly concluded that they were 'useless – as no doubt they were intended to be'.[189] In 1922 and 1923, the NUAW attempted to resist the imposition of lower wages, while farmers dismissed workers to cut their expenses. In this context, the union suffered a significant decline in membership. In 1920, it had 2,735 branches and 170,000 members; in 1923, there were 1,468 branches and 37,714 members.[190] The union retreated to its Norfolk heartland and staged an unsuccessful strike. As Gooch concluded, "It was clear that there were limits to what could be achieved by industrial action in the countryside'.[191]

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[186] Armstrong, *Farmworkers*, 168-169.
[187] *Ibid.*, 173-174.
[188] Edith H. Whetman, "The Agriculture Act, 1920 and its Repeal – the "Great Betrayal," *The Agricultural History Review* 22, no.1 (1974): 36-49.
[189] Groves, *Sharpen the Sickle*, 172.
[190] *Ibid.*, 174.
[191] Gooch, *Edwin Gooch*, 42.

Whether it was the challenges of rural organisation or Labour's rootedness in heavily industrialised and urban areas, the countryside campaigns give the impression that, from Labour headquarters at least, they were a support act for urban headliners and that few would notice if they were dropped from the schedule. There were two phases (1926 to 1928 and 1933 to 1939) to Labour's interwar rural campaigning. Both phases involved local conferences, with much of the on-the-ground work being delegated to local activists, whether Labour workers or trade unionists. The costs also being delegated to the localities.[192] Some Labour activists from the municipalities were careful not to portray themselves as too urban, acknowledging the shared concerns of rural and townsfolk, and that the countryside was about more than 'pigs and poultry.' Technical language was avoided, with party messages being relayed via creative means such as music and Labour choirs.[193] The effects of such efforts were shaped by the peaks and troughs of Labour's electoral fortunes. For example, the scheme of national propagandists was discontinued in 1931 in the context of the fall of the second minority Labour government, the departure of key figures to be part of the National Government, and the pressure on finances that the experience manifested. As a result, where the first phase was general in its reach, the second was more discriminating, targeting divisions where the party stood a reasonable chance of success. However, there was always the sense that the rural campaigns were 'rather easily sacrificed' and 'an add-on to general party activity.'[194] DLPs in rural and semi-rural divisions could not so easily relegate the importance of countryside campaigning and took it upon themselves to run their own rural efforts.[195]

Many rural and semi-rural divisions presented Labour with formidable organisational obstacles, especially those lacking an established trade union base upon which to build and

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[192] Griffiths, *Labour and the Countryside*, 118-129.
[193] *Labour Organiser*, December 1936 quoted in Griffiths, *Labour and the Countryside*, 135 and 133-141.
[194] Griffiths, *Labour and the Countryside*, 118-129.
[195] *Ibid.*, 127.

draw finance.[196] In many instances, rural organisation was stimulated by the introduction of the 1918 Constitution. There were spatial and structural challenges, such as the geographical extent of some divisions and the concomitant isolation of rural communities, which made canvassing challenging.[197] There were also challenges that occurred on the level of mentalities, notably 'deference,' and 'weaknesses of political education,' which the campaigns strived to overcome.[198] Writing for *The Labour Organiser*, S.J. Gee, local party organiser in the rural constituency of North Norfolk, highlighted the challenges presented by the wider *locale*, in particular the local branches of the Women's Institute and British Legion tended to be controlled by the Conservatives.[199] Neither were rural workers always perceived favourably by trade unionists – poor agricultural labourers were perceived as potential blacklegs.[200] Furthermore, fear of and victimisation acted as a deterrent for many agricultural labourers to head unions in their industry. Thus, while Joseph Arch's national union came from within, subsequent efforts relied more heavily on support beyond farmworkers. An offshoot of this was the targeting of non-agricultural workers in agricultural areas, such as railwaymen and miners.[201] As such, relying on the NUAW as Labour did in a number of rural divisions was problematic as, like the NALU, it did not cover all agricultural labourers. Additionally, its primary focus was industrial rather than political, its priorities being the reintroduction of wage boards, then wage regulation, though politics was a means of achieving both. There was also the fact of the rural community's heterogeneity – it consisted of far more than agricultural labourers. This was recognised by DLPs and their organisers in rural constituencies, such as Gee in North Norfolk, who identified that sustained electoral success in the countryside would

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[196] Chadwick, "A 'miracle of politics'," 331-332.
[197] S.J. Gee, "The Problem of Rural Constituencies: A Practical Contribution by a County Agent," *The Labour Organiser*, February 1924, No. 39; and Pelling, *A History of British Trade Unionism*, 195.
[198] Griffiths, *Labour and the Countryside*, 143.
[199] Gee, "The Problem of Rural Constituencies."
[200] Griffiths, *Labour and the Countryside*, 178-179.
[201] *Ibid.*, 180-189.

need to be built on a coalition of support, rather than agricultural labourers alone: 'We cannot hope to win a fight against a solid coalition of squires, parsons, farmers, smallholders and shopkeepers in country towns.' To overcome this challenge, Gee called for careful registration work, the formation of local/branch parties, as well as the gradual capture of local authorities.[202] These challenges made growing membership in the countryside difficult, which had a knock-on effect for funds, as these derived from subscriptions.[203]

These challenges persisted into the 1930s. It remained the case that some farmworkers continued to experience the fear of victimisation at the hands of farmers and landowners; attendance at meetings meant visibly exposing yourself as a trade unionist or socialist. Even with Labour in government, farmworkers were far from satisfied. There was some positive legislation, but these existed alongside perceptions that the Labour leadership sided with the farmers over the farmworkers.[204] Furthermore, increases in NUAW membership from the mid-1930s did not translate into an organisational or electoral breakthrough for Labour.[205] Throughout the interwar period, effective organisation remained a perpetual challenge for Labour in the countryside.

<u>Family Affairs: Labour Relations with the Unions, ILP, CPGB and Co-operative Party</u>

The interwar experiences of the trade unions tended to draw them closer to the orbit of the Labour party which impacted the latter's organisation and identity. In 1918, the trade unions dominated the PLP, with 49 of its 57 MPs sponsored by a union; 25 were sponsored by the Miners' Federation of Great Britain.[206] The structural importance of the unions was evident in the number of local parties that grew from trade council and trade union soil.[207]   Unions

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[202] Gee, "The Problem of Rural Constituencies."
[203] Griffiths, *Labour and the Countryside*, 145-147.
[204] Groves, *Sharpen the Sickle*, 205-224.
[205] *Ibid*., 225 and 229.
[206] Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, 42.
[207] Cole, *A History of the Labour Party from 1914*, 10-13.

demonstrated their value at election times. Indeed, to contest as many seats as possible, Labour

fell back on 'what was already there; fell back, that is, on trade-union organisation.'[208] Between

1918 and 1920, union membership grew, with half the male workforce and quarter of the

female workforce unionised, and there were few reversals in industrial disputes. However, the

situation changed with the onset of depression. By May 1921, unemployment was over 22%

which reduced union bargaining power.[209] The General Strike represented an especially hot

moment. This action damaged the trade unions, leading to a fall in membership; figures for

1933 indicate a 50% decrease in union membership since 1920.[210] The impact on Labour was

more 'ambiguous.'[211] While the fall away in trade union membership and affiliations was

damaging financially and numerically for the party, the General Strike highlighted the

drawbacks of strike action, especially in the context of the 1927 Trade Disputes Act which

made illegal any strike with an 'object other than or in addition to the furtherance of a trade

dispute.'[212] Thus, despite Labour's ineffectual support of the unions during the Strike, there

was an upsurge in union support, driven by the realisation that alternatives to industrial action

might bear more fruit and from a desire to scale back the organisational and financial damage

wrought by the legislation of 1927.[213] Thus, 'industrial gradualism' met 'political gradualism'

as the TUC adopted a more mollifying approach to employers.[214] Indeed, as Todd argued: 'One

of the most important legacies of the strike was that Britain's labour movement became firmly

committed to constitutional change rather than militant or revolutionary action.'[215] As we have

seen, after the devastation of 1931, the links between the Labour party and the TUC were

reasserted and restrengthened, with the party generally becoming more centralised and

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[208] McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party*, 241-243.
[209] Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, 42-44
[210] Todd, *The People*, 104.
[211] Chadwick, "A 'miracle of politics'," 333.
[212] Alpheus T. Mason, "The British Trade Disputes Act of 1927," *The American Political Science Review* 22, no.1 (1928), 149.
[213] Compton, "Lines of Division," 56.
[214] Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, 55.
[215] Todd, *The People*, 58.

disciplined.[216] Confirmation of the closeness of Labour and unions came with the torrent of funds that entered the party via the unions, as well as the rise in affiliation fees agreed at Conference.[217]

Despite the dominance of gradualist and technocratic ideological strands among the Labour leadership, the ILP remained a significant source of organisational resource and ideational inspiration. However, since the 1918 Constitution's creation of DLPs, serious question marks hung over the role and purpose of the ILP within Labour. Frustrating as it might have been for the more radically minded among them, most ILPers worked within Labour parameters. However, dissent was growing in some quarters. Dissentient voices coalesced around the figure of Jimmy Maxton, MP for Glasgow and chairman of the ILP from 1926 to 1931 who adopted the radical "Living Wage" policy and worked to force the issue by shifting even further to the left.[218] In the context of the crisis that racked the party in 1931, questions arose over how to rebuild and reorganise Labour. Some in the ILP saw the need for a radical alternative. In July 1932, the ILP voted 241 to 142 to disaffiliate from Labour.[219] This shift and 'enforcement of party standing orders' led to the final separation of Labour and the ILP. It has been argued that this was the only realistic route left open to the ILP, given its geographic distribution and decentralisation that prevented agreement on a demarcation of functions between the two parties.[220] Regardless, the ILP entered into the political wilderness; however, many ILPers decided to remain within the Labour fold, with a number of them organising themselves into the new Socialist League, also formed in 1932. The League was in favour of planning and credit expansion and, initially at least, focused on research. Furthermore, G.D.H. Cole and Margaret Cole launched the Society for Socialist Inquiry in mid-1931, a group of loyal critics

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[216] Worley, "Building the Party," 78.
[217] Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, 72.
[218] *Ibid.*, 58; and Chadwick, "A 'miracle of politics'," 334.
[219] *Ibid.*, 72.
[220] Dowse¸ *Left in the Centre*, 204-205 and 20-34.

who were to offer constructive criticism of Labour policy from a socialist perspective.[221] In fact, as we shall see, the ILP's disaffiliation had variegated effects shaped by local traditions.[222]

The attitude of Labour's national party leadership towards the Communists was predominantly oppositional. Attempts at affiliation by the CPGB were repeatedly rejected by the Labour Conference. However, communists did attend party Conference and there were even communist Labour MPs. However, relations took a nosedive following the General Strike. Communists were banned from attending Conference as trade union delegates in 1928 and Labour headquarters began disbanding DLPs that refused to expel communists; this fate befell 26 DLPs between 1926 and 1928.[223] Indeed, it was in the realm of candidate selection that the national party would intervene to block candidatures.[224] From 1928, the CPGB's attitude became increasingly oppositional to all parties deemed capitalist, including Labour, as it pursued a "class against class" policy.[225] This backfired as Labour leadership tightened its hold over the party and soured the sympathies of rank-and-file and trade unionist Labour members.[226] Given the spatial unevenness of CPGB strength, such *positional* shifts produced diverging patterns at the divisional level.[227] From 1933, the communists became more conciliatory and pressed for united action only for this proposal to be rejected by Labour's NEC. However, this coexisted alongside subversive tactics under the direction of the Soviet Comintern. Starting in 1933, the strategy would see individual communists infiltrate local Labour organisations and push for collective left-wing opposition to fascism. Campbell and McIlroy estimate that 10% of CPGB members were working inside the Labour party by 1937.

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[221] Ben Pimlott, *Labour and the Left in the 1930s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 44; and Thrope, *A History of the British Labour Party*, 72.
[222] Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate*, 142-143.
[223] Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, 55-56.
[224] Worley, "Building the Party," 79-80.
[225] Matthew Worley, *Class Against Class: The Communist Party in Britain Between the Wars* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002).
[226] Chadwick, "A 'miracle of politics'," 334-335.
[227] Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, 5.

Labour activists were not blind to this and the covert nature of CPGB activists piqued their annoyance. The strategy shifted with developments internationally, specifically the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union.[228] Further attempts at a united or "Popular Front" came in the late 1930s. However, despite some rank-and-file support, Stafford Cripps's proposition for a "Popular Front" was vetoed by the NEC, his persistence with it culminated in his expulsion.[229]

Relations between Labour and the Co-operative party were less dramatic or controversial than those with the ILP or the CPGB. Indeed, while it needs to be qualified, the interwar period marked an improvement in relationship. It was not always clear that this would be the case. In 1900, the Co-operative Movement declined to be part of the scheme for labour representation in parliament; part of the reluctance owed to not wishing to alienate members of other political persuasions in the movement. Change arrived in 1917 when a motion in favour of direct representation was passed. However, even after its passing, Labour and the Co-operative party did not always complement one another. The friction took on a regional character, with the Northern Section of the movement opposing closer relations with Labour. Conversely, in Kettering, Northamptonshire, the general opinion was that the scheme for closer relations did not go far enough. Disagreement was driven by a variety of factors including fears about loss of identity, control of finance, and the fact that while the political programmes of the two overlapped they were not identical.[230]

The 1930s saw a deterioration in relations between Labour and the Co-operative party. After MacDonald's "betrayal", the Co-operative party NEC and MPs met and decided to associate themselves with the new (Labour) opposition rather than the National Government.

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[228] Alan Campbell and John McIlroy, "'The Trojan Horse': Communist Entrism in the British Labour Party", *Labor History* 59, no.5 (2018): 513-554.

[229] Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, 83-85.

[230] Nicole Robertson, "'A union of forces marching in the same direction'? The relationship between the Co-operative and Labour parties, 1918-39," in: *The Foundations*, 213-227; McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party*, 189; see also, Nicole Robertson, "The Political Dividend: Co-operative Parties in the Midlands, 1917-39", in: *Labour's Grass Roots*. Carbery, *Consumers in Politics*, 26 and 35.

Co-operative MPs suffered a similar fate to Labour MPs generally at the 1931 general election, losing all their MPs except Willie Leonard in Glasgow St Rollox. However, this was only the tip of the iceberg. Disagreements ostensibly over Labour's increasing centralisation and desire to have greater control over affiliated and allied organisations following its experience with the ILP. Carbery was scathing of the Co-operative party in the 1930s, describing them as 'wasted years' in which the party was numerically and financially secure but had achieved nothing philosophically or programmatically. Nevertheless, the 1945 General Election marked a 'high-water mark' with 23 Co-operative party candidates elected, including Stanley Tiffany in Peterborough. However, this needs to be balanced against the party's loss of a distinct identity, a pattern that continued for Co-operative MPs in the 1945 to 1951 period.[231]

Women and the Labour Party

Women came to play a pivotal role in the organisation and development of the Labour party in the interwar years. However, distinction needs to be made between such roles and the party's lack of recognition of women's issues. Female activists played a key role in convincing other women to become politically engaged through the network of women's sections and their associated activities, such as political education and participation in electoral campaigns. The establishment of women's section was not without controversy, some critics felt that their creation amounted to the gendered sundering of the labour movement, others felt the sections provided a safe space for women to cultivate political confidence and skills.[232] Additionally, several women became Labour MPs and held senior positions within the party, such as Dr Marion Phillips who was selected for the position of chief woman officer in 1918.[233]

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[231] Carbery, *Consumers in Politics*, 37-51.

[232] June Hannam, "'The Victory of Ideals Must Be Organised': Labour Party Women Organisers in the inter-War Years", *Management & Organisational History* 5, no.3-4 (2010): 331-348.

[233] Sarah Hellawell, "'Sunderland Has Lost a Figure That Will Go Down in History': Marion Phillips in the North East of England, 1923-1932," *Labour History Review* 88, no.3 (2023): 221-244; and Lewis Young, "The Infant

Despite the work of the women's sections, the recognition of women's issues was not immutable and at times struggled to transcend political events. The 1931 crisis was particularly damaging as the focus of the party shifted to existential concerns. Beyond strictly party concerns, the 1930s witnessed an increased focus on class and the broader national and international context of unemployment, extreme ideologies in the form of fascism and communism, and the growing threat of war.[234] This pattern was echoed in the national manifestos from 1918 to 1951. Where the 1918 manifesto made the bold claim that 'the Labour Party *is* the Women's Party,' and those of 1922 and 1923 spoke of equal rights, the general trend was towards the diminishing recognition by the party of women as a distinct segment of the voting population, especially after 1929 and the passing of the Equal Franchise Act in 1928.[235]

The topic of women and Labour lucidly illustrates the heavily caveated advances of the party during the interwar period. The 1918 Reform Act gave most women over the age of 30 the right to vote. Further reform in 1928 extended the right to vote to all women over the age of 21, regardless of marital status or property ownership. Thus, there was an incentive for political parties to appeal to and organise women. Labour figures recognised that the party needed to get its act together; Sidney Webb wrote that the party had, as of 1918, failed 'to make much use of women'.[236] Labour's own reforms pointed to new and different roles for women in party activity. At the national level, four seats were reserved for women on the party's NEC, though these were chosen by the party Conference as a whole rather than by their own organisations. The new Constitution also meant that women could become individual

Hercules and the Socialist Missionary: Ellen Wilkinson in Middlesbrough East, 1924-1931," *Labour History Review* 84, no.1 (2019): 21-46.

[234] Martin Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain since 1914* (London: Palgrave, 2015), 108.

[235] Craig, *British General Election Manifestos*, 5-7, 12-15, 21-24, 34-38, 55-60, 68-73, 81-83, 97-105, 126-135 and 147-151.

[236] Webb, "The new constitution of the Labour Party." See also, Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain since 1914*, 50-52.

members. Many women joined mixed-sex branches and engaged in ward and division organisation, standing for office as secretaries and treasurers. Others became local councillors or were selected as PPCs, though they remained a minority, most successful and unsuccessful candidates in the interwar period being men. Furthermore, women were infrequently placed in winnable seats, the central party finding it difficult to influence local parties to endorse women candidates. In some regards, the experience of women in the Labour party was comparable to that of workingmen in a Liberal party that was reluctant to support working-class candidates.[237]

The development of women's sections were an important means by which Labour organised women.[238] Indeed, Graves commented that 100,000 women were organised in 800 sections by 1922, this figure rising to 200,000 in 1,535 sections by 1925.[239] The women's sections of local Labour parties also provided representation for women on the local executive committees of their respective Constituency Labour Party (CLP)/DLP.[240] Studies have illustrated the 'distinctive contribution' of women in the localities through electioneering and fundraising work, activities which helped to broaden the party's appeal and transform it from one based predominantly on trade unions to 'a more neighbourhood group, articulating specific community and occupational demands.' Hannam has described this work as 'important but gendered'.[241] It should be noted that the organising and campaigning roles performed by women were not confined to urban areas. As Griffiths has argued, there was scope for women to play prominent roles in the countryside.[242] However, regarding trade unionism specifically, '[t]he historian looking for women's experiences in agricultural trade unionism is not

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[237] Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain since 1914*, 51, 127, 130, and 137-138.
[238] June Hannam, "Women and Labour Politics," in: *The Foundations of the British Labour Party: Identities, Cultures and Perspectives, 1900-1939*, ed. by Matthew Worley (Ashgate, 2009), 171-192.
[239] Chadwick, "A 'miracle of politics'," 331-332; Pamela M. Graves, *Labour Women: Women in British Working-Class Politics, 1918-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
[240] Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain since 1914*, 51.
[241] June Hannam, "Women and Labour Politics," in: *The Foundations*, 171-192.
[242] Griffiths, *Labour and the Countryside*, 158.

overwhelmed with material.' The main roles performed by women were catering and supporting the male workers.[243] This latter point reinforces the findings of Hannam.

Overall, in terms of representing women through policy and party mechanisms, Labour's claims were open to criticism. One could argue that the party did not offer women anything new or radically departing from that offered by the Coalition or Conservative governments of the 1920s, so much so that Pugh contended that Labour's approach was 'little more than a mirror image of the Conservative approach, based upon the sanctity of home and family'.[244] Women faced persistent difficulties in getting their collective voice heard within the party, though, and despite no clear demarcation, there was more space for women's issues to be expressed through party channels in the 1920s than in the 1930s.[245]

Wartime Organisation and Identity, 1939-1945

Wartime presented challenges and opportunities for Labour. As with WWI, the outbreak of hostilities in 1939 provided Labour, from May 1940, with further experience of government. However, it was necessary for the party to navigate several potentially damaging hurdles, particularly the issues of Communist affiliation and infiltration, as well as the maintenance of the electoral truce and what to do about left-wing alternatives such as the Common Wealth (CW) party contesting by-elections, and what this meant for the post-conflict electoral terrain. Additionally, there were the relative mundanities of organisation to contend with, keeping the cogs of the Labour machine oiled enough that, when conflict finally subsided at some unknown point in the future, it would be prepared to contest a general election.

WWII operated as a shove in the back, rehabilitating and re-legitimising the party after the false steps of the 1930s, accelerating the speed at which the party was able to compete

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[243] *Ibid*., 196-197.
[244] Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain since 1914*, 94, 99-100 and 108.
[245] Hannam, "Women and Labour Politics," 174.

effectively against the Conservatives. As we have seen, the 1930s were a testing time for the party and there was no clear indication in 1939 or 1940 that Labour would win a general election.[246] However, by the commencement of hostilities, Labour was a more focused and disciplined outfit, with the trade unions playing a lead role. In May 1940, several Labour figures entered the war cabinet and at ministerial level; a recognition of the fundamental role for unions in coordinating wartime industrial efforts.[247] Labour involvement in the wartime cabinet and close cooperation between the government and opposition was not without its challenges. The opposition of the ILP, which issued an anti-war manifesto, was already well established, with Labour's continued commitment to the war scuppering any moves towards the ILP's reaffiliation.[248]

As the war went on, opinion across the country took a 'swing to the left', though this is contested by historians.[249] Additionally, pinning any shift directly to the involvement of Labour in government is not without its difficulties. Regardless, while this process may not have been fully appreciated by party leaders, it was nevertheless to their benefit. Labour's wartime policy was less about calling for complete nationalisation, rather about pushing for more effective control coordinated by agencies responsible to government, as well as an insistence that such controls not be immediately lifted on the conclusion of wartime hostilities.[250] That the wartime coalition was susceptible to Labour pressure was evidenced in the increase in wages for the low-paid, the nationalisation of the fire service, as well as outline plans for reconstruction.[251] Come the 1945 General Election, some commentators felt that Labour benefitted from a 'spirit

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[246] Brooke, *Labour's War*, 1.
[247] Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, 89-92.
[248] Cole, *A History of the Labour Party from 1914*, 373-374.
[249] Brooke, *Labour's War*, 1; and Pugh, *Speak for Britain*, 270. For a contrary view, see Steven Fielding, "What did 'the people' want?: the meaning of the 1945 general election." *The Historical Journal* 35, no.3 (1992): 623-639.
[250] Cole, *A History of the Labour Party from 1914*, 395.
[251] Pugh, *Speak for Britain*, 269.

of egalitarianism and a weakening of class prejudices during wartime,' while the Conservatives suffered from their association with the appeasers of Hitler.[252]

Another important feature of the war years was the introduction of an electoral truce between the parties. Under the terms of truce, the Conservative, Labour and Liberal parties were 'not to nominate candidates for any parliamentary vacancies that now exist, or may occur, against the candidate nominated by the Party holding the seat at the time of the vacancy occurring.'[253] As Brooke has argued, Labour was not always a happy party during the war, with figures on the left as well as the rank-and-file pushing against the truce and the constraints it imposed.[254] Further strain was caused by the contesting of elections by Independents and the CW party. Overall, the truce held in the constituencies, however, there were occasions when frustrations boiled to the surface, resulting in action being taken by party headquarters against CLPs/DLPs, including the expulsion of individual members and disbanding of some local parties.[255] Moreover, the result of the 1945 General Election indicated resoundingly that Labour had little to fear from left-wing alternatives. Indeed, many CW people, including its leader Richard Acland, joined Labour post-war; Acland became a Labour MP for Gravesend in 1947.[256]

Special mention must be made of the CPGB, which presented a unique challenge that prompted Labour into organisational action. Following the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact in 1939 and the shift among CPGB fellow-travellers from opposition to fascism to indifference and non-relevance of the war to the working class, there were concerns within Labour that anti-war elements in the party might be susceptible to this message. However, it was the CPGB's revival following Soviet resistance to Nazi Germany that prompted Labour into action. Red

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[252] *Ibid.*, 272-273. Fielding, *The Labour Party*, 21-22.
[253] Cole, *A History of the Labour Party from 1914*, 377.
[254] Brooke, *Labour's War*, 9.
[255] Cole, *A History of the Labour Party from 1914*, 380; Pugh, *Speak for Britain*, 265.
[256] Thorpe, *Parties at War*, 44.

Army resistance to Hitler's armies helped to boost CPGB membership. During the Battle of Stalingrad (July 1942-February 1943), the CPGB applied for affiliation to Labour. This was rejected by the NEC and defeated at party Conference in 1943 by a margin of 1,951,000 to 712,000, the losing contingent constituting a substantial minority and displaying the levels of sympathy present. Indeed, Communist pressure on DLPs was something that Labour had to contend with throughout the war.[257]

It is important to draw a distinction between the electoral truce which there was and a political truce which there was not. Even after the outbreak of war, the Labour leadership were keen to keep divisional parties active and party messaging in the minds of voters.[258] In October 1939, Labour undertook a review to ensure that its local organisation remained in 'good working order.'[259] Furthermore, many CLPs/DLPs continued to organise social activities and fundraising events and the selection of candidates continued deep into 1940.[260] There was even a questionnaire for CLPs/DLPs about the activities they were carrying out – there was clearly an expectation that they should be doing something.[261] One important corollary was that the war appeared to have a positive impact on trade union membership. As with WWI, the membership and reputation of the unions grew, this was the case for large as well as smaller unions, such as the NUAW that experienced a more than doubling of its numbers.[262] However, there was a decline in individual membership. At the same time, Labour's development model mitigated against some of the consequences as the party, unlike the Conservatives, was accustomed to relying on 'unpaid, part-time and amateur agents.'[263] Despite this mixed picture,

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[257] *Ibid.*, 33-42.
[258] *Ibid.*, 33.
[259] Cole, *A History of the Labour Party From 1914*, 378.
[260] Pugh, *Speak for Britain*, 261 and 264.
[261] Thorpe, *Parties at War*, 33-34.
[262] Pelling, *A History of British Trade Unionism*, 208.
[263] Pugh, *Speak for Britain*, 262-264.

by the time the truce was abandoned in October 1944, Labour had been gearing up for a general election for several months.[264]

Labour After the War: 1945-1951

After the controversies and divisions of the years 1929 to 1931, WWII provided Labour with the opportunity to restore its damaged credibility. This it achieved and reaped the benefits of at the polls in 1945.[265] The Labour victory of 1945 did not mark the beginning of social revolution. Far from it, there was to be no replacement of capitalism with socialism, rather the introduction of a welfare state and adherence to Keynesian economics within a capitalist framework. So much so that for many 1945 marks the beginning of the age of consensus, a culmination of processes originating in the 1930s.[266]

1945 presented another first for Labour: a majority government through which to implement its plans for social reform and reconstruction. The welfare state was created, symbolised by the National Health Service, and 20% of the economy was nationalised. The party remained relatively united until 1947, when internal left-wing opposition began crystallise. For all its successes, Labour's reforms did not extirpate inequality. By the end of its time in power, the party was running out of steam, highlighting internal splits between a left calling for more state control and a leadership preferring a more cautious approach. Indeed, the division from 1947 over the policy switch from planning to demand management sparked friction between politicians and the unions.[267] Additionally, the middle-class support gained in 1945 had drifted back to the Conservatives come 1951.[268] Nevertheless, the existence of a Labour government placed a restraining hand on the extra-parliamentary party, which was

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[264] Thorpe, *Parties at War*, 45-46.
[265] Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, 93.
[266] Brooke, *Labour's War*, 1-2; Pugh, *Speak for Britain*, 257.
[267] *Ibid.*, 329-330 and 333-334.
[268] Fielding, *The Labour Party*, 21-24.

careful to avoid embarrassing the PLP. As such, the balance of power swung from the trade unions, so powerful in the 1930s, towards the party at Westminster. Indeed, as a proportion of Labour MPs, trade unionists accounted for less than a third.[269]

Conclusion

This chapter set out Labour's national development and historiography, highlighting key events and processes, and thematic threads running from 1900 to 1951. Compared to its humble beginnings in 1900, the transformation by 1951 was nothing short of than astounding. One unifying theme that emerged from this analysis was the diversity of Labour's developmental experience. Consequently, the narrative took many detours on the journey from the late nineteenth century to 1951.

The foundations of Labour were revealed to be varied, with each foundation itself possessing great internal diversity. For example, the trade unions were at the core of Labour's development. However, they contained a huge range of opinions, not all sympathetic to the cause of independent labour representation. Some unions affiliated earlier than others, and there was even differentiation within the same industry, as we saw with mining and the railways. Furthermore, some workers were better organised than others, agricultural workers and women being situated on the more unorganised end of the spectrum. Much the same can be said with regards to the impact of WWI and the transformative year of 1918.

Labour's interwar experience further reflected the notion of variation and unevenness. The party led two minority governments and made electoral advances beyond its heartlands at the 1929 election before suffering what might have seemed like an existential defeat in 1931. However, the organisation remained sufficiently intact to begin the process of rebuilding that contributed towards the Labour majority government of 1945. Once again, a world war aided

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[269] Pelling, *A Short History of the Labour Party*, 88 and 95.

the rehabilitation of the party with Labour politicians and trade unionists proving their competency. Labour's development was not a forward march, the debacle of 1929 to 1931 being illustrative of this. However, neither can it be described as one of forward march from 1918 to 1929 before a brief interlude, followed by a further forward advance from 1931 to 1939. This is especially so when the narrative is disaggregated. Labour was advancing in a number of urban areas, but its rural advance was severely limited. Women came to play an increasing role in party affairs. At the same time, the number of male councillors and parliamentarians far outweighed their female counterparts, and discussion of women's issues diminished as the party became more preoccupied with international developments.

The Peterborough DLP developed its own organisational character and ideational standpoints within this national context. As we will see, there were occasions where the Labour in Peterborough aligned with national trends. On the other hand, it is precisely through reference to the national scale that the distinctions of the Peterborough case are illuminated. Additionally, a top-level articulation of Labour's ebb and flow in rural areas is especially useful in pinpointing any distinctness in the Peterborough case. Labour in the countryside is often dealt with in the most cursory of fashions. For a mixed constituency like Peterborough, discussion of Labour's development in principally urban *and* rural areas is essential. That said, the national lens is not the only vantage point through which we can gain glimpses into the character of the Peterborough DLP, its regional peers also provide helpful instruction, and it is to East Anglia and the East Midlands that we turn next.

Chapter 5: The Regional Labour Movement: East Anglia and the East Midlands, 1900-1945

Introduction

Precisely what region Peterborough belongs to is a point of contention. The division sits at the crossroads of East Anglia and the East Midlands, similar arguments could be made regarding those abstracts of North and South. Alternatively, Pelling placed North Northants and Peterborough within a larger 'Central Region', along with the rest of Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire, the bulk of Berkshire and Buckinghamshire, as well as portions of Gloucestershire, Huntingdonshire and Wiltshire. That said, the region was deemed 'most unsatisfactory' by an earlier commentator.[1] The following analysis locates Peterborough at the dividing line of East Anglia (i.e., Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Norfolk, Suffolk) and the East Midlands (Derbyshire, Leicestershire, parts of Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, as well as Rutland). The former due to its geographical proximity and the *prima facie* comparability with its provincial towns and cities, as well as its rural and semi-rural constituencies; the latter owing to its nearness, but more significantly because the Peterborough Division came under Labour's East Midlands Regional Council (EMRC). Additionally, the towns and cities of the East Midlands, most notably Northampton, Leicester, Derby and Nottingham, and, in some instances, the surrounding space, can be similarly mined for insights and comparisons into the *practices* of Peterborough DLP activists.

The first section analyses the matter that made up the Labour movements and parties in the region (i.e., East Anglia and the East Midlands). Broadly, party matter in the region

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[1] Pelling, *Social Geography*, 106.

reproduced that discussed in the national literature. That said, it was the particular quality and quantity of local ingredients as they pertained to religion, socialism, (non-)agricultural trade unionism, etc., that informed the developmental paths of CLPs/DLPs. Discussion of Labour movements and parties in the provincial urban centres and rural spaces in the region brought into greater focus the peculiarities of the Peterborough case. Comparison with developments in Norfolk, with its long history of rural radicalism, and Huntingdonshire, where Labour made a late arrival and struggled to make an impression, showed the trajectory of the Peterborough DLP in rural portions of the division to have more in common with the latter.[2] Thus, the importance of localism is highlighted as is the need to understand borough *and* county divisions to grasp Peterborough's idiosyncrasies.

The second section traces the organisational and ideational legacies of the foundational material of CLPs/DLPs into the interwar period and beyond. The analysis found that the imprint of early developmental experiences persisted in multiple areas of party *practice*. This persistence made it possible to identify *dispositional* activities regarding organisation and ideation, allowing for a party's essence to be distilled with some degree of accuracy. This comparative exercise enabled a more refined and granular understanding of the nature of Labour across the region, and provided further clarity concerning the specific dynamics of Labour's development in Peterborough.

Formative Matter: Social and Organisational Bases of DLPs, 1890-1918

If we were to take a map of England and mark out the area covering the East Midlands and East Anglia, removing all administrative, electoral and other boundaries, we would be left with a shape resembling a boot with Norfolk as its enlarged toe-box. The East Coast and Midland mainline railways slice through this region. Various industries, including mining, hosiery, lace,

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[2] Howkins, *Poor Labouring Men*; Gooch, *Edwin Gooch*; Edwards, *From Crow-Scaring to Westminster*.

boot and footwear, railways, engineering, fisheries are dotted across it, agriculture occupies large swathes. Such industries shaped the composition and character of local economies, societies, and politics. As we add the divisional layer, the industrial and social matter from which local labour movements would take shape becomes clearer; further layering down to the ward and neighbourhood provides even sharper relief. However, knowledge of local geography and the social and organisational components of DLPs are insufficient to account for party *practices* and due regard must be given to *place*. This appreciation aids the unravelling of questions concerning proto-party and party *practices*, including the drivers of local Labour party formation; choices concerning organisational structure beyond the early developmental phase; processes of candidate selection; as well as *issue positioning* and policy *curation*.

The region contained a diverse set of building materials reflective of those observed in the local (chapter six) and national-scale literature. They can be classified as: 1) religious, 2) non-agricultural and agricultural trade union and trade council, 3) socialist, 4) working-class conservatism, 5) political agency, and 6) Liberal and Liberalism. The region contained examples of where religious material, especially of a nonconformist flavour, had an incubating effect on the cause of independent labour representation and its organisational and ideational expression. Nowhere was nonconformism the lone material for building DLPs; however, such beliefs regularly intersected with radical Liberalism. In truth, nonconformism's pre-1914 place as a key formative ingredient varied from division to division. There are fewer examples of the durability of nonconformist influence on Labour organisation and identity in the interwar period and beyond; indeed, WWI had a damaging sidelining effect in many areas.[3] Additionally, contrary to dynamics in several extra-regional locations, sectarian divisions delimiting Labour's appeal were far less pronounced.

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[3] McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, 115.

The non-agricultural industrial bases (i.e., trade unions) from which Labour parties in East Anglia and the East Midlands drew were varied and shaped the subsequent form and nature of organisational and ideological expression of independent labour. That said, similarities in organisational bases produced different outcomes dependent on the context in which they occurred. In addition to individual trade unions, Cole's description of the pre-1914 organisation highlighted the role played by trade councils in many towns and cities.[4] This might imply that the impact of trade union and trade council *practices* were entirely positive as they concerned DLP emergence and formation. This was not the case; Liberal adaptability within and without these bodies could halt perceptions of the need for independent organisation. Additionally, while once Liberal-leaning trade unions and trade unionists and trades councils provided the bulk of material from which DLPs in the region were built, there were *locations* with limited unionised material to construct from, necessitating recourse to alternative sources which had long-lasting organisational and ideational consequences.

The raw material for DLPs was not limited to the towns and cities. In some county divisions, the effective organisation of agricultural labourers provided Labour parties with footsoldiers and leadership. Whether farmworkers were organised and ideationally inclined towards radicalism depended heavily on local social and political traditions. In the region, agricultural labourers' trade unionism was strongest in Norfolk's predominantly rural divisions. This owed to a localised combination of rural radical tradition, nonconformism, proximity to urban socialism (i.e., Norwich), and political agency that was especially vibrant compared to other intra-regional areas.

Reference to socialism and socialist societies were found in most of the divisions studied. However, to burn, socialism required fuel, and it needed fuel of sufficient quantity and

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[4] Cole, *A History of the Labour Party from 1914*, 10-13.

quality to have a lasting impact and, as such, its strength and influence varied greatly. The fuel for a strong local socialism could be grounded in radical histories which could create a lasting impression on subsequent Labour organisation and, equally importantly, character and identity. Local employer-employee relations, which often intersected with politics, also influenced the nature and density of socialism. However, the flexibility and durability of local Liberalism could negate this. As could working-class conservatism. Despite working-class men and women making up the majority of the electorate, Labour only secured a majority government in 1945. Analysis of the prevalence and handling of working-class conservatism in the region highlighted distinct DLP identities and organisational trajectories.

Across the region, interconnections between religious belief, urban and rural trade unionism, socialism, and working-class conservatism were evident. Furthermore, the interaction of these materials with philosophical Liberalism and the Liberal party were central to the nature and form of DLPs. Indeed, many Labour activists and politicians cut their teeth as Liberals and many trade unionists were sympathetic to the party. Identification of when the bonds that tied future Labour party members, activists, as well as the trade unions, to the Liberal party broke, enabled a deciphering of how important Liberal *practices* were for DLP emergence and development. On the flip side, the durability of the Liberal vote into the interwar period highlighted where an alternative base was more important for DLP sustenance.

Formative Matter: Borough Divisions

All the formative materials discussed so far were present in the region's borough divisions, except non-agricultural trade unionism. The quantities and relative importance of each varied with local context. It is not uncommon to find nonconformist trade unionists and trade council delegates who subsequently played important roles in DLPs.[5] It is more difficult to ascertain

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[5] I. Grimwood, "The Rise of the Labour Party in Ipswich," in: *Labour in the East*, 12.

whether nonconformist presence amounted to nonconformist beliefs being ingrained in ideational party *practices*. Nonconformism had some influence on the ILP and SDF in Northampton. However, this did not stop either of them supporting the local Liberal Association's acceptance of the atheist and birth-control-supporting Charles Bradlaugh as PPC – pragmatism overrode idealism.[6] Furthermore, the region lacked the religious tensions that were to plague others (chapter six). For instance, despite playing host to various Christian denominations, Derby lacked any significant religious divisions which contributed to the moderation of its labourism.[7] In Peterborough, nonconformism offered limited building material, while the absence of pronounced adversarial religious politics likely moderated the *practices* of the local labour movement bringing the division in line with the regional borough picture.

Aligning with the national picture, trade unions and trades councils played a crucial organisational role in the early development of DLPs. Beneath this headline statement the story was much more complex, with the social and industrial composition of each division shaping the local labour movement and nature of labour politics. Several trades councils amalgamated with DLPs, furnishing them with a ready-made organisational base and reservoir of manpower. The National Union of Boot and Shoe Rivetters and Finishers (NUBSRF), later renamed the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives (NUBSO), was central to the organisation and identity of the Northampton DLP.[8] The Ipswich District Trades Council, which was established in 1885 and quickly extended its functions beyond the industrial to contest municipal elections, combined with the Ipswich DLP in 1920.[9] Derby was home to a strong labour movement

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[6] Marie Dickie, *Town Patriotism and the Rise of Labour: Northampton 1918-1939* (PhD Dissertation: University of Warwick, 1987), 39-42 and 114.
[7] Andrew Thorpe, "J.H. Thomas and the Rise of Labour in Derby, 1880-1945," *Midland History* 15, no.1 (1990), 117-119.
[8] Matthew Kidd, "Evolution of the Northampton Labour Party, 1888-1918," *Ex Historia* 6 (2014), 2-4.
[9] Grimwood, "The Rise of the Labour Party in Ipswich," 16 and 20.

grounded in numerically significant industries, notably the railways and engineering works and their associated unions, the NUR and AEU, respectively. There was also a significant number of trade unionists attached to the WU and TGWU. The moderate nature of railway trade unionism in Derby is suggestive regarding Peterborough. A context of stable nineteenth and twentieth century population growth and 'unspectacular' migration patterns, combined with the presence of large-scale railway and 'other "sheltered" industries' better shielded from the 'cold blasts of the world market' than export industries, fostered a 'moderate, defensive but self-confident Labourism, based on the realisation that things could be a lot worse.' Additionally, the railway and engineering industries nurtured a respectable 'working-class elite', further contributing to the moderate tone of Derby's labour politics.[10] Thus, the industrial composition of the Peterborough Division, the large numbers of railwaymen and engineers, may have contributed to the level-headed nature of its Labour politics.

The strength of the trade unions in Derby limited the space available to alternatives such as the ILP.[11] However, this state of affairs was not replicated everywhere in the region which had implications for DLP form. Norwich lacked heavy-scale industry and the concentration of skilled and unionised workers that such an occupational structure often brought, leaving it with a weak trade union base.[12] Instead, the city comprised of a plethora of industries, including boot- and shoe-making, building, transport, and food and drink processing, alongside other small-scale employment. This acted to fragment industrial action; the Great Labour Unrest caused 'hardly a ripple' in Norwich.[13] In such areas, the organised working-class alone was not sufficient to build and sustain a DLP. In Norwich, the ILP supplied

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[10] Thorpe, "J.H. Thomas and the Rise of Labour in Derby," 112-114 and 120-126.
[11] *Ibid.* 116.
[12] Matthew Worley, "The Red Flag and the Fine City: The Norwich Labour Party, 1900-1945," in: *Labour in the East*, 125-126.
[13] Cherry, *Doing Different?*, 6, 8-9 and 51-62.

the numbers to get the message of socialism out, aided by cordial relations between socialists and labourists.

In organisational and ideological terms, the influence of socialism and socialist societies in the region was uneven. The region could boast of a rich radical history. In East Anglia, Ipswich was a stronghold of Chartism, whose charter demanded, among other things, universal manhood suffrage and the abolition of the property qualification for becoming an MP.[14] In 1875, a local branch of the Labour Representation League (LRL) was established calling for working-class representatives in parliament, this was followed in 1893 by a branch of the ILP.[15] Despite a financially shaky start which saw the ILP fold soon after its formation, it was re-established in 1906 with Robert Jackson (a future Labour MP) winning a seat on the borough council in 1911.[16] The fact of Jackson's candidature at municipal and later at parliamentary level speaks to the enduring organisational and ideational influence of the ILP in Ipswich. Leicester could claim a radical tradition extending back to Chartism. The town was an important shoe-making hub, and the dominance of the footwear industry translated into trade council membership where, in 1903, 13,000 of the 19,500 affiliated members were from NUBSO.[17] Here, technological and structural changes experienced by footwear and hosiery workers created a substantial reservoir of socialist support.[18] Highlighting the importance of *place*, Northampton, as well as the neighbouring areas of Kettering, Wellingborough, a Rushden, and numerous Northamptonshire villages, hosted a substantial number of boot and shoe operatives.[19] However, the development of a non-adversarial politics that placed class

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[14] A.F.J. Brown, *Chartism in Essex and Suffolk* (Essex Record Office, 1982); and Grimwood, "The Rise of the Labour Party in Ipswich," 10.

[15] Grimwood, "The Rise of the Labour Party in Ipswich," 13-15.

[16] *Ibid*., 20-24.

[17] Howell, *British Workers and the Independent Labour Party*, 230; and Bill Lancaster, *Radicalism, Cooperation and Socialism: Leicester working-class politics 1860-1906* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1987), xix.

[18] Lancaster, *Radicalism, Cooperation and Socialism*, xix-xxii; and Howell, *British Workers and the ILP*, 231 and 277.

[19] Pelling, *Social Geography*, 106, 110 and 114.

collaboration over class conflict limited socialist room for manoeuvre.[20] Northampton SDF

candidates appeared on the ballot in 1906 and January 1910, the two candidates put forward at

each election in the double-member division finished bottom on both occasions. Indeed, the

ILP and SDF were drawn into the town's civic culture, maintaining good relations with the

local trades council from 1900 to 1914.[21]

Norwich's place as an ILP stronghold since the 1900s left an indelible mark on the

city's labour politics that could still be seen deep into the 1940s.[22] In accounting for islands of

ILP strength, Howell pinpointed places lacking 'the dominance of a few employers' and

observed the local strength and quality of Liberalism.[23] The provincial city of Norwich is an

illustrative case in this regard. In the late nineteenth century, Norwich was home to a range of

socialist societies. In 1886, F.J. Crotch, a self-described 'independent socialist', ran against a

sitting Liberal in that year's municipal elections and was successfully returned alongside a

Liberal. In 1887, the local branch of the Socialist League had 150 members, though its

influence was marginal by the time of its collapse in 1892. Nevertheless, its members had

prepared the groundwork for the socialists that followed; it was, for instance, Socialist League

activists who had visited the village of St Faith's (see below).[24] Rather unusually for a place

outside Yorkshire or Lancashire, the ILP's presence and influence was pronounced in the

1900s. The Norwich branch was formed in 1894 and, as in Leicester, the persistence of outwork

may have contributed to an independent-minded working-class for whom the idea of

independent labour representation was attractive.[25] However, it was not plain-sailing. During

the 1890s, there was competition from the left in the form of the local SDF and defections to

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[20] Dickie, *Town Patriotism*.
[21] Kidd, "The Evolution of the Northampton Labour Party," 15-20.
[22] Cherry, *Doing Different?*; and Worley, "The Red Flag and the Fine City."
[23] Howell, *British Workers and the Independent Labour Party*, 278.
[24] Cherry, *Doing Different?*, 5, 15, 17, 24-26
[25] *Ibid.*, 10-11. Also, Lancaster, *Radicalism, Cooperation and Socialism*.

the Liberals.[26] However, the ILP gradually grew in influence on the Trades Council. In 1902, G.H. Roberts was elected as its president alongside another ILPer, G.F. Hipperson, as secretary in 1906; these positions were regularly held by ILPers from this point.[27]

Peterborough held more in common with locations where socialism struggled for any sort of organisational or ideological hegemony. For Wyncoll, SDF and Socialist League branches in Nottingham played a pioneering role in converting the local unskilled to socialism in the 1880s and an ILP branch was well-established in 1893, with Clarion Clubs and Cyclists out "making socialists" in the 1900s.[28] Notwithstanding the socialist challenge to craft union dominance in Nottingham, it possessed insufficient strength to displace local Lib-Labism which had support from officials in the lace union and Nottinghamshire Miners' Association (NMA). In Nottingham, no ILP candidate stood in any seat before 1914. However, the increase in industrial tensions in the late nineteenth century provided Nottingham socialists with a niche in the hosiery and mining industries in which to spread socialist ideas, contributing to the recognition of the need for independent labour representation. Building on the foundations of local branches of the SDF and Socialist League, the ILP became increasingly influential on the trades council.[29] The ILP was stronger in Derby, but it struggled to establish a distinct identity within a moderate industrial climate dominated by trade unions.[30] Extending this argument to Peterborough, the railway and engineering industries, some of whose employees formed the roots of the Peterborough DLP, were large enough and trade union density sufficient enough to squeeze the space available for socialism to flourish, while opening up the space for the PTUC to incubate fledging independent labourism.

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[26] Cherry, *Doing Different?*, 44-49.
[27] *Ibid.*, 54-55.
[28] Wyncoll, *The Nottingham Labour Movement*, 87 and 130-131.
[29] *Ibid.*, 74-75.
[30] Thorpe, "J.H. Thomas and the Rise of Labour in Derby," 112-114.

Proponents of independent labour representation in the region had to contend with the conservatism of many of its working-class inhabitants. There are few explicit examples of Labour successfully channelling such sentiments. One poster child for how to effectively wield the flag of "Tory Socialism" was J.H. Thomas in Derby. Thomas was able to appeal to the 'patriotic, anti-temperance, sporting element' within the working class in a way that many other Labourites could not. Labour in Derby started early in its attempts to win over the organised *and* unorganised working-classes. These efforts were aided contextually by the aforementioned steady demographic growth and absence of sectarian divisions.[31] This should not detract from the significance of Thomas' input and the electorate's perception of Labour as derived from its *practices* – choosing the right candidate with the right message. Thomas demonstrated how something approaching a mass (local) appeal could be achieved. The example of Thomas depicts how agency could steer the organisational and ideational course of early local Labour parties.[32]

The region contained five double-member divisions from 1885 to 1918. Unsurprisingly, Labour's pre-1918 returns in these divisions read more positively than those for single-member provincial boroughs, more so given the context of the Gladstone-MacDonald Pact. Thus, working men had the opportunity to compete for a seat in parliament alongside a Liberal. This could appease or stimulate proponents of independent labour into further action. Derby returned its first LRC candidate, Richard Bell of the ASRS, in 1900. Bell was elected alongside a Liberal and his subsequent political career was to demonstrate his closeness to the Liberal party. Thomas, who was elected in January 1910, was more clearly a *Labour* candidate. The *practices* of the local Liberal Association were important, rather than attempt to re-energise Liberalism they simply ran alongside a Labour candidate. The short-termism of this strategy

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[31] *Ibid.*, 112 and 120-126.
[32] *Ibid.*, 120-126.

of minimal resistance came back to haunt the Liberals in 1918 when they faced an assertive Labour party keen to contest *both* seats.[33] In Norwich, a Labour candidate first appeared on the ballot at the 1904 by-election. Labour won parliamentary representation in 1906 with G.H. Roberts as candidate; he was returned in January and December 1910. However, where the Liberals in Derby hastened their own decline, the industrial composition and political traditions in Norwich enabled the Liberals to maintain their local relevance and electoral performance throughout the 1920s and 1930s, hinting at aforementioned alternative sources of local strength for Labour. Derby and Norwich were regional examples of the healthy working of the Gladstone-MacDonald Pact, while *place*-specific factors produced different outcomes.[34]

While double-member divisions could raise the prospect of independent labour representation, such an outcome was not preordained and local factors could actually work against it. We saw how socialists in Northampton came up against a well-established town identity that prized meritocracy and civic service over calls for revolution, with evidence of the ILP and SDF branches adapting to local circumstances.[35] Indeed, the dominant pattern in Northampton popular politics was one of conciliation between labour activists and the local Liberals. In the 1880s, labour activists worked through the local Liberal and Radical Union; even the LRL branch, formed in 1886, chose to work within it. Furthermore, the 1887 lock-out in the footwear industry and the 1895 "shoe war" did not convince the majority to break from the local Liberal-labour alliance. This conciliatory character persisted well into the Edwardian period, and while the formation of the Northampton LRC in 1914 brought together trades councils, labour activist, ILP and SDF members in one organisation, this did not decisively break the old sentiments.[36]

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[33] *Ibid*., 119.

[34] Cherry, *Doing Different?*, 85-86.

[35] Dickie, *Town Patriotism*.

[36] Matthew Kidd, *Popular Political Continuity in Urban England, 1867-1918: The Case Studies of Bristol and Northampton* (PhD Dissertation: University of Nottingham, 2015).

While double-member boroughs were potentially amenable to agreements between local Liberals and Labour, single member boroughs offered fewer opportunities. The combination of this with certain local conditions could act to retard the development of independent labour. Nottingham is a prime example of this developmental trajectory. From 1885 to 1918, Nottingham comprised of three single-member boroughs (i.e., Nottingham East, Nottingham South, and Nottingham West). Despite the presence of militant radicals, the protectiveness of their position exhibited by members of the skilled trades, bred by technological changes in the lace and hosiery industries between 1900 and 1914, stymied the development of labour-socialist consciousness.[37] The actions of skilled craftsmen to defend their status and wages hindered broader unionisation. This same elite stratum dominated the local trades council. Additionally, Wyncoll argued that the inter-mingling of miners with other industrial groups, such as hosiery and lace workers, and the fact that they did not constitute a self-contained community, reinforced this outlook; the nature of the Nottinghamshire coalfields, such as the higher-than-average wages on offer, did little to detract from this. Thus, the influence of Liberal mine owners and the stress placed on conciliation and arbitration in lace and hosiery had a dampening effect on political militancy.[38] The Nottingham labour movement was simultaneously 'progressive and deeply conservative'.[39] Developments in Peterborough, albeit from a different industrial base and factoring in the restrictions of the franchise, were comparable to those in Nottingham. Peterborough returned a single MP and there were no independent labour candidates for parliamentary elections until 1918. Additionally, pre-WWI municipal election results indicated that proponents of independent labour representation were some distance from capturing the working-class and displacing the Liberals. Organisationally and ideationally, and given the timing of the Peterborough DLP's

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[37] Wyncoll, *The Nottingham Labour Movement*, 91 and 112.
[38] *Ibid.*, 19-26.
[39] *Ibid.*, 91 and 112.

formation in late 1918, this leans us towards attaching greater significance to the impact of wartime experiences, the 1918 Reform Act, Boundary Commission and Review and 1918 Labour Constitution on the establishment and developmental arc of the party between 1918 and 1951.

To varying degrees, the flexibility of the Liberals allowed them to apply the brakes to the development of independent labour interests and Labour organisation. However, such developments could only be delayed. The accumulated reluctance of local Liberal Associations to put forward working men as parliamentary candidates and sate working-class appetites for reform would, ultimately, prove their undoing.[40] Municipal elections in the 1890s and 1900s indicated the emergence and growth of class-based attitudes on local trades councils with Labour and Liberal candidates being increasingly pitched against each other.[41] Such developments did not necessarily imply an imminent break from the Liberals, though they can be read as signs of discontent. In Northampton, the trades council gradually moved away from the Liberals over the extent of political reform from 1900. In 1912, the council rescinded a prohibition on the conduct of political activities separate from either the Liberal or Conservative parties.[42] In mid-1890s Leicester, there were a significant number of purely Labour electors who would not countenance supporting a Liberal trade unionist.[43] Even in Nottingham, noted for the stunted growth of its labour movement, saw a 'harden[ing]' of the Trades Councils position between the two elections of 1910, when the Council agreed to back one Liberal candidate but not the other due to his position on the Osborne Judgement.[44] The

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[40] Kidd, *Popular Political Continuity in Urban England*; Kidd, "The Evolution of the Northampton Labour Party"; and Dickie, *Town Patriotism*.
[41] Kidd, "The Evolution of the Northampton Labour Party," 12.
[42] *Ibid.*, 12-13.
[43] Howell, *British Workers and the Independent Labour Party*, 232-235.
[44] Wyncoll, *The Nottingham Labour Movement*, 153.

outcome of such processes was a gradual coalescence of material in favour of independent labour representation in the pre-WWI period.

Formative Matter: County Divisions

Predictably, the major dissimilarity in foundational material between borough and county divisions rests in the latter hosting farmworkers' trade unionism. Norfolk constitutes the best regional example of farmworker organisation, providing an instructive contrast to North Northants and the Soke. Norfolk had a long tradition of rural radicalism stretching back, in terms of trade union organisation, to the 1860s/1870s.[45] Other unions followed, such as the Eastern Counties Labour Federation, whose programme of reforms included state ownership of land and direct labour representation on public bodies.[46] Early farmworker unions in Norfolk coalesced around Primitive Methodist preachers and speakers; it was during this time that a young George Edwards first appeared on the scene. Furthermore, the tolerance of major landowners aided Liberal prospects and provided an environment in which the seeds of independent labour representation could grow. In the North-West Norfolk division, which contained a mixture of agricultural land alongside side small urban areas such as Wisbech and Hunstanton, Joseph Arch, agricultural labourer and founder of the NALU, was returned in 1885, 1892 and 1895, losing only to Conservative opposition in 1886. The large number of agricultural labourers contributed to Arch's and the Liberal's successes. Where landlords desired or were able to command local support, as in South-West Norfolk, the Conservatives were more successful.[47] Radicalism was able to establish itself most effectively in those areas where an alternative existed to the 'joint authority of the squirearchy and the Church.'[48]

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[45] Groves, *Sharpen the Sickle*, 34.
[46] *Ibid.*, 86-87.
[47] Pelling, *Social Geography*, 97-98.
[48] Pugh, *The Making of Modern British Politics*, 70.

The precedent for farmworker organisation in Northamptonshire can be found in the nineteenth century. For instance, the response of farmers in the county to deteriorating working conditions in rural areas in the 1870s illustrated how they saw emerging trade unionism as a threat. Farmers used their influence to target and cut outdoor relief payments. The thinking behind this move was that it would weaken the unions in their bargaining power, steering labourers towards self-help and charity rather than organisation. However, this manoeuvre backfired on local elites who, in their attempts to maintain the status quo, stoked local opposition and laid the groundwork for later reforms vis-à-vis workers' rights.[49] Further examples of agricultural labourers' trade unionism in the county were discussed in chapter one. However, while some farmworkers were organised, the primary industrial base of Labour in Northamptonshire were boot and shoe operatives and their unions. Indeed, there are parallels between South-West Suffolk and the squire-dominated South and North Northants divisions.[50] What stood out in these divisions in contrast to the growing towns in the county, such as Northampton, was the political influence of large landowners.[51] The predominantly rural division of South Northants, excepting the radicalism of the small towns of Brackley and Daventry, returned Conservatives with regularity – six out of eight parliamentary elections from 1885 to December 1910. Thus, where dependence upon a landlord for employment and a roof over one's head prevailed, as in the 'closed' villages of the midland counties, there was less room for radicalism's effective manoeuvring.[52] Radicalism's crop in North Norfolk was always likely to be more bountiful than that in North Northants.

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[49] E.T. Hurren, "Agricultural Trade Unionism and the Crusade against Outdoor Relief: Poor Law Politics in the Brixworth Union, Northamptonshire, 1870-75," *The Agricultural History Review* 48, no.2 (2000). See also, Horn, *Agricultural Labourers' Trade Unionism in Four Midland Counties*, 94-96.

[50] Greenall, *A History of Northamptonshire*, 73.

[51] Adams, "Politics in Late Victorian and Edwardian Northamptonshire," 78; and Pelling *Social Geography*, 107 and 121.

[52] Pugh, *The Making of Modern British Politics*, 70.

The challenges of organising agricultural labourers in Northamptonshire had its parallels in Suffolk. Lowestoft was a mixed division. While the herring industry was 'the town's mainstay', it was part of an interconnected web including boatbuilding, marine engineering and railways. Additionally, the division contained substantial rural space as well as small market towns including Bungay, Beccles, and Halesworth. The agricultural areas of the division were characterised by depression, low wages, landlord predominance, and rural depopulation as labourers and others sought better conditions and pay in local towns and cities. Furthermore, fears of victimisation by farmers and landlords made organisation and trade union organisation difficult.[53]

The nonconformist chapels of the region provided an important schooling for rural independents and radicals. In Lowestoft, Johnnie Joplin was a nonconformist public speaker, later applying his talents to the local ILP and trades council.[54] The influence of Primitive Methodism was especially pronounced in Norfolk.[55] In his lifetime, George Edwards was a soldier, an agricultural labourer, founder of a trade union, and MP for the South Norfolk division; he was also a Primitive Methodist.[56] Edwin Gooch, was shaped by his parents 'formidable blend of nonconformist high-mindedness, political radicalism and personal discipline'. He was heavily involved in the NUAW regionally and nationally and became Labour MP for North Norfolk in 1945. Gooch may aptly be described as a Christian socialist for whom 'the Bible was their text, not *Das Kapital.*'[57] Edwards and Gooch were part of a long Norfolk tradition of Methodist lay preachers that 'produced pioneer trade unionists'.[58] Thus, a direct line can be drawn from nineteenth-century agricultural labourers' trade unionism and

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[53] Mathew, "From Two Boys and a Dog to Political Power," 58 and 63-64.
[54] *Ibid.*, 60.
[55] Groves, *Sharpen the Sickle*, 32.
[56] Edwards, *From Crow-Scaring to Westminster*.
[57] Gooch, *Edwin Gooch*, 9.
[58] *Ibid.*, 9-10.

Joseph Arch to its twentieth-century manifestation, a long-burning fuel of religiously-tinged socialism in the Norfolk countryside. By contrast, while nonconformism had a discernible presence within the PTUC in the early 1900s, the influence of such ideas on the Peterborough DLP faded quickly with the predominance of a more orthodox trade unionism.

This begins to highlight the significance of agency in driving Norfolk's rural radicalism. Multiple histories have corroborated the importance of the role played by George Edwards in the 1906 revival of farmworkers' trade unionism and the formation of ECALSHU that would go on to provide the core of DLPs in Norfolk's largely agricultural divisions.[59] For example, between September and December 1906, Edwards reportedly opened 57 branches and recruited 1,600 members to ECALSHU.[60] Indeed, he was a major reason why the revival came in Norfolk.[61] It was not only Edwards, William "Bill" Holmes was an ILP organiser and sat on ECALSHU's executive committee from 1911 who, along with Walter Smith, ECALSHU president from 1911, made important organisational contributions.[62] Peterborough had personalities of comparable local stature, such as John Mansfield, Frank Horrabin and Robert Arthur (R.A.) Watson, but these only came to the foreground *after* the conclusion of WWI.

Radical religionists and rural labouring trade unionists were not alone in their efforts at organisation in the countryside. Railwaymen and railway trade unions often played an important role in the development of the early Labour party in county and borough divisions.[63] Railway trade unionists occupied a liminal role, the scattered nature of their residence and employment making them a potentially important building material for urban and rural DLPs. During the Burston School Strike (1914 to 1939), railwaymen were amongst the first workers

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[59] *Ibid.*, 24; Groves, *Sharpen the Sickle*, 107.
[60] Groves, *Sharpen the Sickle*, 107.
[61] Howkins, *Poor Labouring Men*, 90-91.
[62] Groves, *Sharpen the Sickle*, 129.
[63] Compton, "Lines of Division," 37.

to offer their help by raising money to support the strikers.[64] Indeed, without the input of railwaymen, the rural/urban organisational imbalance of Labour in the Peterborough Division would have been even greater than what it was (chapter seven).

The development of rural radicalism through trade union organisation and via the chapels occurred in a 'local world'.[65] Thus, what applied to Norfolk did not necessarily apply elsewhere. Nevertheless, the proximity of rural Norfolk to the provincial city of Norwich meant some ideas were able to penetrate the countryside from that space. Indeed, radicals out of Norwich helped to stoke rural radicalism. Norwich hosted branches of the SDF and Socialist League in the 1880s and later the ILP. Fred Henderson joined the Norwich SDF just before its split and switch to the Socialist League. The message of the League was carried into the countryside, Henderson claimed:

> 'We carried on a continuous propaganda in the villages and all around Norwich…In many of the villages we held a meeting once a week for a year, even two years. This work did much to prepare the way for a trade union in the countryside.'[66]

Henderson was not alone. Bill Holmes joined the Norfolk and Norwich Amalgamated Labourers' Union (NNALU) in 1890, in 1892 he moved that the NNALU should support a Labour candidate at the pending General Election. Cycling from Norwich, Holmes held meetings and sold socialist papers and pamphlets in the countryside.[67] On one occasion, Holmes recalled 150 cyclists heading out from Norwich to propagandise in Norfolk's rural areas.[68] The ILP undertook propaganda work in the Norfolk countryside well before the unrest

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[64] Groves, *Sharpen the Sickle*, 158.
[65] Howkins, *Poor Labouring Men*, 59.
[66] Groves, *Sharpen the Sickle*, 101.
[67] *Ibid.*, 103-104; and Howkins, *Poor Labouring Men*, 105-108.
[68] *Ibid.*, 129.

in St Faith's. During the St Faith's dispute, the ILP was pivotal in the organising and supporting rural support meetings and arranging weekly workplace collections for the cause in Norwich.[69]

While Norfolk was distinct in many regards it was not universally so, the pattern of growing labourer disillusionment with local Liberal Associations culminating in independent labour representation and organisation was found in the county and across rural divisions of the region. Arch won North-West Norfolk as a Liberal, while Edwards and Gooch both began their political lives as Liberals, only later shifting their allegiance to Labour. Thus, while there was no contradiction between radicalism and nonconformity, the relationship between radicalism and the Liberal party looked increasingly strained in the 1900s and early 1910s. In his autobiographical account, Edwards expanded on his reasons for severing ties with the Liberal party after years of commitment:

> 'I had for some time been getting out of touch with the Liberal Party. In fact, I always was an advanced Radical and had hoped the party would have advanced in political thought. But I had now become convinced that there was no hope that the Liberal Party would ever advance in political thought sufficiently to meet the need of the growing aspirations of the new democracy.'[70]

With the layers of its radicalism being stripped away, nonconformists had to find an alternative platform from which to deliver their radical gospel. For Edwards and many others, that meant the Labour party.

As in the boroughs, the timing of labour's break from the Liberals varied depending on the configuration of local factors. The pace of the split was quicker in Norfolk than Northamptonshire. Indeed, the former was the cockpit of a rejuvenated agricultural labourers' trade unionism in the early twentieth century. Northamptonshire was not devoid of rural

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[69] Cherry, *Doing Different?* 57-58; and Armstrong, *Farmworkers*, 150.
[70] Edwards, *From Crow-Scaring to Westminster*, 130.

disputes between 1900 and 1914, but they compare as nothing to developments in East Anglia.[71] Tracing the history of the NUAW demonstrates the central role performed by the "Eastern Counties", particularly Norfolk, in the revival of farmworkers' trade unionism. The seeds of the future NUAW were located in North Walsham, Norfolk, in 1906, with the formation of ECALSHU. At its foundation, the union was supported by Liberal grandees who saw it as a rival to the Conservative's Primrose League.; it maintained a strong Liberal character until 1911.[72] Furthermore, demographic shifts and rural depopulation had changed the fortunes of the Norfolk labourer by the 1900s. Labourers now had the upper hand in the labour market owing to the disappearance of the casual reserve labour force, enhancing their bargaining power.[73] By 1909, the union was on solid footing, but there were signs of increasing frustration with the working men wanting action on wages and working/living conditions which they felt were not forthcoming from the Liberals.[74] Events were to steer the union on a different political trajectory. Following a strike in St. Faith's over wages and an unsatisfactory outcome that for many smacked of worker betrayal at the hands of the union's Liberal executive, the union executive was effectively captured by Labour-supporting trade unionists.[75]At the ECALSHU annual conference of 1911 and under pressure, the Lib-Lab George Nicholls resigned, and the Liberal Richard Winfrey withdrew his name from the ballot. The union's new president was a socialist by the name of Walter Smith. While most of the men on the executive were not ILP members, the event marked a definite turn towards Labour.[76]

The Marks of Creation: Organisation and Identity, 1918-1945

Organisational Practices in the Towns, Cities and Countryside

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[71] Groves, *Sharpen the Sickle*, 145-147.
[72] Howkins, *Poor Labouring Men*, 87.
[73] *Ibid.*, 10.
[74] Groves, *Sharpen the Sickle*, 111-112; and Howkins, *Poor Labouring Men*, 94-104.
[75] Gooch, *Edwin Gooch*, 24-25; and Groves, *Sharpen the Sickle*, 120.
[76] Groves, *Sharpen the Sickle*, 123-125; and Armstrong, *Farmworkers*, 150.

The process of Labour's interwar organisation in the region was one of convergence and divergence from the national picture, with each DLP's developmental trajectory illustrating the shaping power of wider trends *and* the enduring influence of local formative material on party *practices*. At the same time, events could act as forks in the road, nudging DLPs onto a revised developmental trajectory. Thus, the *practices* of some parties in the region reflected McKibbin's argument that the 1918 Constitution changed little, while others challenge it.[77] The 1920s have been interpreted as a decade of Labour consolidation.[78] Our region broadly concurs with this description, albeit with *place*-specific qualifications. For instance, organisational consolidation appears to have been more successful in the towns and cities, rather than the villages. This highlights another significant feature of Labour's interwar development, the fortification of the party's strength at the sub-divisional or 'neighbourhood' level.[79] In some instances, Labour was so embedded that it is possible to speak of *Labourspheres*, highly concentrated locations of party electoral and/or organisational strength. During the 1930s and 1940s national issues cut through to the divisional scale. Again, the regional impact of these, including the collapse of the Labour government in 1931 and subsequent fallout, the disaffiliation of the ILP, the wartime electoral truce, and apprehensions about communist entrism, was diverse. Indeed, DLP responses to each issue reflected in many instances the influence of their formative years.

There existed much commonality in the types of campaigning and social activities DLPs engaged in, aligning the region with the national scale as well as horizontally with other local Labour parties elsewhere in the country. Core party activities included canvassing, the booking of speakers for party and public events, as well as attempts in borough and county

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[77] McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party*, 91-105.
[78] Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, 48.
[79] Savage, *The Dynamics of Working-Class Politics*.

divisions to mobilise support among women.[80] For example, Labour and Co-operative parties

collaborated in Nottingham to organise music events, dances, and speaker invitationals.[81] In

1924, the Huntingdonshire DLP arranged for a speaker to lecture on the topic of socialism in

Somersham and Huntingdon, alongside plans for a big canvassing push in the summer focusing

on the division's villages.[82]

Post-1918, the region saw an increase in the number of DLPs established suggesting

that the international and domestic events of the wartime years stimulated constructive

impulses in the direction of political organisation. We saw how labour disillusionment with

local Liberal Associations in borough and county divisions in the pre-WWI period contributed

to the emergence of independent labour candidates, particularly at the municipal level, and

local LRCs. Furthermore, at the national level, WWI presented challenges for Labour and the

Liberals but was especially damaging for the latter. Electoral reform and Labour's re-

organisation in 1918, which clarified its intentions to build party machinery in every division

and transform itself from a sectional to a national party, were also important for the party's

post-war sub-national development. For local enthusiasts of independent labour representation

and organisation who were unable to break from the firm embrace of the Liberals before 1914,

the combination of these factors was like manna from heaven.

A discernible regional pattern in the formation of LRCs/DLPs was their earlier

establishment in double-member divisions and, by extension, boroughs. For example, an LRC

was formed in Derby, Leicester, and Northampton during or before 1914.[83] This is not

surprising as such divisions provided opportunities for independent labour candidates to run

alongside a Liberal. However, the picture of DLP formation in semi-rural/county divisions

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[80] Robertson, "The Political Dividend," 153-154.
[81] *Ibid.*
[82] *Hunts County News*, 20 March 1924.
[83] Kidd, *Popular Political Continuity*, 133.

across the region pre-1914 and post-1918 indicate that events between those years were important in prompting Labour organisation. As the 1918 Constitution directly relates to the question of DLP establishment, it can be interpreted as an organisational trigger. For instance, while the roots of the Lowestoft Labour Party were essentially 'the Trades Council *en bloc*', its formation in July 1918 suggests the importance of the war years and the Labour's re-constitution.[84] For some in the division, wartime experience prompted an attitudinal shift. As one Labour member from Bungay said, 'I was brought up in a Liberal family. But I changed to have totally different ideas about things. I came back from the war a red-hot socialist…'[85] Later formation was a feature of largely rural divisions; it was not until May 1919 that the Huntingdonshire DLP was inaugurated – the agricultural vote in the division accounted for 43.3% of the occupied male population over 12 in 1921.[86] The late formation could have been anticipated, conservatism and the Conservatives being deeply ingrained. The division's predecessors, Huntingdon, and Ramsey were similarly dominated; in Ramsey, this was personified in the influence of William Fellowes, 2nd Baron de Ramsey and his younger brother Ailwyn Fellowes 1st Baron Ailwyn, who held the division between 1885 and 1900. Huntingdonshire Division was predominantly shared between National Liberals and Conservatives between 1918 and 1979 when it was won by John Major. That said, even in radical Norfolk, Labour had little formal political organisation in 1918, the first rural party came into being at Wymondham in August 1918; DLPs were formed in East Norfolk, North Norfolk and Kings Lynn in 1919. However, bases of support rooted in local history were available. Thus, some candidatures, such as that of Robert Walker in Kings Lynn, was possible based on 'remnants of ILP support'. Norfolk was also the cradle of the ECALSHU/NUAW. Village branches of the union were vitally important as an organisational foundation, and

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[84] Mathew, "From Two Boys and a Dog to Political Power," 62-63.
[85]*Ibid.*, 60.
[86] *Daily Herald*, 12 May 1919; and Kinnear, *The British Voter*, 119.

played a comparable role to some mining lodges, trades unions and trades councils of the South Wales coalfields.[87] In spaces without such heritage, like North Northants, organisation was more challenging. It is for this reason that there was no North Northants LRC/DLP, the impetus came primarily from Peterborough.

Regionally, 1918 to 1929 were years of consolidation, though this principle was not universal and highlights the importance of *place*. Aligning with the national pattern, Labour made municipal gains in 1919, though many of these were only fleeting.[88] While Norwich advanced organisationally during these years, it displayed the advantages and disadvantages of its foundations. The Norwich Labour party's limited trade union base meant it could cast its net for recruits beyond organised labour. By the mid-1920s, the party possessed approximately 2,500 individual members, strong ward organisation, and well-rehearsed canvassing that served it well into the 1930s.[89] Building on its strong trade union bases in the NUR and AEU, the Derby Labour party welcomed the affiliation of the Co-operative party which subscribed 'on the basis of 5,000 members until 1932'.[90] Furthermore, some DLPs received a membership boost via an influx of co-operators affiliating through the recently established (1917) Co-operative party. It was not only Derby that benefitted from their entry, in Kettering, Northamptonshire, close collaboration between the local Labour and Co-operative parties resulted in the organisation of social and other activities, as well as Co-operative PPCs.[91] As an organisational illustration of Labour's re-configuration in 1918, the 1920s witnessed an increase in the geographical extent of Labour's organisation in semi-rural divisions. In Lowestoft, the decision was taken in May 1921 to create a *divisional* Lowestoft Labour Party;

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[87] Howkins, *Poor Labouring Men*, 126-129; and Worley, "Building the Party," 75-76.
[88] Grimwood, "The Rise of the Labour Party in Ipswich," 29. *Yarmouth Independent*, 8 November 1919 and 5 November 1921.
[89] Worley, "The Red Flag and the Fine City," 125-126 and 128.
[90] Thorpe, "J.H. Thomas and the Rise of Labour in Derby," 117.
[91] Robertson, "'A Union of Forces Marching in the Same Direction?'," 222-223.

new parties sprang up in the towns of Halesworth, Beccles and Bungay in the context of the growing influence of trade unions among railway workers, shipyards, engineering, and the printing works (located at Beccles and Bungay). Additionally, there were developments in the organisation of women, with a Women's Section being established in October 1918. However, this should not imply that organisation was easy, the countryside continued to present the challenges evident pre-1914, while the right-wing patriotism of workers in the fishing industry was a further organisational obstacle.[92]

The general literature on Labour's interwar development in the countryside highlights the challenges of covering substantial areas of physical space and of organising its labouring populations.[93] Our region broadly concurs with this assessment. Organisation in the 1920s was not aided by events. Initially. The NUAW, which had moved its headquarters from Fakenham to London in 1918 had 180,000 members by 1920.[94] However, global economic conditions and the actions of the UK Government to end subsidies for agriculture put considerable pressure on the NUAW, effectively reducing it to its Norfolk rump. The Great Strike of 1923 in Norfolk over proposed wage cuts and "efficiencies" made by farmers caused a fall in NUAW membership which impacted Labour organisation as it relied on the union's village branches; indeed, Groves described the post-1923 period as the 'lean years'.[95] Despite these setbacks, there were divisions, most notably in Norfolk, that were able to organise farmworkers more effectively than elsewhere in the region and beyond. Demonstrating the deep marks of their heritage, the North Norfolk and South Norfolk DLPs were built on foundations of rural radicalism which itself was composed of multiple identities, including the chapels, unions, political and other organisations.[96] The image of George Edwards riding his bicycle from

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[92] Mathew, "From Two Boys and a Dog to Political Power," 63-64.
[93] Griffiths, *Labour in the Countryside*.
[94] *Ibid.*, 187.
[95] Groves, *Sharpen the Sickle*, 174-176 and 205-224.
[96] Howkins, *Poor Labouring Men*, xii.

village to village in the Norfolk countryside and rallying support for the NUAW and Labour

was not an activity restricted to the pre-WWI period. Indeed, while the Great Strike ended in

defeat for the labourers, it arguably had a similar effect on Labour in Norfolk as would the

1926 General Strike more generally, with the South Norfolk DLP as the main beneficiary. For

instance, Gooch has contended that a 'spirit of solidarity' followed the strike which may have

helped George Edwards overturn the result of November 1922 with a majority of 861.[97]

Labour may have benefitted electorally from the Great Strike, but rural organisation

remained challenging. In addition to obstacles to engagement such as the risks of victimisation

and eviction, the organiser for North Norfolk, S.J. Gee, noted the difficulties of getting women

to attend meetings typically under the auspices of trade unions, as well as the impression of

Labour as an 'annex to the union' which limited attendances to agricultural workers to the

exclusion of others such as village school teachers, clergy, shopkeepers, small-holders, and

'enlightened farmers'. Despite these challenges, Labour was relatively successful in North

Norfolk Division between the wars, winning in 1922, 1923, 1924, 1929, 1930 (by-election),

1945, 1950 and 1951.[98] Indeed, Howell put Labour's 1945 success in rural Norfolk, bucking a

national trend, down to the relative strength of the NUAW and where several of the villages

held memories of 'economic depression and heightened class conflict'.[99] Gee assigned local

success to an effective campaigning and meeting programming, including not restricting topics

to local issues, identifying the particular grievances of villagers, as well as a commitment to

fighting 'every Rural District Bye-Election'. Nevertheless, the perennial issues of 'distance,

employment, and lack of means' remained.[100] Even in the brighter spots, rural organisation was

perceived by Labour as challenging. While Norfolk was an exceptional case, more typical was

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[97] Gooch, *Edwin Gooch*, 43.
[98] Labour also won in 1955, 1959, 1964 and 1966.
[99] David Howell, *British Social Democracy: A Study in Development and Decay* (Croom Helm, 1980), 130-131.
[100] S.J. Gee, "Some Rural Problems," *The Labour Organiser*, February 1924, No.39.

the experience of Labour in the semi-rural Lowestoft Division. In 1922, Labour was restricted in its campaigning capabilities by having only one motor car available to visit the far-flung reaches of the division.[101] Demonstrating the lightness of rural organisation in some areas, the interwar period witnessed labour bodies in urban and industrial centres taking on responsibility for the rural areas in their local environs. Thus, the Suffolk Federation of Trades Councils and LRC established a network of trades councils in local towns that were responsible for developments in rural districts; similar *practices* occurred in an around Leicester.[102] Once established, rural organisation could be difficult to maintain. This resonated with developments in Cambridgeshire Division, while Labour in rural Leicestershire came up against formidable obstacles in the villages in the form of 'mini fiefdoms' held by the local Conservative Association.[103]

Of course, assistance from proximal urban centres could provide added value for rural parties, rather than indicate organisational deficiencies, especially where there was a history of such *practice*. While most ILP members and activists were based in towns and cities, the importance of spreading the message of independent labour to rural workers was not lost on them. The Norfolk countryside was visited by bike-riding ILPers from Norwich.[104] In the summer of 1925, the TUC carried out a campaign in Norfolk and Northamptonshire, among others, to disseminate the benefits of farmworker unity; such efforts increased enrolments in agricultural trade unions.[105] Efforts were made by the Peterborough DLP to tour the division, particularly when it came to election time. However, there were no documented instances of Peterborough ILP activists heading out into the Soke and North Northants on recruiting ventures. The combination of indigenous rural Labour organisation supplemented by radical

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[101] Mathew, "From Two Boys and a Dog to Political Power," 68.
[102] Griffiths, *Labour and the Countryside*, 128.
[103] Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate*, 28.
[104] Griffiths, *Labour and the Countryside*, 109.
[105] *Ibid.*, 116.

ideas emanating from the towns and cities had important organisational and electoral consequences, and contributed to interwar party successes in Norfolk that were not shared in other largely rural areas.

The liminal position of railwaymen and their organisational energy was reproduced in the region. The organisational role played by railwaymen in borough and county constituencies was noted as a feature of Labour's early development. This role persisted into the interwar period. For example, Harry Allen, a railway signalman, founded and was the first honorary secretary for the rural North Norfolk DLP. As Griffiths noted, '[t]he rail unions had members scattered in virtually every constituency, and signalmen and station masters lived in many villages'.[106] Some even went as far as to claim that half of rural parties in the 1930s would not exist if it were not for the formative role played by the NUR.[107] Extending this logic to our case, the liminal position occupied by the railwaymen would appear to fit well with the Peterborough Division which sat at the threshold of the urban and the rural. This is not to say that the developmental experience of the Peterborough DLP simply replicated that observed elsewhere, rather, it draws our attention to what role railwaymen might have played while factoring in local context.

Labour's "consolidation" in some areas revealed as much about the party's strengths as its weaknesses. Huntingdonshire was a largely rural division. There were reports on organisational developments in late 1923, with a branch of the Labour party formed for St Neots and district.[108] Additionally, the March 1924 Huntingdonshire DLP AGM reported attendees from across the division, including Ramsey, St. Neots, Huntingdon, Yaxley, Fletton, and Godmanchester. However, the same sources make clear that the DLP was sowing the

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[106] *Ibid.*, 153.

[107] George Ridley, MP for Clay Cross, Derbyshire, quoted in Griffiths, *Labour in the Countryside*, 153.

[108] *Bedfordshire Times and Independent*, 21 September 1923.

seeds of organisation rather than consolidating them in many parts of the division. One AGM delegate, A. Johnson, outlined a scheme for securing the cooperation of trade unionists in the county and for mapping out the division into sections with Huntingdon at its centre. The plan was to visit every village and hold at least one meeting in each, so that 'by the time the next election came along they would have sown the seed and have got together the nucleus to fight the division'; others present spoke about the 'great amount of spade work to be done'. Clearly, there remained a lot of organisational work to be done in some areas of the region. These organisational challenges were compounded by the efforts of the local Conservatives, whose candidate, C. Kenneth Murchison, had been 'working the village…for months' and 'assiduously wooing the good opinion' of the locals.[109]

Local newspaper reports from the 1920s indicate a concentration, albeit limited, of Labour's organisational strength in one part of the division. In 1928, there were murmurings locally that 'the head of the Fletton brickworks', located in the north of the division and adjoining the Peterborough Division, would stand as the Labour candidate at the 1929 General Election. This was significant as Fletton was described as 'the only portion of the constituency where the Labour Party is in any strength'.[110] Developments in both areas are interesting in that they represent organisation centred on a town (i.e., St. Neots) and a location of non-agricultural industry. Additionally, as with the rural divisions of Norfolk benefitting from proximity to Norwich and its socialists, Huntingdonshire appears to have profited from its closeness to Peterborough. For example, Ernest Wentworth Peake was an organiser for the Huntingdonshire DLP and an engineer's turner at J.P. Hall & Sons, an engineering firm established in 1899 and located on London Road, Peterborough.[111]

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[109] *Hunts County News*, 20 March 1924.
[110] *Peterborough Standard*, 27 January 1928.
[111] *Ibid.*, 30 March 1934.

Variations in sub-divisional Labour strength was not unique Huntingdonshire, with divisions containing a mixture of high- and low-density areas. During the 1922 general election campaign, the Labour candidate for Nottingham East reported that there was 'no Labour or Co-operative machinery'. In 1929, the party candidate for Nottingham Central reported only poor organisation in three of its five wards.[112] In Lowestoft, the town's West Ward was Labour's local stronghold.[113] In Peterborough, the North Ward, where many of the city's railway workers were housed, and later Paston Ward, were islands of Labour strength. Thus, while some neighbourhoods remained far from Labour's grip, others established themselves as local *Labourspheres*. Indeed, the Peterborough case reveals that exposing the precise location of intra-divisional islands of strength can tell us much about party identity.

A major industrial flashpoint during the twenties was the 1926 General Strike, this event had important organisational consequences. Regional support for the miners came from multiple quarters, with local workers from Derby, Ipswich, Lowestoft, and Norwich, among others coming out in solidarity. The ending of industrial action after nine days had local consequences, echoing the weakening of the trade unions seen more generally. For instance, some striking railway workers in Lowestoft were downgraded or transferred.[114] Many of the divisions discussed thus far, particularly those in East Anglia possessed no substantial mining communities – the same could not be said of Nottinghamshire. Initially, it looked like the strike would force a developmental trajectory shift. Soon after the strike was called the Nottingham Trades Council set up a strike committee. Many workers in the town answered the call to strike and there were 'huge meetings' of transport workers and railwaymen. The experience of industrial action on this scale acted to bring the various elements of the local labour and socialist movements together, setting aside past disagreements. However, this was halted when

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[112] Robertson, "The Political Dividend", 153.
[113] Mathew, "From Two Boys and a Dog to Political Power," 88.
[114] *Ibid.*, 73.

the strike was unceremoniously called off to be benefit of employers and the government. The

fallout was damaging to trade unionism with reports of worker victimisation and employer

shunning of strikers.[115] While the General Strike was damaging for the trade unions, Labour

experienced an uptick its in 1929 vote share relative to 1924 in most divisions of East Anglia

(the exceptions being Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, South Norfolk, Eye (Suffolk) and

Ipswich); Labour felt confident enough to run candidates in Bury St. Edmunds and Sudbury

(Suffolk), the party secured 25.4% of the vote in Sudbury, though the 8.2% in Bury St.

Edmunds put the party off contesting the division until 1945. In the East Midlands, vote shares

for 1929 marked an increase on those at the previous election, except in the perennially

hopeless case of Lincolnshire.[116]

If the 1920s were about organisational consolidation, the thirties were about rebuilding

after several damaging blows. DLPs in our region did not go unscathed by the collapse of the

Labour Government in 1931 and the decision of some to join or, as in Ramsay MacDonald's

case, lead the National Government, nor the disaffiliation of the ILP in 1932. However, the

extent of the cut-through and its outcomes varied depending to a significant degree on the

histories of each party. As elsewhere, the results of the 1931 General Election marked a setback

in Labour's advance. However, it also spotlighted the bedrock of Labour support and, by

extension, the types of community where party organisation in the formal sense or associated

institutions such as trade unions was strongest. While Labour returned no candidates in East

Anglia, it was able to hold on to a handful of county divisions in the East Midlands. In

Derbyshire, Labour held onto Clay Cross and lost Ilkeston by the margin of two votes in a

contest between Labour and National Labour. In Nottinghamshire, Labour held Broxtowe and

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[115] Wyncoll, *The Nottingham Labour Movement*, 197-211.
[116] The case of Holland-with-Boston makes for interesting reading, with Labour winning the division in 1918 (39.8%), 1922 (39.1%) and 1923 (54.1%). However, much of the party's success appears to have been attached to the personage of William Stapleton Royce. After his death in 1924, which triggered a by-election won by the Conservatives, Labour never won the division again up to its abolition in 1997.

Mansfield. What these divisions held in common was the large proportion of males over the age of 12 engaged in mining, the figures for 1921 were: 62.3% (Clay Cross), 51.4% (Ilkeston), 52.9% (Broxtowe), and 56.3% (Mansfield). On a more personal level, the effects of the defections of 1931 were felt heavily in Derby where Jimmy Thomas was amongst the defectors. However, while the damage was serious it was not terminal. Labour was kept out of parliament by a combination of Conservative and National Labour (i.e., Jimmy Thomas) in 1931 and 1935, but made a return in 1936 with Philip Noel-Baker following Thomas' resignation. The party's solid trade union base enabled it to build back.[117] However, this should not detract from the force of Thomas's personality and his local appeal, thus grounding the experience of the Derby Labour party in the 1930s in its formative years.

The experience of 1931 compounded further the organisational difficulties in already challenging areas. Before 1931, Labour contested Huntingdonshire Division only once in 1922 when Dermot Freyer secured 23.6% of the vote in a three-way contest that returned the Unionist Charles Murchison (50.7%). In 1929, C.S. Giddins recorded 12.3% in a three-way contest, though the real low point came in 1931 when Maurice Orbach received 16.7% in a two-way contest against the National Liberal Sidney Peters. There was a recovery in 1936, when James Lievsley George received 31.3% of the vote, losing out in a two-way contest to Peters. Nevertheless, and despite limited local advances in the 1920s, national events overshadowed these and fostered an environment of political apathy that endured into 1935. When the Liberal candidate boasted of being able to call upon three hundred cars during the election campaign, the Huntingdonshire DLP countered that they had 'seven thousand good legs' ready to march. However, the 1935 General Election was deemed the 'dullest on record at St. Neots'; evidently, not many of the seven thousand legs were in motion.[118]

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[117] Thorpe, "J.H. Thomas and the Rise of Labour in Derby."
[118] *Bedfordshire Times and Independent*, 15 November 1935; and 5 October 1934.

The impact of the ILP's disaffiliation from Labour reflected the relative local importance that its local branches were able to build up since the 1890s. The ILP's departure barely raised eyebrows in Peterborough. However, the Norwich ILP was central to the organisational *practices* of the pre-1914 LRC and post-1918 Labour party. The Norwich Labour party was one of the largest in interwar Britain despite having a limited trade union base. This needs qualification, the party was built on the local trades council, particularly NUBSO members, but it was the sizeable ILP element that 'provided most of the party's active membership'. Until 1932, the ILP Club provided the primary premises for Labour meetings and several trade union branches.[119] While electoral performance in the twenties and thirties was far from perfect, the electoral machine the party built in this period laid the foundation for success in 1945.[120] Owing to the deep organisational and numerical roots of ILP socialism in Norwich, it might be anticipated that its departure would cause a localised existential crisis for Labour. Indeed, the Norwich DLP was heavily reliant on the local ILP. This was especially apparent at the municipal level. In 1932, opposition between the two parties had allowed the Liberals to cut through the middle. In 1933, a working arrangement was reached between the ILP and Labour, contributing to two ILP victories in Catton Ward.[121] Thus, it was precisely the ILP's local embeddedness and affinity with Labour that enabled the local branch to go 'relatively unaffected' by disaffiliation. Indeed, the ILP maintained a healthy membership throughout the 1930s and 1940s.[122]

Elsewhere in the region, the ILP's disaffiliation had negligible to intermediate effects on party organisation. In Northampton, the years 1932 to 1934 marked a period of discontent

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[119] Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate*, 57.
[120] Worley, "The Red Flag and the Fine City," 124-126.
[121] Gidon Cohen, "'Happy Hunting Ground of the Crank'? The Independent Labour Party and Local Labour Politics in Glasgow and Norwich, 1932-1945," in *Labour's Grass Roots*, 67; and Worley, "The Red Flag and the Fine City," 131.
[122] *Ibid.*, 55, 68 and 70.

in a town which had historically prized its local civic culture of collaboration. However, disagreements emerged within the division's Labour party over the selection of municipal candidates for the town's North Ward, with four activists expelled as a result. Furthermore, the Northampton ILP protested in 1931 over rumours that the municipal elections were to be deferred until 1933, while the ILP's national disaffiliation 'precipitated them into agitation around unemployment'. Some younger members of the Labour party left to join the disaffiliated ILP, CPGB, and the Northampton branch of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement.[123] Thus, the ILP's departure from the Labour fold had a clear organisational impact. However, it is necessary to separate organisational impact, which there was, from *positional* or ideational impact, which was more limited.

The organisational responses of Labour parties in our region to the demands and consequences of WWII were not far removed from those found further afield. The departure of men to join the armed services caused some disruption to party activities, with a resultant drop in membership and activists. Nevertheless, parties in the region were able to at least maintain an organisational skeleton which party activists transformed into growth during the later years of the war. In the urban areas of Ipswich and Norwich, there is evidence of an uptick in organisational activity at divisional and sub-divisional scales in 1943. Similar developments took place in (semi-)rural divisions. In Cambridgeshire, new local Labour parties were established, while in Kings Lynn a locally-stationed military man was largely responsible for establishing a local party at Hunstanton.[124] Reflecting its local industrial composition, the 1943 AGM of the Huntingdonshire DLP reported progress being made in all parts of the county, with new parties being formed or in the process of formation 'at the principal towns', with many of the newest members being trade unionists attached to the NUAW or TGWU.[125]

[123] Dickie, *Town Patriotism*, 124-134.
[124] Thorpe, *Parties at War*, 210 and 215.
[125] *Peterborough Standard*, 22 October 1943.

Nevertheless, the spatial development of new parties suggests that organisation in rural areas *per se* remained challenging during wartime. Another reading of the situation, given that the NUAW accounted for many of the new members, is that although they would be expected to travel to towns such as St. Neots, there was some cut-through to agricultural labourers in the division. Such experiences provide a regional point of departure to ascertain the normalcy of the wartime Peterborough DLP.

Similarly, the interwar organisation of Labour women in the region did not depart significantly from the national party picture and that described in other localities (chapter six). Women played an important role in taking the Labour message to the wider working-class community. In Norwich, women were involved in organising social events, distributing party literature, and running 'party rooms at election time'.[126] Similarly, women and children helped to carry out canvassing work in Leicester.[127] In South Norfolk, a clear division of labour emerged: 'The women in Wymondham and the men rendered magnificent work. All the envelopes were addressed and the addresses folded voluntarily. The local men supplied the platform with speakers.'[128] In terms of female involvement in local and national government, there were regional examples of women elected to local councils or parliament, as in the case of Dororthy Jewson.[129] Elsewhere, women assumed senior or executive roles within their respective DLPs. For example, in May 1920, Ethel Gooch, the wife of Edwin, was appointed as vice-president of the South Norfolk DLP.[130] Similar functions were identified in extra-regional divisions, indicating that such patterns were not unique to our region.

Party Identity: Parliamentary Candidate Selection

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[126] Worley, "The Red Flag and the Fine City," 129
[127] Worley, "Building the Party," 82.
[128] Edwards, *From Crow-scaring to Westminster*, 134.
[129] Grimwood, "The Rise of the Labour Party in Ipswich," 29; and Worley, "The Red Flag and the Fine City," 124.
[130] Gooch, *Edwin Gooch*, 29.

Examination of the recruiting *practices* of DLPs in the region provided an insight into ideational and organisational essence and whether such decisions aligned with formative material. Firstly, our region makes clear that candidate selection did not necessarily align with the specificities of *location*; this was a common pattern in divisions mixed in terms of their industrial and/or spatial composition. Secondly, the flip side of the this was that more industrially/spatially homogenous divisions recruited candidates that "matched" those criteria. However, DLPs did go off-piste in their appointments of unconventional PPCs. Finally, there were also opportunities for women to get on the ballot, though the fact of their womanhood, in and of itself, to their candidature was less important than being ideologically or organisationally part of the Labour family.

Candidate selections in some divisions of the region may on first appearances seem almost random. However, an alternative reading of the situation views such decisions as the attempts of DLPs in industrially and spatially mixed divisions to find a candidate amenable to as many voting cohorts as possible, or at least to show that it was not in the pocket of a particular sector. Finding a match based on occupation that was agreeable to the local electorate, let alone the party, was not straightforward. This was the case in Lowestoft, where non-local figures or those of national reputation were often selected as candidates.[131] This pattern resonated in Peterborough. However, this did not necessarily imply that candidates were not a *place* match. It was possible for a candidate to capture a constituency's *sense of place* as in the case of Frederick Pethick-Lawrence who held Leicester West from 1923 to 1931. In 1923, Pethick-Lawrence defeated the Liberal Winston Churchill as he was able to make the case convincingly that he was the rightful heir of local Liberal traditions.[132] Similarly, surface appearances would seem to suggest Edwin Gooch and rural North Norfolk were a mismatch. At 16, Gooch worked

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[131] Mathew, "From Two Boys and a Dog to Political Power," 80-93.
[132] Worley, "Building the Party," 81.

on his family's forge before becoming a printer at the *Norwich Mercury* where he rose to staff reporter and joined the National Union of Journalists (NUJ). He remained a member of the NUJ for the rest of his life. However, perhaps his most significant contribution was to the NUAW whose executive committee he sat on in 1926 before serving as the union's president from 1928 to 1964.[133]

In divisions home to one or two industries that comprised a significant numerical and/or proportional chunk of the workforce, selection *practices* reflected this state of affairs. The case has already been made for Gooch in North Norfolk as a match for a division where 44.1% of the male population aged over 12 were engaged in agriculture in 1921. Similarly, in South Norfolk, where the equivalent figure was 53.3%, the South Norfolk DLP secured the services of George Edwards, whose early years involved a stint of crow-scaring before founding ECALSHU in 1906.[134] The Kings Lynn Division (42.2%) was contested unsuccessfully in 1918 and 1922 by Robert Barrie Walker who hailed from a family of farmworkers and worked as an organiser for the NUAW in the Midlands, becoming its general secretary in 1912.[135] This propensity for matching candidates with the structure of local industry was not confined to Norfolk. In December 1910, Labour in East Northamptonshire put forward Thomas Frederick Richards, a member of NUBSO, as their election candidate.[136] The Cambridgeshire Labour Party opted on multiple occasions during the interwar period and after WWII for A.E. Stubbs, a district officer of the WU which played a fundamental role in laying the groundworks for the Cambridgeshire DLP and which amalgamated in 1929 with the TGWU and recruited heavily amongst agricultural labourers.[137] In 1925, the party adopted Geoffrey Garratt, who was at the

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[133] Griffiths, *Labour and the Countryside*, 359.
[134] Edwards, *From Crow-scaring to Westminster*.
[135] Kinnear, *The British Voter*, 119.
[136] Kidd, "The Evolution of the Northampton Labour Party," 14.
[137] *Daily Herald*, 3 February 1931, and 2 February 1937; and Richard Hyman, *The Workers' Union* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

time honorary secretary of the Labour Agricultural group.[138] In 1932, it was the turn of academic J.R. Bellerby, a researcher of agricultural economics, as candidate, who finished well behind the local Conservative at the 1935 General Election.[139] The single twentieth victory of the Cambridgeshire DLP came in 1945, A.E. Stubbs being returned to parliament. Choosing a prospective candidate who could be seen, in local or industrial terms, as a spatial approximate or match was not a guarantee of electoral victory.

In Derby, Jimmy Thomas was an ideal candidate who, in a way, personified Labour in the town for nigh-on three decades. The railways and railway trade unionism held an important place animating the local labour movement. Thomas was an official of the ASRS and was general secretary of the NUR from 1916 to 1931. As an LRC/Labour candidate, he was returned at every election from January 1910 to 1929. The events surrounding Thomas' departure from Labour to join MacDonald's National Government demonstrated the enduring hold of the past and the dynamics animating labourism in Derby. Despite his actions, Thomas maintained considerable prestige within both the NUR and the Derby DLP. The local party voted 103 to 48 to withdraw support for Thomas; however, three Labour councillors and the largest of Derby's NUR branches, as well as his secretary-agent, stuck by him.[140] At the general elections of 1931 and 1935, Thomas retained his parliamentary seat comfortably. For several decades, Thomas was a towering figure in the Derby labour movement, with a brand of politics that appealed to many and not only the organised working class. His influence and character made it difficult for some Labour supporters to let go.

Thus, organisational bases and ideational proclivities were evident in the selection *practices* of Labour parties in the region. It was not uncommon to observe NUAW members

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[138] *Ibid.*, 13 January 1925.
[139] *Ibid.*, 25 July 1932.
[140] Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate*, 136.

and officers standing as interwar candidates in county divisions with a large proportion of agricultural workers, and miners in divisions such as Broxtowe (i.e., George Spencer, MP 1918-1924 and NMA official) and Mansfield (i.e., William Carter, Frank Varley, and Bernard Taylor) in Nottinghamshire, and Clay Cross (i.e., Frank Hall) in Derbyshire.[141] This pattern was expressed in other ways. Since the passing of the motion on direct representation of the Co-operative Movement at the Co-operative Congress in 1917, the Co-operative party ran numerous candidates. In 1918, prior to the national electoral alliance in 1927, there were 10; however, only one was elected, A.E. Waterson for Kettering, Northamptonshire. The two parties co-operated effectively at the municipal level, regularly securing the return of county councillors.[142] In 1919, the Kettering Co-operative and Labour Council was established. The relationship in Kettering gives the appearance of mutually beneficence, though, as others have argued, Waterson was 'heavily reliant' on the organisational support of the local Labour party.[143] Furthermore, on entering parliament Waterson took the Labour whip. Undoubtedly, the Co-operative Movement and party was an important organisational base for Labour in Kettering. Furthermore, Co-operative activists active in the Nottingham Labour party were keen to see the selection of co-operators as Labour candidates at municipal and general elections.[144] The best example was Nottingham Central, where a string of Labour Co-op candidates fought a by-election and general elections between 1929 and 1935. In other areas, such as Leicester, Labour and Co-operative parties remained two separate beasts throughout the interwar period and beyond.[145] In Peterborough, the visibility and practical influence of the Co-operative party came with the selection of Stanley Tiffany as PPC in 1943. However, the

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[141] The "safeness" of such seats could also attract prominent Labour figures such as Arthur Henderson who was briefly MP for Clay Cross after a by-election 1933. Ilkeston is an exception to divisions with large mining communities having PPCs who were miners, the two (National) Labour candidates who contested the division from 1918 to 1964 were barristers.
[142] Robertson in Worley, "The Political Dividend," 147 and 151-152.
[143] Angela Frances Whitecross, *Co-operative Commonwealth or New Jerusalem? The Co-operative Party and the Labour Party, 1931-1951* (UCLAN, 2015), 82; and Carbery, *Consumers in Politics*, 26.
[144] Robertson, "The Political Dividend," 156.
[145] Robertson, "A Union of Forces," 218-223.

debate remains concerning the distinctive contribution of the Co-operative party to Labour in this instance and more generally.

As the case of Co-operative candidatures intimates, the appointment of candidates from Labour's affiliates could provide some indication of their local influence and the organisational bases of DLPs. For instance, the Ipswich, Norwich and Northampton parties selected ILP members as their PPCs between 1918 and 1951.[146] Furthermore, socialist influence can be inferred from candidate selections in Great Yarmouth, with the (National) Liberal vote holding up for much of the first half of the twentieth century; the blips coming in 1924 when the Conservatives took the seat, and 1945 when Labour won for the first time. A flurry of socialist affiliated candidates represented Labour in the 1910s and 1920s. William McConnell, the 1918 Labour candidate, was involved in the SDF and its successor the BSP which sponsored his candidature.[147] Arthur Whiting, who stood in 1922, was associated with the SDF, BSP and the National Socialist party, formed by a splinter group of the BSP in 1916.[148] George Johnson of the ILP, who stood for Labour in Norwich in 1922, switched to Great Yarmouth for the 1929 General Election.[149] However, the socialist influence was less apparent from 1931 onwards, a shift coinciding with the collapse of the Labour government and the disaffiliation of the ILP.

However, there are examples of DLPs veering off script and selecting candidates that corresponded to neither *location* nor *place*. In Kings Lynn, which had previously selected "matching" candidates, Labour opted for Sir John Maynard in 1929 who was educated at the University of Oxford, served as an administrator in British India and was a prominent Fabian. This also appears to have been the case in the largely rural division of Huntingdonshire where

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[146] See Grimwood, "The Rise of the Labour Party in Ipswich"; Worley, "The Red Flag and the Fine City"; and Kidd, "The Evolution of the Northampton Labour Party."

[147] Martin Crick, *The History of the Social Democratic Federation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), 330-332.

[148] Ian Bullock, *Romancing the Revolution: The Myth of Soviet Democracy and the British Left* (Alberta: AU Press, 2011), 129.

[149] Gidon Cohen, *The Independent Labour Party, 1932-1939* (PhD Dissertation: University of York, 2000).

the local party executive selected 'a gentleman of University attainments' that was not agreeable to all sections.[150] The man in question, Dermot Freyer, attended Trinity College, Cambridge and the University of Edinburgh, studying medicine. He was ultimately unsuccessful in his bid to get to parliament, finishing well behind the winning Conservative candidate at the 1922 General Election, though only just behind the Liberal. While the record neither proves nor disproves this assessment, the prospects of recruiting a wealthy self-financing PPC may have appealed to the Huntingdonshire DLP as it would in Peterborough.

There were also opportunities in the region for women to get their names on parliamentary ballot papers. For a time in the late 1920s, there were newspaper reports that the Huntingdonshire DLP would select Clara Dorothea Rackham as its PPC. Rackham was a feminist who was active in suffrage movements as well as the Women's Co-operative Guild. However, the candidature ultimately went to C.S. Giddins.[151] In Norwich, the trade union and ILP socialist Dorothy Jewson was selected on multiple occasions during the interwar years, being returned in 1923; in 1931, she fought unsuccessfully as an ILP candidate. Indeed, Jewson's candidature can be interpreted as evidence of influence of the ILP locally. Similarly, Margaret Bondfield, also a member of the ILP, was Labour candidate for Northampton at the 1920 by-election and the general elections of 1922, 1923 and 1924. Winning in 1923, Bondfield became the first and first female Labour MP for Northampton. On each occasion, women candidates were considered or selected as PPCs not because they were women but because they reflected an aspect of the party's essence, often deeply rooted in the past.

Party Identity: Policy Curation and Issue Positioning

Analysis of DLPs in our region demonstrated policy and *positional* alignment with Labour's national messaging alongside examples of local *curation* to reflect the views of constituents or

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[150] *Peterborough Standard*, 3 November 1922.
[151] *Bedfordshire Times and Independent*, 14 September 1928.

at least parts of the local community. Whether elections were municipal or parliamentary, or whether the CLP/DLP was located in a borough or county division, there were several common campaigning topics running through Labour's messaging to voters. However, closer inspection revealed multiple instances of spatialised messaging, with the content of such campaigns illustrating that many parties remained, to some degree, tethered to their foundations. That said, this did not necessarily mean that Labour's arguments chimed with their intended audience and even messages seemingly tailored to a specific locality could miss their mark. Where national issues penetrated to sub-national scales, the responses of parties in our region reflected convergence and divergence from the official party line.

Labour's municipal and parliamentary election campaigns comprised a core set of issues and values grounded in its foundations as a party chiefly representing working-class interests. Common themes included education, housing, health, unemployment and public services. For instance, the Labour party in Lincoln focused on education, housing, and the establishment of a 'maternity and child welfare centre' as priorities.[152] Housing became a key issue in Norwich, particularly after the slum clearances and housebuilding of the 1930s.[153] The campaigning platform of Labour in Leicester consisted of a similar suite of issues.[154] Reflecting its roots, the angle of the party on many of these issues concerned tackling injustice and ensuring fairness. For instance, in 1919 the Huntingdonshire DLP *positioned* itself on the question of teachers' salaries, resolving to 'strongly protest against the disgraceful salaries paid to teachers by the Huntingdon Education Authority'.[155] The unjustness of child malnutrition

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[152] Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate*, 198.
[153] Worley, "The Red Flag and the Fine City," 127; and Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate*, 198.
[154] Worley, "Building the Party," 83.
[155] *Leicester Evening Mail*, 14 July 1919.

and inadequate clothing was taken up by the Yarmouth DLP in 1936.[156] As was the stubbornness of unemployment and the National Government's failure to tackle it.[157]

Regional examples of the local tailoring of Labour policy on a range of issues disclosed the enduring influence of formative material and, thus, the organisational character and identity of DLPs. In her study of Labour's rise in Northampton, Dickie identified a "Town Patriotism" depicting the town as a distinct local community with messaging focused on meritocracy and civic service. In buying in to this idea, Labour was able to gain some legitimate authority.[158] The formative experience of Labour in Northampton anticipated this outcome. In particular, the non-adversarial and cooperative relationship between labour and the Liberals; indeed, the sympathy of local Liberals to working-class interests and concerns.[159] The persistence of conciliatory and collaborative local dynamics went on to inform Northampton politics in the interwar period, even despite the heightened class consciousness which increased Labour's appeal from 1933 to 1935.[160]

While there was a general waning of the influence of religion and nonconformism on the political *practices* of DLPs, where it did persist most overtly was in areas where it constituted an important building block in the formative period of Labour's organisational and ideational development. Nonconformism remained an important source of identity for Labour activists in Norfolk such as Edwin Gooch. During the Great Strike of 1923 in Norfolk, Gooch made an impassioned rallying cry that revealed both the durability of his religious convictions and the bases of rural radicalism on which Labour in the county was built. On the pages of the NUAW journal, *The Land Worker*, he wrote: 'The mantle of Kett[161] and Arch has descended

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[156] *Yarmouth Independent*, 21 March 1936.
[157] *Ibid.*, 5 May 1934.
[158] Dickie, *Town Patriotism*.
[159] Kidd, *Popular Political Continuity in Urban England*.
[160] Dickie, *Town Patriotism*, 161-171.
[161] Robert Kett (1492-1549) was a Norfolk yeoman who led Kett's Rebellion in the summer of 1549. The revolt began in Wymondham, South Norfolk, and was ostensibly a response to land enclosures.

upon him [the farmworker]. His sun is rising and best of all, God is on his side.'[162] This continued into the 1930s when he commented positively on the persistence of 'old Christian Socialist principles'.[163] Such radical language suffused with the ethos of nonconformism was an inheritance extending back to the 1870s.[164]

Positioning on political topics in some predominantly rural division demonstrated the heightened importance afforded to rural issues relative to Labour in the boroughs. For example, 56.9% of the occupied male population over the age of 12 in Cambridgeshire Division were engaged in agriculture. The political stances taken by A.E. Stubbs, who fought the division as an Independent Labour candidate in 1918, and as a Labour candidate in 1922, 1923, successfully in 1945, and 1950, displayed a manifestly rural flavour.[165] Following the selection of Sir George Fordham as PPC for Cambridgeshire DLP, an action which greatly irritated Stubbs who threatened to stand as an independent candidate which, in turn, prompted a tetchy response from G.J. Huckle, the secretary of the Cambridgeshire Trades Council and Labour Party (CTCLP), elected not to pledge his support for the candidature of Fordham as he wanted to know more about his 'industrial and political policy'.[166] In particular, Fordham's position on land nationalisation was vague while Stubbs' was clear in his acceptance of it as accepted Labour party policy. As it turned out, Stubbs rather than Fordham went on to stand for Labour in 1922 and 1923, which suggests that the CTCLP was not too far removed from his *positioning*. Furthermore, at a meeting of the newly formed Soham Labour party in 1939, Stubbs spoke in his capacity as a Labour alderman on Cambridge Town Council on the foreign policy of the Neville Chamberlain's government (May 1937 – May 1940) and his outlook on

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[162] Gooch, *Edwin Gooch*, 40-41.
[163] *Ibid*., 65.
[164] Howkins, *Poor Labouring Men*, 39-56.
[165] Kinnear, *The British Voter*, 119.
[166] *Cambridge Independent Press*, 28 May 1920; and 1 October 1920.

agriculture which, according to Stubbs, was 'as ignorant as it was dangerous'.[167] In his 1945 election address, Edwin Gooch, the new Labour MP for North Norfolk, orated on the interests of the farmworkers, particularly on land resettlement and the allocation of smallholdings, and the protection of farmworker's minimum wages when farmers displayed reticence.[168]

However, rural DLPs did not focus *exclusively* on affairs affecting the countryside, and rural communities were keen to hear about topics beyond those of a strictly agricultural flavour.[169] Norfolk provides a useful yardstick on the local *curation* of party policy directly aimed at voters in agricultural areas. There were constituencies in the region where the agricultural vote accounted for between 40-60% of the male population aged over 12. In South Norfolk, that figure stood at 53.3% in 1921. In his 1918 address, George Edwards called for a fixing of prices that would enable farmers to pay labourers a living wage, controlling the price of seeds and other raw materials to prevent profiteering, security of tenure for farmers, as well as reforms or alterations to the Game Laws and the Small Holding and Allotment Acts. The need for security of tenure for farmers reappeared in leaflets for the 1920 by-election, alongside a call for 'more drastic power' to be placed in the hands of Agricultural Councils, a statutory working week, and the abolishment of tied cottages.[170] However, other appeals to the electorate concerned issues of national finance, foreign policy, mines and railways, among other (inter)national concerns.[171] Elsewhere, while the PPC for Huntingdonshire DLP, James Lievsley George 'made agriculture his chief point' at a public speaking event at St. Neots market square, the external speaker described Labour policy on agriculture, as well as finance and fiscal questions.[172]

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[167] *Ibid.*, 3 March 1939.
[168] Gooch, *Edwin Gooch*, 77-79.
[169] Griffiths, *Labour and the Countryside*, 135.
[170] Edwards, *From Crow-scaring to Westminster*, 134-135 and 140-142.
[171] *Ibid.*, 140-142.
[172] *Bedfordshire Times and Independent*, 5 October 1934.

As it regarded parliamentary elections, party *positioning* extended beyond the *curation* of campaign content. The decision whether to put forward a candidate and the *position* adopted in relation to political competitors could be equally revealing about local Labour identity. In Huntingdonshire, the alleged actions of party members and branches raised serious questions about Labour's political independence. The controversy stemmed from statements made by the successful Liberal candidate, Leonard Costello, during his victory celebrations when he thanked members of the Labour party, which had decided not to put forward a candidate, for the part they played in his victory.[173] At the 1924 meeting of the Huntingdonshire DLP, the president J.A. Reid attempted to dispel the rumours by 'contradicting the statement that some of them, even the Party itself [i.e., the Huntingdon Branch Labour party], had gone over and joined the Liberals. This was not the case…' Whatever the truth of the matter, the controversy underscored the local nature and durability of Liberalism and the Liberal party. The formation of Huntingdonshire DLP only took place in 1919 and was afflicted by organisational challenges well into the 1920s. Additionally, the (National) Liberals remained competitive in the division throughout the interwar period and beyond; David Renton held the division for the National Liberals (1945-1970) and the Conservatives (1970-1979). Returning to the 1920s, the appeal of Costello among the working class may have owed something to his political character, with the *Hunts County News* describing him as a 'staunch Liberal' with 'radical tendencies that knit him to all true progressives and his wholesome and sincere service for the interests of the working classes have proved him to be a true friend of Labour.'[174] Whilst perhaps over-effusive in its praise, his electoral success would appear to suggest there was at least a kernel of truth to it. This episode demonstrated how Liberal durability could stunt the development of

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[173] *Hunts County News*, 28 February 1924.
[174] *Ibid.*, 16 October 1924.

independent labour politics and, consequently, in an area where alternatives such as the ILP were weak, Liberalism suffused the nature of the division's Labour party.

In much the same way that a division's status as a county or borough could shape *curation* and *positioning*, the local influence of a branch of the Labour family could shape organisational and ideational character. Local candidates in Nottingham were able to put a Co-operative stamp on election material. During the 1930 municipal election campaign, A.E. Waterson, who was the first Co-operative MP in 1918, told Nottingham electors that he would 'hold up the flag of the consumers'. Later on, his electoral address had all the hallmarks of co-operativism.[175] In Leicester, the ILP were able to put their stamp on Labour's municipal programme. However, the programme failed to resonate with the local electorate who deemed it unrealistic.[176] Given the scale, it is possible that such personalised or tailored campaigns could slip under the radar. Nevertheless, these examples illustrate how the beliefs of familial organisations or ideologies could suffuse Labour campaigns.

Well-tailored messaging did not guarantee electoral success. On occasion, Labour was prone to misjudge the local electorate. The campaign of Frederick Wise in Lowestoft demonstrated how the (inter)nationalisation of electioneering could backfire. Post-WWI, Lowestoft was a depressed area. The herring industry never recovered its pre-war prosperity. Associated trades, such as transport, net-making, fish-curing, dock-working, coopers, etc., suffered. This had a knock-on effect in the countryside with many seasonal farm labourers traditionally seeking employment in the fishing industry being unable to find jobs. Conditions in the countryside were 'bleak to the point of despair', so much so that labourers in North Suffolk worked as strike-breakers during the 1923 Norfolk labourers' strike. The Lowestoft Labour party initially grew against this backdrop by running soup kitchens and other support

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[175] Robertson, "The Political Dividend," 160.
[176] Worley, "Building the Party," 83.

initiatives. In 1935, Wise focused his campaign on the themes of the distribution of wealth, peace and the League of Nations, reducing unemployment and social planning. Labour's approach at this time is understandable, given the wider context of the rise of Fascism. However, he would lose out to a Conservative candidate who stressed the challenges and decline facing the local fishing industry.[177]

Examination of *positioning* on issues that cut through from the national to the regional level revealed localised responses rooted in formative material, alongside examples of intra-regional alignment which, in turn, accorded with national *positions* and those adopted extra-regionally (chapter six). While labour movements in our region expressed sympathy with the General Strike and the plight of the miners, with local intra-movement divisions being bridged by a unifying cause, the calling off of industrial action saw them cleave apart. In Nottingham, divisions between left and right hardened, with the left dominating the Trades Council and the Labour party and trade unions moving to the right. This echoed national trends as well as bringing into sharper relief the moderate and conservative traits which had long informed the evolution of the Nottingham labour movement.[178] The ILP's disaffiliation produced different *positional* responses which can be traced back to the primeval material of each Labour party. For instance, relations between the ILP and Labour in Norwich remained cordial, despite two Labour candidates contesting the 1935 General Election rather than a joint ILP-Labour ticket. Indeed, the Norwich Labour party had attempted to bring the issue of 'shared nominations', with which it was sympathetic, to the 1937 party Conference only to be blocked by the NEC.[179] Conversely, while some younger members left for the CPGB and the ILP, their influence on Northampton politics was superficial and did not amount to a fundamental rejection of the long-

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[177] Mathew, "From Two Boys and a Dog to Political Power," 66, 74-75 and 87-88.
[178] Wyncoll, *The Nottingham Labour Movement*, 197-211.
[179] Cohen, "'Happy Hunting Ground of the Crank'?", 55,68 and 70.

established behaviours of the political majority in the town.[180] During the 1940s, there was some criticism of Labour's involvement in the wartime government from some of the divisions within our region, such as Northampton. However, most DLPs offered their support – detraction of support for the government was a minority *position*.[181] The electoral truce caused some friction, with the national party concerned about local support for as well as the immediate and future electoral success of CW and Communist candidates; indeed, the Norwich Labour party supported the affiliation of the Communists in 1942 to 1943.[182] This was likely to alarm the national party leadership which had been concerned about communist "entrism" before and during the war and viewed its grassroots organisation as the most likely entry point for such elements. As it turned out, Labour had little to fear from the Communists or CW in 1945. There were examples of candidates accepting the assistance of individual communists, but such advances were generally rejected as in Derby.[183] It is possible to make tentative conclusions regarding responses in Norwich and Derby. The former possessed a weak trade union base and relied heavily on members from the more radical ILP, while the strength and moderation of trade unionism in Derby had a habit of inhibiting the growth of communism.[184]

Conclusion

Each DLP was comprised of a distinct ensemble of evolving bases. The same foundations were identified in the national literature; however, it was shown that the influence, quality, and/or quantity of each base in the mix mattered for subsequent ideational and organisational development. Working backwards, the durability of the Liberal vote during the interwar period and its ability to deliver electoral victories hinted at alternative sources of developmental energy for DLPs, such as socialist societies. Elsewhere, the quality and quantity of agricultural

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[180] Dickie, *Town Patriotism*, 124-134.
[181] Thorpe, *Parties at War*, 196.
[182] *Ibid.*, 208-209.
[183] *Ibid.*, 217.
[184] Thorpe, "J.H. Thomas and the Rise of the Labour Party," 116.

labourers' trade unionism in Norfolk contributed towards Labour's strength in the county's rural divisions that was not replicated in other parts of the region. Moving forward, the developmental particularities of the 1918-1945 period, driven by the qualities and quantities of foundational material, existed alongside areas of intra-regional commonality and alignment with general patterns. For example, the types of activities engaged in relating to political campaigning and social events recurred from place to place – holding a whist drive did not mark a DLP out for distinction. Similarly, women played similar, often gendered, roles from to division to division and when they were selected as PPCs the decisions hinged on their organisational affiliation or ideology rather than their womanhood *per se*.

A multitude of distinct developmental *practices* were identified in the areas of party formation, party organisation, candidate selection, as well as policy *curation* and *positioning*. For example, the Huntingdonshire DLP case qualified the national scale argument that the 1920s were a period of consolidation. More accurately, the party was just getting started having only formed in 1919 and with considerable variation in its sub-divisional organisation, which helped to explain the question marks over the Huntingdon Labour party's political independence from the Liberals and the gaps in the DLP's contestation of parliamentary elections during the interwar period. In many instances, candidate selection was found to reflect a division's industrial composition. However, divisions that were mixed spatially or industrially tended to opt for a different strategy. So, rather than adopt a trade unionist candidate who might be perceived as representing one section of the working community, they opted for cross-sectional candidates. Regarding policy *curation* and *positioning*, we observed how the bases of DLPs informed messaging and the nature of the national issues that cut through and responses to them, as well as the presentation of general party policy. In summary, understanding the coalescence of material that formed each DLP helped to forge first an

impression of organisational character and identity, and second to demystify party *practices* beyond the point of formation, enabling a distillation of each DLPs' *dispositions*.

This exercise has shed considerable explanatory light on the development of the Peterborough DLP. Regional analysis suggests that the *practices* open to the party were determined by the specific set of circumstances present in the Peterborough Division. Before WWI, the local labour movement was notable for its moderation, with many of its trade unionists and trade council delegates coming from amongst railwaymen and engineers, providing a stark contrast to the radicalism and socialism of the boot and shoe operatives in Northampton and, especially, Leicester. The limited influence of socialism and socialist societies was another feature of the division, contrasting Peterborough with Norwich where the relative weakness of trade unionism compelled the labour movement there to build on alternative foundations. Comparatively, Labour's municipal advance was also stunted as the Liberals held their ground. As with some other DLPs in the region, it would take WWI to raise local dissatisfaction with the Liberals to a level sufficient to enable Labour to overtake them. However, there were small pre-war signs in the city's North Ward. Indeed, sub-divisional locations of Labour strength and weakness recurred across the region. Meanwhile, North Northants lacked the inheritance of rural radicalism that agricultural labourers' and their supporters were able to draw upon in Norfolk. Indeed, the contrasting historical experiences in the two counties helps to contextualise the interwar difficulties the Peterborough DLP faced regarding its rural organisation; the more approximate regional comparison in terms of rural organisation was Huntingdonshire. The Peterborough DLP's *practices* vis-à-vis PPC selection reflected patterns seen in other mixed divisions, though, crucially, not in the case of party *organiser* selection which, in the first instance, was a consciously sectional decision. Additionally, the ways in which the party spatialised its messaging reflected the Peterborough DLP's aggregated urban-rural identity, its *practices* echoing those observed in borough *and*

county divisions. The utility of regional analysis has been in its grounding of party development at the grassroots in contrast with the national picture, and in bringing into sharper relief the idiosyncrasies of Peterborough Division and the Peterborough DLP via division-to-division comparison. In the next chapter, we take this analysis further to consider extra-regional DLPs and further substantiate the *spatial-institutionalist* framework.

Chapter 6: Local Labour Party Studies: Developing a Comparative Framework

Introduction

The previous chapter examined Peterborough in the context of its regional peers in East Anglia and the East Midlands. *Prima facie* similarities began to lift some of the shroud enveloping the Peterborough DLP's developmental dynamics. On the other hand, aspects of its *practices* and their rationales remain obscured or only semi-understood. In short, intra-regional comparisons cannot be relied upon exclusively to depict the organisational character and identity of a DLP. That said, the analysis established irrefutably that local Labour parties were aggregations of the places they inhabit. Precisely how elements coalesced and operated was shaped by the *location*, the *locale*, as well as the sense of attachment or belonging that developed *over time*. Just as importantly, the application of *spatial-institutionalist* methodology demonstrated that foundational material can be observed to shape the actions of Labour parties and activists over an extended period and that the nature of a party's compositional fabric exerts an influence on its divergence or convergence from national and/or intra-regional developmental patterns. To add further substance to this contention, as well as the value, utility and transferability of the methodology, it is helpful to extend the analysis beyond regional boundaries to consider a wider vista of parties and their dynamics. Indeed, Labour's variation at different scales becomes more lucid 'once area studies are compared and contrasted.'[1] As such, this chapter is part discussion of the act of doing organisational histories of Labour and of reading local studies for any enlightenment they provide concerning Peterborough.

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[1] Worley, "Introduction," in: *Labour's Grass Roots*, 4.

In conducting histories of the Labour party, scholars have adopted varying scales of reference including the regional and the local/divisional. Regardless of scale, it is common for such studies to be atheoretical in their approach, providing little transparency as to how sources were handled – we know that they were read but not *how* they were read. *Spatial-institutionalism* demystifies the process of historical inquiry by providing a procedure for the analysis of primary and secondary material. Complimentary to this, space has been devoted to discussion of Savage's monumental study of Preston and the dynamics of working-class politics, as insights from this work had a profound effect on the development of the *spatial-institutionalist* framework, not least on the conceptualisation of party *practices*.[2] That said, Savage's study is not without its limitations, especially in the areas of scale and comparative analysis, which the present framework seeks to rectify. The remainder of the chapter applies the framework to extra-regional local studies of Labour, reaffirming the analytical utility of concentrating on the *four key areas of analysis* (i.e., party emergence and formation; party recruitment and retention; and party organisation; policy *curation* and *issue positioning*) to elucidate on the organisational and ideological development of DLPs.

Approaches to Local Labour Development

The plethora of works on Labour's sub-national development have demonstrated that many scholars have "done Labour history." The field has come a long way since Clark bemoaned the historiography of Labour and its focus on party and trade union leaders.[3] There is an inherent value to the conduct of local studies, each case providing greater lucidity to the overall picture of Labour's development. However, the conduct of such enquiries has tended to be lightweight regarding methodological or theoretical approaches to source analysis. Such inconsistencies or opacities are evident in collection type studies of Labour. For instance, the collection *Labour*

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[2] Savage, *The Dynamics of Working-Class Politics.*
[3] Clark, *Colne Valley*, xiii.

in the East provides invaluable insights into party developments in a relatively neglected area in Labour studies. That said, there is no clearly enunciated or shared approach to the handling and analysis of the sources used, a fact admitted to in the introduction.[4] Similarly, while *Labour's Grass Roots* offers the reader an examination of Labour activities and experiences in numerous 'towns, cities, counties and regions,' there is no clearly delineated shared methodology on how sources were handled or analysed.[5] Furthermore, each chapter of *The Foundations of the British Labour Party* examines a base of political labour, whether that be railwaymen, mineworkers, or women, among others. However, while each contributor offers an excellent overview of their chosen "foundation of Labour," the precise permutations of each at sub-national scales requires further investigation.[6]

Studies whose primary focus is a single division, while often giving space to discussion of the (inter)national context, regularly overlook the regional scale. Regional analysis carries the advantage of highlighting developmental convergence and divergence. For instance, whilst acknowledging intra-regional differentiation in terms of industrial composition and political tradition, Thorpe was able to make the convincing general argument that the South West of England, with its large expanses of rural space, limited and/or scattered trade unionism, presented Labour with serious organisational challenges.[7] The existence of distinctly regional dynamics in Labour's development are not restricted to the South West, with similar contributions being made for the West Midlands, West Yorkshire, (South) Wales, Durham, and London.[8] Additionally, whilst not strictly a study of Labour, Lawson's investigation into

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[4] Gyford, "Introduction," 8.
[5] Worley, "Introduction," in: *Labour's Grass Roots*, 1.
[6] Worley, ed. *The Foundations of the British Labour Party*.
[7] Andrew Thorpe, "'One of the Most Backward Areas of the Country': The Labour Party's Grass Roots in South West England, 1918-1945," in *Labour's Grass Roots*, 216-239.
[8] Rolf, "Labour and Politics in the West Midlands between the Wars"; Callcott, "The Nature and Extent of Political Change in the Inter-War Years"; Michael Tichelar, *Why London is Labour: A History of Metropolitan Politics, 1900-2020* (London: Routledge, 2021); Barbara Humphries, *The Origins and Development of the Labour Movement in West London, 1918-1970* (PhD Dissertation: University of Reading, 2019); and J. Reynolds and K.

railwaymen in the North East identified a distinct regional identity by drawing on comparative insights from macro-, meso-, and micro-scales.[9] However, divisional studies have tended to be limited horizontally at two scales. Firstly, comparison with other regions is often limited or omitted. For instance, the developmental fortunes of Labour in the South West are not compared with peers in rural Northamptonshire, or East Anglia, the latter providing a fascinating contrast to the party's rural organisation elsewhere in the country. Secondly, while intra-regional DLPs are discussed they are rarely contrasted with extra-regional parties at the same scale. In contrast, *spatial-institutionalism* emphasises the analytical value of cross-scale analysis to bring developments in an area into sharper relief. Indeed, arguments regarding the Peterborough DLP are strengthened by reference to developments in the Norfolk, Northamptonshire, South West and beyond.

From the outset, divisional studies should be commended in their efforts and daring to place a sub-national locality at the centre of analysis, waving away the voices of naysayers who question the generalisability and thus value and relevance of localised analysis, and highlighting how the 'features of [a] constituency' affect the nature of the local labour movement.[10] The insights of such studies sheds further doubt on the veracity of claims doubting their value, as they reveal that if we do not understand sub-national expressions of Labour, we do not really understand the party at all. To take one example, the organisational development of the Liverpool Labour party demonstrated a locally anchored trajectory not always in temporal synchronisation with the national scale.[11] In the passages that follow, it will be

Laybourn, *Labour Heartland: A History of the Labour Party in West Yorkshire during the Inter War Years 1918-1939* (Bradford: Bradford University Press, 1987).
[9] Frank Lawson, *Railwaymen in the North East of England 1890-1930: Industrial and Political Attitudes and Politics* (PhD Dissertation: The Open University, 1995).
[10] Clark, *Colne Valley*, 2; Dickie, *Town Patriotism*.
[11] Davies, *Liverpool Labour*.

demonstrated how the plethora of developmental permutations and their consideration refined understanding of the case study.

That said, single division studies suffer from a similar affliction to regional studies in their dearth of theoretical or clearly elucidated methodological grounding. Indeed, it is common for historical studies to omit methodological or theoretical chapters altogether.[12] Nevertheless, there are exceptions to this pattern which provide some steer on possible directions of travel. McHugh took theories of party type to frame his analysis of Labour in Manchester, investigating at what point, if ever, it became a truly mass party.[13] This potentially offers researchers a transferable frame of reference which can be applied to Labour at national, regional, and local scales. However, whether this approach helps to explain the minutiae of party *practices* is debatable – once party type is grasped it remains to unpack precisely how members and activists operated within those parameters. To make sense of everyday politics, reference to *place* and *practices* furnishes us with a granular understanding. In a distinct approach to local Labour history, Holford's study of Edinburgh in the years shortly before and after WWI applied a Gramscian method, charting the development of the working-class challenge to the cultural hegemony of the ruling class, particularly the expanding and shifting notion of the 'nation', as well as mobilisation of the 'language of planning, efficiency, organisation, and so forth' in the interests of the working class.[14] The emphasis on the sources of class consciousness is helpful to consider, particularly where WWI and the deterioration of the Progressive Alliance are concerned. However, with regards to questions of candidate selection, electioneering, the role of women, and organisation in the city and the countryside

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[12] For example and this list is by no means exhaustive: David Clark, "We Do Not Want the Earth: The History of South Shields Labour Party," (Tyne & Wear: Bewick Press, 1992); Andy Durr, ed., *A History of Brighton Trades Council and Labour Movement, 1890-1970* (Brighton Hove and District Trades Council, 1974).

[13] McHugh, *Labour in the City*, 8-11.

[14] John Holford, *Reshaping Labour: Organisation, Work and Politics – Edinburgh in the Great War and After* (Croom Helm: London, 1988), 1-7.

in the interwar period, its utility diminishes. In short, the insights are tightly time-bound, whereas the *spatial-intuitionalist* approach offers greater versatility.

A commonality and strength of collection, regional and single division studies of Labour has been their placement of the party's development in historical context. *Spatial-institutionalism* does not abandon this approach, seeing the inherent value in the explanatory power of deep contextualisation and the principle that all party *practices* have a present and a past. However, in terms of methodology, many studies that devote space to historicisation of their topics do not do so based on a clearly elucidated process or framework. On the contrary, *spatial-institutionalism* provides a clear procedure with which to historicise party *practices*. In making this provision, this approach offers a greater degree of transparency and heightens the rigour of the practice of historical enquiry.

The publication of Savage's *The Dynamics of Working-Class Politics* in 1987 marked an important milestone in approaches to understanding how local labour movements develop. Savage challenged the simplistic notion that the working class, by the fact of being working class, would automatically vote Labour, as well as accounts focused exclusively on cultural shifts. Subsequent studies have proven the correctness of Savage's argument.[15] Thus, greater emphasis is placed on social structure and political allegiance, their change and interrelations. The result is an 'analytical framework' which, in theory, could be applied to other cases beyond Savage's focus on Preston.[16] This approach roughly equates with Agnew's examination of *location* and *locale* and illumines the *practices* of local Labour parties. As such, it supplies a helpful building block upon which to establish a *comparative* analytical framework. Indeed, the granularity of Savage's approach is a particular strength. He and others have stressed the importance of ward level and neighbourhood analysis to properly understand Labour's local

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[15] For examples, Davies, *Liverpool Labour*.
[16] Savage, *The Dynamics of Working-Class Politics*, ix-x and 1-7.

identity, reach, and appeal. For example, Tanner recommended that historians examine results from every ward of every constituency to ascertain precisely Labour's position.[17] Furthermore, the opening chapter demonstrated how Labour's municipal performance in Peterborough varied from ward to ward, with the North Ward and New England area proving to be particularly propitious for the party. The next step is understanding how those granular trends inform other aspects of party activity from candidate and organiser selection to electioneering and *issue positioning*.

Once again, Savage presents part of the solution in his conceptualisation and application of "practices". He is keen to emphasise insights into working-class dynamics that can be gleaned from the examination of 'popular practices'.[18] Appreciating political practice requires grounding it in comprehension of 'working-class interests arising out of the need of workers to reduce the material insecurity inherent in capitalist society.' Such practices are closely tied to social structure, which thus shapes the directions of travel available for the working classes.[19] Savage goes on to identify three types of 'working class practical politics,' namely 'mutualist,' 'economistic,' and 'statist.' Such conceptions help identify and categorise shifts in working-class practices over time. Indeed, one concluding remark is particularly resonant: '[W]orkers' struggles depend on the local context in which specific groups of working-class individuals find themselves. Different elements of the local social structure provide various capacities for the maintenance of particular forms of collective action.'[20] This chimes symphonically with the notion of the *locale* as the realms where (political) activities are organised. This can assume numerous and interconnected forms, such as Church groups and associations, trade unions,

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[17] Duncan Tanner, "Elections, Statistics, and the Rise of the Labour Party, 1906-1931," *The Historical Journal* 34, no.4 (1991): 893-908. See also, Holford, *Reshaping Labour*, 233-234.
[18] Savage, *The Dynamics of Working-Class Politics*, 4.
[19] *Ibid.*, 12-20.
[20] *Ibid.*, 20-38.

social and/or pressure groups, etc. Thus, *spatial-institutionalism*, via its grounding in political geography, contains the best elements of Savage's seminal work.

However, the present study does not simply replicate Savage's approach. The chief limitation of Savage's approach is its restriction to a single case study. The framework developed may be transferable to other cities, towns and villages, but the study does not test this. The dearth of comparative work is of detriment to the overall approach. A related critique concerns cross-scale analysis. The detail of Savage's account concerning Preston leaves little room to doubt the veracity of the claims. However, the concluding remarks would have carried additional weight if examples had been provided of neighbourhood dynamics and working-class politics in other locations were included. Indeed, by bringing insights from Labour's organisational and ideational developments at national, intra- and extra-regional, as well as local scales to bear on that of the Peterborough DLP, *spatial-institutionalism* helped to create a sharper picture of the degree of distinctness, relative to its peers, from one area of party activity to another that an isolated case study would not have allowed. Of course, it should be added that the fact that a comparative *spatial-institutionalist* framework can be applied at all is testament to the work of Savage and the steady growth of local Labour studies since 1987.

Place and *Practice*: A *Spatial-institutionalist* Approach to DLP Development

So far, we have discussed the strengths and limitations of alternative approaches to accounting for the development of Labour in the regions and divisions of the UK. Earlier, chapter three detailed the *spatial-institutionalist* approach and the prominence it afforded to the notion of *place* and historicisation. Building on this and the regional analysis, this section develops the four key areas of party *practice* in empirical rather than theoretical context, illustrating their pertinence to the subject of conducting developmental analysis. As such, extra-regional studies at regional and local scales are used to test the framework and provide further insights into the

determinants of organisational behaviour. This exercise adds further weight to arguments made in relation to Labour developments in East Anglia and the East Midlands, and of the value of cross-scale comparative analysis. Additionally, to avoid any confusion, the usage of the term *practice* here differs from that of Savage. Here, the term is used to refer to what people and organisations did based on the surviving source material. Of course, it is important to recognise that, beyond the leading lights, ascertaining precisely what most Labour members did, or thought is unattainable. Nevertheless, by working through *spatial-institutionalist* procedures we can recreate some impression of the organisational and ideational essence of sub-national party units.

Party Formation, Organisational Bases and Practices, 1900-1945

The foundations of extra-regional DLPs echo those discussed in the national historiography and those of Labour in East Anglia and the East Midlands. Thus, the organisational bases of numerous LRCs and DLPs consisted of trade union or trade council foundations. This was the case in divisions as varied as those in the South Wales coalfield and the shipbuilding and heavy industrial areas of Clydeside, to cities such as Birmingham, Bradford, Brighton, Leeds, Sheffield and London, and towns such as South Shields.[21] Of course, industrial structures and trade council composition differed from place to place and informed party *practices* across the four areas of analysis identified. The influence of socialism and socialist societies was identified in varying quantities, with ILP strength being notable in Bradford and Glasgow,

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[21] Chris Williams, "Introduction," in: *The Labour Party in Wales, 1900-2000*, 14; Deian Hopkin, "Labour's Roots in Wales, 1880-1900," in: *The Labour Party in Wales, 1900-2000*, 41; Paul Griffin, *The spatial politics of Red Clydeside: historical labour geographies and radical connections* (PhD dissertation: University of Glasgow, 2015); John Boughton, *Working-Class Politics in Birmingham and Sheffield, 1918-1931* (PhD dissertation: University of Warwick, 1985); George J. Barnsby, *Birmingham Working People: A History of the Labour Movement in Birmingham 1650-1914* (Wolverhampton: Integrated Publishing Services, 1989), 302-303; Raymond David Dalton, *Labour and the municipality: Labour politics in Leeds 1900-1914* (PhD dissertation: University of Leeds, 2000), 385; J. Reynolds and K. Laybourn, "The Emergence of the Independent Labour Party in Bradford," *International Review of Social History* 20, no.3 (1975): 313-346; Durr, *A History of the Brighton Trades Council and Labour Movement*, 13-14; Humphries, *The Origins and Development of the Labour Movement in West London*; Clark, *We Do Not Want the Earth*, 30-31.

among others, but weak in some locations such as London and practically non-existent in much of rural England.[22] The religious bases of local labour politics and DLPs varied greatly in strength.[23] For instance, nonconformism was particularly pronounced amongst Welsh MPs and miners, while religious radicalism had minimal influence on the working-class politics of Birmingham.[24] As with Derby and rural Norfolk, it is not uncommon to find examples of dynamic agency driving the development of embryonic DLPs.[25] The key role played by Liberalism and local Liberal Associations in expediting or slowing Labour's advance in East Anglia and the East Midlands was reproduced elsewhere, reinforcing the importance of this dynamic to understanding not only DLP formation but the interwar *practices* of local Labour.[26] Additionally, the challenges of nurturing Labour in areas where working-class conservatism predominated over liberal tendencies, and in rural areas where the logistics of organisation were a significant part of the battle, also emerged from the extra-regional literature.[27] In each division, early Labour was presented with a different configuration of base material.[28] Indeed,

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[22] Clark, *Colne Valley*, 15, 157 and 182-196; Molney, "The Nineties," in *A History of Brighton Trades Council and Labour Movement*, 8-9; Dalton, *Labour and the municipality*; Graham Philip Heaney, *The Development of Labour Politics in Southampton, 1890-1945* (PhD dissertation: University of Southampton, 2000); Jeffery Hill, "Manchester and Salford Politics and the Early Development of the Independent Labour Party," *International Review of Social History* 26, no.2 (1981): 171-201; Clark, *We Do Not Want the Earth*, 10, 13 and 26; Howell, *British Workers and the Independent Labour Party*, 264-265; Reynolds and Laybourn, *Labour Heartland*, xi-xii; Griffin, *The spatial politics of Red Clydeside*; Daniel Carrigan, *Patrick Dollan (1885-1963) and the Labour Movement in Glasgow* (MPhil(R) thesis: University of Glasgow, 2014); and Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, 5.

[23] Graham Walker and James Greer, "Religion, Labour, and the National Question: The General Election of 1924 in Belfast and Lanarkshire," *Labour History Review* 84, no.3 (2019): 217-240.

[24] Brown, "Non-Conformity and the British Labour Movement"; Hopkin, "Labour's Roots in Wales," 44-45; and Barnsby, *Birmingham Working People*, 495-496.

[25] Clark, *We Do Not Want the Earth*, 5 and 15.

[26] Carrigan, *Patrick Dollan*; Clark, *We Do Not Want the Earth*, 7-11 and 21; Dalton, *Labour and the municipality*, 380-381 and 384-385; McHugh, *Labour in the City*, 156; Heaney, *The Development of Labour Politics in Southampton*; Hill, "Manchester and Salford Politics and the Early Development of the Independent Labour Party"; Molney, "The Nineteenhundreds," in: *A History of Brighton Trades Council and Labour Movement*, 16; Cyril Parry, *The Radical Tradition in Welsh Politics: A Study of Liberal and Labour Politics in Gwynedd, 1900-1920* (Hull: University of Hull, 1970); A.W. Purdue, "The Liberal and Labour Parties in North-East Politics 1900-14: The Struggle for Supremacy," *International Review of Social History* 26, no.1 (1981); Reynolds and Laybourn, "The Emergence of the Independent Labour Party in Bradford"; R.C. Whiting, *The View from Cowley: The Impact of Industrialisation upon Oxford, 1918-1939* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 20; Williams, "Introduction".

[27] Spence, "Suburban Labour"; Thorpe, "'One of the Most Backward Areas of the Country'"; Worley, "Building the Party," 85-86.

[28] Matthew Worley, "The Fruits on the Tree: Labour's Constituency Parties between the Wars," in: *The Foundations of Labour*, 197.

many of these bases and obstacles were present in some form in the Peterborough Division. However, to reach the objective of accounting for the development of ideological identities and organisational characters generally and that of the Peterborough DLP specifically, it is important to understand if and how these bases informed party *practices* in the period from 1918 to 1951.

The wartime years (1914-1918) and the reforms of 1918 had a profound impact on Labour's organisation, though the effects were felt differently from place to place. Several areas had an LRC/Labour party before WWI. For example, the Leeds LRC was established in 1902 under the leadership of the ILP and with most local trade unions affiliating within months. While LRCs and the Liberals could cooperate, in Leeds relations were hostile with the credibility of Liberalism as an agent of social reform being eroded away between 1902 and 1911.[29] Leeds was not alone in its early formation, the South Shields Labour party, for example, was established in 1912.[30] In these cases, WWI and post-war reforms were not a trigger for party formation.

That said, there were many areas where Labour's pre-1914 organisation or influence was minimal.[31] However, this did not mean that the cause of independent labour was non-existent, with an increasing number of Labour candidates contesting municipal elections and increasing frustration directed towards the Liberals over the pace of social reform and reticence to support working-men candidatures. The organisational tipping point owed much to developments at the (inter)national scale. As we know, WWI severely damaged the credibility of the Liberals while raising the profile of Labour. Stirrings within Labour were also important, and while general discussions of the party's 1918 Constitution have noted the commitment to

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[29] Dalton, *Labour and the municipality*, 380-385.
[30] Clark, *We Do Not Want the Earth*, 30.
[31] Cole, *A History of the Labour Party from 1914*,10-13.

the creation of DLPs in every division, they have tended to overlook its differential spatial impact. Combined with the 1918 Reform Act, the Constitution functioned as an organisational spark for Labour in London, which saw opportunities to appeal to working-class voters, women, and ethnic and religious minorities such as Irish Catholics and Jews.[32] Intra-regional analysis began to furnish the discussion with some nuance, highlighting that the effects of the Constitution were spatially dependent; examination of extra-regional cases reinforces this. Labour in West London was a direct beneficiary of the Constitution with the adoption of divisional and branch structures alongside individual membership.[33] Furthermore, it may also be the case that the Constitution prompted the amalgamation of the South Shields Labour party and the local trades council, and the establishment shortly afterwards of a local women's section.[34]

The DLPs that were central to Henderson's vision of a new look Labour party had a general organisational structure and set of functions. DLPs typically reproduced the federal principle that operated nationally. As such, they comprised of trade unions and socialists who paid a subscription fee to Labour. Affiliate organisations were joined by membership fee paying individuals from 1918. The decision-making body of DLPs was the General Management Committee (GMC), which consisted of delegates from ward/branch parties and affiliates. A key function of the GMC was to elect an Executive Committee responsible for the general running of the party: 'The executive normally meets once a month; it receives financial statements and reports from the lower echelons of the party, and generally supervises and stimulates the development of party activity.'[35] Multiple roles existed within this structure, including the positions of party secretary and party agent/organiser. The secretary was

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[32] Daniel Weinbren, "Sociable Capital: London's Labour Parties, 1918-45," in: *Labour's Grass Roots*, 194-195.
[33] Humphries, *The Origins and Development of the Labour Movement in West London*, 120-121.
[34] Clark, *We Do Not Want the Earth*, 34.
[35] McKenzie, *British Political Parties*, 542.

responsible for communicating with party officials and providing oversight on all party activities, while the agent/organiser was encouraged to see themselves as the party's managing director.[36]

Our regional inquiry qualified the notion that the 1920s were a period of organisational and electoral consolidation and highlighted variations in developmental trajectories. There were examples of DLPs lagging organisationally, while sub-divisional analysis revealed a mosaic of developmental experiences. Unquestionably, Labour was some distance from becoming a mass party. The extra-regional picture adds further weight to these arguments. Nevertheless, there is evidence of interwar consolidation. It has been contended that Labour was making slow municipal progress before WWI and offered little by way of a distinctive programme compared to its political opponents.[37] However, this changed in the interwar period with steady municipal gains. In addition to a party programme, campaigning and organisational activities became more systematic, with canvassing becoming increasingly prevalent as an electioneering and recruitment method.[38] In many instances, consolidation was aided by trade union manpower and finance to the extent that the absence of such assistance could seriously impinge on DLP viability.[39] The fundamental importance of trade unions to Labour organisation was so extreme in some cases that the very notions of "party organisation" or "party consolidation" seem inappropriate. For instance, the network of institutions that organised miners in place like Durham and South Wales were so extensive that Labour organisation *per se* was minimal.[40] Thus, the notion of party organisation was relative, heavily contingent upon the *locale* and the ways in which the working class was organised.

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[36] *Ibid*., 538-558.

[37] Cahill, "Labour in the Municipalities," 89.

[38] Matthew Worley, "The Fruits on the Tree," 202; and Stuart Ball, Andrew Thorpe and Matthew Worley, "Elections, Leaflets and Whist Drives: Constituency Party Members in Britain between the Wars" in: *Labour's Grass Roots*, 14.

[39] McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party*, 242; and Worley, "The Fruits on the Tree," 196.

[40] Worley, "Building the Party," 75-76 and 85.

Expanding the analysis to divisions beyond East Anglia and the East Midlands underscored environmental and chronological variation in DLP consolidation. Lacking a strong trade union presence in many areas, London Labour was built on local 'advocates' who integrated the party into their local communities through their authenticity and familiarity.[41] In other areas, such as Bradford, Glasgow, Labour drew on local socialist traditions. This had important organisational and *positional* consequences, not least following the ILP's disaffiliation.[42] The example of Oxford highlights variations in the timing of consolidation and the genesis of organisational bases. Struggling due to the combined blows of the collapse of the Labour Government in 1931 and the disaffiliation of the ILP the following year, the arrival of the car industry in Cowley in the 1930s provided a foundation from which Oxford Labour could rebuild.[43] In Birmingham, Labour had to contend with a deeply embedded Unionist tradition that maintained political control of the city and most of the West Midlands throughout the 1920s. By 1885, the Conservatives had raised their vote to 42%, no mean feat in an area where Chamberlainite Liberal Unionism held significant sway. At municipal elections, the Conservatives put forward working men and small tradesmen as candidates. 1886 saw the amalgamation of the Conservatives and Liberal Unionists, squeezing the space available to any opposition; Pugh commented that Chamberlainite candidates 'went virtually unchallenged in every Birmingham constituency until 1929.'[44] That said, Labour did evolve, appointing divisional organisers and establishing a central executive committee, while broadening its appeal and disseminating its message through choirs and cycling groups.[45] Furthermore, Birmingham Labour engaged in organisational *practices* typically associated with the

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[41] Weinbren, "Sociable Capital: London Labour Parties, 1918-45," 194-195.

[42] Cohen, "'Happy Hunting Ground of the Crank'?," 54-78.

[43] Duncan Bowie, *Reform & Revolt in the City of Dreaming Spires: Radical, Socialist and Communist Politics in the City of Oxford 1830-1980* (Westminster: University of Westminster Press, 2018), 212; and Whiting, *The View from Cowley*, 1-3 and 196.

[44] Pugh, *The Making of Modern British Politics*, 85.

[45] Ian Cawood, "The impact of the Representation of the People Act of 1918 on the politics of the West Midlands," *Parliamentary History* 37, no.1 (2018), 85-86.

Conservatives, namely patronage. For example, Oswald Mosley, who stood for Labour against Neville Chamberlain in Birmingham Ladywood in 1924, promised to buy the local Ex-Servicemen's Guild a meeting place. This was a course of action not open to many cash-strapped DLPs.[46] In nearby Coventry, a different set of locally informed *practices* manifested. Here, Labour had an 'unclear' relationship with the trade unions which would, in the 1920s, open up space for the Communists to advance on the shop-floor; though the decline of the Communists in 1922-1923 helped to clarify Labour's identity and the parliamentary/municipal routes to political change.[47] Echoing regional findings, organisational *practices* hinged greatly on the material bases on which DLPs were built and, by extension, the *locale* which they were a part of.

The sub-divisional scale revealed the patchiness of Labour's consolidation. There was no such thing as a Labour division, where the voting-eligible population came out in its entirety to vote for Labour. In Manchester, Labour built on pre-1914 gains in the city's industrial districts where there were relatively high levels of unionisation. Building on the momentum of governmental experience at the national level, the Manchester Labour party felt confident enough to 'take the fight beyond its industrial heartlands into the suburbs…'[48] Similarly, Southampton Labour consolidated its hold in the predominantly working-class wards of Northam, St. Marys, Bitterne, and Pear Tree.[49] In 1923, in Oxford's West Ward, which hosted many of the city's railwaymen, the *Oxford Chronicle* commented that 'all that was done was attributable to the railwaymen'. Earlier, the same newspaper noted the solidarity of the railwaymen, their wives and families when it came to social events.[50] Changes to the local

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[46] Boughton, *Working-Class Politics in Birmingham and Sheffield*, 124-125.

[47] F. Carr, "Municipal Socialism: Labour's Rise to Power," in: *Life and Labour in the Twentieth Century City: The Experience of Coventry*, eds. by B. Lancaster, B. and T. Mason (Coventry, 1986), 172-200.

[48] McHugh, *Labour in the City*, 147-148 and 159.

[49] Heaney, *The Development of Labour Politics in Southampton*, 274.

[50] Whiting, *The View from Cowley*, 136.

housing landscape could work to Labour's advantage, with various London housing developments contributing to party growth.[51] Such spatialised advances hinted at the presence of local *Labourspheres*. Davies' challenge to narratives emphasising religious sectarianism as a driving dynamic of Liverpool politics, highlighted the existence of localised pockets of Labour strength in the city. More specifically, he contended that 'structural features of the local economy' and 'occupation divisions' contributed to 'spatial patterns of distinctive localities or neighbourhood'. Thus, while religion was important, so were occupation, skills, and gender, as well as how Labour responded to them. As it turned out, Labour was strongest amongst 'non-waterfront workers' and craft unions, but weakest amongst those where 'casual port-related employment' was predominant.[52] Each case provides confirmation of the importance of the *location* and *locale* to an understanding of Labour's sub-national identity.

Many divisions with a substantial rural element felt the onus to develop some form of countryside organisation. In many instances, it was a case of building from scratch rather than consolidating. The early post-war Labour apparatus of rural divisions was challenged by the organisational and logistical demands such spaces presented. Rolf reported that, despite the significant number of males engaged in agricultural work, the party found it difficult to organise in Herefordshire, Shropshire, and Worcestershire.[53] In Wales, there was a defined contrast between consolidation in the urban north and South Wales and the limited success in (semi-)rural areas.[54] In Pembrokeshire, it was down to a handful of activists to get the Labour message out across a sprawling constituency.[55] In Devon, trade union organisation was minimal and scattered and individual membership was small. Thus, there was very little matter

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[51] Worley, "The Fruits on the Tree," 198-199.
[52] Davies, *Liverpool Labour*, 19-21 and 234.
[53] Rolf, "Labour and Politics in the West Midlands between the Wars," 44.
[54] Duncan Tanner, "The Pattern of Labour Politics, 1918-1939," in: *The Labour Party in Wales*, 125-127.
[55] McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party*, 151-156; Tanner, "The Pattern of Labour Politics, 1918-1939," 113-139.

with which Labour organisation could coalesce around.[56] Indeed, Labour organisation across the South West, with its sizeable agricultural workforce that reached over 30% in some areas in 1931, was challenging. The same suite of problems that hampered rural organisation elsewhere found expression. Divisions were vast and populations scattered, while local agricultural labourers' trade unionism was a far-cry from the Norfolk exemplar; neither was the number of individual members impressive. Additionally, dislodging the Liberals and the inability to find the correct pitch of appeal to draw voters from the armed forces away from the Conservatives compounded the challenge.[57]

As noted in the national literature and that concerned with East Anglia and the East Midlands, railwaymen were often well-positioned to aid rural organisation, acting as outposts of Labour in the countryside.[58] Indeed, owing to the reluctance on the part of agricultural workers to lead branches of farmworkers' unions, itself a result of fears about victimisation at the hands of landlords, railwaymen took up the mantle of local rural organisation. This was the case in very different parts of the country. As Griffiths wrote:

> 'The organisation of agricultural workers around Dorchester during the First World War was begun by railwaymen in Poole. Railway workers frequently acted as branch officers when other union members were afraid to do so. In one part of Norfolk, six out of eighteen agricultural union branches had secretaries who did not work in agriculture.'[59]

Thus, the structure of railway trade unionism, the spatially scattered residence of those working the railways, placed them in a distinct position compared to other unions, one which was valuable to the Labour party.[60]

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[56] Worley, "Building the Party," 76.
[57] Thorpe, "'One of the Most Backward Areas of the Country'," 217-221.
[58] Groves, *Sharpen the Sickle*, 129.
[59] Griffiths, *Labour and the Countryside*, 206.
[60] Bagwell, *The Railwaymen*, 200.

Despite the challenges, rural organisation was taken seriously in rural and semi-rural divisions, with recruitment drives taking place irrespective of Labour's national efforts. For example, the division of North Buckinghamshire, a significant part of which was rural, though by the 1910s, approximately one-fifth of the electorate were railwaymen out of Wolverton or Bletchley, ran a countryside campaign in 1936.[61] Overall, the level of success attained by these efforts more closely approximated the experiences of areas outside Norfolk. As such, they benchmark some of the challenges faced by Peterborough DLP activists operating in the Soke and North Northants.

The defeat of the 1926 General Strike had mixed consequences for the trade unions and the Labour party. Overall, the outcome produced a fall in both trade union membership and industrial militancy.[62] This was the experience in West London, though local railway workers would continue to form the organisational backbone of the party.[63] In other areas, like Oxford, the strike *per se* had a limited impact but its consequences were nevertheless felt in various arenas of party *practice*. The initial enthusiasm surrounding the General Strike brought previously bickering elements of local Labour movements together. However, the atmosphere soon turned with the collapse of strike action, the fall in trade union membership, and the re-opening of old intra-labour movement wounds. In Oxford, the 'unity of action' that the strike had fostered dissipated soon afterward, as disagreements about the relationship between the Trades Council, which contained communist elements, and the Labour party broke out.[64] Despite its outcome, the General Strike benefitted Labour parties organisationally and electorally. The South Shields Labour party reaped the benefits of the strike assistance it

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[61] Griffiths, *Labour and the Countryside*, 126; and Pelling, *Social Geography*, 118-119.
[62] Noreen Branson, *Britain in the Nineteen Twenties* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976), 249.
[63] Humphries, *The Origins and Development of the Labour Movement in West London*, 32 and 146-147.
[64] Bowie, *Reform & Revolt in the City of Dreaming Spires*, 174.

provided, with bonds strengthening between it and local miners, while Labour in Southampton experienced an increase in its vote share at the municipal elections following the strike.[65]

The collapse of the 1929 to 1931 Labour Government did not produce a universal response or identical outcomes and tended to reflect political dynamics within local labour movement. We saw in the regional analysis how the defection of Jimmy Thomas to the National Government split the party and local trade unions in Derby, illustrating the personal popularity of Thomas and his embodiment of local Labour. The crisis only served to heighten local differences between the Oxford Labour party, Trades Council and University Labour Club, to the point where the Labour party was in such a state of paralysis that it did not put forward a candidate for the 1931 General Election – 'The Oxford Labour Party was now an organisation in name only.'[66] The outcome of the election saw Labour reduced to rump heavily concentrated in highly industrialised and unionised areas. This was particularly revealing in the case of parties in areas with a much later experience of industrialisation, such as those in Oxford, and West London, pointing to both alternative bases of organisation or the later reaping of the benefits of industrialisation.[67] In each case, responses to the crisis of 1931 and the challenges of the rebuild ahead were grounded in local and historical experiences.

Whether national scale events filtered to sub-levels depended greatly on the course of Labour's *place*-based historical development, as did the degree of impact. Like Norwich, the ILP was central to labour politics in Glasgow. The extent of this influence within the Labour party and among the Glasgow electorate was exemplified in 1931. Nationally, Labour received a battering. As part of the Labour federation, ILP candidates were not immune from the aftershocks, with the ILP parliamentary group being reduced to five. Significantly, four of the

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[65] Clark, *We Do Not Want the Earth*, 67; and Heaney, *The Development of Labour Politics in Southampton*, 274.
[66] Bowie, *Reform & Revolt in the City of Dreaming Spires*, 175-176.
[67] Humphries, *The Origins and Development of the Labour Movement in West London*.

five ILP MPs represented divisions in Clydeside. Given how immersed the ILP was in Glasgow politics, it is little surprise that the party's disaffiliation from Labour had profound organisational consequences. Cohen, for instance, argued that the event stripped local Labour parties in Shettleston, Govanhill, Carluke and Lanark of their 'whole organisational structure'.[68] In many instances, ILP disaffiliation led to some degree of membership attrition. The Southall Labour party in West London lost one member following disaffiliation of the local branch of the ILP, though larger losses were recorded in the Lammas and Grosvenor branches of South Ealing, an eventuality testament to the influence of the Ealing ILP.[69] That said, the organisational consequences of the combined effects of the collapse of the Labour government and the ILP's departure could seriously hamper the party's effectiveness. This was the situation in Oxford, where the party had to wait on the renewed spark provided by trade unionism in Cowley, particularly after industrial action in 1934, to provide an organisational base from which to rebuild.[70] Comparison in this manner brings to the surface the different qualities and quantities of ILP strength and influence at divisional and sub-divisional layers and the organisational *dispositions* of DLPs and local Labour parties.

Aligning with national and regional historiographies, the organisational roles of women across divisions shared a great deal of similarity, though this was not universally the case. Labour's 1918 Constitution made clear the party's intention to shift from a sectional to a national party, expanding the organisation of women represented an element of this transition.[71] Women's sections were established in many divisions and women were regularly at the forefront when it concerned social activities.[72] Women were also mobilised as feet-on-the-

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[68] Cohen, "Happy Hunting Ground of the Crank?", 57.

[69] Humphries, *The Origins and Development of the Labour Party in West London*, 106 and 242.

[70] Bowie, *Reform & Revolt in the City of Dreaming Spires*, 212.

[71] Worley, "The Fruits on the Tree," 200; and Ball, Thorpe and Worley, "Elections, Leaflets and Whist Drives," 13.

[72] Carr, "Municipal Socialism," 197; Worley, "Building the Party," 86; and Worley, "The Fruits on the Tree," 205.

ground, conducting canvassing, preparing envelopes for distribution, and organising meetings.[73] Women occupied a significant role in the Labour party throughout the North East of England, and while it was predominantly men who were active in the unions, it was women that ran the parties. Furthermore, there were opportunities for women to become local councillors. The importance of women to the organisational health of the South Shields Labour party was so much so that they constituted the party's 'backbone'.[74] Similar scenarios played out in other partes of the country. That said, there were locations where men dominated and where women's voices and women's issues struggled for an airing; women had little voice in the 'executive organs' of the parties Worley studied in Devon, Durham, Leicestershire, Midlothian-Peebles and Monmouthshire.[75] In Penge, the situation was described as 'a very masculine affair.'[76] Furthermore, in Liverpool, women were involved in organisation at ward and division level. However, women's organisation was lacking in Catholic areas of the city, and there were few routes for progression into leadership roles, as exemplified by the 'tiny proportion' for female Labour councillors in the city.[77]

During WWII, the national party leadership was concerned about maintaining local organisation so as to be prepared for a post-war world. Similar concerns found expression at sub-national scales. Organisational experiences in the years before WWII did not bode well, with a stagnation in membership and concerns over collaboration with the Communists. During the war, DLPs strived to continue their organisational work in the face of adversities, including the departure of men to the armed services, air raids and blackouts, commandeering of meeting halls, as well as *practices* like the publication of local newspapers. Furthermore, the NEC's suspension of new PPC selections in October 1941, a directive which remained in place until

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[73] Ball, Thorpe and Worley, "Elections, Leaflets and Whist Drives," 17.
[74] Clark, *We Do Not Want the Earth*, 36-39.
[75] Worley, "Building the Party," 74 and 86.
[76] Spence, "Suburban Labour," 243.
[77] Davies, *Liverpool Labour*, 233-234.

1944, removed a key *raison d'être* of many DLPs.[78] Spatially, the war had a differential impact,

particularly between urban and (semi-)rural divisions. Thus, while the onset of the Blitz

impacted Labour in the capital, the disruption the war brought to transport services had a

negative effect on attendances at party and public meetings in the countryside.[79] Despite these

hardships, Labour's organisation at the divisional level compared favourably to that of the

Conservatives.[80]

Party Candidates and Organisers: Selection and Recruitment

DLPs retained a 'degree of autonomy' in numerous areas of party activity, including the

practice of candidate and local organiser recruitment.[81] McKenzie placed even stronger

emphasis on DLP independence, stating that they were 'self-governing' in 'most respects'.[82] It

is clear from the historical record that DLPs spent considerable time selecting PPCs, and

although local decisions were subject to NEC approval they provide an invaluable insight into

DLP identity and organisation.[83] The topic of candidate selection is a standard feature of many

works in the Labour historiography. Candidate selection is taken to refer to (in)formal party

rules, as well as decisions extending from the invitation of interested candidates to apply,

through to and including their final endorsement. Precisely which agencies (i.e., trade unions,

socialist societies, etc.) of the party were involved shaped the dynamics of candidate selection.

These dynamics were not fixed and shifted over time. The NEC was responsible for the

ratification of candidate selections. Sign-offs proceeded with very few hiccoughs unless the

person concerned was a communist or suspected of having communist sympathies, at which

point the NEC might deem it necessary to intervene.[84] In part, the rarity of central intervention

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[78] Thorpe, *Parties at War*, 189-90, 201-202 and 205-206.
[79] *Ibid.*, 197-200.
[80] *Ibid.*, 189-190.
[81] Worley, "Introduction," in: *Labour's Grass Roots*, 3.
[82] McKenzie, *British Political Parties*, 538.
[83] *Ibid.*, 539; Worley, "Building the Party," 79.
[84] McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party*, 131-137.

can be explained through reference to the nature of Labour's historical development. Firstly, local parties emerged and developed through local initiative rather than by central diktat, though central manoeuvres could provide formative impetus, as in the case of the 1918 Constitution.[85] Secondly, the voluntary nature of grassroots party work may have deterred the party centre from being too overbearing on the question of candidate selections. However, this did not mean that finding and keeping a PPC was straightforward, especially where the prospects of victory were slim.[86]

Party *practices* in this area confirm the impressions made in the previous chapter. Thus, the process of candidate selection highlighted industrial or other bases as well as ideological leanings of an LRC/DLP and provided insights into organisational character and identity. Depending on a DLP's bases and leanings, the social position or status of an applicant could enhance or mar the likelihood of their appointment. For instance, the selection of trade unionists from a particular industry in heavily unionised areas, such as the appointment of miners in divisions where a significant portion of the employed population worked in the mining industry.[87] In County Durham, the Durham Miners' Association dominated DLPs in the coalfields, with leadership and parliamentary candidatures illustrating the Association's dominion.[88] The South Wales Miners' Federation played such a role in Monmouthshire where mining communities' interlinkages with lodges, chapels, and the union created 'mining fiefdoms' of some DLPs.[89] Jennie Lee's selection for North Lanark in 1923 represented a similar pattern. Her father was a miner, while her grandfather was involved in an official capacity with the Fife Miners' Union.[90] The case of Lee also highlights the importance of *place*.

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[85] Panebainco, *Political Parties*, 90.
[86] Worley, "Elections, Leaflets and Whist Drives," 14.
[87] Worley, "Building the Party," 80-81.
[88] Ball, Thorpe and Worley, "Elections, Leaflets and Whist Drives," 10.
[89] Worley, "Building the Party," 76.
[90] Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain since 1914*, 138.

We can speculate that the fact of her being a miner's daughter resonated with the electorate in North Lanark in a way that her candidature in an area with no mining tradition would not have. Selections in South Shields were consistent with this idea until the party went off-piste with James Chuter Ede of the National Union of Teachers.[91]

Selections could also demonstrate the influence of a specific section of a local labour movement over Labour politics. For instance, Lawson argued that railwaymen were 'the backbone of the Labour Party in the outposts' of the North East of England. Indeed, railwaymen stood as candidates at municipal and parliamentary levels in the region. John Bromley of ASLEF became an MP in the late 1920s, while J.H. Palin in Newcastle West and E. Scott in Newcastle North were railway union candidates in 1929, after 1929 General Election there were 20 railway union MPs.[92] Furthermore, the NUR and TGWU held some influence over candidate selection in parliamentary divisions of West London, while the Co-operative party played a comparable role in Sheffield.[93] Alternatively, selections could display the sway held by certain local personalities, such as Edward Sheerien in Barnsley and Albert Ballard in Hillsborough, who chose candidates with strong local backing and a solid chance of electoral success.[94] Spatially and/or industrially mixed divisions presented opportunities for flexibility in that they were less tied to a person representing a specific section of the local workforce. At the same time, this flexibility welcomed complications as DLPs tried to identify candidates who could appeal across social classes and industries.[95] Having a trade unionist candidate could also entail financial backing from the union concerned.

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[91] Clark, *We Do Not Want the Earth*, 145-148.

[92] Lawson, *Railwaymen in the North East of England*, 226-227.

[93] Humphries, *The Origins and Development of the Labour Movement in West London*; Boughton, *Working-Class Politics in Birmingham and Sheffield*.

[94] Andrew Stephen Trickett, *Labour politics and society in South Yorkshire, 1939-51* (PhD Dissertation: Sheffield Hallam University, 2004), 192-193.

[95] Worley, "Building the Party," 80-81; and Ball, Thorpe and Worley, "Elections, Leaflets and Whist Drives," 11.

While aspects of *location* and *locale* produced specific recruitment patterns, most frequently aligned with industrial and trade union presence, they could foster alternative selection dynamics. In much the same way that union backing could stand a potential candidate in good stead in the selection process, a non-union applicant, or one without the financial backing of their union, could enhance his/her chances of selection by offering to foot the bill for campaigning, etc.[96] The distinctness of the Birmingham *locale* meant that Labour had the challenge of 'weaning working-class support from Chamberlainism'.[97] Indeed, the predominance of the Chamberlain interest impacted Labour's *practices*, including those of candidate selection. The weakness of the trade unions meant that there was a greater reliance on private individuals and sponsorship, such as that of Oswald Mosley in Ladywood.[98] The difficulties associated with securing a PPC were especially pronounced in rural areas that presented logistical challenges in terms of electioneering and where election prospects were unpropitious. Such challenges were compounded by the perennial problem of sufficient funds.[99] This general observation adds weight to the *practices* in Huntingdonshire Division. These examples drawn from areas and divisions of differing character and composition validate the place of candidate selection analysis to ascertain the organisational and ideational essence of DLPs.

Policy Curation and Issue Positioning

Some of the clearest examples of localised party identities emerged in the regional analysis of policy *curation* and *issue positioning*. From its inception, Labour was a 'campaigning organisation', though its nature changed and evolved over time.[100] The possibility of local

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[96] *Ibid.*, 81; and Ball, Thorpe and Worley, "Elections, Leaflets and Whist Drives," 16.
[97] Boughton, *Working-Class Politics in Birmingham and Sheffield*, 123-124; and Barnsby, *Birmingham Working People*, 303-304, 306-307 and 498.
[98] *Ibid.*, 123-125.
[99] Griffiths, *Labour and the Countryside*, 161, 164 and 166-169.
[100] Dominic Wring, *The Politics of Marketing the Labour Party* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 1-9.

curation was contingent on the degree of central (i.e., national) coordination over parliamentary election campaigns and their content. General elections took place within a multi-scaled environment, with party policy focusing on the national economy, widely shared domestic issues, and international events. The expansion of the electorate in 1918 encouraged parties to broaden their appeals; for Labour this meant attracting voters beyond the organised working class. Indeed, it appeared as though the door for any sort of campaigning autonomy for local parliamentary candidates had been shut at the February 1918 party Conference. Initially, the NEC were happy, so long as issues raised by the Committee and the PLP were afforded prominence, for candidates to otherwise 'remain free to include, in addition, any other proposals not inconsistent therewith, and to discuss any other subjects at their own discretion…' However, Conference decided to drop this clause from the Constitution.[101] Nevertheless, via comparison, it was possible to identify multiple instances where national messages were given a local flavour. Furthermore, local party activism was far from glamourous and not financially remunerated. Much local work was unpaid and dependent upon the will of people to offer their personal time for the cause. Local parties were voluntary associations, if the hand of the party centre fell too heavily it could have a deleterious effect on involvement and, thus, organisation. This created enough space for parties to express themselves. Indeed, McKenzie contended that local parties undertook 'their own programme of publicity and propaganda' and conducted 'election campaigns in the constituency on behalf of the party.'[102] That said, there was not unlimited scope for parties to do as they pleased and the party in central office or in parliament could, if it felt so inclined as it did regarding communist influence, apply considerable pressure to the point of disaffiliating local parties.[103] Thus, sub-national party units were never autonomous from the rest of the party. Instead, the

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[101] McKenzie, *British Political Parties*,478-479.
[102] *Ibid.*, 539.
[103] Pugh, *Speak for Britain*, 247-248, 253 and 254-255.

observations in the previous chapter and below illustrate a relationship of mutual interdependence.[104] How such locally *curated* policies landed with their respective electorates varied from place to place, neighbourhood to neighbourhood, and hinged on the historically-grounded dynamics of *location*, *locale* and the *sense of place* that developed.[105] Similarly, the *practice* of *issue positioning* highlighted vertical and horizontal ideational variation. Where parties stood on topics that resonated across spatial scales, such as the General Strike, the disaffiliation of the ILP, Communist entrism and collaboration, the role(s) of women, and the wartime electoral truce provided insights into the organisational and ideological balance within local parties. Furthermore, investigation of party *positioning* enabled a charting of foundational shifts within DLPs and other local organisational expressions of Labour. As with *curation*, and the two are not necessarily independent, local *positioning* had its limits and could provoke a response from the central party offices.

At a cursory glance, there was a great deal of similarity from division to division regarding campaign topics for municipal and parliamentary contests, as well as *positioning* on various issues. Thus, an abundance of DLPs and local parties focused on housing, health, education, and unemployment relief. Labour in Barnsley campaigned on education reform.[106] In Leeds, the local LRC championed sanitation and public housing. Comparable campaign content was widespread, taking in diverse locations including London, Southampton, Birmingham, South Shields and Oxford.[107] Regarding *issue positioning*, and despite a number of female councillors and MPs, there was recognition of women as 'housewives and homemakers', but little

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[104] Cross, "Understanding Power-Sharing within Political Parties."

[105] See Savage, *The Dynamics of Working-Class Politics*; Spence, "Suburban Labour," 240.

[106] Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate*, 197-199; and Ball, Thorpe and Worley, "Elections, Leaflets and Whist Drives," 18.

[107] Dalton, *Labour and the municipality*; Weinbren, "Sociable Capital"; Trickett, *Labour politics and society in South Yorkshire*; Heaney, *The Development of Labour Politics in Southampton*; Cawood, "The impact of the Representation of the People Act of 1918 on the politics of the West Midlands"; Clark, *We Do Not Want the Earth*; Bowie, *Reform & Revolt in the City of Dreaming Spires*. See also, Reynolds and Laybourn, *Labour Heartland*, 31.

adaptation of party ideology to women.[108] Thus, while views on the role of women and women's issues could and did change, experiences of unemployment prompted hostile responses from some men in some areas.[109] There was also a great of local agreement regarding the Popular Front, which was generally opposed, though less on the expulsion of Sir Stafford Cripps, a key proponent of the Front.[110] Furthermore, local disgruntlement at national insistence that the electoral truce in play during WWII be adhered to was very common, revealing very little about distinct local party identities (chapter four).

However, once we scratch beneath the surface the indigenisation of national party messaging becomes apparent.[111] For example, the *curative practices* of the Southampton Labour party regarding unemployment relief were tailored to patterns of local employment patterns, specifically the seasonal and cyclical nature of employment in port-related industries. As such, Labour representatives were prominent advocates of better support for the unemployed and those living in poor housing conditions. In the 1930s, this involved carefully balancing the need for economy while emphasising the importance of spending on relief works for the unemployed.[112] Elsewhere, the ILP turned overcrowding and poor living conditions into a key campaigning platform.[113] Similarly, the long term and well-reported issues of overcrowding and slum conditions in South Shields became a central plank of Labour's campaigning in the 1910s and 1920s. The local party was central in the establishment of 'tenant defence leagues' to help progress the housing situation.[114] Additionally, the area was badly affected by unemployment, particularly in the 1930s; in 1934, the proportion of those seeking working stood at 30.9%. This prompted a localised response. In the 1920s, the party permitted

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[108] Worley, "Building the Party," 83-84; and Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain*, 134.
[109] Hannam, "Women and Labour Politics"; and Savage, *The Dynamics of Working-Class Politics*, 167-168.
[110] Reynolds and Laybourn, *Labour Heartland*, 143-144.
[111] Worley, "Building the Party," 82-83.
[112] Heaney, *The Development of Labour Politics in Southampton*, 30-37, 116-125, 206 and 227.
[113] Griffin, *The spatial politics of Red Clydeside*; Daniel Carrigan, *Patrick Dollan*.
[114] Clark, *We Do Not Want the Earth*, 47-52.

the affiliation of the local Unemployment Committee at no charge and encouraged one of their activists to stand as an official Unemployment Committee candidate, even though this would mean no official Labour candidate in a winnable seat.[115]

As a *location* and *locale*, London differed in many regards from Southampton and South Shields. Regardless, examples of policy *curation* to local circumstances abound, adding further weight to consideration of this area in charting party identity. In his study of Labour in London, Weinbren argued that the party focused on modernity and efficiency in suburban areas, while its inner-city message emphasised unity and social support, particularly in areas with significant Irish or Jewish populations. Indeed, *curation* extended down to neighbourhood level, with the party providing support to Jews considering emigration to Palestine and linking in with Irish self-determination groups. The response of some London Labour parties to the national party crisis of 1931 displayed both the local foundational qualities and *curation*, the capital's bedrock of local advocates combined with an emphasis on local issues likely enabled the party in West Ham to retain all its seats except one at the 1931 local elections.[116] Such contextual *practices* were designed to shore-up the party's support amongst specific (immigrant) communities and represent a clear example of how *place* impacted Labour's character. In suburban London, specifically areas that traditionally voted Conservative, Labour was inclined to adapt its message to win over voters. During the period of pronounced industrial unrest (1911 to 1914), Labour in Penge emphasised class identity and party as a home for the working-class regardless of ideology or earlier affiliations; three of Labour's candidates in the 1913 municipal elections had earlier, and publicly, opposed the party.[117]

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[115] *Ibid.*, 52-53.
[116] Weinbren, "Sociable Capital," 195-197.
[117] Spence, "Suburban Labour," 242.

In addition to localised slants on national party policy, the *positioning* of local parties on a range of issues served to highlight distinct identities generated over time by specific circumstances. Contrary to the ambivalence of the party leadership, Labour activists participated in the General Strike, and opposed the punitive legislation (i.e., the Trade Union and Trades Disputes Act of 1927) introduced after its collapse.[118] The regional analysis depicted varied *positional* responses to the ILP's disaffiliation, noting that Labour-ILP cooperation persisted in Norwich owing to the historical relationship between the two. From a slow start, the Sheffield ILP maintained that the advancement of socialism would benefit from continued cooperation with Labour, whereas the Birmingham ILP supported secession owing to growing disillusionment with the Labour leadership. As in the case of Norwich, these variations in *positional practice* stemmed from local experience. ILPers in Sheffield recognised that their achievement of power and enactment of good works owed in some part to the vehicle of the Labour party. This opinion, however, was not shared in Birmingham.[119]

Developments in Gateshead present a very different example of localised *positioning*, but one which serves to amplify how such *practices* provide a window into party identities. The Gateshead Division was long characterised by poverty and overcrowding; it was also overwhelmingly working class. The interwar period witnessed the decimation of traditional heavy industries in the area, with the monthly average unemployment rate for the town standing at 44.6% in 1932. The Gateshead Labour party became embroiled in a number of legal disputes in the 1920s and 1930s. For example, in the 1920s, the inequalities of the rating system, exacerbated by the industrial action of miners locally in 1925 and nationally during the General Strike, brought the party, which had majority control of the local council, into legal conflict with the central government. This was part of a pattern of behaviour. In October 1931, the

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[118] Reynolds and Laybourn, *Labour Heartland*, 31.
[119] Boughton, *Working-Class Politics in Birmingham and Sheffield*, 279-280.

Gateshead party proposed, though nothing came of it, refusing to apply the means test.[120] Both stances can be linked to the poverty of the local area and whose resolution was at the forefront of the minds of Labour activists. The above examples are by no means exhaustive but serve to illustrate how (alliteration aside) *place* permeates the *positional practices* of political parties.

Conclusion

Despite the abundance of local Labour party studies, there exists no methodological consistency in terms of how source material is analysed which has impeded the practice of comparison. The introduction of a *spatial-institutionalist* framework rectified this situation. It did so by building on the foundations of the mountain of existing material. The four key areas of analysis for the understanding of the organisational and ideological character of sub-national Labour parties that were applied to intra-regional DLPs were reiterated and applied to parties in extra-regional divisions to further solidify their veracity. This exercise confirmed the utility of each area of analysis and the linkage between *practice* and organisational bases regardless of their genesis in time and space. Furthermore, examination of each area in comparative perspective brought into sharper relief local idiosyncrasies as well as horizontal and vertical (mis)alignment. Indeed, the grounding of party *practices* in their *location* and *locale* and the accompaniment of this analysis by within and across scale comparison pinpointed precisely where Labour was at its most organisationally and ideationally eccentric.

This analysis of extra-regional peers enables a more detailed iteration of the developmental trajectory of the Peterborough DLP to be constructed. Intra-regional and extra-regional analysis confirmed that the reforms and re-organisations of 1918 could have a profound impact on divisional parties, permeating their organisational and ideational *practices*. Thus, we might expect that the formation of the Peterborough DLP at the crossroads of

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[120] Sam Davies, "Legal Challenges to Labour Rule: Gateshead Politics between the Wars," *North East History* 41 (2010), 11-13 and 19-20.

franchise reform, party re-organisation, and a boundary review that melded two divisions of contrasting character together, would make a deep impression on its subsequent development. Furthermore, Labour's general experience of organisation in rural areas was one characterised by seemingly insurmountable difficulties, the Norfolk exception becoming more pronounced in this wider analysis. At the same time, examples of consolidation in urban areas during the 1920s abound, though the contributions of Savage and examples beyond Preston illustrate the importance of sub-divisional analysis to ascertain a more detailed picture of Labour's local identity. Indeed, given the vital organisational role played by railwaymen, as confirmed by national, regional, and extra-regional historiographies, their sizeable number in Peterborough presents a potentially positive sign. As we shall see, echoes of Labour's experience in rural *and* urban divisions are to be heard in Peterborough between 1918 and 1951 in the realms of party formation, party organisation, candidate (and organiser) selection, as well as policy *curation* and issue *positioning*. The relative novelty of Peterborough appears to reside in the circumstances of its formation and their percolation into numerous party *practices* throughout the entirety of the interwar period and beyond.

Chapter 7: The Development of the Peterborough DLP, 1900-1951

Introduction

The stage-setting of the previous chapters is utilised here as a filter through which to understand the developmental trajectory of the Peterborough DLP. Thus, the comparative framework that ran as an underlying thread in the regional discussion before being fully explicated in the previous chapter is turned on the Peterborough Division. The analysis demonstrates how the Peterborough DLP's formation at the *crossroads of franchise reform; boundary reform; and the introduction of a new Labour constitution* played a fundamental role in informing its *practices* across the four key areas of analysis from its inception in 1918 through to 1951. The genesis and formation of the party was in many ways consistent with that found in other parts of the country. The evolving disillusionment of working people with the Liberals in the early 1900s, particularly those within the PTUC, was crucial for the Peterborough DLP's organisational and electoral development. The timing of its formation in October 1918 illustrated the catalysing roles of WWI and the 1918 Reform Act, as well as Labour's own reimagining as a 'national party' in its 1918 Constitution. While there were local proponents of independent labour's organisational expression before 1918, a multi-scaled array of factors prohibited its manifestation.

The depictions of the organisational and ideational bases of (sub-)divisional parties in East Anglia, the East Midlands and beyond demonstrated the range of possible configurations. The Peterborough DLP shared many of these strands; however, the quality and quantity of each was distinct. Narratives of Labour's development in both urban *and* (semi-)rural areas resonated with experiences in Peterborough. Organisationally, the Peterborough DLP contended with challenges of recruiting, building, and maintaining party structures among scattered populations at some distance from the Peterborough metropole. Within municipal

boundaries, a different narrative played out. Labour effectively stormed the once Liberal fortress in the city's North Ward, establishing a local *Laboursphere* built largely on the presence of a substantial number of railway and associated workers. Indeed, the organisational role played by Peterborough's railwaymen echoes interpretations reached in the national, regional and local historiographies. Thus, the spatial variability of the DLP's development qualifies arguments regarding the 1920s as a period of 'consolidation'; indeed, several sub-divisional locations only established branches for the first time in the 1940s.[1] Additionally, Peterborough was not immune from the filtration of national issues, and while the disaffiliation of the ILP barely registered, the crisis of 1931 carried organisational consequences. This outcome aligned broadly with the national picture, as did the DLP's approach to the General Strike, the electoral truce and the role of women. The defining organisational feature of the DLP was its intention to be an authentically divisional party which was reflected in practical attempts to build lasting party structures in urban and non-urban spaces.

Rough patterns of candidate recruitment were identified in the regional and local analyses. Party *practices* accorded with those found in spatially or industrially mixed divisions, with recruitment confounded by limited financial resources. Interestingly, candidate attrition highlighted the percolation of space and geography into decision-making. Furthermore, the influence of space and *place* bled into the realm of party organiser selection. In the first instance, the final choice reflected a strategic decision designed to be of organisational and electoral benefit in rural portions of the division. Many of the most profound insights regarding PPCs related to the areas *issue positioning* and policy *curation*. Here, candidate *positions* on party organisation reflected the division's heartland-hinterland dynamic. Standpoints on issues including the General Strike, the electoral truce, Sir Stafford Cripps and the Popular Front, communist affiliation, and the growing post-WWII distance between the party centre and the

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[1] Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, 48.

grassroots accorded with general patterns. However, in terms of policy *curation*, the Peterborough DLP displayed its split personality as it attempted to appeal, not always successfully, to urban and rural voters. Additionally, Frank Horrabin's time in the division (1926 to 1932), and that of Winifred Horrabin, presented a very different take on *curation* as he attempted to insert the square peg of his Marxism in the circle of divisional Labour politics. While frustrating for Horrabin, his efforts emphasised the moderation of Labour politics in Peterborough, reflecting its historical and organisational foundations.

The Emergence and Formation of the Peterborough DLP, 1900-1918

In 1918, the PTUC decided 'that the time had come for politics to be a separate entity' in its work and, with the help of John Mansfield, 'formed the Peterborough Local Labour Party.'[2] As this implies, Labour sympathies were present within the Council before 1918.[3] One account of Labour and socialist development in Peterborough Division described the situation from 1900 to 1914 as 'quiescent.'[4] As an explanation, this is unsatisfactory. Municipal election results from the 1899 to 1914 period reveal that Labour was far from toppling the Liberals. However, the crystallisation of labour disillusionment with the Liberals was a general, regional, and local trend repeated in Peterborough and there were growing calls for independent labour representation within the PTUC, amongst railwaymen and others, in the *ante-bellum* period. This gradual disengagement, evident in the increasing number of independent labour municipal candidates, was an important factor in the breakdown of the Progressive Alliance locally.

However, this alone does not explain the timing of the Peterborough DLP's formation. International events and their domestic consequences played an important role. Serious splits within the Liberal party, increased recognition of the trade unions, and the enhanced credibility

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[2] Tom Browning, PAS/WTB/13/4. Peterborough Archives.
[3] This has been confirmed by the work of Perry.
[4] Laybourn, "The Peterborough Labour Movement."

gained by Labour as a part of the wartime government helped create conditions conducive to the formation of a divisional party in Peterborough. Reference to its regional peers helps to account for the delay. The limited local presence and significance of socialist societies placed Peterborough in contrast to many of its regional and provincial peers.[5] Regarding ILP organisation, a local branch was formed in 1905 but quickly deteriorated, leaving behind little record of its impact. A branch of the BSP made a similarly indiscernible impression.[6] Given the limited strength of alternative bases from which to build, labour's disengagement from the Liberal fold was pivotal for the Peterborough DLP's formation. The precise timing in owed much to the nature and development of the local labour movement. The electoral durability of the Liberals and their ability to hold onto trade unionists also contributed to the delay in local Labour party formation (chapter one). As did Peterborough's status as single-member division, precluding the opportunity for working men or women to run alongside a Liberal candidate as occurred in Norwich and Derby. In rural space, the pre-1914 appearance of a North Northants DLP was even less likely. Lacking the traditions and dynamics of rural radicalism in Norfolk, North Northants bore closer resemblance to Huntingdonshire where DLP formation was delayed until after WWI and the introduction of the 1918 Constitution.

October 1918 marked the point of final departure in Peterborough, when the supporters of independent labour representation struck out, organisationally, beyond the Liberal fold. It also marked the culmination of an ideational shift. Soon after its formation, John Mansfield, at the time chairman of the Peterborough DLP, made clear that the workingmen and women of Labour were no longer answerable to the Liberals. In response to a comment made by Lloyd-George concerning how he would not tolerate any opposition to the Coalition, Mansfield was reported in the *Peterborough Advertiser* as saying that: 'We [the Labour party] will send men

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[5] *Peterborough Standard*, 29 October 1943.
[6] Laybourn, "The Peterborough Labour Movement," 2.

to the House of Commons free and unfettered to vote for any legislation that can be seen and proved to be for the betterment of the people.'[7] This assertion of an independent labour identity was rammed home in further comments reported in the same newspaper:

> 'He [Mansfield] wanted to state clearly that his own attitude would be, and that the party's attitude in his opinion would be, that they would support the Coalition, always providing that the legislation introduced…would not act to the detriment of the important section of the community known as Labour…They reserved to themselves the right to maintain their identity, so that the power could be used, if occasion arose, in the best interests of that section of the community that they claimed to represent – they would not go to the country as part of a Coalition, but they maintained their identity in the best interests of those whom they represented.'[8]

Local Labour activists were not cowed by Lloyd-George and made the compelling argument that the Coalition and its constituent parts did not necessarily reflect the interests of working people. When compared to pre-1914 statements about the division being animated by a particular brand of Liberalism, the utterances of Mansfield represent something of a coming-of-age, a consciousness of interests specific to the working-class which the Liberals had shown themselves incapable of addressing.[9] A new political organisation was required to match the shift in working-class mindset.

McKibbin's contention that the introduction of the 1918 Constitution reflected "business-as-usual" is a fair assessment for many local parties. However, the correctness of this argument in some instances does not disprove exceptions. Aligning more strongly with Cole, Peterborough can be placed in the transformational camp. The timing of the emergence of the Peterborough points to the catalysing effect of the 1918 Constitution in conjunction with

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[7] *Peterborough Advertiser*, 14 December 1918.
[8] *Ibid.*, 14 December 1918.
[9] See Holford, *Reshaping Labour*, 1-7.

range of multi-scaled factors including wartime experience, electoral reform, and the post-war breakdown of the local Progressive Alliance. With the directives of the Constitution ringing in their ears, politically independent labour activist engaged in a process of party-building. However, it was the boundary review that played the predominant instructive role when it came to the practicalities of organisation and identity formation.

A House Divided? Urban and Rural Organisation in Peterborough Division, 1918-1951

Party Activity and Branch Party (Re)formation

Party activities carried out by the Peterborough DLP matched those found in intra- and extra-regional divisions, including canvassing, garden fetes and whist drives.[10] However, the conduct of such activities was hampered by issues associated with the establishment and maintenance of branch party organisation. Sub-divisional parties faced the stubborn challenge of cycles of formation, decay, and re-formation. This was most acutely felt during years immediately following the Peterborough DLP's formation and after the 1931 crisis. This is perhaps unsurprising, the first bout of organisational difficulties occurring at a time when the DLP was trying to make sense of its novel environmental surroundings, and the second when Labour was at its interwar lowest ebb. Such challenges were not felt equally across the division. Indeed, the analysis of local party formation brings into sharp relief the contrasting experience of Labour in the municipality and in the surrounding countryside.

Despite the challenges of organising across a geographically and industrially diverse and expansive territory, party activists were determined to give themselves the best chance of securing as much support as possible. Rather than forsake those areas further removed from the city centre, the party would seek to permeate into as many cracks and crevices as possible. The aim of expanding the spatial reach of the party was indicative of the identity the DLP

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[10] Peterborough DLP Minute Book. 31 May 1947; 23 August 1947; 19 June 1948; 14 May 1949; 2 July 1949.

wished to forge for itself, that of a party that was as relevant to voters outside municipal boundaries as those within them. In addition to the Peterborough Local Labour party, correspondence from the DLP's General Committee in March 1919 indicated other sites of party organisation. For instance, there was a party in Thrapston located in the far south of the Northants side of the division, as well as one in Helpston, Ringstead, Titchmarsh, Walton and Woodford; there was also agreement to set up a local party in Gretton, as well as a request to give attention to the formation of another branch in Harringworth.[11]

If the Peterborough Division were a blank canvas and the DLP an artist, the plan was to paint it with as much red as possible, ideally right to the edges. However, plans and reality did not align. Initially, some of the reports from the branches made for positive reading. The Gretton party claimed 65 members in 1919, while reports from Woodford and Brigstock branches spoke of 'steady progress.'[12] In the case of Brigstock, however, early progress was followed by the need for the party's reformation. By April 1920, the Woodford Local Labour party had to be reformed, something that the General Committee resolved to address, though operations remained 'temporarily suspended' until at least October 1920. In January 1923, there were hopes to 'form a local party there,' suggestive of recurring organisational difficulties.[13] Elsewhere, the local party in Walton was facing difficulties. In July 1921, it was unable to secure a meeting of either its committee or members. Nevertheless, the Woodford and Walton parties appeared to be on an upward trend by April 1923 when it was reported that both were 'going well.'[14]

However, as the fortunes of one location gave the appearance of growth and sustainability, it was the turn of others to get caught in the vicious cycle. Despite an event held

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[11] *Ibid*., 31 May 1919.
[12] *Ibid.*
[13] *Ibid*., 29 January 1923.
[14] *Ibid*., 7 April 1923.

in April 1923 for the reformation of the Ringstead party being well attended, it was reported that, 'the party at present cannot be reformed because of unemployment etc.'[15] Unemployment did not help matters, but with support already thin on the ground and limiting the ability to fund organisational efforts through affiliation fees, the party was caught in a difficult place. The Thrapston party underwent its own reformation. A series of open-air meetings were held between 4 and 8 June 1923. These proved a success, despite the challenges posed by the size of the constituency and travel arrangements. It was reported that, '…as a result of the effort the parties at Ringstead [15 June] and Thrapston [31 June] have been reformed.'[16] In the same year, there was a somewhat cryptic series of reports and resolutions regarding Helpston. Signs there were 'encouraging,' but, more worryingly, reports went onto to state that, 'our [the Divisional Committee's] attention is needed there.' Meanwhile, there was no party in formation at Titchmarsh, as well as no recent activity at Thrapston.[17] The unstable foundations of the Eye and Gretton parties were exposed in July 1923, though there was no mention of party collapse, only the need for attention. The Peterborough DLP tried to build across the division, but it was becoming clear that it was difficult to establish firm roots and build any sort of organisational momentum in many areas located away from Peterborough.

The open-air meetings of June 1923 were not one-of-a-kind ventures from the city to the countryside. Reports fed back to the Divisional Committee, as well as the discussions themselves, demonstrated a keenness to organise and embed Labour. Garden fetes and summer rallies, often organised with the help of sympathetic individuals in the branch areas.[18] As such, there was a drive to represent division wide. However, the reality of organising across a vast area, up against the local Conservatives who tended to receive solid support, proved a real

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[15] *Ibid.*
[16] *Ibid.*, 7 July 1923.
[17] *Ibid.*, 7 April 1923.
[18] *Ibid.*, 18 August 1923; 31 May 1924; and 16 May 1926.

challenge as the experience of stop-start local/branch Labour party (re)formation demonstrated.[19]

Reports of the dilapidated state of branch organisation beyond Peterborough reduced in frequency with the arrival of Frank Horrabin and R.A. Watson as organiser and the injection of organisational energy they provided. As well as being an accomplished cartoonist and cartographer, Horrabin made his name as an itinerant speaker, this was especially so during the months before and during the General Strike.[20] Horrabin would draw on this experience when campaigning and building party organisation in Peterborough. The arrival of Watson and Horrabin certainly 'breathed life into a latent party organisation', even if it is a little underappreciative of the efforts of Labour's early pioneers. Nevertheless, that the newcomers began to 'coordinate and extend' the party's activity beyond the purely electoral is confirmed by local evidence.[21]

Within months of their arrival, there was a spate of organisational activity in the form of meetings and divisional rallies. This newfound dynamism was reflected in activities beyond the confines of the city. In October and November 1926, Horrabin was to travel the Division giving addresses at Brigstock, Eye, Glapthorne, Helpston, Oundle, attending numerous ward meetings in Peterborough, Ringstead, Walton, Werrington and Woodford.[22] Watson and Horrabin were keen to extend this tour elsewhere in the constituency to Barnack, Glinton, Gretton, Harringworth, Newborough, Thrapston and Wittering. This list demonstrates the intentions of the DLP to appeal across the length and breadth of the division; in short, to be a truly *divisional* party. This was further illustrated by a request to the NEC to have Peterborough

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[19] *Peterborough Standard*, 7 June 1929.
[20] Letter from Frank to Winifred Horrabin, 10 May 1926. Papers and Publications relating to Winifred and Frank Horrabin. UDX 283/1. Hull History Centre.
[21] Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate*, 91.
[22] Peterborough DLP Minute Book. 9 October 1926.

included in the list of rural constituencies for Labour Rural Campaign.[23] Propaganda efforts were not limited to the divisional tour described above. The period from April 1927 to January 1928 was described as one of 'considerable activity.'[24] Similarly, that from January to April of the same year was remarked upon as a 'period of activity both in propaganda, social and organisation.'[25] The activity did not cease there. When Horrabin addressed the Divisional Committee/Annual General Meeting in April 1928, he called for 'increased work by visits to the division particularly in view of the general election in 1929.'[26] The momentum would be kept up beyond the election, with parliamentary work, meetings and socials being undertaken and reported on in 1930 and 1931.[27] In effect, the party became a continuous campaign and propaganda vehicle.

While the period from 1918 to the mid-1920s constituted an acute one regarding party (re-)formation, the process was not bounded by it. Indicating the filtration of the 1931 national crisis, several sub-divisional parties grappled with their own cycles. This was the case in Collyweston, Helpston, and Oundle.[28] Once again, it was the market towns and villages beyond the municipality that were worst affected. Problems persisted deep into the 1930s. In May 1937, a Peterborough DLP sub-committee held a discussion under the heading of "Revival of Parties", where delegates recognised the need to arrange meetings for the purposes of 'strengthen[ing] the parties' in Ringstead, Woodford, Eye, Helpston, and Thrapston.[29] In some ways, the fact that re-formation took place in several rural areas of the division pointed to some degree of success in that party structures existed earlier. There were numerous locations where party organisation only appeared for the first time in the 1940s, such as Benefield, Easton-on-

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[23] *Ibid.*, 18 December 1926.
[24] *Ibid.*, 25 April 1928.
[25] *Ibid.*, 16 May 1926.
[26] *Ibid.*, 25 April 1928.
[27] *Ibid.*, 8 February 1930; 25 April 1931.
[28] Laybourn, "The Peterborough Labour Movement," 17-18.
[29] Peterborough DLP Minute Book. 8 May 1937.

the-Hill, and Kings Cliffe.[30] However, the condition of party organisation in the late 1930s was enough of a concern that the long-time party agent, R.A. Watson, resigned.[31] It was only following a review conducted by George Shepherd, the national agent, that Watson withdrew his resignation. Among other remedial measures, a propaganda committee was to act with Watson 'both outside Peterborough and in the Wards'.[32] He was not alone. The challenges of rural organisation were a significant driver of Ernest Davies' (PPC, 1935 to 1938) resignation (see below); the difficulties experienced by the Peterborough DLP in relation to organising in predominantly rural areas accord with findings from the national and sub-national literature.[33]

The minutes indicate that wartime organisation was not straightforward, and there was a real need to ensure the party structures were at least well maintained, this was especially evident in rural areas. The DLP was reminded of the necessity of maintaining the health of the organisation soon after war broke out, with the North Ward Women's Section requesting 'greater efforts in the Party work in the Constituency etc.'[34] Acknowledging the existence of the electoral truce and according with the absence of such regarding party organisation, Samuel Bennett, the Peterborough DLPs PPC, instructed that work be executed to 'keep the party work as effective as possible under the circumstances.'[35] At the 1942 AGM, the party organiser gave his report on party organisation after which it was resolved: 'That we write to the Agricultural Labourers['] Union and other Trade Unions to ascertain if they will help in this matter.'[36]

Neither was the end of the war a universal organisational panacea, with reports of numerous parties in rural areas being 'restarted'.[37] We should perhaps not judge party activists

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[30] Laybourn, "The Peterborough Labour Movement," 17-18.
[31] Peterborough DLP Minute Book. 22 January 1938.
[32] *Ibid*., 23 April 1938 and 30 April 1938.
[33] McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party*, 151-156; Tanner, "The Pattern of Labour Politics, 1918-1939," 113-139.
[34] Peterborough DLP Minute Book. 9 December 1939.
[35] *Ibid*., 9 December 1939.
[36] *Ibid*., 25 April 1942.
[37] *Ibid*., 22 November 1947; 15 May 1948.

to harshly in this regard given the organisational disruption caused by the war. On the other hand, the seriousness with which rural organisation was considered was reflected in the appointment of sub-agents for different sections of the division, such Mrs Stedmen in the Northern Area (i.e., Eye and Collyweston), A.C.W. Smith for the Central Area (i.e., Oundle), and A.C. Line in the Southern Area (i.e., Thrapston).[38] Additionally, the cycles of organisational illness were not cured post-WWII, with the party in Eye in late 1950 'in danger of becoming defunct'.[39] Conversely, the Peterborough Local Labour party could boast an unbroken line from 1918 to 1951, though the relative organisational durability of parties in Ringstead, Thrapston, Helpston, and Woodford is noteworthy despite episodes of decay. Indeed, as late in the archival record as 1950, A.C. Line, the party president, commented on the 'cleavage that seems to exist between the two sections [i.e., urban and rural].' It was resolved that 'increased social contact between the City and Country members would be desirable and with that in view, a Social Event be arranged in the very near future, for the purpose of bringing together City and Country parties.'[40] The fraught dynamic between city and country animated the DLP *practices* over more than three decades.

Overall, these examples are testament to the perseverance of local Labour activists. However, they also highlight that organisational challenges were more pronounced in the countryside than in the city. There are several explanations for this state of affairs which are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Taking our cue from other local and national studies, evidence points towards Labour organisation being stronger in urban areas, particularly areas of considerable unionisation, compared to the countryside where they faced problems of financing, navigating, and reaching sparsely populated areas and isolated communities. At the regional scale, the historical challenges of organising agricultural labourers in

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[38] *Ibid.*, 28 January 1950; 4 March 1950.
[39] *Ibid.*, 30 December 1950.
[40] *Ibid.*, 5 May 1950.

Northamptonshire in the nineteenth century may have contributed towards shaky foundations upon which to build the party in the local countryside.[41] Underpinning all of this was the boundary review, which framed the thinking of the Peterborough DLP and its organisational efforts, the challenges of financing and reaching every voter being compounded by the sheer scale of the division. The picture was somewhat rosier in the city.

Urban Organisation: The Predominance of Peterborough

The organisational strength of the Peterborough DLP was spatially uneven, with the party's engine located within the municipal boundaries. However, even here there were differences, with particular wards or neighbourhoods presenting as more solidly Labour than others; this has been demonstrated in electoral terms (chapter one). It was also reflected in the spatial distribution of social activities. The New England and Paston districts of the city were hives of activity. Social events and other activities including whist drives organised by Labour women in Paston, dances under the auspices of Paston and North Ward Labour parties, as well as day schools for Labour and Co-operative women arranged by the Northants division of the Labour Women's Advisory Council.[42] The success of organisation in the Paston area prompted a meeting in June 1949 on the possibility of dividing the ward so as to 'cope with increasing membership.'[43] Concurring with the arguments of Savage regarding the importance of the neighbourhood in understanding localised social and political dynamics, the site of much of Peterborough Labour's activities informs us about its character, in particular its local embeddedness in the city's railway and engineering communities.

That said, the locations of the earliest meetings of the Peterborough DLP gave the impression that there were multiple focal points of equal organisational strength within the

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[41] Horn, *Agricultural Labourers' Trade Unionism in Four Midland Counties*.
[42] *Peterborough Standard*, 28 March 1941; 2 April 1937; and 11 December 1936.
[43] *Ibid.*, 24 June 1949.

division. The conference that agreed to the formation of the DLP was attended by delegates

from the Peterborough Labour party as well as the TDTLC, five from each. The meeting itself

took place in Oundle in the North Northants portion of the division.[44] This critical moment

intimated at the multiple geographical pivots of the party, with the bulk of the division captured

between two centres, one in Peterborough and the other centred on Oundle and Thrapston. In

terms of organisation, any centre-periphery tensions or power struggles between the city and

Oundle or Thrapston were, if not non-existent, then well concealed. The conference agreed that

Oundle would be the temporary venue for future meetings concerned with the formation of a

divisional party. Additionally, a member from Thrapston was appointed as party secretary *pro

tem* by unanimous decision. Discussions on who should be chair and secretary on a more

permanent basis, and where they ought to hail from, were put on hold for a future meeting. A

month later, E.M. Pask (Peterborough) was appointed party secretary *pro tem*.[45]

The redrawing of the boundaries shaped the composition of the Peterborough DLP's

various committees; a spatial balance of representation soon emerged. The first instance of

elections to the party's divisional and executive committees took place in January 1919. The

presidency of the DLP went to a Peterborough man, while the vice-presidents represented

Helpston, Thrapston and Woodford. The post of treasurer went to J.C. Lemmy (Peterborough),

while that of financial secretary went to J. Gray (Titchmarsh); Pask continued as party

secretary. Nominations for the Executive Committee indicated a sharing of responsibilities

between Peterborough and Thrapston, reflecting the spatial origins of the party. Of the 11

members elected, five represented Thrapston, four Peterborough, one from Ringstead, and the

remaining one from Woodford.[46] In 1923, W. Jones was elected President, while the vice-

presidency went to Sarah Donaldson, also representing the city. Mansfield took the

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[44] Peterborough DLP Minute Book. 12 October 1918.
[45] *Ibid*., 29 November 1918.
[46] *Ibid*., 18 January 1919.

secretaryship and Digby that of Treasury and Financial Secretary. The lone non-Peterborough officer was J.C. Atkin of Walton, who occupied the other vice-president spot; though the Executive Committee selections better reflected the diversity of spaces covered by the division and party, including representatives from Thrapston, Woodford, Titchmarsh as well as Peterborough.[47] This pattern of behaviour was consistent through the 1930s and 1940s.[48]

However, the stop-start experience of party (re)formation was demonstrative of an alternative developmental pattern. The areas affected, including Woodford and Brigstock, were some geographic distance from the nominal centre of Peterborough. The Peterborough Local Labour party, alongside the DLP itself, did not share the struggle of periodic party (re)formation. Instead, Peterborough began to exert an organisational gravitational pull. Figure 9 illustrates this starkly. Of forty-seven meetings[49] organised and held by the DLP from 1918 to 1926, forty-four took place at central locations in Peterborough. The gravitational pull of Peterborough as a meeting place did not cease in 1926 but was a persistent feature of organisational *practice* in the division. Indeed, the issue did not go uncommented on when, following the re-organisation of the DLP into sections, the Joint Committee of the Southern Section, centred on Thrapston, requested that 'alternate Divisional meetings and occasional E.C. meetings be held in the Southern Section'.[50] Such *practices* reflected realities on the ground, with railwaymen and engineers, the party's key footsoldiers, concentrated in the municipality; this also made the city the site of the divisions most mature trade unionism.

Figure 9. Location of Peterborough DLP "Events," 1918-1926

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[47] *Ibid.*, 7 April 1923.
[48] *Ibid.*, 1 April 1933; 24 March 1934; 4 April 1936; 20 April 1940; and 25 April 1942.
[49] Meetings covered include Annual General Meetings, Conferences, Divisional Committee Meetings, Executive Committee Meetings, Finance Committee Meetings, General Committee Meetings, Local Labour Party and Divisional Party Meetings, Propaganda Committee Meetings, Provisional Committee Meetings, Special Meetings.
[50] Peterborough DLP Minute Book. 21 August 1948; and 4 September 1948.
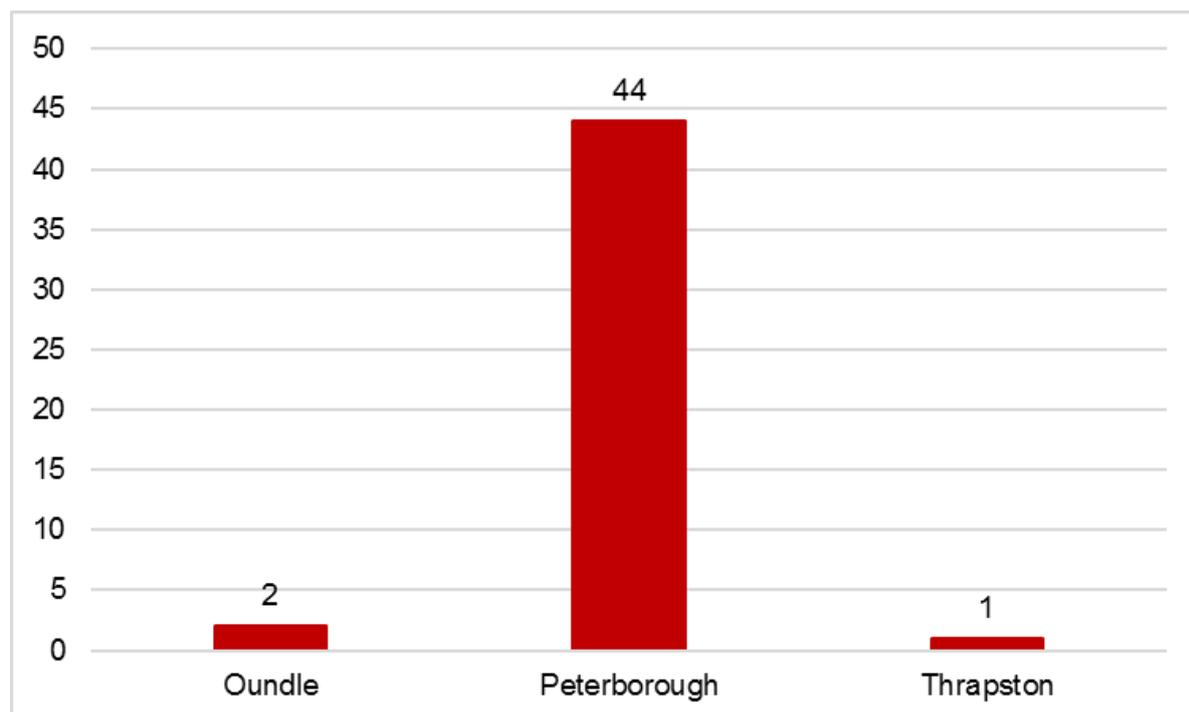
Organisational Footsoldiers: Railwaymen in the City and the Countryside

Scholars of the ILP have commented on how it plugged gaps in Labour's constituency organisation, in some cases playing a crucial developmental role. A local ILP tradition extending back to the 1890s could expedite the formation of local Labour organisation and hasten working-class and trade union departure from the Liberal fold (chapter five). Therefore, the minimal ILP influence in Peterborough may have delayed the municipal and organisational advance of those sympathetic to Labour's cause. Without a viable section of the ILP or any of the other socialist societies, and despite the fleeting passing of BSP branch, Labour would need to finds its organisational footsoldiers from a different source.

At the municipal level, railwaymen and railway trade unionists formed the backbone of the party.[51] Acquiring enough working-class candidates to contest municipal seats and sit as unpaid councillors was a challenge for some areas.[52] It is unclear whether this was the case in Peterborough, or if they chose only those contests they thought they could win. The biographies

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[51] Compton, "Lines of Division," 37.
[52] Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate*, 90-91.

of several municipal candidates covering the period 1900 to 1951 illustrates this point. The 1919 candidate for the South Ward, C.L. Fletcher commenced his career in the Great Eastern Railway goods offices in the 1890s, eventually holding the position of chief accounts clerk; he was a member of the RCA.[53] W. Rimes, a signalman for the GNR and member of the NUR, stood for Labour in the South Ward by-election of 1919.[54] Successfully returned following the first elections for Paston Ward in 1929, John Benstead was chairman of the Peterborough Labour party and a railway clerk, eventually becoming general secretary of the NUR in 1943;[55] J.A. Bartram, who was also successful at the same election, was a signalman.[56] Finally, prior to moving to Peterborough from nearby Grantham in 1931, James Barnard Palmer was a member of the Grantham Branch NUR, as well as being on the Eastern District Council of the NUR.[57] In 1933, he would stand as a municipal Labour candidate in the city's East Ward. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but it demonstrates the fundamental role played by railwaymen.[58] The occupations of the directors of the Peterborough Labour Club Ltd. are also indicative. Of the nine directors, eight were either engineers or held railway-related employment; the remaining director was a fruit retailer.[59] These industries were centred on Peterborough. Considered alongside the organisational features already discussed, a picture begins to develop, despite best efforts, of a predominantly *urban* Labour party.

In addition to their role as municipal candidates, candidate nominators, and attendance at DLP committee meetings, railwaymen played several further roles.[60] The party minutes report financial donations from local branches of the NUR, as well as joint fundraising events

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[53] *Peterborough Standard*, 8 November 1919.
[54] *Ibid.*, 13 December 1919.
[55] *Peterborough Citizen*, 31 October 1939.
[56] *Peterborough Standard*, 29 March 1929; and 30 March 1934.
[57] *Ibid.*, 29 September 1933.
[58] Further examples include George Palmer. Elected to the city council in 1918 for the North Ward, he worked as a railway express driver for London North Eastern Railway (*Peterborough Citizen*, 20 June 1933).
[59] Peterborough DLP Archives. Miscellaneous.
[60] Peterborough DLP Minute Book. 29 November 1918; 5 February 1919; 1 March 1919; 11 October 1924; 22 November 1924; and 21 January 1928

alongside the DLP, with one such event raising £42.[61] Not every activity was strictly political. When tragedy struck, the Thrapston NUR appealed to the DLP for the widow of G. Mason, who died in a motoring accident and was Chairman of the Thrapston Local Labour party.[62] What the functions of candidacy and fundraising begin to illustrate is the central organisational role played by railway trade unionists. Where trade union organisation was light, railwaymen stepped in and provided an important base for Labour organisation. This was the case in the market towns of North Northants, where figures such as S.P. Smart, secretary of the Thrapston branch of the NUR, represented Labour locally.[63] Furthermore, it was not only male railway-workers who were organised and supporting the Labour cause, the minutes also refer to an NUR Women's Guild, though evidence for the nature of their activities is minimal.[64] According with the liminal role they assumed further afield, railwaymen featured on the committees of branch parties.[65] Organisational predominance translated into influence. We saw how despite the influence of ILP members in the upper reaches of the ASRS in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the rank-and-file did not necessarily follow ideological suit.[66] Indeed, a salient characteristic of local railwaymen candidates, as described by the Conservative-leaning *Peterborough Standard*, was their moderation.

While railwaymen predominated, Peterborough was home to a handful of large engineering companies. Unsurprisingly, engineers also played an important role in the development of Peterborough DLP. First and foremost among these was John Mansfield. Long-time secretary of the Peterborough DLP and regular PPC, Mansfield was employed by Peter Brotherhood Ltd.[67] Another was councillor S.T. Digby, who also worked for Brotherhood's, a

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[61] *Ibid.*, 18 January 1919; and 16 July 1921.
[62] *Ibid.*, 20 July 1935.
[63] *Northampton Mercury*, 1 May 1914; and 6 October 1917.
[64] Peterborough DLP Minute Book 1918-1951. 1 March 1924.
[65] *Ibid.*, 5 February 1919; 1 March 1919; 1 March 1924; and 20 July 1935.
[66] David Howell, *Respectable Radicals*.
[67] *Peterborough Standard*, 29 September 1933.

member of the local Trades and Labour Council and committee man of the ASE, he was considered, like many of his engineering and railway colleagues in Labour, a 'moderate' socialist.[68]

However, the organisational acumen of the railwaymen and engineers should not conceal the fact that breaking through and establishing a lasting presence beyond North Ward proved challenging. To a considerable degree, this owed to the success of the local Conservatives. The party was not static. In 1928, the party proposed a scheme of reorganisation. Additionally, new Conservative clubs were opened in the North Northants side of the Division at Oundle, Brigstock, and King's Cliffe, though they also reported a fall in subscriptions. Additionally, the party made use of young people and newly enfranchised voters, reporting that: 'Excellent work has been done by the members of the Junior Imperial League, both in the city and rural portion of the division.'[69] Furthermore, local women were providing crucial assistance from catering to canvassing, enabling the party to cover 'many of the new parts of the city, which have hitherto been outside the existing organisation.'[70] While Conservative success should not create the impression of perfect organisation, there were reports in 1931 from the East Ward of a 'lack of coordination,' the result of complacency given that it was a solid base for the party, it was a formidable opponent in the city, notwithstanding its rural strength.[71]

The pronounced organisational role played by railway trade unionists could have been surmised from the formative material available in the division. However, while railwaymen and engineers undoubtedly played central role both organisationally and as municipal candidates, there were other sources of activism. One body that increased its distance from the

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[68] *Ibid.*, 6 November 1920.
[69] *Peterborough Standard*, 23 March, 1928.
[70] *Ibid.*, 30 March, 1934.
[71] *Ibid.*, 6 March, 1931.

Peterborough DLP after 1918 was the PTUC. This can be read in multiple ways, one reading

suggests a desire to maintain a distinction in organisation and function. An alternative reading

intimates that, if amalgamation specifies that a critical mass of trade unions and trade unionists

represented on a trades council were in allegiance with the Labour party, then Peterborough

never reached this point. Given the course the PTUC followed, the former explanation is the

more plausible.[72] Beyond the PTUC, there was a Co-operative presence in the division. W.

Seaton, municipal candidate for the East Ward in 1936, was previously a member of the Co-

operative Educational Committee, secretary of the Co-operative Branch Managers'

Association, librarian of the Co-operative Reference Library, and a member of the

Peterborough Co-operative Branch of the National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers.[73]

That said, compared to the railwaymen, Co-operative influence was marginal. Furthermore,

reports from the time indicate that women played a valuable role in advancing local

organisation. Entries in *The Labour Woman* from the late 1910s and early 1920s refer to the

holding of regular and successful meetings, while one November 1920 spoke of the 'rapid

progress' of the Peterborough Women's Section since its formation, recording nearly 200

members and attracting national figures, such as Marion Phillips, as guest speakers. Local

evidence indicates that women's sections were responsible for organising social events,

including a Weekend School in Skegness.[74] Women also assumed important local roles, such

as Mrs Donaldson's appointment as a Justice of the Peace (JP).[75] At the same time, a gendered

division of Labour persisted; at a candidate selection meeting in 1944, the minutes noted a

resolution, carried unanimously, that 'the best thanks of the meeting be conveyed to the Ladies

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[72] Perry, *Peterborough Trades Union Council*.
[73] *Peterborough Standard*, 1 May 1936.
[74] Peterborough DLP Minute Book. 10 March 1945.
[75] *The Labour Woman*, July 1919, Vol. VII, No.7; August 1920, Vol. VIII, No.8; and November 1920, Vol. VIII, No.11.

responsible for the serving of a very excellent tea.'[76] Neither was this an isolated occurrence.[77]

Contrary to numerous intra- and extra-regional areas where the ILP assumed a major organisational role, Peterborough Division was an ILP desert.[78] However, this did not mean that individual socialists/Marxists did not have an influence on party structure, a fact exemplified by the case of Frank and Winifred Horrabin (see below). On balance, the functions carried out by Peterborough DLP members and activists accorded with the relative weights of its principal organisational bases.

Parliamentary Candidates and Organisers: Selection, Recruitment and Retention, 1918-1951

It was argued that Labour had no difficulty in finding candidates for the 1918 General Election.[79] This contrasts with the interwar experience of the Peterborough DLP, which faced the recurring problems of finding and retaining PPCs. Obstacles to the appointment and retention of local candidates included the geographical extent of the division, echoing the organisational experiences of (semi-)rural Labour parties elsewhere.[80] The spatial composition of the division precluded the appointment of a trade union sponsored candidate due to fears of alienating members from its rural portion. There was also a financial dimension, with potential suitors deterred by the monetary commitment required to contest a division with limited prospects of electoral victory. In the 1940s, PPC selection constituted the most pronounced episode of centre-periphery tensions throughout our period. Furthermore, biographies of PPCs reveal that the *practices* of the Peterborough DLP adhered to the norm for mixed divisions. Concerning organiser recruitment, the appointment of R.A. Watson showed the party's spatial sensitivity; however, his retirement heralded a less strategic era.

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[76] Peterborough DLP Minute Book. 3 June 1944.
[77] *Ibid.*, 24 March 1945.
[78] Dowse, *Left in the Centre*, 207.
[79] McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party*, 106.
[80] *The Labour Organiser*, February 1924, No.39.

Party Candidates

In seeking a candidate for the 1918 election, the party tried to secure the services of F.O. Roberts. However, he was being courted by the West Bromwich Labour party and made it clear that it was his preferred option. The young party also failed to appoint two further names, both of whom were said to have been 'fixed up' in other divisions.[81] This may have been a case of asking the question too late, though subsequent experiences suggest something more than bad timing. By the end of November 1918, the party remained without a candidate to put into the field. As they would on future occasions, the Peterborough DLP's General Committee requested that John Mansfield stand as the local Labour candidate. Mansfield was happy to fulfil this request so long as he received the endorsement of affiliates and individual members, which he subsequently did. In what may have been an indication of the contentedness with their candidate, Mansfield was accepted as candidate for the 1922 General Election; on this occasion no other names were thrown into the hat for consideration.[82]

Compounding such obstacles, there was often the spectre of financial difficulty hanging over the Peterborough DLP. A 1923 report into the party's finances concluded that the strain of campaigning could be eased by appointment of a candidate 'financed by an organisation.' Not all members were in favour of this, exposing heartland-hinterland tensions in the process, encouraging instead a deeper exploration of possible alternatives.[83] The investigation got the party no further, at which point it was resolved to contact Egerton Wake, the national organiser, for a full discussion of the issue.[84] In the minds of local activists, the ideal situation would be if Mansfield were to secure financial backing from his trade union, the AEU. That Mansfield

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[81] Peterborough DLP Minute Book. 12 October 1918.
[82] *Ibid.*, 24 October 1922.
[83] *Ibid.*, 7 July 1923.
[84] *Ibid.*, 24 October 1922.

secured the candidacy was no doubt testament to his local popularity, though there were not queues of applicants gathering outside the party's offices.

The division was unattractive to several potential suitors.[85] Following his interview with the Peterborough DLP in 1923, Wake gave the names of two individuals who might be interested in standing in the division: Captain Bennett and H. Nixon. As it turned out, both declined the nomination. With the dissolution of parliament and the election of 6 December 1923 imminent, the need to select a candidate became urgent. The general tone of the meeting that selected the candidate was one of concern. Resolving the issue meant pursuing a familiar course of action – selecting Mansfield. Soon after a third second place finish, the party were adamant to put up a candidate whenever the next election might be; local parties were asked to submit their nominations within six weeks.[86]

It looked like the Peterborough DLP, through sheer determination, would break the *disposition* that had developed as a result of earlier exercises in candidate recruitment. Initially, there were a couple of nominations for any upcoming election, promising signs when compared to 1918, 1922 and 1923. This included George Ridley of the RCA, who received nominations from the Peterborough Local Labour party, two branches of the AEU and the local NUR Women's Guild. The other name put forward was, predictably, that of Mansfield, with support from a couple of local Labour parties as well as the Helpston branch of the NUR and NUAW. Unfortunately, the executive of the RCA declined the authorisation of Ridley's candidature for the division. It looked like the party was back to square one. However, soon more names started coming through. Following the recommendation of Wake, the Peterborough DLP approached a Mr Fraser and Colonel Osborne; these were soon joined by Captain W.G. Hall. Compared to earlier searches, the party was relatively inundated. In addition to those mentioned, Mr Dobbie

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[85] Laybourn, "The Peterborough Labour Movement," 1.
[86] Peterborough DLP Minute Book. 15 December 1923.

(NUR), W.H. Hutchinson (AEU), Mr Bellamy (NUR) and Montagu Lyms were invited to attend a divisional meeting.[87] However, the same old problems soon reared their unwelcome heads, starting with Fraser's decision not to stand.

The party now returned to familiar territory and asked Mansfield to stand. However, he became increasingly reticent about standing from 1923. In March 1924, he argued that to obtain a 'real and effective organisation', and secure increased funds for the party, that an alternative candidate be selected. However, Mansfield stood once again at the 1924 General Election. His decision was largely governed by the circumstances rather than enthusiasm. By 11 October 1924, the party still did not have a candidate and looked unlikely to secure one in time. Recognising the 'emergency', he agreed to stand. In 1925, reticence turned into refusal. The Divisional Committee asked for a final time if he would reconsider his decision not to stand, he replied that he would not.[88]

The party's fortunes took an upturn in 1926 with the appointment of Frank Horrabin as PPC; his wife, Winifred, would also play an important organising and propagandising role. The appointment of a journalist as PPC was consistent with patterns identified in other "mixed" divisions. James Francis (Frank) Horrabin was born on 1 November 1884, 12 Cromwell Road, Peterborough. His mother was from Stamford, Lincolnshire, close to the area her son would one day represent for Labour. He spent his school years at Stamford grammar school and Sheffield School of Art where he developed his craft as cartoonist and cartographer; skills he would later apply to his political activism. He would go on to work for several newspapers throughout his life, including the *Sheffield Telegraph*, *Yorkshire Telegraph and Star* and *Daily News* (later the *New Chronicle*).[89] He was a member of the NUJ; however, this did not represent

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[87] *Ibid.*, 11 October 1924.
[88] *Ibid.*, 14 March 1925.
[89] Margaret Cole [revised by Amanda L. Capern], "James Francis [Frank] Horrabin," accessed February 18, 2022, https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-33995#odnb-9780198614128-e-33995.

a threat to rural party members in the way that a PPC from the NUR or ASE would. Finally, while the minutes do not reveal delegates' feelings about Horrabin's financial contribution, party accounts indicate he made a significant cash injection which would have likely allayed any lingering doubts.[90]

The 1930s were organisationally disruptive for Labour generally, this was reflected in the party's need to reconfigure itself in the arena of candidate selection. However, it also represented a local regression to an earlier *disposition* which the appointment of Horrabin had appeared to break, with the period from 1932 to 1935 marked by several short-lived candidatures. This settled with the candidature of Ernest Davies (PPC from 1935 to 1938), though this his stint as PPC negatively accentuated the division's characteristic urban-rural dynamic. In 1938, Davies submitted his letter of resignation. The precise details of the letter are unknown, but the planned communication to the press was revealing: 'That we communicate to the press that Mr Davies desires a larger organisation involving a greater expenditure than the Division can afford.'[91] This summarised two endemic and related problems for the Peterborough DLP: establishing and embedding an organisation that reached into every pocket of the division, and securing the finance to make this possible. The challenges associated with organising and campaigning across a large division further exposed the financial difficulties faced by the party, which were compounded by the inability to secure a candidate funded by another organisation, such as a trade union, compounded further still by the uninviting electoral prospects apparently on offer to Labour in the expanded Peterborough Division. In this sense, Davies' resignation can be interpreted as a long-term effect of the redrawing of divisional boundaries that took place in 1917-1918.

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[90] Peterborough DLP Archives. Miscellaneous – Balance Sheet, 1929.
[91] *Peterborough Standard*, 12 February 1938.

PPC appointments proceeded smoothly between 1938 to 1944 and 1945 to 1951. Patterns of recruitment echoed earlier periods, with a mixture of local and non-local candidates unaffiliated with railway trade unionism. Samuel Bennett (PPC 1938-1943) was a non-municipal and non-railway candidate from the local area; he was a native of and JP in Oundle, as well as president and chairman of the Oundle Labour Party. As a trade unionist he was involved in the activities of the Oundle branch of the National Federation of Building Trade Operatives.[92] It is possible that Bennett's appointment was considered an astute move given his long association with local Labour politics, while his positionality just outside the municipality also meant that he could act as a unity candidate, navigating the sometimes frosty urban-rural dynamic. Stanley Tiffany, who was PPC from mid-1945 was of a similar mould to other candidates in mixed divisions. Although he was an electrical engineer, he represented the Peterborough and District Co-operative Society. Indeed, the endorsement and financial backing of the Co-operative party worked to Tiffany's and the Peterborough DLP's favour and enabled a level of campaigning not seen since Horrabin's time.[93]

The only real flashpoint came with the selection of Dennis Capron which highlighted vertical and horizontal centre-periphery tensions. The sticking point arrived when the NEC refused his endorsement.[94] This piqued the Peterborough DLP Divisional Committee which resolved that the NEC had 'abused its authority' and produced 'no valid or adequate reason for its actions'. The party dug its heels in, defiantly stating that it would 'adhere to its democratically selected choice'.[95] The local press revealed little that was inflammatory about Capron's character or actions. The only "incriminating" evidence appears to be that he came from a Conservative family – his mother was a chairwoman of the women's Conservative

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[92] Peterborough DLP Minute Book. 14 May 1938, 2 July 1938 and 3 September 1938; *Peterborough Standard*, 20 January 1933, 18 October 1939, and 28 October 1938; and *Peterborough Evening Telegraph*, 29 November 1949 and 11 April 1950.

[93] *Peterborough Standard*, 17 June 1949; Peterborough DLP Minute Book. 10 March 1945 and 2 June 1945.

[94] Peterborough DLP Minute Book. 30 September 1944.

[95] *Ibid*., 21 October 1944.

organisation in the division before its merger with the men's. Until 1939, Capron was a member of the Divisional Executive of the Conservative party before putting his weight behind Labour. This may be the nub of the issue, as he only left the Conservatives in March 1944 before switching to Labour. Thus, while the Peterborough DLP may, in large part, have forgiven Capron for his earlier "sins", the NEC was in a less forgiving mood and may have been concerned about the optics of an ex-Conservative Labour candidate.[96] The episode also brought spatial frictions to the surface. Interestingly, the above resolution was passed 38 (for) to 22 (against), a significant minority. The *Peterborough Standard* speculated on internal divisions, particularly as Capron was a member of the Oundle Local Labour party. Indeed, C.R. Proctor and H. Black, representatives of Oundle, came out against the NEC's decision. The depth of the divisions compelled Mansfield to resign the secretaryship, though this was later withdrawn. The controversy endured until January 1945, when the Peterborough DLP conceded defeat, voting 72 to 32 to accept the NEC's decision.[97]

In terms of candidate endorsement, Peterborough aligned with general experience in that the process proceeded, with one exception, without controversy. The minutes of the Peterborough DLP, as well as its correspondence with Transport House, support this conclusion; there is no suggestion of the 'endless friction' maintained by McKenzie. Even the endorsement of Frank Horrabin, a member of the CPGB before switching to Labour and an unashamed Marxist, was easily confirmed. Two letters of endorsement from Transport House have survived, these refer to the candidatures of Ernest Davies (1936) and Samuel Bennett (1938), in both cases the NEC provided the required signatures without resistance. Additionally, the letters also confirm McKibbin's argument that where local parties were prepared to assume financial responsibility, the passage to endorsement was a straightforward

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[96] *Peterborough Standard*, 19 January 1945 and 17 June 1949.
[97] Peterborough DLP Minute Book. 2 December 1944 and 20 January 1945.

one.[98] The furore surrounding Capron's was an outlier in an otherwise smooth-running process. However, the episode did demonstrate (rare) centre-periphery friction, unrelated to Communist infiltration that was a contemporaneous concern elsewhere, with the DLP frustrated at the national party's lack of transparency in an arena it considered predominantly its domain.

Party Organisers

The Peterborough case highlights an area of party activity that is informative in terms of ascertaining party character and identity, but has rarely been granted much attention: the recruitment of local party organisers. As with candidate selection, the exact nature of the party central office's involvement in organiser selection and recruitment can be partially explained via reference to the specific patterns of Labour's historical development. The total number of local organisers fluctuated from 111 to 133 between the years 1920 and 1924, though overall numbers tended to increase closer to election time.[99] The role performed by local party organisers and election agents was an important one. According to one study of British party agents, they were encouraged to think of themselves as the 'managing director of the party.'[100] Agent responsibilities included:

> '[O]rganising the societies and individuals in the movement into a collective unity for the achievement of the party's aims. He must cultivate the art of getting people interested in the work of the party. He will always be looking out for likely individuals and assessing their qualities.'[101]

While Croft's description of agent responsibilities may seem grand, organisers might fulfil these duties to a greater or lesser extent. We could also add to this description the coordination

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[98] McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party*, 131-137.
[99] *Ibid.*, 32-33 and 143.
[100] H. Croft, *Party Organisations*, 8-10 quoted in McKenzie, *British Political Parties*, 542.
[101] *Ibid.*

of speaking engagements and other campaign activities. Local organisers could and did play significant roles in their areas of activity.

Practices in the areas of sourcing and recruitment of a local party organiser illustrate the enduring influence of the earlier boundary review, as well as deliberate efforts to reflect opinion and bring into the party fold voters in the countryside areas. The Peterborough DLP's search for a local organiser was several years old before they finally settled on a suitable appointment: R.A. Watson. Mention of the need for a full-time organiser entered into the party minutes for the first time in July 1923 in reference to a conference in the division during the previous month.[102] The topic of party organiser would rear its head again and again throughout 1924, 1925, and 1926.[103]

Much of the initial discussion centred on the question of financing an organiser and how a revival in trade would help fund whoever took up the post. However, this should not be read as excuse-making, the Peterborough DLP's Executive Committee was keen on the immediate appointment of an organiser, but felt that this was impossible given the state of party finances.[104] To meet financial needs, a request was sent out to branch parties to see what funds they were in a position to contribute. At this stage, no great consideration was given to the personal requirements, skills or past experience of any potential suitor. As a further demonstration of local enthusiasm for this initiative, a Special Meeting contained a motion to ascertain local positions on whether or not to 'advertise for an organiser and make plans to secure the necessary finance;' the motion was passed: 98 for, one against.[105] The decision to secure an organiser was driven by the local party. Egerton Wake, Labour's national organiser, did have some involvement in the process, but this did not represent the imposition of central

[102] Peterborough DLP Minute Book. 7 July 1923.
[103] *Ibid*., 3 May 1924; 10 May 1924; 31 May 1924; 22 November 1924; 8 February 1925; 25 April 1925 and 17 April 1925.
[104] *Ibid*., 10 May 1924 and 25 July 1925.
[105] *Ibid*., 31 May 1924 and 8 February 1925.

control over local affairs. The key constraints, as so often with the Peterborough DLP, was the question of finance. The financial situation was alleviated somewhat in mid-1926 following Frank Horrabin's arrival on the scene.

Horrabin's finance and proactiveness helped to push the question of appointing a full-time organiser to the forefront of the party's agenda. At his inaugural meeting, Horrabin urged those present to 'immediately advertis[e]' for an organiser;[106] he also pledged '£100 per year' of his personal wealth towards the funding of a local agent/organiser.[107] Shortly afterwards, Horrabin and Wake discussed the 58 applicants for the post, which was whittled down to five, priority being given to those who had previous experience as local organisers.[108] In the end, three candidates were interviewed for the position. Of crucial significance is what was noted about the three men and what this revealed about the thought processes and organisational priorities of the Peterborough DLP's Divisional Committee. First to be interviewed was Mr Riley, a schoolteacher by trade, he was previously agent for Frank Hodges in the Lichfield Division and now unemployed due to Hodges' withdrawal as candidate. Riley had helped Hodges win the Lichfield seat in 1923, though it would be lost at the next election. His past experience managing party finances would undoubtedly have been to the benefit of the Peterborough DLP. The second interviewee, Mr Parker, came with experience from Northwich Division in Cheshire. Currently unemployed but a trained weaver by profession, he had experience of editing a local labour movement newsletter, as well as some close election results but no victories to his name. In terms of communicating the party message, there was a case to be made for Parker.

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[106] *Ibid.*, 17 April 1926.
[107] *Ibid.*, 16 May 1926.
[108] *Ibid.*, 21 August 1926.

However, neither Riley nor Parker was successful, the Divisional Committee opted for the third of their interviewees. That person was R.A. Watson, whose past experience of organising in rural divisions saw him to victory. Watson was previously the agent for Noel Buxton and George Edwards. His availability arose at this time due to Edwards' withdrawal as candidate for rural South Norfolk. As this suggests, Watson had 'considerable experience in rural areas' and was a member of the NUAW.[109] Thus, the appointment of Watson can be read as part of efforts to engage with and appeal to voters across the entirety of the division. The mixed composition of the Peterborough Division following the alterations to the boundaries was something which the party were cognisant of, contributing towards recruitment and retention patterns observed during the interwar period. Watson would remain in post for nearly two decades.[110] When he retired, the recruitment of his successors proceeded in a less than strategic fashion with a high turnover of post-holders.[111]

Crafting a Party Identity: Policy *Curation* and *Issue Positioning*

The PLP assumed the role of crafting electoral policy, with much of the material distributed by the Peterborough DLP rhyming closely with the national line. However, there was room for local candidates to put their own slant on official policy; intra- and extra-regional analysis demonstrated this was not uncommon.[112] This small aperture permitted the articulation of a localised party identity that endeavoured to reflect divisional opinion. A clear intention of the Peterborough DLP's policy *curation* was to appeal to urban *and* rural voters, further illustrating the critical and *practical* importance of the boundary review. However, such appeals were no guarantee of electoral victory, and it was not unheard of for urban activists to relapse into a

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[109] *Ibid.*, 21 August 1926.
[110] *Ibid.*, 20 November 1943.
[111] *Ibid.* 2 June 1945; 15 December 1945; 6 April 1946; 14 September 1946; 30 November 1946; 2 October 1948; and 24 September 1949.
[112] McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party*, 100.

Peterborough-centric default.[113] Furthermore, the interaction of individual Marxists with divisional Labour politics constitutes as relatively underexplored area.[114] The experience of the Horrabins demonstrated the degree to which two Marxist intellectuals were socialised into the moderate climate of Peterborough's Labour politics – their experience as educationalists having a greater local impact than Historical Materialism.

On his nomination as Labour's PPC for the 1918 General Election, Mansfield accepted in full Labour's programme (i.e., *Labour and the New Social Order*). Divisional support for Mansfield was considerable. His endorsement meeting was reportedly attended by 800 members and was not confined to the city, with support coming from members of the Executive Committee and affiliated trade unions, such as the Thrapston branch of the NUR.[115] The longevity of his time as party secretary, then Honorary Party Secretary, and prodigious work ethic, point towards his popularity.

Mansfield played a frontline role in framing national party appeals for consumption by the local electorate, rather than departing from its core content. In 1922, Mansfield wrote his own election leaflet. Predictably, the leaflet was critical of the Coalition Government, referencing 'unprecedented' unemployment, 'unfair' taxation, and industrial unrest. Mining and agricultural industries were said to be in a 'state of despair,' while the judgement of the Coalition was brought into question by events in the Near East that, while ultimately averted, could have resulted in conflict with Turkey. On trade and unemployment, Mansfield described how the policy of wage reduction to lower the cost of production was 'economically unsound' as it only touched the fringes of the problem. The real problem was the chaotic condition of

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[113] Worley, "Building the Party," 84.

[114] Extant studies cover a range of topics including the organisation of the CPGB, such as Noreen Branson, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain vol.3 1927-1941* (Lawrence & Wishart, 1985) Keith Laybourn and Dylan Murphy, *Under the Red Flag: A History of Communism in Britain* (Sutton, 1999); Henry Pelling, "The Early History of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1920-9," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 8 (1958): 41-57. For the CPGB across (inter)national, regional, and local scales, see Worley, *Class Against Class*.

[115] Peterborough DLP Minute Book. 29 November 1918.

foreign exchanges. Referencing his own industry, engineering, in Peterborough, it was pointed out that 50% of products from factories in the area were, in normal times, destined for Russia, the Balkan States and elsewhere. This assemblage of information convinced Mansfield that focusing on the wage question was a 'futility' that failed to address the bigger issues: 'This is an international question and can only be solved on international lines.'[116] The leaflet showed the crossing of scales of reference from the international to the local. Additionally, when the local was specifically referenced, it was through the lens of the Peterborough engineer, a familiar one for Mansfield. As such, the nature of local appeals that appear in documents such as Mansfield's 1922 leaflet expose the tensions at the heart of the Peterborough DLP's identity. At times activists made efforts to cross spatial and industrial divides, at others they would fall back into their comfort zone.

In terms of content, the Peterborough DLP's 1923 campaign was consistent with the issues raised by the national Labour party. Emphasis was laid on the material concerns of the electorate, with Tariff Reform versus Free Trade being the key issue on which the election was fought. To Mansfield's mind, tariffs were not a remedy for unemployment and there was an 'urgent need' to restore foreign trade and secure recovery after WWI. He pledged his support for a programme of 'necessitous work,' involving the development of electricity supply, transport facilities, land drainage and reclamation. In agriculture, Mansfield and the party were consistent with earlier appeals in advocating for the restoration of the Wages Boards. Additionally, the party favoured an international conference to deal with world trade and, relatedly, a 'graduated war debt redemption tax' on all individual fortunes to relieve taxation in other directions.[117] There was no tailoring of party policy to reflect local conditions or priorities. In summation, when election material did take on a more localistic flavour, the

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[116] Peterborough DLP Archives. Parliamentary Elections.
[117] *Peterborough Standard*, 23 November 1923.

balance was in favour of the municipality. This urban lean, more specifically a lean towards railway-associated industries, was perhaps to be expected. The party secretary was an engineer by trade and railwaymen formed a core of local activists.

Nevertheless, the party attempted to appeal across the length and breadth of the division in its other campaigning efforts. The party's appeal to the materialist concerns of agricultural workers was evident when Mansfield addressed the NARWC:

> 'The land was the source of all wealth, and as *the agricultural industry was the most important industry in the world*, the claims of the agricultural worker should be considered before the claims of the workers in any other industry [my italics].'[118]

The tone and topic of Mansfield's address was undoubtedly shaped by the intended audience. Regardless, it showed an attempt to appeal to the diversity of the division. Similarly, at a meeting organised by the Peterborough DLP at the Old Town Hall, Oundle, the keynote speaker was the district organiser of the ALU/NUAW (Figure 10).[119] In 1919, Mansfield struck a confident note with regard to Labour in the rural areas of the division. According to the *Standard*: 'He [Mansfield] felt he could go round in many villages now without the feeling that he was amongst strangers. They were definitely linked with the Labour Party'.[120] However, analysing the 1918 vote from the information available, the *Standard* pointed out that Labour's strongholds were to be found in the 'north end of the town' of Peterborough and parts of Thrapston district. The 'north end of town' coincides with the New England area, home to many of the division's railway workers and Labour's municipal stronghold. However, even in Peterborough it was said that the result for Brassey, the Conservative candidate, was better than expected, suggesting the resonance of nationalistic rhetoric in the city.[121] In the space of three

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[118] *Northampton Daily Echo*, 3 May 1919.
[119] *Peterborough Standard*, 23 November 1923.
[120] *Ibid.*, 4 January 1919.
[121] *Ibid.*

days in 1939, Mansfield visited New England and Dogsthorpe, both centrally located, as well as Newark, Werrington, Barnack, Helpston, and Peakirk, which were positioned further afield from the city centre.[122] Activists within the Peterborough DLP actively sought to *position* the party as one that represented the whole constituency. However, election campaign content illustrates how, on multiple occasions *over time*, lip-service only was paid to agricultural workers.

Figure 10. Leaflet for a meeting of the Peterborough DLP, 26 July 1919[123]
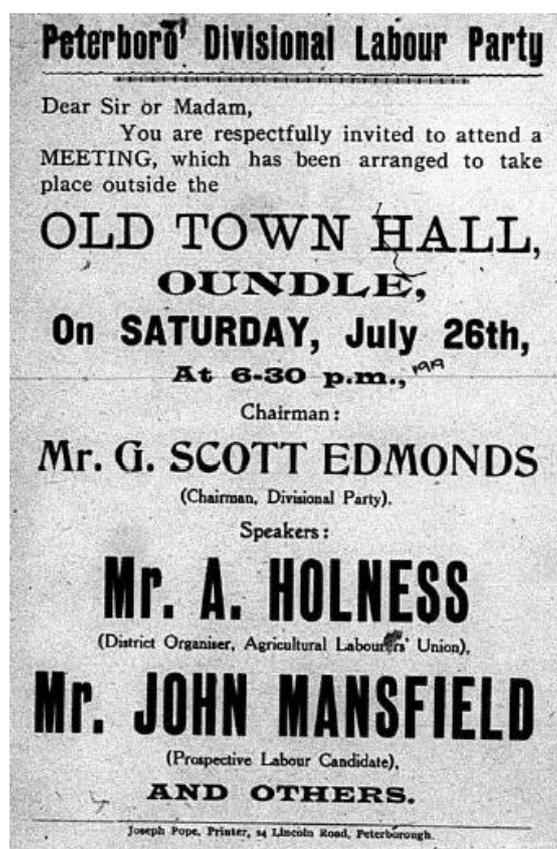
Of course, in venturing into the rural hinterland, Labour need not restrict its message to "countryside issues".[124] Many concerns, national as well as local, were shared by urban and rural voters. Indeed, speaking in Thrapston to local attendees and those from surrounding neighbourhoods, Mansfield discussed John Sankey's report on the Coal Commission,

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[122] *Peterborough Citizen*, 31 October 1939.
[123] Peterborough DLP Archives. Parliamentary Elections.
[124] Griffiths, *Labour and the Countryside*, 135.

nationalisation of the mines, while G.S. Edmonds, 'in a racy speech,' spoke on a range of subjects including the proposed trial of the ex-Kaiser.[125] However, while such orations may have been stirring, the balance of evidence illustrates that the Peterborough DLP never completely captured the imaginations of the segment of the electorate living and working in agricultural pursuits.

Unfortunately, limited material has survived covering the efforts of Ernest Davies who contested the 1935 election. However, the record reveals that while Stanley Tiffany adhered closely to the *Let Us Face the Future* in 1945 and *Let Us Win Through Together* in 1951, the content of local appeals were personalised and *curated* for a local audience. For example, the local election leaflet for the 1945 General Election afforded more space to agriculture, which the national manifesto omitted. However, beyond statements on the acreage of land under the plough and the entitlement of farmworkers to the same conditions as workers in non-rural industry, there was minimal segmentation or sweeteners to specific parts of the local electorate. In an echo of the campaigning *practices* of Mansfield and of intra-regional co-operators, Tiffany devoted space to 'The Consumer' and the role played by the Co-operative Movement throughout its history in 'the defence of the consumer', and his commitment, 'as a life-long co-operator', to the defence of consumer interests. Indeed, the distinct impression that Tiffany made on the Peterborough DLP can be found in his emphasis on the programmatic closeness and affinity of 'Labour and Co-operative Parties'.[126]

Several national issues cut through to sub-national levels, carrying implications for party identity. That said, the disaffiliation of the ILP had no discernible impact. This was not unexpected given the history and bases of the DLP. The party was certainly sympathetic to the plight of the miners and their families during the General Strike, organising to collect funds for

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[125] *Northampton Mercury*, 18 July 1919.
[126] Peterborough DLP Archives. Parliamentary Elections. 1945-1950.

their relief.[127] Other resonant issues included the Popular Front and Communist infiltration and collaboration, as well as the electoral truce and expulsion of left-wingers post-war. A letter from the NEC encouraged the view that there should be 'no association' between local Labour parties and either the United Front or Popular Front. The response of the Peterborough DLP was one of characteristic moderation, urging a national conference on the issue in light of the international situation.[128] Rather than dismissing any association outright, the party wanted further deliberation. That said, the *position* of the DLP on CPGB affiliation was consistently uncompromising, even after the Soviet Union switched to the side of the allies in WWII, with delegates to party Conference being instructed to vote against such a move.[129] Once again, the party acted in a manner consistent with the moderate *dispositions* that it carried since its formation.

The response to the expulsion of Stafford Cripps demonstrated in microcosm the conciliatory tone that typically characterised the DLP, but also pushback on the decisions of the national leadership. A resolution from the North Ward, Labour's municipal stronghold, proposed that the party suspend Cripps' expulsion 'pending consideration by the Annual Conference.' However, this view did not receive universal approval. A second proposal was put forward stating, 'That this meeting of the DLP supports the NEC in their action re Sir Stafford Cripps.' An amendment to the effect of the first proposal was passed, though only narrowly (13 for; 11 against). Those who voted against the amendment were not bitter, universal agreement being given to a further amendment which stated, 'That this meeting emphatically asks the NEC to allow Sir Stafford Cripps to personally present his case to the National Conference at Southport 1939.'[130]

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[127] Peterborough DLP Minute Book. 5 June 1926.
[128] *Ibid.*. 23 April 1938.
[129] *Ibid.*, 17 April 1943; and 6 April 1946.
[130] *Ibid.*, 4 March 1939.

The Plebs in Peterborough: A Case Study of Frank and Winifred Horrabin, 1926-1932

While the arrival of the Horrabins was organisationally transformative, the ideational picture was more convoluted. Indeed, the couple's *curative* and *positional practices* cemented the limited influence of Marxism on the Peterborough DLP's politics. Their socialisation entailed moderation of their ideological instincts, better reflecting political temperaments within the party and division. To appreciate this, it is necessary to detail the nature of the Horrabins' Marxism and depict the pared down version of their worldview expressed to Peterborough electors and, by extension, the constraints of working within a reformist and integrationist Labour party.

Frank Horrabin was the first and only avowedly Marxist PPC recruited by the Peterborough DLP. Marxist philosophy sees class struggle and economic factors as the driving forces of history. Indeed, class and class struggle were a recurring theme in the couple's work, placing them in a tradition extending from Marx to and through figures such as William Morris and beyond. For instance, in "Is Woman's Place the Home?", Winifred wrote, 'Out of the struggle for rights, workmen's and women's, there began to emerge the fact that there was underlying all the difficulties of both, the existence of class struggle.'[131] The emphasis on class and class difference was equally evident in Frank's work, writing a piece entitled "The Class Struggle."[132] Such convictions were permitted further expression through the couple's involvement with the Plebs League, where they would play a prominent role; Frank assumed the editorship of its monthly organ, *The Plebs Magazine*, in 1914.[133]

The Plebs League was founded in 1908 by students at Ruskin College to promote independent working-class education, a direct challenge to what was perceived as the

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[131] Ian Gibson, "Marxism and Ethical Socialism in Britain: the case of Winifred and Frank Horrabin," (Unpublished BA thesis, University of Oxford, 2008).

[132] J.F. Horrabin, "The Class Struggle," 171-192.

[133] J.P.M. Millar, *The Labour College Movement* (London: NCLC Publishing Society Ltd., 1979).

"orthodox," non-political educational policies of the college authorities. For the Plebs, education was political, its object being, '[t]o further the interests of the independent working-class education as a partisan effort to improve the position of Labour in the present and to aid in the abolition of wage-slavery.'[134] Much the same way that the prevailing political and economic system reinforced the status quo, the content of the educational curriculum buttressed existing power relations (Figure 11); the content needed to reflect the interests of the working-classes. As such, common subjects that formed the curriculum of the Labour College Movement (LCM) included industrial history and economics. In general, classes took on a Marxist tone with 'a strong dash of syndicalism and industrial unionism.'[135] This is not surprising given that many Plebs Leaguers had histories in the industrial conflicts of South Wales, the rigidly Marxist SDF, SLP and ILP.[136] Furthermore, a Pleb textbook authored by Frank, *An Outline of Economic Geography* (*An Outline*), was written 'from the working-class point of view.'[137] The form of working-class education offered in *An Outline* cannot be described as history from below, more closely approximating a partisan history *for* below. Horrabin held that knowledge and the selection of geographical facts should be filtered so that only those that provide for a better understanding of the working class' 'social development' are included; the object of presenting this particular selection of facts was to raise the class-consciousness of recipients.[138] However, such views would put him at odds with the mainstream Labour view on the content and purpose of education. This begins to paint a picture of his radical Marxist geography.

Figure 11. "Education" – His ideal! [139]

[134] *The Plebs*. XIV, 1, January 1922. Back page.
[135] MacIntyre, *A proletarian science*, 74-75.
[136] Millar, *The Labour College Movement*, 1-2.
[137] Frank Horrabin, *An Outline of Economic Geography* (London: The Pleb League, 1923), 10.
[138] F. Horrabin, *An Outline of Economic Geography*, 9-10.
[139] J.F. Horrabin cartoon reproduced in Millar, *The Labour College Movement*, 212-213.

"Education"

YES SIR!

YES SIR!

YES SIR!

YES SIR

YES SIR

YES SIR

YES

His ideal!

J.F.H.
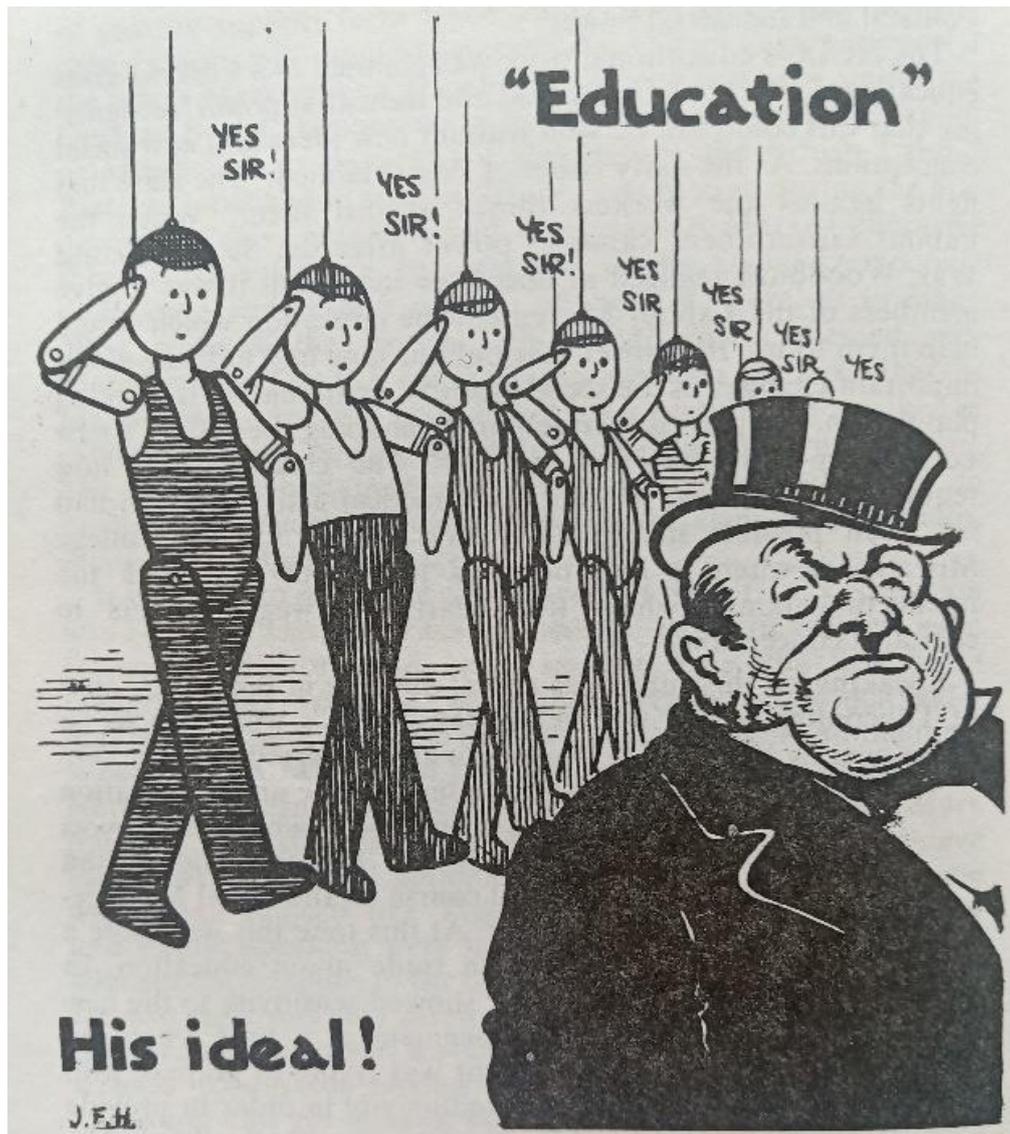
Winifred Batho (1887-1974) became a prominent socialist and journalist. Her political development was influenced by the South African feminist-socialist Olive Schreiner about whom she began to write a biography. Batho later joined the Women's Social and Political Union. The meeting of her feminism and transformative socialism was expressed in a paper titled "Is Woman's Place the Home?" In it she argued that only with the destruction of private property would womankind be released from economic slavery. Like Frank, she believed

firmly in the merits of independent working-class education, views which were published in the co-written *Working Class Education*.[140]

The arrival of Frank Horrabin and Watson prompted a clear shift in the frequency, form and quality of campaigning. To a considerable degree, the improvement in quality owed much to Horrabin's journalistic and artistic pedigree. Visual imagery was to play a more pronounced role in Labour propaganda from 1926, marking a move away from the text-heavy literature produced by Mansfield. Horrabin wrote eloquently about his beliefs concerning the intersection of education and illustration. In one 1922 book review, he expressed his hopes that Independent Working-Class Educators would make working-class history more vivid with the addition of imagery. For instance, the party released a souvenir for a bazaar in November 1926. The document was largely written and fully illustrated by Horrabin. While it was light on the specifics of Labour policy, the images clearly depicted a vision of Labour progress in Peterborough. The souvenir gave the impression of irresistible Labour momentum, with images of horticultural growth (Figure 12) and the Labour train heading towards local positions of influence (Figure 13). The use of a railway metaphor would not have been lost on the party's core constituency.

Figure 12. The Candidate – and Better Half – doing a little gardening[141]

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[140] J.F. Horrabin and Winifred Batho Horrabin, *Working-Class Education* (London: Labour Publishing Co., 1924); and Amanda L. Capern, "Winifred Horrabin," accessed 18 February, 2022, https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-42087.
[141] "The Candidate – and Better Half – doing a little gardening." Peterborough DLP. Miscellaneous.

Figure 13. Mr J.R. Hall, First Labour Member, Peterborough Board of Guardians[142]

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[142] "Mr J.R. Hall, First Labour Member, Peterborough Board of Guardians." Peterborough DLP. Miscellaneous.

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THERE ARE SOME MORE COMING AFTER ME !!

GUARDIANS

LABOUR

J.F.H.

Mr. J. R. HALL
First Labour Member, Peterborough Board of
Guardians

On one level, the bazaar souvenir was explicit about neither Labour policy nor his far-left background. A closer look reveals some continuity with his earlier beliefs and their interaction with the *practice* of local Labour *curation*. The first of these came from John Ball, the radical preacher best known by association with the "Peasants' Revolt" of 1381. Imprisoned three times by the Archbishop of Canterbury for his "heretical" preaching and speeches against

inequality and the corruption of those who wielded power against the powerless.[143] Horrabin opted to quote the following: 'My friends, things cannot be well with us in this England of ours, nor ever will, until all things shall be in common; when there shall be neither lord nor vassal.' The choice of Ball was significant, he was a radical and a preacher, two biographical details shared with Horrabin. Furthermore, the events of 1381 can, and have, been interpreted through the lens of class conflict.[144] Given his background, it seems likely that Horrabin understood that event in similar terms; the Marxist in him was not far from the surface on this occasion.

Horrabin also drew on the French social reformer Henri de Saint-Simon (1760-1825). Saint-Simon is considered a founder of Christian Socialism, who argued in his *Le Nouveau Christianisme* (The New Christianity, 1825) that the scientific reorganisation of society and industry, something later seen in Fabian doctrine, must be accompanied by a brotherhood of man.[145] Horrabin quoted the following from Saint-Simon: 'If the idle classes disappeared, Society would continue to live untroubled; but if the working classes should disappear, Society would cease to exist.' Both selections are oppositional, placing one group or class in direct contrast to another. This presentation of class dynamics was consistent with Frank's worldview. However, such views were some way removed from those of Labour leaders, such as Ramsay MacDonald, who winced at the idea of class conflict, preferring class cooperation and reform to revolution. In little ways, therefore, Horrabin made idiosyncratic marks on the campaign material of the Peterborough DLP, giving air to his beliefs in class division and inequality, the role of work in defining your station in life, and the influence of Christian thinkers on his own belief system.

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[143] Dan Jones, *Summer of Blood: The Peasants' Revolt of 1381* (London: Harper Press, 2009), 61 and 80.
[144] Empson, *'Kill all the Gentlemen'*; R.H. Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free: Medieval Peasant Movements and the English Rising of 1381* (Routledge, 1988).
[145] Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Henri de Saint-Simon: French social reformer," accessed February 16, 2022, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Henri-de-Saint-Simon.

A glance at the party's local campaign for the 1929 General Election reveals its similarity to previous efforts. For example, a note written by Frank for the local electorate simply endorsed the national Labour party programme.[146] In referencing the "Zinoviev Letter," he demonstrated the sub-national filtration of (inter)national issues.[147] However, this should not take away from efforts to make the party's programme locally relevant. Of the workers 'by hand and brain' that the Peterborough DLP proclaimed to stand for, it was little coincidence that 'railwaymen, farm and factory' workers were mentioned first and foremost.[148] Two points are worth raising here. Firstly, the note was an endorsement of *national* Labour policy. In the context of his personal worldview, both in terms of what came before and after his time in Peterborough, it is evident that the organisational context of the Labour party restrained his ideational tendencies. Secondly, the subtle spatial tuning demonstrated a recurring theme in the Peterborough DLP's interaction with and understanding of its local environment and its desire to appeal to the electorate in the party's urban heartlands and those in the rural hinterland. This left limited space for Horrabin to express an unadulterated brand of Marxism.

"Horrabin's Election Special," was a fascinating piece of election propaganda demonstrating how local candidates could put a personal stamp on campaign proceedings. Once again, the tone was tempered compared to his pre- and post-Peterborough writings. *Curated* for local consumption, the "Special" was eponymously named rather than being party branded. The "Special" featured guest writers as well as a mixture of Labour policies, political cartoons, and allegorical stories with a political edge.[149] It was to date the most comprehensive appeal to the Peterborough electorate published by the party in the interwar period. Reading through the document, a clear intention was to make the content of the national party

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[146] "To the Electors of the Peterborough Division," Parliamentary Elections. Peterborough Archives.
[147] Reynolds and Laybourn, *Labour Heartland*.
[148] "To the Electors of the Peterborough Division."
[149] "Horrabin's "Election Special"." Parliamentary Elections. Peterborough Archives.

programme relevant for a Peterborough audience. It channelled several key issues of the time through a local lens. The case was made for Free Trade, particularly with Russia, and against the forces of reaction and Toryism. Horrabin wrote that the restoration of diplomatic and trade relations with Russia and absence of trade tariffs would result in less unemployment for those employed in engineering and fishing industries, and presumably those sectors doing the transporting (i.e., the railways).[150]

The "Special" also provided an opportunity to educate, a favourite pastime of the Horrabins. Winifred's fable, "The Visitor from Mars: A Tale for Tories," that made its way into the "Special." The story involved a visiting Martian who was provided with a guided tour of Earth. The inquisitive Martian asked why specific groups appeared to do all the work while others had an abundance of leisure time but offered very little productively.[151] It was a tale of exploitation and the unequal distribution of wealth in a capitalistic society, of a society divided into classes. The literary genre of fable made it possible to express socialist or Marxist sentiment in a way that was unobtrusive and that did not require recourse to technical language. With Marxist ideas being related in soft tones, the educationalist within Frank and Winifred became louder.

However, events in the late 1920s and 1930s exposed divisions within the Labour party. Locally, the moderating stabilisers on the Marxist bike began to loosen. Frank served as the Labour MP for Peterborough from 1929 until 1931. As a member of PLP, it was soon clear to Horrabin that the Labour Government was not living up to the transformative agenda detailed in *Labour's Appeal to the Nation* and he became caught up in the divisions and disputes that rocked the Cabinet as well as the wider party and movement. The fundamental issue was

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[150] *Ibid.*, H.J. Laski article in the same edition.
[151] *Ibid.*, "The Visitor from Mars: A Tale for Tories."

unemployment.[152] The stymieing of radical economic ideas was frustrating for left-wing Labour MPs. Frank was one of the ILP Group in parliament who signed the Mosley Manifesto in December 1930.[153] The proposal was rejected, but his decision to sign it showed a willingness to challenge party orthodoxy. At the divisional level, the Peterborough DLP was keen to keep hold of Horrabin, which suggests the presence of local sympathy for his policy *positioning* in parliament.

Nevertheless, this flirtation with Liberal Socialism did not dampen his more deeply held beliefs. Following Labour's defeat locally and nationally at the 1931 General Election, Frank and Winifred were quick to reaffirm their belief in class struggle. Defeated activists and Labour supporters gathered at Mansfield Hall to hear from their local leaders. Referring to the odds firmly stacked against them in terms of 'wealth, influence, possessions, [and] motor cars,' Fred Terrell, then Peterborough DLP chairman, echoed Winifred's assertion that 'there is a class distinction between us; and we have never realised it more than during this election.' Moments later, Winifred took to the platform. As reported by the *Peterborough Standard*:

> 'Mrs Horrabin, who was greeted with cheers, said she wanted to thank the people who had voted for her husband. She said to her husband before they left their hotel that morning, if we keep out 14,000 votes solid in class-war, I am satisfied…They had done that…Many working-class people who voted for the Tories this time did so probably because they have lost sons and brothers in the war, and thought, perhaps, that they were helping them. I want to say that you were not helping them. Those lives lost in the war were utterly thrown away unless the working class stand by their own. The truest form of patriotism is to stand by your own class. The working class can make and remake England.'[154]

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[152] Skidelsky, *Politicians and the Slump*, 11-12.
[153] Howell, *MacDonald's Party*, 299-304.
[154] *Peterborough Standard*, 30 October 1931.

The division of the population into adversarial classes was a constant, as was the interpretation of the situation through a class-tinted lens. Regarding patriotism, Frank and Winifred believed that Labour's loss was due to their opposition's flag-waving appeal to the "national interest." Frank referred to 'black-coated workers,' those who thought themselves gentlemen. The job, as he saw it, was to 'persuade' those people that "worker" and "wage-earner" were badges of honour to be worn with pride. In other words, 'They had to find the workers who had not worked for themselves, and explain things to them.' The educationalist, never far from the surface, came forward. It was necessary to educate and raise class-consciousness so as to make the working-classes cognisant of their material conditions in contrast to the gentlemen-capitalists.

In 1932, Frank committed his future to the Peterborough DLP and re-stated his commitment to socialism.[155] The years of Labour Government from 1929 to 1931 had taught him one thing: the need for 'a hundred per cent socialism'. Horrabin pledged that there would be no qualifications or modifications on his part and that any future Labour Government must pledge 'not to step towards socialism, but to socialism itself.'[156] This was a clear denunciation of the laboured advance towards anything approximating socialism that characterised 1929 to 1931. Patience had worn thin, now was the time for action. However, the years from 1932 to 1937 would prove to be ones of further frustration. His actions in this period illuminate the compromises of 1926 to 1932 and the exasperation felt more generally by those on the left-wing of an integrative rather than transformative Labour party.[157] When the ILP disaffiliated in 1932, many on the left followed. However, Horrabin was among those who remained,

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[155] *Ibid*., 26 February 1932.
[156] *Ibid.*
[157] Hannah, *A Party with Socialists in It*, xiii-xv.

publishing through two left-wing organs that were loyal to but critical of the Labour, namely the Socialist League and the SSIP.

Initially, this arrangement played to Horrabin's strengths as a political educationalist in that both focused on research. Soon after the Socialist League's establishment, he was able to write with sincerity that it would be 'a centre of socialist research and missionary activity, but activity in and through the Labour party, and with nothing whatsoever of the separate political machine about it.'[158] However, the relationship between the Socialist League and Labour soon began to fray as the party's integrationist nature tested the limits of left-wing patience. In 1934, he wrote an avowedly Marxist piece for *Problems of Socialist Transition* in which he depicted a struggle between two opposing classes.[159] And 'real' socialist policy, Horrabin argued boldly, rested on 'the fact of the class struggle,' by which he meant, 'a struggle between two main groups in Capitalist society: the group of property-*owners*, and the (much larger) group of property-less *workers*.'[160] The abolition of private property was deemed a necessity to relieve the workers of their economic dependence on the property-owning class, thus laying the foundations for the redistribution of economic and political power to the whole community. True socialism was not about making capitalism run smoothly, a criticism aimed at the Labour party, but challenging and changing the existing system.[161] Social reform in the nineteenth century was understood as being driven by an organised working class fighting for, and thus conscious of, its 'class interests.'[162] Furthermore, in December 1934, Horrabin asserted the need for 'disciplined organisation' and to move beyond programme making 'into the realm of action.'[163]

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[158] Frank Horrabin, *The Socialist Leaguer* (15 December 1934), quoted in Pimlott, *Labour and the Left in the 1930s*, 49.
[159] Frank Horrabin, "The Class Struggle."
[160] *Ibid.*, 171.
[161] *Ibid.*, 172 and 184.
[162] *Ibid.*, 179 and 178-183.
[163] Frank Horrabin quoted in Pimlott, *Labour and the Left in the 1930s*, 49.

The views expounded as member a of the Socialist League are closer to those found in Horrabin's earlier writings, suggesting he presented a restrained version of his worldview during his time as PPC. The Socialist League would drift increasingly from the mainstream of the Labour party, alienating the party leadership in the process, as they became increasingly radical. At the Whitsun conference of 1933, the League called, among other things, for the abolition of the House of Lords and the introduction of an Emergency Powers Act for the purposes of enabling the socialisation of industry and finance; industry would be set up along lines of self-government.[164] Horrabin was clear in his support of the proposals contained in the League's *Forward to Socialism*.[165] The outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 and with it the establishment of a Unity Manifesto, supported by the Socialist League, ILP and CPGB, and which made the case for a united front of working-class organisations resisting fascism, was too much for the Labour leadership to stomach. Their race was run in 1937, at which point the Socialist League took the decision to disaffiliate from Labour. The moderate climate of Peterborough's Labour politics tempered the Horrabins' Marxism. However, the effects were only temporary, and national developments over the 1930s demonstrated the incompatibility, in this instance, of radical Marxism and reformist labourism.

Conclusion

National, intra- and extra-regional historiographies illuminated the Peterborough case, making conspicuous its idiosyncrasies. The process of party formation demonstrated parallels with other divisions. The experiences of WWI and labour's disengagement from the Liberal fold, coupled with the introduction of the party Constitution, were critical to Labour's organisational expression in the division. Significantly, the primary driver came from the municipality and the PTUC, composed largely of railwaymen and engineers. Consequently, the shape of

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[164] See Hannah, *A Party with Socialists in It*, 61-62; and Pimlott, *Labour and the Left in the 1930s*, 52.
[165] *The Yorkshire Post*, 21 May 1934.

Peterborough Division from 1918, with the addition of North Northants, thrust upon the new DLP a unique set of challenges that the fledgling party was not completely prepared for, but which nevertheless percolated into its *practices*. The division's spatial composition compelled the DLP to act like its borough *and* its county peers intra- and extra-regionally. Organisationally, this meant having a division-wide presence. In practice, the party was structurally imbalanced, with the main pockets of strength in the municipality's North and Paston wards and amongst its railwaymen and engineers. Rural organisation came and went, while rural activists eyed jealously the city's predominance. That said, PPC selections represented, in part, an effort to appease rural party activists with a run of non-sectional candidates, while party organiser selections were overtly sectional, but in a way favourable to countryside activists. In other areas of organisation, such as the role played by women, the Peterborough DLP diverged little from the general picture.

In *curating* party messages, the DLP tried to craft a spatially inclusive identity, with appeals to urban and rural voters, albeit with mixed success – the city/country divide was never completely bridged. In its *issue positioning*, the party tended to align with national trends, though the non-impact of the ILP's disaffiliation highlighted the minimal role that organisation formed as a base of the party. The case of the Horrabins presented a novel angle on the DLP's temperament, confirming patterns long-established, with the lifelong Marxists socialised into the moderate climate of Peterborough's Labour politics before it became too much in the 1930s in the broader context of the 1931 crisis and disaffiliation of the ILP. Furthermore, the Peterborough DLP, like its divisional peers, took the opportunity to use the degree of autonomy afforded to it to express itself organisational and ideationally in a way that reflected the locality. The moderation of Peterborough Labour politics meant this generally caused little friction with party HQ. On the isolated occasion where the NEC refused to endorse the DLP's selection for PPC, it resisted albeit futilely.

Thus, in distilling the essence of the Peterborough DLP, we can conclude that it was distinguished by its moderation, grounded in the influence of local railwaymen and engineer trade unionists. Additionally, the party's *practices* were chiefly animated by a city/country dynamic thrust upon it by the boundary review. Indeed, a failure to appreciate the impact of the alterations to divisional boundaries is a failure to understand much of what the Peterborough DLP did or tried to do.

Conclusion: City and Country

A central claim of this thesis is that sub-national party development has been under-theorised, leaving researchers with no standardised or transferable tools with which to enhance our understanding and make meaningful comparisons. Unpicking the evolving organisational and ideational character of (local) parties was resolved through development and application of a comparative *spatial-institutionalist* framework. Theoretically, this approach positioned a conceptualisation of *place* at the centre of party analysis. Following Agnew, this ideation encompassed *location*, *locale* and *sense of place*. *Locations*, it was argued, are part of an interconnected network extending horizontally and vertically. Thus, political actions or *practices* were seen as occurring within a multi-scaled context as part of a spatialised process. Furthermore, *practices* were grounded in a past as well as a present and were therefore understood in the context of space and time. Inductive and deductive procedures revealed four key areas of analysis (i.e., party formation; party organisation; candidate and organiser selection; and policy *curation* and *issue positioning*) central to comprehending a DLPs overarching organisational character and identity. Each *practice* pertaining to one or more of the four areas was filtered through Agnew's three dimensions of *place* to reveal the narrative arc of DLP development.

The *spatial-institutionalist* framework provided the thesis's structure, with Labour's organisational and ideational development being investigated at different but interrelated scales. The period from 1900 to the outbreak of WWI was gestational, denoting the early stages of the party's development. Aggregated *locational* analysis revealed a set of foundational bases from which the party was built at different scales. Chief among these were non-agricultural trade unions, such as the ASRS, as well as the ILP and other socialist societies. Numerically, the trade unions dominated the newly minted LRC, while its main policy focus was the reversal

of damaging anti-union legislation, and the introduction of reform measures deemed to benefit the working class. Other foundations included agricultural labourers' trade unionism, trade councils, religion (especially nonconformism), liberalism, and working-class conservatism. WWI transformed the fortunes of Labour, the opportunity to be part of the wartime government enhanced the party's reputation and the credibility of state intervention, while the 1918 Reform Act and Labour Constitution of the same year altered the electoral and organisational playing field. Among other things, the Constitution outlined the intentions of the party leadership to transform Labour from a sectional into a national party reflective of divisional opinions across the country. Significantly, the quantity and quality of the organisational push this document provided varied from place to place. Overall, the result was a growth in the number of divisional and branch Labour parties. However, regional and local investigations were required to establish the variability in the Constitution's impact.

Scholars have understood the interwar years as a period of Labour's electoral and organisational consolidation (1918 to 1929) followed by a period of collapse and convalescence (1929 to 1939). Municipal advances in the early post-war period and Labour's heading of two minority governments point towards growth and consolidation. Furthermore, the 1926 General Strike, a key event in the narrative of organised labour, while damaging for trade union membership and Labour's finances, promoted the view that parliamentary methods, rather than industrial action, constituted the most effective means through which to protect and advance working-class interests. Under closer scrutiny, there were caveats to this optimistic picture. For instance, while the establishment of women's sections demonstrated organisational development, they tended to be skirted over in terms of policy. While urban organisation proceeded apace in many areas, rural areas were afflicted by problems associated with the scattered nature of rural populations and small numbers of unionised workers. There is little escape from the fact that the events of 1931 were electorally damaging, Labour being reduced

to a rump of heavily industrialised and mining areas. That said, the party was able to remain organisationally intact and even the disaffiliation of the ILP in 1932, and the machinations of the CPGB did little long-term damage to its electoral prospects. Like WWI, WWII presented Labour with an opportunity to enter a wartime government and prove itself in foreign and domestic realms, helping it to secure a resounding electoral victory in 1945. While there were some local disturbances and resistance to the observance of the electoral truce, it was, on balance, adhered to. Similarly, attempts at communist infiltration were generally handled successfully. The advent of the majority Labour government in 1945 generated much optimism, though the pace and nature of reform led to friction between left-wing and centrist elements.

Regional analysis added nuance to the arguments in general historiography of the party. DLPs in East Anglia and the East Midlands bore the marks of foundations identified at the national level. However, it was the quantities and qualities of each that were fundamentally important to the development and nature of DLPs. Features of each *location* and *locale* informed the timing of Labour's organisational appearance, highlighting how the legislation and re-organisation of 1918 had variable effects depending on this inheritance. Echoes of the interwar experience of the national party were observed in the region. There were early municipal advances and evidence of organisational consolidation, with parties carrying out a similar set of core activities, alongside the familiar caveats of rural organisation proving more difficult than in the towns and cities. However, distinct trajectories, in many cases hinging on the specific configuration of organisational bases upon which each DLP was built, were found in relation to patterns of candidate selection and party organisation, policy *curation* and *issue positioning*. Organisation in rural Norfolk was more effective than in North Northants due to an aggregation of factors. Furthermore, national-scale events, such as the disaffiliation of the ILP, rippled down to sub-national levels. However, the impact varied depending on the material

that constituted each party. Analysis of our region's extra-regional peers reinforced the intra-regional chapter's line of argumentation and of the comparative framework.

The decision to conduct a scaled comparative approach revealed that the Peterborough DLP's developmental trajectory was similar to patterns observed in urban *and* (semi-)rural divisions. As the appellation "semi-rural" implies, the Peterborough Division from 1918 was neither entirely rural nor urban. This characteristic of the division was of critical importance in understanding the party's *practices* and distinct organisational and ideational trajectory. A failure to appreciate the role of the city *and* the country on the party's organisational and ideational activities is a failure to grasp its essence. Indeed, the spatial composition of the division would have a shaping impact on its actions from its conception in October 1918 through to 1951. The formation of the Peterborough DLP at this time made it a child of specific circumstances, emerging at the crossroads of the 1917-1918 Boundary Commission and Review, which transformed the geographical extent of the Peterborough Division, fastening the borough of Peterborough to the predominantly rural Soke and North Northants; 1918 Reform Act; as well as the 1918 Labour Constitution which outlined the plan to create party organisation in every division. Before WWI, proponents of independent labour struggled to establish themselves at municipal and parliamentary levels. It would take that conflict to force a shift, accelerating the decay of the local Progressive Alliance. This was not far removed from formative experiences in other divisions.

What was distinct about the Peterborough DLP was the specific circumstances of its formation. Indeed, the party's organisational *practices*, from its inception through to 1951, reflected its material bases and the wider divisional environment. The intention from the outset was to be a *divisional* party reflecting the interests of railwaymen and engineers in the city and surrounding environs, and of agricultural labourers in market towns and villages. In reality, party units in the municipality, particularly those in the North Ward, came to dominate

divisional politics, while the rural experience was characterised by episodes of branch party growth and decay. While the challenges of rural organisation were not unique to Peterborough, its semi-rural status and the aspiration of local activists created the expectation that it should simultaneously act like a borough and a county party. The Peterborough DLP attempted this balancing act, with the cross-spatial railwayman acting as important footsoldiers, though without ever really mastering it.

Patterns of PPC recruitment in Peterborough reflected those observed in other industrially or spatially mixed divisions. Additionally, trends illustrated the financial challenges afflicting many DLPs, as well as the unattractiveness of a geographically vast division not favourably disposed towards returning a parliamentary Labour candidate. Financial challenges, particularly in the 1920s, resulted in the party secretary, John Mansfield, standing on multiple occasions. Many potential suitors withdrew their interest, while others resigned due to organisational challenges compounded by financial poverty. In the first instance, organiser recruitment illustrated a focus on a particular section of the community and an acknowledgement of the organisational work that was required in rural areas. However, while the appointment of R.A. Watson was a strategic decision, subsequent recruitment efforts indicated that there was no broader strategy in place. Nevertheless, the foundations of party *practice* provided by the boundary review were clearly discernible.

The *positional* and *curative practices* of the Peterborough DLP reflected its foundational bases, these played a fundamental role in filtering national and regional issues. Unlike Norwich, the ILP made a minimal impact on Labour politics in Peterborough and, as such, its disaffiliation barely seemed noteworthy. Additionally, the moderation of the city's labour politics contributed to a stance on communist infiltration that emphasised fairness in dealing with those suspected of being sympathetic to communism. The Peterborough DLP's *positioning* regarding the wartime electoral truce meant that the decision of the PPC, Samuel

Bennett, to stand as a CW candidate roused little controversy. Indeed, the one occasion where the DLP was particularly piqued by the actions of the NEC was not grounded in a gulf in ideological differences, the frustration arose because of the NEC's lack of transparency or explanation as to why they rejected the locally endorsed PPC. In terms of policy *curation*, we see clearly the DLP's split personality as it tried to balance its appeal to urban and rural portions of the division, with the outcome being more effective on some occasions than others. The party's actions in this area denote one of the clearest expressions of the enduring impact of the boundary review on party *practice*. It can be concluded with some confidence that the outcome of the boundary review compelled local Labour activists to chart a particular organisational and ideational path that would not have been necessary if the post-1918 boundaries were confined to Peterborough MB.

Finally, in a *History Extra Podcast* the historian and Germanist Mary Fulbrook discussed the importance of tackling subjects that have personal relevance, rather than shying away from them.[1] As such, I wanted to end on a note about Peterborough. I was born, went to school and grew up in Peterborough. My family ancestry includes those who worked on the city's railways as well as those who laboured on the fields of its surrounding environs – city *and* country. Without quite appreciating it at the time, the vast majority of my pre-university years were spent within its invisible boundaries, venturing out only irregularly and tentatively. My formative years owe much to the *place*, while in adulthood I have reflected on its enduring influence and meaning. The drive to study Peterborough in some way was motored by this personal connection, alongside a sense that it does not get the attention I feel it deserves. Perhaps, then, there was a sense of inevitability about my conducting a *place*-based study on the rock I call home.

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[1] "The Holocaust: a 21st-century view," *History Extra Podcast*, accessed April 10, 2023, https://podcasts.apple.com/om/podcast/the-holocaust-a-21st-century-view/id256580326?i=1000578156145.

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