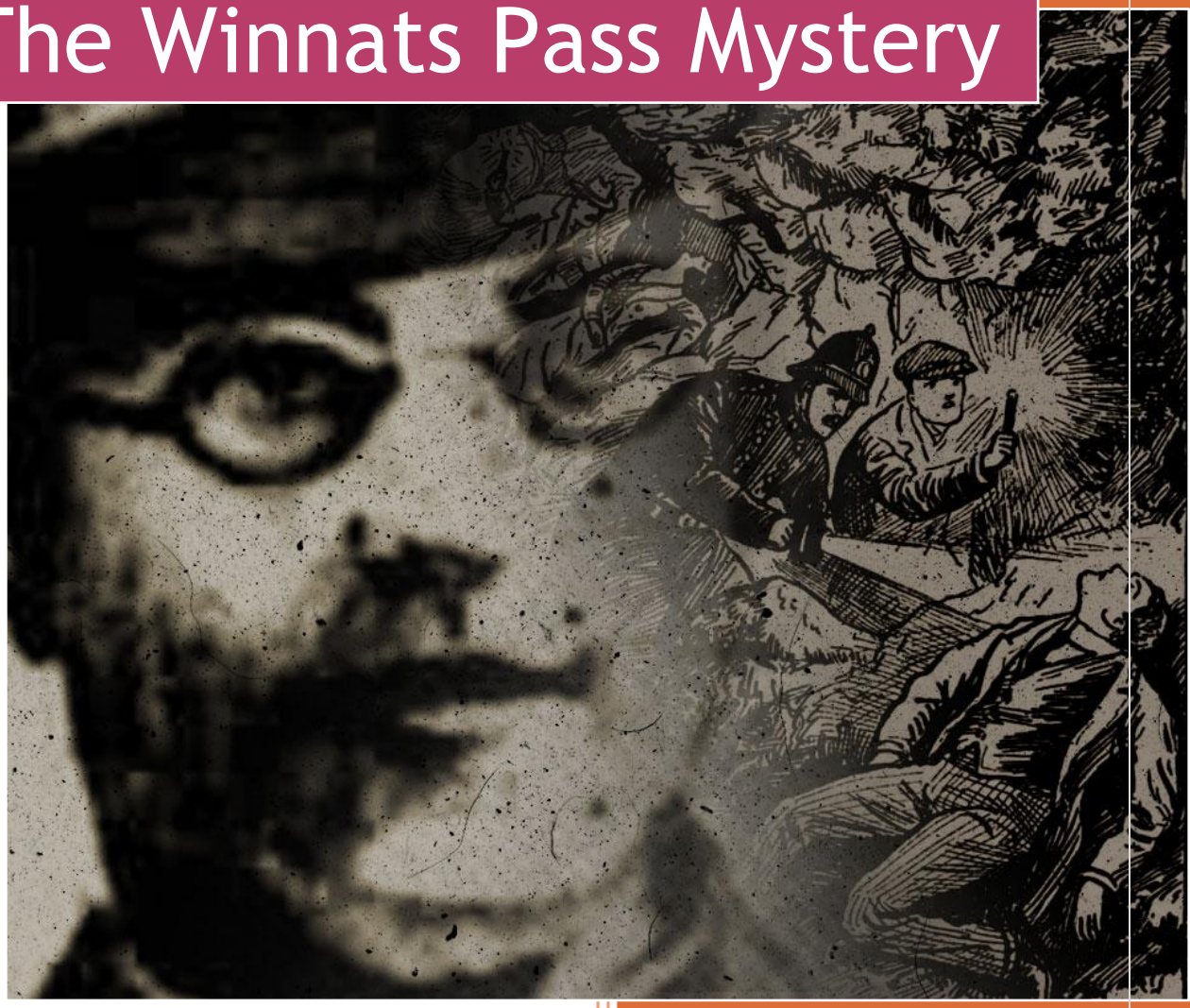
2020

The Winnats Pass Mystery



Alan Sargeant

Anarchism/Communism

8/28/2020

The Winnats Pass Mystery: The Death of Harry Fallows

In the aftermath of a fractious year that had seen the much feared General Strike promise to set Britain ablaze with devastating flames of crisis and sedition, the national papers made the most of an unremarkable start to the New Year. The famous Winnats Pass in the craggy High Peaks of Derbyshire, a favourite rambling and cycling spot among Sheffield and Manchester city folk, had been the scene of a 'sensational discovery'. The bodies of a young man and woman, who had been missing from their homes in Manchester since January 1st 1927, were found at dusk on Saturday 8th by 17-year old rambler Fred Bannister from Manchester. The victims of the tragedy were Harry Fallows of 28 Hinde Street in Moston, Manchester and 17 year-old Marjorie Coe Stewart of 44 Hinde Street.

Incredibly, the story emerged just days before another missing persons' story had been resolved. Glasgow-born activist Nancy Graham had disappeared from her home on the evening of Wednesday 5th. Her husband, a naval architect trained at John Brown & Co Ltd in Clydebank, had discovered his barely conscious wife a week later in the empty home of a Presbyterian minister in Upton near Liverpool. If the discovery of the bodies in Castleton hadn't been linked to the Toplis 'Grey Motor' case, the story may well have missed the press columns entirely.

The dead man was 26 year-old Harry Fallows, the former corporal in the RASC Vehicle Office at Bulford Military Base who just several years before had been charged with harbouring and maintaining the fugitive Percy Toplis — legendary leader of the mutiny at the Etaples Base Camp in France during the war [1]. Archive records show that over a three day period in September 1917, thousands of British soldiers transiting through France had downed arms and rioted over demeaning

camp conditions and the atrocious routine abuses being meted out by instructors and camp police. It was rumoured that Percy Toplis was among the more lawless of the men involved. Toplis' story was eventually re-imagined in the 4-part BBC drama, *The Monocled Mutineer* in the 1980s, a blistering critique of the war written by Alan Bleasdale, starring Paul McGann and directed by lifelong Socialist, Jim O' Brien. And for a four-week period in September 1986 it caused nothing short of chaos for the Tory Government.

The facts relating to the 'Etaples Mutiny' had been covered-up for the best part of seventy years, partly as a result of embarrassment and partly to suppress a broad scale civil uprising in the immediate aftermath of the war. The fury of the troops had been settled by negotiation. Acknowledging the mutiny had meant conceding the possibility that violent revolution could be a successful model for change. With the exception of the occasional allusion in parliament — usually made by nervous Rear Admirals in hushed, evasive tones or by boisterous Scottish Socialists teasing the cat out of the bag — the mutiny was dutifully buried beneath the thickest of murmurs and whispers. It was only the determination of Douglas Gill and Gloden Dallas — two military historians of a uniquely militant and enquiring bent — that led to it being unearthed and re-examined under a harsh, if not exactly panoptic, academic light (*Mutiny at Etaples Base in 1917*, Past & Present, OUP, Nov 1975, No. 69). A book by John Fairley and William Allison followed — and the rest, as they say, is unwanted history.

Little is known about the riots themselves. The first national press report on the incident was published some thirteen years later by the *Manchester Guardian*, based on the eyewitness statement of a junior officer, but anything other than informal oral testimony evidence remains frustratingly thin on the ground and what there is remains dogged by rumour and speculation. As Mark Lancaster, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence confessed in April 2017, the official records pertaining to the Haig Board of Inquiry into the Etaples Mutiny

had been lost (Hansard, Citation: HC Deb, 24 April 2017, cW). But there are clues in Haig's diary and letters written by other officers.

On the third day of the riots Field Marshall Douglas Haig had written in his diary that the disturbances had occurred when "some men of new drafts with revolutionary ideas" had produced red flags and refused to obey orders (Douglas Haig: Diaries and Letters 1914-1918). The Camp Diary of Base Commandant Brigadier Thomson fleshes the story out in a little more detail, whilst leaving out the militant Socialism that may or may not have inspired it.

Some two and a half years after the mutiny, Winnats Pass suicide victim, Harry Fallows had been the star witness at a hastily convened inquest that saw Toplis — the 'man with a gold-rimmed monocle' and much-touted ringleader of the mutiny — tried and found guilty in absentia for murder of taxi-driver Sidney Spicer. The theory that Superintendent James Cox of Hampshire Police was pursuing was that Toplis had stolen the car, murdered the cab driver and taken Fallows on a joyride to Swansea, where Toplis then ditched the car after failing to sell it on. A dramatic nationwide manhunt had then been launched before Toplis, the military "Ishmael", was gunned down by Police in Penrith.

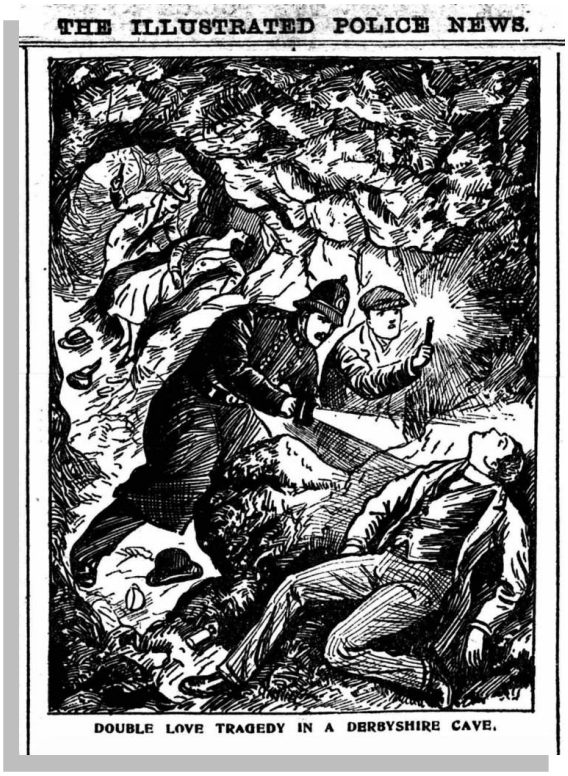
As a result of the 1978 book by John Fairley and William Allison and the explosive drama by Bleasdale in the 1980s, a legend has evolved that the ambush on Toplis had been sanctioned by the British Home Office and secretly coordinated by British Secret Service. It was and remains a far-fetched claim but the circumstances surrounding the death of his accomplice, Harry Fallows in some remote recess of the Dark Peak in January 1927 — so soon after the Great Strike — adds a dash of plausibility. This was a pivotal year for Anglo-Russian relations and Mi5 and Special Branch were up to their necks in intrigue. The notorious Police raid on the Soviet 'Arcos' offices in London which took place in May that year, was based partly on evidence that there was Soviet Military spy-ring operating from Longsight in Manchester under the coordination of Cheka

agent, Jacob Kirchenstein and featuring *Metro-Vickers* worker, Fred E. Walker. Just weeks after the death of Fallows, James Cullen – a founding member of the British Communist Party who had been sentenced to one year's imprisonment for his role in the Etaples Mutiny — published his own account of the riots in France and like Haig he heaped no shortage of blame on Bolshevik trouble-makers. More curiously still, it was on the actual day of the raid of the Soviet offices that Newcastle MP, Sir Charles Philips Trevelyan presented the *Access to Mountains Bill* to Parliament. A meeting to support the Bill would take place in Winnats Pass that June and it was here that Sheffield and Manchester Socialists declared their full intention to support it. The arrival of former Communist MP, Walton Newbold to contest the High Peaks at the next election, had seen this little-known limestone gorge transformed into a political magma chamber and the death of Fallows, peculiarly enough, had taken place in one of its main vents.

But what does all this have to do with Toplis?

Well one story published in the wake of the villain's death cast Toplis as an armed and dangerous anarchist with links to an organized Soviet cell operating in the East End of London (World Pictorial News, June 11 1920). Although it's likely to be lacquered in misconceptions and half-truths, some reports in the Scottish Press at the time of the murder inquiry do much to support the rumour. Arriving at a Temperance Hotel in Inverness, Toplis is reported to have blithely told the property owner that he had "recently been in Russia". The hotelkeeper went on to describe how Toplis, a 'modern day Yorrick', had made quite an impression on guests by delighting them with tunes on the piano in the hotel lounge. The tunes he was most fond of playing? "Nearer my God to Thee and the Russian National Anthem" (Highland News, June 5th 1920). The boasts and his playing of the anthem probably did little to help his cause. There had already been speculation that Toplis had been involved in the brutal murder of former Etaples matron, Nurse Florence Nightingale Shore, bludgeoned to death on a train travelling

between London and Bexhill-on-Sea. The Nurse's cousin, I would learn much later, was the cousin of Raphale Farina, the sitting Head of Mi5's Russian Section, who was at this time compiling a list of suspected Communist sympathizers and suspicious Russian émigrés active in Bexhill and Hastings.


THE ILLUSTRATED POLICE NEWS.

DOUBLE LOVE TRAGEDY IN A DERBYSHIRE CAVE.

The role of Harry Fallows in the 'Grey Motor Car Murder' inquiry was even less straightforward than the role alleged to have been played Toplis, whose guilt was never firmly established. Despite Harry being arrested as an accomplice in the murder of Spicer, all subsequent charges were withdrawn against him and he was only ever called as a witness at a hastily convened inquest in Salisbury that Toplis found guilty of murder 'in absentia'. Harry had made no attempt to deny that he had ridden with Toplis in the stolen vehicle immediately after the murder but claimed to have been elsewhere when Spicer was killed. As Toplis was not present at his own trial, and wasn't in a position to defend his murder conviction, we will never have any way of knowing whether Harry played a hand in the

killing, or had acted simply as an accessory after the event. Wrongdoer or witness? It's likely we'll never know.

And it's the whole of witnesses that makes the whole thing so uncertain. *There were no actual witnesses in the 'Grey Motor' case.* The Public Inquest into the death of Spicer was, by today's standards, a gross violation of justice. The coroner who presided was J.T.P Clarke, Deputy-Coroner for North-West Hampshire, not a civilian but a Captain in the regiment in which both Toplis and Fallows were serving. No one was brought forward to corroborate Harry's story about being at back at the base when the murder of Spicer took place and no one else came forward to place Toplis at the scene of the crime. Insufficient evidence, no key witnesses, insufficient motives, a mass of contradictory statements, no confession and no forensics.

The entire case against Toplis had built around statements made by Corporal Harry Fallows, who by his own admission had not been present when the murder took place. By the time of the police raid on the Soviet trade offices in May 1927, the only man who could have ever re-examined the death of Spicer, Superintendent James L. Cox, was dead too. The lead investigator in the Toplis case had died suddenly at home in Hampshire, just days before the dramatic raid on the Arcos offices in London, and just months after his old star witness had ended his life in the cave.

There was only one way of moving forward; we would need to go back to the cave.

Fred Discovers the Bodies

At the time of the couple's deaths in the Dark Peak, Harry was estranged from his wife Alice and his daughter Irene, aged four. His new sweetheart Marjorie Stewart was a fabric designer at *Mayne Fabric Company* in Salford. She was young, she

was happy and a string of creative talents suggested a life full of exciting options. After a brief spell working as a driver, Harry — described by neighbours as ‘a man with a jaunty air’ — had found himself unemployed.

Fred Bannister, the young rambler who had found them in the cave, lived at 21 Upper Duke Street in Hulme in South Manchester. The streets where he lived were made up of soot-peppered red-brick terraces; wall upon wall, roof upon roof, row upon row, each one drowning beneath a dark and pitiful glaze of persistent northern drizzle. The real punch would come on workdays when the rain would mingle with the malted vapours of the nearby breweries and the sulphur of pluming coal fires would cough from the chimneys along the street. According to one member of the press, this small South Manchester suburb was the very heart of an ‘arid region of mean streets and meaner dwellings'. Just 500 yards down the road a pub called *Bleak House* — a name clearly bestowed on the place by a publican who knew his Dickens — had been resurrected as hostel by Christian ‘stretcher-bearers’ Toc H. The contrast between this and the mortarless moors of the Peaks couldn’t have been more profound. Remarkably, Fred had been living little more than a few miles from the couple he alleges to have found by chance in a cave in Castleton. His father Robert Bannister ran a two property business as a dairyman after spending several years in Australia with his wife Mary Ann and Fred’s half brother Arthur. He’d had a few scrapes with the law for selling watered down milk — both in Oz and in Britain — but was otherwise unknown to Police.

The 27-mile hike from Hulme in Manchester would have been no small achievement for an inexperienced youngster embarking on the journey alone, the recent Winter Solstice having squeezed the hours of daylight into a tight and fairly challenging seven-hour window of opportunity. The shortest route would have taken Fred through the inner city suburbs to Marple Bridge and out onto the Kinder plateau. From here he would trudge his way east through the heather-

knitted moors of Edale, mostly likely kitted out in a statutory mix of hob-nail boots, socks pulled up to his knees and the heaviest jacket he could lay his young hands on. It would have been tough going underfoot and after working anywhere between ten and fourteen hour shifts as a labourer, the craving to get out into the hills must have been strong. The 26 shilling wages he would be drawing every week practically ensured a modest kit, and any dawdling or unnecessary sightseeing would have seen Fred tackling the moors in the dark, and almost certainly at this time of year, in the mist. As a reporter for the Sheffield Independent was to write on the Monday, attempting a tramp across the bleak Kinder Scout in the first few weeks of the New Year was a stunt undertaken by "only the keenest ramblers."

The first chamber in the Suicide Cave in Winnats Pass where the bodies were found

With a good dose of stamina and incentive, it was just about doable — at a push.

Until recently, the road through Winnats Pass was little more than a gritty dirt track punctuated unevenly by heathery tufts and sphaggy moss. A stream coursed

through the Pass during the rainy season and on either side of the cleft, steep banks would rise-up to almost impossible angles, flecked with tremendous rocks. Here the tall crags would throw grim, illusive shapes and the rounded, grassy shoulders of the slopes would give way to unexpected, sudden-death ledges. The one hope in the Hope Valley was that you survived long enough to enjoy it. Two parts really creepy to one part 'holy shit!'

In a report dated Monday 10 January 1927, the morning after his discovery, Fred Bannister tells the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* a fairly remarkable story. He had arrived in Castleton on Saturday January 8th to spend the weekend with friends in the village. Around tea-time, curiosity got the better of him and he headed off to explore the caves on the slopes of The Pass. This tortuous, ancient bridle way winds west out of the village and is surrounded by towering ridges, rough pinnacles and silhouettes — a regular magnet for adventurous youths. At approximately 5.00 pm Fred entered a cave to the right of the foot of The Pass, and it was here that he found the bodies of the couple in the entrance to the cave. His story was made all the more remarkable because he had encountered the very same couple — only this time very much alive — in the same spot just seven days earlier (Sunday January 2nd).

His journey on that first week had been little different. Two rambling friends from Manchester who Fred knew only as 'Sunshine' and 'Ambrose' had set off with him on the Sunday and they had arrived at the Winnats Pass around 4.30 in the afternoon. Fred described how the couple at the time of this first sighting had been 'sitting side by side in the dark' at the cave entrance (Sheffield Daily Telegraph 10 January 1927, p.5). *"We had torches and they told us to put them out. It was the man (Fallows) who asked us, and he spoke in an ordinary way, without any sign of agitation or anything to arouse our suspicion."* In the aftermath of the drama Fred had talked to other ramblers who had gone into the cave a little earlier in the day and they told him they had found nothing unusual inside them. If Fred's

story is correct, then Fallows and his sweetheart must have arrived at the caves shortly before Bannister and his group, and slightly later than the other ramblers.

When the reporter pressed Fred on why he had headed to Castleton on the Saturday he discovered the bodies — the weekend after his trip with 'Sunshine' and Ambrose — the boy said that he had arrived to stay the weekend with Mr and Mrs Younge of The Island Gift Shop, situated just off Buxton Road. Tea-room and gift shop owner Henry Younge and his wife Hannah were the parents of Harry George Younge, a keen fell runner who had married 27 year old Clara Bellass some three years earlier. Clara, a supervisor at *Metro-Vickers* at Trafford Park were now living at Trafford Grove in Stretford, putting them little more than a few miles from young Fred in the southern districts of Manchester and just a hundred yards from future Communist and A.E.U leader, Hugh Scanlon on Chester Road. It also placed Clara tantalisingly close to suspected Soviet agent, Fred E. Walker, another *Metro-Vickers* employee.

In previous years the Younge's son, Harry Jnr. would lead celebrations as the garlanded King's Consort on horseback for Castleton's legendary 'Oak Apple Day' — a relic of the old Stuart dynasty commemorating the restoration of the monarchy in the 1600s. By 1927, the whole event had been largely forgotten. It was only in quirky backwater strongholds like Castleton that this rather Conservative celebration still thrived.

Another key figure at the Oak Apple Day celebrations was 44 year old Arthur Potter, a guide to the local Speedwell Cavern. The cavern stands to this day some 75 yards from the cave at the entrance to The Pass. Just a few years later, Potter's hostility towards the mixed-sex rambler camps dotted around Winnats Pass would culminate in a campaign to stamp the nuisance out once and for all. As he and other 'Castleton Ringers' saw it, the rambler's camps were a 'disgrace to civilization'. The "free and easy manner" in which the sexes were mixing was totally unacceptable and something needed to be done (Sheffield Independent, 07

June 1935, p.7). Castleton's Tory MP, Major Samuel Hill-Wood probably couldn't have agreed more. In the Major's eyes, most of the ramblers were unruly young Socialists and 'the bulk of the Labour Party were Bolsheviks'. Hill-Wood's fight was not with the honest and decent men who represented the unions but with 'them' — the extremists (Derbyshire Courier 11 September 1920, p.3) Going toe-to-toe with daring former-Communist, J.T. Walton Newbold in the High Peaks local elections of June 1927 would only sour his opinion further. But this is something we'll need to come back to.


THE WINNATS CAVE TRAGEDY.

Fred Bannister, of Hulme, Manchester, who discovered the Castleton tragedy and found the bodies.

The entrance to the cave in the Winnats where the bodies of a man and girl were found on Saturday.

The 17 year old rambler who found the bodies of the couple (Sheffield Daily Telegraph 10 January 1927)

Before making his way to Mr and Mrs Younge at the Island, Fred says he had gone alone to explore the caves at Winnats Pass. The time would be around 5.00 pm. He says he passed the cave, which though some 800 yards from the village is just about observable from the narrow mud-track road that zigzags through The

Pass. The ‘Horseshoe Cave’ as it was then known, lies some 100 yards up a gentle incline.

Gales were blowing in from the East the day Fred returned to the cave that Saturday. Almost a full week had passed since his first trip to the cave and a deep depression was now sitting between Scotland and Iceland. As a result there had been widespread flood damage across Britain. The moors around the Peaks had also seen considerable snowfall. The first few days of the New Year had been relatively mild and Fallows and Stewart are likely to have encountered little more than drizzle if they had arrived in the Peaks on New Year’s Day. The temperatures though were dropping and it’s unlikely the couple could have survived a full week in the caves without any kind of provisions. When Fred Bannister arrived at the caves, the pass was being battered by a ‘terrific rainstorm’ (Dundee Evening Telegraph 10 January 1927, p.3).

Although Fred says he had passed the cave at first, something had told him to go back. He returned and entered the outer cave, before squeezing through a bottleneck passage about fifty yards inside. It was here that Fred flashed his lamp and made out the legs of a woman, reclining against a rock. She wasn’t moving. Fred’s first instinct was to exit the cave, but composing himself he returned and

felt the woman's pulse. She was cold. He felt nothing. Horrified he ran out, having seen nothing of the man. "As I passed Speedwell Mine, I blew a whistle I carry, but there was no one about, and I ran down into the village of Castleton and informed Police Sergeant Barrett". Sergeant Barrett and Dr Bailey accompanied Fred back to the cave, and it was then that the body of Fallows was found, lying face down some 10 or 15 yards away from the girl. Both were fully dressed and a broken cup and saucer was between them. A full bottle of Lysol disinfectant was in Harry's coat pocket and a second broken bottle was found lying at his side. At the feet of the woman reclining against the rock was a handbag. Nothing in the way of provisions or extra clothing were found. A cursory examination of the handbag revealed only a manicure set, a powder puff and a ticket with an address and a telephone number on it. The number and address was that of a woman who Marjorie had exchanged Christmas cards with just weeks before. Dialling the number, Superintendent J.H MacDonald learned that Marjorie had been missing for a week. The man had been absent from Manchester for some days.

In spite of Fred's story about seeing them alive at the cave the week previously, there was no evidence to suggest that the young couple had been staying in the village from the time of their disappearance on January 1st to the discovery of their bodies on January 8th. No witnesses came forward to say that they had been seen and no one came forward to say whether the missing couple were even familiar with the Castleton district. Fred's two young rambling friends, 'Sunshine' and 'Ambrose' may have been able to shed some light on the claims, but curiously the pair never came forward.

After the Police Sergeant and the Doctor had completed their review of the cave, Edward Medwell, a greengrocer and village sexton, who had married the Younge's daughter Doris, conveyed the bodies from the caves to the Castle Hotel in his van, battling against the pummelling high winds which had prevented the van from turning and driving back for quite some time. Once the van did manage

to get away, the helpers at the rear of the wagon were seen to topple awkwardly over the bodies. The gale coursing through The Pass provided nothing in the way of shelter and even less in the way of mercy.

The Sheffield Telegraph wasted no time in pointing out that whilst Winnats Pass was frequently visited during the summer months, particularly by Manchester people, winter visitors were comparatively rare. Neither the doctor nor the constable was able to say if Fallows had taken his own life before or after Marjorie, although the pair of them were both believed to have been dead some days. There were no signs of a struggle and their bodies were 'well clothed' in their everyday city attire. As Dr Baillie explained to the press, "they were obviously not ramblers" (A Dead Couple in A Cave, Dundee Evening Telegraph 10 January 1927, p.3). If what Dr Baillie says is true, then they were also not sufficiently kitted out for spending five days in a cave in the High Peaks in winter. So where did they stay and what had been the couple's movements since they were last seen on Friday 31st December?

Teddy Medwell who used his van to convey the bodies to the Castle Hotel (Castleton Historical Society)

At 2.30 pm on Sunday 9th January, Mrs Lily White, the sister of Harry Fallows, arrived in the village with her father, Edwin. They spent a few minutes at the Castle Hotel identifying the bodies and after a brief conversation with Sergeant Barnett returned to Manchester. The hotel occupied a fairly private location just off Cross Street, a hundred or so yards from Bannister's friends, the Youngs at The Island Gift Shop. The once mighty Peveril Castle loomed high on the cliffs above it, offering a safe, reassuring embrace. Marjorie's sister and parents, William and Hannah visited the home of the minister where they discussed the business of burying the couple together — an unconventional enough arrangement even under normal circumstances, and certainly more so now given Harry was still married to Alice.

Mass Ramble in the Pass

If Fred Bannister's account was accurate, then Harry and Marjorie would have arrived in Winnats Pass when it was crawling with hundreds of ramblers. This was a key date on the walking calendar: a New Year's rambling celebration at the Peak Hotel in Castleton wedged neatly between a series of mass tramps across the moorlands of Kinder Scout — the highest point in the Peaks. Despite protests, the pathway across the mountain had been closed in recent years and an annual 'mass trespass' had been built into the fabric of the celebration. As local rambling organiser, G.H.B.Ward was in the habit of repeating, rambling "did not consist of a perambulation from one public-house to another" or "disrupting Sunday morning worship" with the pumping of some heinous concertina on street corners. An open and honest roam across Kinder was all they sought, and a vow had been made to go there every year until they could cross it as 'free men'. It may have been a whole New Year for the Clarion Socialist men and women, but it was the same old battle they were fighting.

Turn-out had increased three-fold and many of the group had started out the previous morning, some getting the train from Manchester, whilst members of the Sheffield faithful had started off on foot from Fulwood by way of Stanage Pole. All being well, there would be a welcome meeting at the hotel on the Saturday before walks would conclude on the Sunday with a tramp across Kinder.

It was ramblers' day and ramblers were everywhere.

Reporting the event on Monday January 3rd, The Sheffield Independent wrote,

"At every bend in the winding moorland path, and at each guide-post that marks the twisting lanes the wanderer would have been met with cheery greetings for the New Year. Some were veterans of the game, others were young and vigorous, and quite a number were girls, bobbed and shingled, who strode alongside their male companions quite unabashed in heavy boots and breeches. The majority of youths were hatless and bare-necked, although one braved hill and dale in Oxford bags and a beret."

Sheffield Independent 03 January 1927, p.10

The hundred or so ramblers were drawn from all parts of the surrounding districts: Rotherham, Worksop, Sheffield, Manchester, Rotherham and Barnsley. As on most other occasions turn-out was very good and this year the annual New Year tramp would be celebrating its 26th anniversary. Among those likely to have attended the Mass Trespass on Kinder Scout on the Saturday would be future Trespass leader, Benny Rothman and his young friend, Hugh Scanlon, the future Communist and A.E.U leader who lived just 100 yards from Clara Bellass and Harry Younge at 8 Trafford Grove in Stretford.

As usual, the man who had organised the event was G.H.B Ward, founder of the Sheffield Clarion Ramblers, formidable Labour activist and self-styled Prince of the Ramblers. "The truest rambler could go anywhere", Ward would say as he prepared the annual toast on the first day of 1927. The resolution this year, as it was every year, was the relentless, blister-popping advance toward self-

improvement: mentally, physically and spiritually. In Ward's eyes the finest nation would be the one where the greatest percentage of its people were disciples of the open air. For Bert it was about the working man or woman seizing control of their destiny, plotting a course and preparing for a life with purpose and direction. As one ascended Kinder Scout the soul would climb and a sharp, north-easterly wind would whip away the dust from the eyes and send a shiver of self belief rattling down the spine. The gravel beneath ones feet gave way equally to knight or knave, sire or scuzzer, baron or bastard. Ward, who had forged a close personal friendship with the Spanish anarchist revolutionary, Francisco Ferrer during his trips to the Canary Islands at the start of the century, said that rambling stood for the 'pride of a manly heart, a swinging stride and a personality that could penetrate and was not afraid'. When thumping your boots down on the beautifully scarred soils of the Peaks, the working man could enjoy the same natural rights as his landed masters. The revolution, one might surmise, would start in the lungs and the heart and the spirit. He may have forged his trade amongst the smouldering twisted metal of the steelworks of Sheffield, but he had the restless soul of a poet.

The custom was to hold the Clarion Club's annual New Year dinner on the first Saturday evening of the year at the Peak Hotel. The Sheffield Daily Telegraph of January 4th reported that the club's members spent a jolly evening singing songs and making merry. Ward made a toast to the Club's treasurer W.H Whitney, and remarked that the Clarion Socialists were now like an oak tree — well-established, strong with numerous branches. If they wanted the moors to be free, they must free it for themselves. Rambling was the sport of levellers, smoothing away the social boundaries that divided men of small and large means. As celebrations got underway a glass was raised to rambler James Evans, a Manchester railway worker who had gone missing not far from Castleton in the first week of January 1925.

GHB Ward (centre) with Clarion Ramblers

Knickerbocker Bolsheviks

The weekend of the New Year Clarion Ramble was also marked by the arrival of the Young Communist League, a more unmatured blend of the two local radical youth organisations: the *Young Workers' League* and the *International Communist Schools Movement*. The group, led by the indomitable William Rust, embraced the same purposeful stride and free spirit of the Clarion Ramblers and provided a fractious rearguard at the landmark Winnats' Pass rally arranged by Ward just six months earlier. Rust's influence was at its peak. As Fallows and Stewart prepared to spend their very last Christmas together, Rust was marching his 120-strong YCL members through the streets of nearby Sheffield to the Primitive Methodist Chapel on Stanley Street, home of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, where Ward had been serving as Chairman [2].

As the saying goes, 'the boy's will is the wind's will' and the 24 year-old Rust wasted no time in directing its boisterous airflow through the city's steel districts

in the run-up to Christmas. Anybody still wrestling with their Yuletide goose or lugging a tree down West Bar or the Quays would have been confronted by a miniature Red Army swarming like flies across Lady's Bridge, down past the Wicker Arches to the banks of the mighty Don. Bursting through the mists of the quays in late December 1926, youths of fourteen and children as young as eight, would be heard screaming for the overthrow of the capitalist state and the hanging of General Strike pariah, Jimmy Thomas — all boisterously carried out to the tune of John Brown's Body (Leeds Mercury 20 December 1926, p.5). To the average onlooker it must have looked like Santa' elves had arrived en masse one week too early, bearing the darkest of gifts from the Kremlin.

Claiming to represent the interests of 1,500 young miners abandoned and betrayed by the leaders of the General Strike the previous spring, 'Lord Fly' Bill Rust and his Communist kindergarten hoisted red banners brandishing Russian and German slogans, as speakers — often in knickerbockers — expressed scruffily prepared protests about everything from cane-swishing schoolmasters to the resounding failures of trade union leaders like Thomas. The "Communist Youth", Rust explained, were "now a real force in the class struggle". They knew what they wanted and how to get it (Communist Kindergarten, The Observer, Dec 19, 1926, p.17). As was the case with an earlier event in Manchester a message of support from the Young Communist International in Moscow was read aloud by one of the children. A note of warning from several British soldiers was also repeated; bad food and living conditions had made the Red Army the only choice. 'Scab workers' came in for it too. Comrade William Halpin of nearby Neville Street, said that feeling was getting stronger against the "dirty blacklegs who worked while others went on strike" (Comrade Children in Conference, Manchester Guardian, Feb 15 1926).

As a response to the success of the congress in Sheffield a small delegation of Young Communist Leaguers, including 13-year old speaker Clifford Roberts,

would embark on a trip to Moscow in June the following year. Joining him on his visit would be 12 year old Edward Turner from Openshaw in Manchester, Nancy Hall from Birtley, Thomas Stevenson of Fife, William Baker from London and Norman Paton from Glasgow (Off To Russia, The Scotsman 23 June 1927, p.10). That year, the 13 year-old boy from Tylerstown in Rhondda and his delegates would spend a month in Russia visiting schools, playgrounds, rest houses and a fully equipped 'children's city' built on estates seized from the fleeing Tsarists.

Rust himself had only recently been released from jail after receiving a 12-month custodial sentence for Incitement to Mutiny at the Old Bailey. His attendance of the Fifth Congress of the Communist International in Moscow in 1924 had considerably fired-up his youthful devotion to direct action and Rust and his comrades had been encouraging troops not to shoot on striking workers. One of those sentenced alongside Rust that day was J.T Murphy, a colleague of Ward at Sheffield's Amalgamated Society of Engineers, where Ward had been serving as chairman.

Little secret was being made of attempts by the Communists to mobilize the 'Baby Reds', but the kids had ideas of their own. A special correspondent for the Daily Mail described an increasing appetite among youngsters for violent revolution. 'Comrade Lee' of Manchester was reported as saying, "We young ones have learned to use big words and technical terms, and if we don't take care, we shall become word-bound to the older Communists. We had to learn to make ourselves simple." It was action they wanted now, not words (Our Baby Reds, Daily Mail Dec 20 1926).

J.T Walton Newbold — A Communist for Castleton

One man you might have expected to see at the New Years' Clarion meet was the recently appointed Labour candidate for Castleton and the High Peak — J.T Walton Newbold who had joined Young Communist League leader William Rust in the Political Bureau of Britain's fledgling Communist Party, back in 1923. Newbold, himself a keen and experienced rambler — and a local man to boot — was still a regular contributor to The Clarion newspaper, so it's certainly very plausible. Newbold may also have attended the Young Leaguer's congress in Sheffield just two weeks before. Newbold's close friend Shapurji Saklatvala was certainly in the city that week, having made a lighting trip from Battersea in London to provide a short but supportive address to Rust and his young red followers.

Given his status in the early British Communist movement and his friendship with High Peak MP, Walton Newbold — not to mention his links with both Manchester and the Peaks — it is well worth pausing on Saklatvala for a moment, arriving as he did shortly prior to the Arcos Raid and the death of Harry Fallows in Castleton — an emerging battleground district in Newbold's new constituency. Irrespective of its credibility, the Intelligence coming through to Special Branch was that in the aftermath of the General Strike, Manchester was fast replacing Glasgow as the epicentre of industrial action and Soviet intrigue. And its Pennine access to Sheffield made it militants doubly dangerous.

Born in Bombay in 1874 to a prominent Indian business family, Sakatvala had formed a precocious friendship with Russian Revolutionary and eminent bacteriologist, Vladimir Haffkine whilst studying at university. After arriving in England shortly after the 3rd Russian Social Democratic Labour Party Congress in London in 1905, Shapurji quickly got involved in the various émigré

communities emerging in London and Salford, eventually running as Communist Party candidate in the 1922 General Election. In May 1926, at the height of the General Strike, Saklatvala was sentenced to two months imprisonment at Wandsworth Prison. In what may now rank as a 'rites of passage' for any self-respecting radical, the North Battersea MP was convicted of Incitement to Mutiny. A warrant was issued to him at his Highgate address and he was taken in for questioning by Detective Andrew Davies. It was here that Shapurji learned that he was going to be charged under the Emergency Regulations Act for a speech he'd made at Hyde Park on May Day a few days previously. During his subsequent interview with Police, a short-hand summary of his speech was read back to him by Davies*: "We saw a vanload of Black Shirts in Oxford Street with nothing inside but Union Jacks. The Union jack has for hundreds of years been doing nothing but harbouring fools and rogues ... we know they are preparing to fight us. We know they are preparing to kill us, and they are preparing to throw bombs. We want to tell the Army boys that they must revolt now, and refuse to fight ... I want the Navy boys to march behind every English woman when she goes out to purchase food, and I want the army and navy to really protect the people, instead of the rogues and thieves of the master classes* (MP At Bow Street, The Scotsman 05 May 1926, p.6)

Given the role that Toplis is alleged to have played in the mutiny at Etaples, the arrival of Fallows in the Peaks at the time of the Clarion Ramble adds volume to the seditious mandate being pushed rather noisily by the Communist Party of Great Britain (the CPGB) at this time. Over the years, the Clarion Socialists had retained a small but capable faction of hardcore militants, as well as no small number of Communists. If there had been so much as a whisper of doubt about Fallows, it could have made things very awkward if he had attended the New Year meeting.

After his release on June 26, Saklatvala was kept under close observation by Special Branch. A series of intercepts had revealed that the CPGB were currently in the process of setting up a 'Secret Committee of Five'. Upon their selection, the chosen five would help organise and direct the party "underground activity" in Her Majesty's Forces on orders and directions provided by the Soviet Embassy. According to Sakatvala's security file, activities and objectives of the group would include the acquisition of naval and military information, propaganda in H.M Forces and the smuggling of foreign agents in and out of the country. The creation of a secret courier system and liaison with other extreme revolutionary organisations was also being planned (TNQA, KV2-611). The information had been brought to the attention of Scotland Yard by Major Phillips at Mi5, after a tip-off in the last few weeks of September. By December 8th Saklatvala was being shadowed by detectives again. A secret meeting had been scheduled at 2 St Albans Villas, his new home off Highgate Road. The man he was meeting at that address was Éamon de Valera — the Irish Revolutionary whose prison-break from Lincoln Prison, according to declassified files at the Bureau of Military History, had been assisted in no small part by the Manchester and Sheffield anarchists.

Just six weeks prior to his appearance at the Communist Youth Congress in Sheffield in December that same year, Mi5 Director Sir Vernon Kell queried a visit that Saklatvala was rumoured to be making to nearby Derbyshire. If he'd made the trip to the Peaks, it would have been something of a hero's return for Saklatvala, having worked in the region for several months at *Smedley's Hydro* as secretary to his uncle, Ratan Tata. His wife Elizabeth Marsh was from Matlock — a popular site for radical gatherings — and the couple would return frequently over the years. He'd joined the Clarion Socialist Club in Manchester in 1909 and his profile around Edale and the Dark Peaks had remained strong.

Saklatvala's friend, John Turner Walton Newbold, the prospective MP for Castleton, was by contrast, the son of a Buxton cattle merchant who had built an astonishing career as Britain's first elected Communist. In August 1926, he switched his electoral hopes from Motherwell in Scotland to Buxton, where he would be standing not for the Reds this time but for Labour. It was a clever, strategic move. The rural playground that was Edale and the Peaks provided fertile election soils, with Trevelyan and Bert Ward's much hyped 'Access to Mountains Bill' promising to unite left leaning Liberals and Communists alike. As Newbold and Ward saw it, industry was fast encroaching on the beauties of the Peak District. If they played their cards correctly, the energy and the passion stirred by the Mountains debate could be used against his Conservative rival, Major Samuel Hill-Wood, whose support for the upcoming Trades Union Act that would outlaw general strikes was as vocal as it was uncompromising.

The arrival of Newbold in Buxton must have sat prettily uneasily with local Conservatives. The last few years had seen the gap narrow considerably in this once safe Tory stronghold. At Britain's next General Election, Salford Trade Unionist George Bagnall would more than double the Labour vote. And with Newbold still carrying no small amount of weight in Russia, the heathers around the Peaks must have been bristling a little more intensely than usual. As the *Motherwell Times* wrote in June 1926, the 39 year-old Newbold had seriously deep connections to the "inner circle of the aristocracy that controls and directs the Communist International in Moscow and its constituent parties everywhere."

Shortly before his selection as candidate for the High Peaks, Newbold was heard boasting to a crowd at Wishaw near Glasgow. In a typically flamboyant address, Walton recalled that when serving as a member of the Executive Committee of the Communist International in 1924, he had received his private letters and news from Moscow in the uncensored mail bags of the Russian Trade Delegation in Highgate. If his break with the Communist Party of Great Britain had been as

clean and acrimonious as he'd been suggesting, then bragging about it now ahead of his shock return to the Peaks may have been the clearest indication yet that there were plenty of 'red cells' still oxygenating his political blood. It was a Communist trip on a Labour ticket.

Despite frequent trips to Canada and the United States, Newbold plodded on with an uncomfortably low-profile campaign, unevenly punctuated by lavish broad swipes at Lord Beaverbrook and the impact of 'commodity civilization' on the refuge of the Peaks.

Every weekend Newbold would greet ramblers off the Saturday noon and early Sunday morning trains: "Miners from Nottinghamshire, steelworkers from the Don Valley, mill girls from Oldham, clerks out of Manchester … each of them escaping for a few brief hours on the windy, rain-whipped uplands" (Another People's Playground Going West, Daily Herald 22 April 1927, p.4)

A Labour rally at Buxton in June saw Newbold read a message from their leader, Ramsay MacDonald who expected 'great things from Derbyshire' at the next election. A more ominous tone was taken by rally speaker and Cheetham Hill MP, J.R Clynes who referred to the collapse in relations of Russia as a result of the ARCOS raid.

In January 1928, Newbold withdrew suddenly from the High Peaks face-off with Hill-Wood citing health reasons. Recovery must have been quick, as within months he was back in business at Epping where the repeated resignations of prospective Labour candidates, including former Mi5 man, Maurice Spencer, left an opportunity too good to miss. In Epping, Newbold would be up against prodigious cross-party medal winner Winston Churchill. It was an obvious move in the circumstances. Compressing the race for the Epping constituency into a headline-grabbing face-off between Britain's most successful Communist candidate and its most fiercely anti-Communist candidate would only sharpen the

resolve of both extremes at the following year's General Election. The battle was symbolic. It didn't matter if Newbold won or lost. His inevitable defeat at the polls would be consumed and rendered meaningless by the spectacle of the battle of the century. It would be a contest at a symbolic level.

"The moors are well-nigh trackless because 'an alien band has seized the land' as old Socialists used to sing, and so are as yet deadly dangerous to townsfolk, but many of us there are who have loved to have tread them in the rain and to be pulled on cliff edge in mist."

Walton Newbold in Buxton, Daily Herald 25 June 1935, p.6

There was nothing tremendously complex to understand about the relationship between Marxism and mass rambling. It didn't take a genius to work out that Communism and mass rambles were expressions of the same free spirit. It was self-determination with boots on. The grey mist rolled in from the moors in the same saturating fashion as the steam from Sheffield's steel foundries. Etaples Base Camp had its Bull Ring, and the Peak District had its moors, ringed by barbed wire fences, bolted gates and 'fuck-off peasant' signs in big bold lettering. The war-shy NCOs that many of the men would have encountered at the base camp training grounds during the war had now been replaced by gamekeepers. The Brass Hats were the landed gentry barking orders from the slopes. Sending the grouse flapping from their bogus sanctuaries on some ritual weekend trespass may not have sounded like much of a challenge, but it just about passed for freedom — to man and fowl alike.

And of course there was the camaraderie. As the *Daily Worker* put it, a well organised camp or ramble could forge a 'close-knit unity' among its members. It was collective pursuit which brought men and women together in a 'fine spirit of comradeship'. The forum provided opportunities for learning and political development, building physical and mental stamina and giving young workers self-belief. It also took Marxism right across the British borders. Manchester Communist Harry Pollitt had been urging his comrades to go out on hiking

expeditions for years, and when they did so to take copies of the *Country Standard* and *Worker's Weekly* to spread the word. For the Clarion faithful, the very air you took in as you walked was full of freedom, the earth beneath your feet the property of no one. Like two perfectly balanced clouds, the steam of the foundry floor bore witness to the toil, whilst the mist of the heathery moor offered the moist, miraculous relief.

One of the commonest materials in the world is perovskite, a mineral compound of silicon, magnesium and oxygen, and named, appropriately enough after the Russian scientist who discovered it. And despite making up the greater part of the earth's mantle and possessing powerful sources of energy and untold wealth, it does little more than prop up the ground beneath your feet. As prevalent and abundant as it is, you can't own it any more than you can see it. And it was much the same with borders; it was only when you crossed across the world's borders on foot that you realised that those borders had never really existed in the first place. As vast as it was, and as dense as it was, the land of hope and glory was a seamless continuity marked only by milestones and the occasional sheep droppings.

Post-Strike Demonstration

That first week in January 1927 wasn't the only occasion that the windy, desolate slopes of Winnats Pass had played host to an organised Socialist gathering. Just six months before the discovery of the bodies in the cave, somewhere in the region of 300 ramblers and Labour activists were assembling upon its banks for a major demonstration in support of the 'Access to Mountains' bill (Demonstration in Winnats Pass, Manchester Guardian, 14 June 1926, p.11). At this time Harry and Marjorie were just months away from death. As on other occasions, representatives from the various radical groups mingled among the hordes of happy enthusiasts and the more businesslike Clarion Ramblers. Curiously, a

picture that appeared in *The Sphere* the following week shows one of the speakers at the demonstration — Rochdale Labour MP, R.J. Davies — addressing a crowd of ramblers just a hundred or so metres from the cave in which the bodies of Fallows and his sweetheart were found. As the *Manchester Guardian* was to write in the days that followed, one "might well have imagined that he had stumbled upon a gathering of persecuted Dissenters holding a meeting in the wilderness" (A Demonstration in the Winnats, Manchester Guardian, 14 June 1926, p.11).

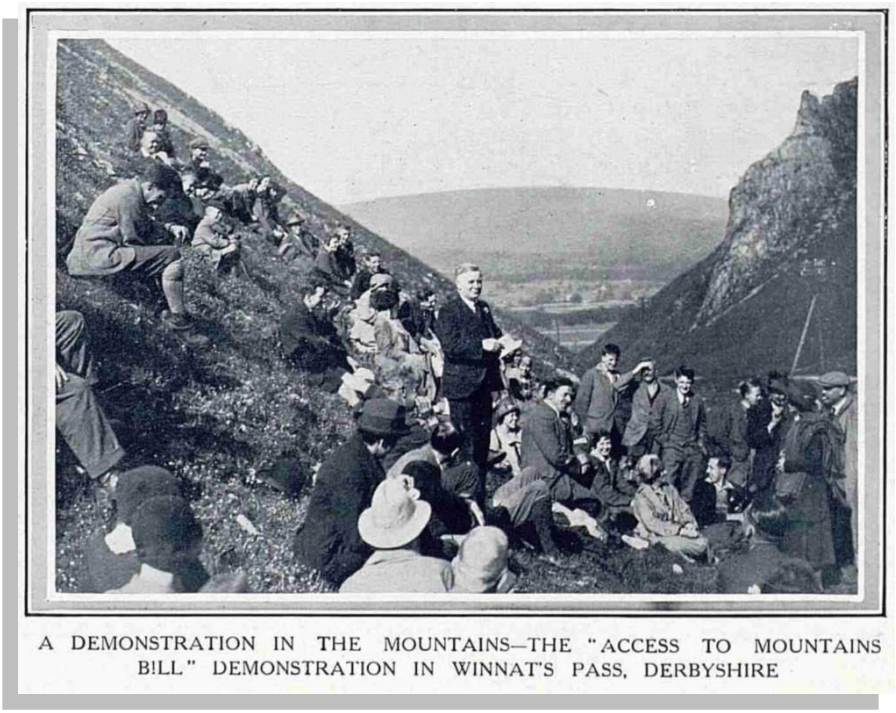
The fanfare and anticipation that had accompanied General Strike just four weeks previously had diminished into a hopeless anti-climax. The revolutionary movement which had promised to inflict such 'great suffering on the great mass of innocent persons' now gathered formlessly on the side of a hill, the intense heat of the will of the people cooling like magma on its slopes. The organizing of pickets and the canon roar of slogans were now little more than echoes around The Pass. Over 2000 workers had been arrested during the strike and some 1200 were now languishing in jail.

Re-amassing the Clarion's worn out troops on the blustery plains of the High Peaks must have seemed the most natural way in the world of pumping fresh gallons of air into the workers' sagging lungs. The clarion called, and the hopeful returned. And with them, plenty of new blood.

Accompanying the throng was prospective MP for Castleton and the High Peak, Walton Newbold, fresh from a blistering tour of Lanarkshire and back living at his home in Buxton after his selection a few weeks earlier. Perhaps Fallows, compelled by either idle curiosity or loyalty to Stewart, sacrificed his trip to the bookies that weekend and rolled along with the rest of the crowd to the Peaks.

The Cheetham Hill district in Manchester where Fallows had grown up was responsible for several prominent members of Salford's Young Communist League: Bert Maskey, Cyril Bowman, Syd Abram, Jack Askins, Henry Suss, Jud

(Julius) Colman. Winnats Pass played host to several other major demonstrations by the groups over the years including the famous 'Mass Trespass' of 1932 organised by the Young Communist League's Benny Rothman, a 21-year old protegé of Rust who also served as Secretary of *British Workers' Sports Federation,* closely affiliated to Ward's Clarion Ramblers. On this occasion Ward would stay in the background, his position as civil servant and existing ten year ban, precluding him from getting his boots — or his hands — dirty.



A DEMONSTRATION IN THE MOUNTAINS—THE "ACCESS TO MOUNTAINS BILL" DEMONSTRATION IN WINNAT'S PASS, DERBYSHIRE

R.J Davies of the Hands Off Russia committee addresses the crowd just yards from the cave in which Fallows and Stewart perished (The Sphere 19 June 1926)

Another leading figure in that demonstration was Communist Billy Buxton, born and bred in the Hayfield region where the rally got off the ground. After massing at Bowden Bridge, the 400-strong young ramblers led by two youths in four columns marched up to Ashop Head where they encountered a violent hand-to-hand struggle with Police and local gamekeepers. Several youths, including Rothman were arrested and charged. Those injured during the skirmishes were

quickly whisked to Stockport Infirmary. That very same year in November, a 23 year-old Fred Bannister — the boy who discovered the bodies in the cave — would marry his sweetheart, Harriet Wild in Hayfield. Bannister's new home at 1 Cuckoo Nest on Valley Road would place him just 100 or so yards from the Bowden Bridge rallying point selected by Rothman and the Young Communist League to launch the Kinder Scout offensive. The couple would eventually make their home in the nearby village of Charlesworth, where Fred and Harriet would see out their days.

Whether moved by the plight of the young ramblers, or by the thought of a lucrative public relations bonanza, the *Manchester and County Bank* generously donated two cottages to Hayfield Council just weeks after the death of Fallows. The cottages were to be used by labourers working on a road improvement scheme that would make it possible to run cheap buses from Manchester direct to the Kinder Valley, greatly boosting the volume of ramblers tramping across its moors. It was a strange move in the circumstances. As a result of a demonstration at nearby Werneth Low in March 1927, tensions — and hormones — were already dangerously high. On that occasion a small army of youths organised by the Manchester Federation of Ramblers set out from Hulme and Chorlton on Medlock to settle a right of way dispute over the ancient 'Benfield' footpath. The first of the so-called 'Battles of Benfield' took place in the first week of March, and by the end of the month there was another one. This time the Police were prepared and the three train loads of Eton-cropped girls and boys in Knickerbocker trousers encountered firm and fast resistance from the boys in blue, whilst a sturdy reserve of cudgel-carrying gamekeepers looked every inch like the Red Caps at Etaples. The gamekeepers raised their sticks and 150 troops surged forward. Such was the intensity of debate about it that the Manchester Guardian devoted no less than twenty seven articles to it over an eight week period in March to April that year, many of them letters from angry activists. If

Fallows and Stewart had determined to die, they couldn't have picked a more volatile location.

One of the men whose letters were published shortly after the Battle of Benfield was Harold Ernest Wild of 20 Slade Grove of Longsight in Manchester, an Inspector at the Peak District *Footpaths Preservation Society*. He was certainly no stranger to protest, having been arrested as part of a police raid on Fenner Brockway's *No Conscription Fellowship* in the summer of 1916. Alongside the secretary of the group's organising and propaganda department, Joseph Arnold Harrop (b.1895) and two young members from Hulme, the 20 year old Wild, at that time working with Harrop in the Salford-based printing offices of the National Labour Press, was arrested as an absentee and placed under military escort (Manchester Guardian, June 26th, 1916, p.10). A diary kept by Wild's daughter Dorothy Spence showed him to be a regular attendee of class struggle and anti-war lectures at the Free Trade Hall. A well conceived assault on the Quaker organisation, the Society of Friends, had also allowed Wild and the N.C.F to tap into sources traditionally inaccessible to the Labour Party and the partial immunity from prosecution that membership of the group ensured (Letter to the Editor, Manchester Guardian, 22 June 1916, p.3).

The man who had turned Wild on to the Society of Friends and the whole anti-War movement was future Communist and High Peak labour candidate, Walton Newbold who'd made valiant efforts to unite the Quakers with the feisty young Socialist Democrats back in the summer of 1915. Speaking of the duality of his own Quaker faith and his seemingly political membership of the No Conscription Fellowship, Newbold wrote in the *Labour Leader* that he and his fellow brothers had been stirred by the dedication and direct action of London and Manchester Socialists in bringing the movement together. Even braver in Newbold's view, were those courageous young Quakers and Society of Friends members who

waved their religious exemption by signing up with the N.C.F (The Society of Friends in Conference, Labour Leader, 03 June 1915).

The letter that Wild had written about the controversial Benfield footpath was dated March 24 1927 — just eight weeks after Harry Fallows had been found dead in the cave in the Pass. It asked the editor of the Manchester Guardian if the landowners would accept the evidence of the scientists and have the case heard in a court of law (Manchester Guardian, 26 Mar 1927, p.9). That same October, Wild would organise a demonstration at Hayfield in support of the Access to Mountains Bill presented by Newcastle MP, Sir Charles Philips Trevelyan to Parliament. Astonishingly, the proposed bill got its First Reading in on the day of the ARCOS raids. An earlier meeting had taken place Winnats Pass that same June and Wild had made clear his intention to support it (The Manchester Guardian, Jul 4, 1927, p.11). The Right of Way issue was certainly shaping up to be a local election winner for his old friend Walton Newbold, prospective candidate for the High Peak, still fresh from his Communist exit plan to Independent Labour. Trevelyan's anti-war movement, the Union of Democratic Control had served gallantly alongside Wild and the N.C.F and collaboration was clearly still in progress — the focus of their labours having switched effortlessly from No Man's Land to Moorland and the landowner and his gun.

The Baldwin government's response was to the gently provocative Mountains Bill was to step up pressure on Labour radicals with the 1927 Trade Disputes Act which was successfully driven through parliament the following month. The Bill would put an end to mass picketing and acts of bullying and intimidation. It remains one of the biggest Conservative legislative assaults on unionism to date, effectively outlawing 'sympathy strikes'.

The founder of the No Conscription Fellowship in which Wild had served so diligently was Archibald Fenner Brockway, a close friend of Victor Grayson and a leading anti-war campaigner. Brockway, a life-long Socialist born in the British

Raj, had lived with his Suffrage worker wife Lilla at Red Row Cottage near Marple Bridge, just three miles west of Hayfield. Representing the interests of the Marple I.L.P, Fenner and his wife used its typically low-key branch meetings to mobilise a force of pacifists and dissenters hoping to bring about an early end to the war. In a frenzy of good intentions, letters would be sent, statements would be published in the press and fantastical demands for multi-lateral disarmament and an immediate end to the war would be served to the Lloyd George government. Meanwhile in Manchester, Harold Wild and Joe Harrop would spreading the word at Society of Friends meetings groups, taking German lessons, ordering Raleigh bikes, attending tribunals and sculpting the kind of moral arguments that could punch holes in any advancing tanks. In just over twelve months their consciences were practically bullet-proof. In contrast to Trevelyan's Union of Democratic Control, Brockway and the N.C.F demanded an immediate end to fighting. Minority left-wing fragments like the Anarchists and the Socialist Labour Party had all opposed to the war but what distinguished the U.D.C was the need for accountability. Whilst both groups would have welcomed the creation of a 'concert of nations' Trevelyan and the U.D.C sought the nationalisation of the arms industry and a full examination of war aims made public by the Lloyd George Government. One of those who explored the pre and post-war arms trade was Walton Newbold, who cited Britain's lack of cooperation with Germany at the Hague Conference of 1907 for the rapid acceleration of the Anglo-German arms naval race (Labour Leader 07 June 1912, p.10).

At the end of July 1917, just weeks before rioting broke out at Etaples, an angry mob of organised pro-War activists descended on the Brotherhood Church on Southgate Road where Victor Grayson's Socialist campaign manager, the Reverend Frederick Swan now served as pastor. For the best part of a year Swan had allowed the London sections of the No Conscription Fellowship and the newly formed *Workers and Soldiers Council* to assemble in its hall. A meeting was arranged for the afternoon on the last Sunday of July, but it was carnage.

Hardly a word had been spoken before a carefully prepped assembly of uniformed soldiers, patriotic bystanders and a selection of seasoned thugs from Sir George Makgill's Anti-German League, rushed the hall. A journalist at the Daily Express had tipped them off and a crowd had gathered outside the church hall some hours in advance. The tabloids unleashed a torrent of graphic images. According to the Daily Mirror on the Monday, the rioting was some of the "wildest ever seen" in London: *"every window was smashed to atoms by stones volleying like shrapnel, chairs and doors were broken and the building entirely devastated."* The whole sequence of events was framed neatly within the narrative of a spontaneous grassroots uprising by soldiers and civilians, goaded on by the provocative antics of 'a few peace cranks'. But it was really anything but.

The day before the riots took place Special Branch's Basil Thomson noted in his diary: "They will have a rude awakening tomorrow, as I have arranged for the Daily Express to publish the place of the meeting and strong opposition may be expected." Additional fly-posters had been pasted up in public houses, alerting all roughs and criminals to come equipped with knotted clubs. The Daily Mail, savouring every minute, described the fighting as deliriously promiscuous: "with half-smothered roars the waves of the assaults broke over the doomed building" (Daily Mail, Pacifist Riot, July 30 1917, p.5-6).

The Conservative press seemed unanimous in their condemnation of the peaceniks and law-abiding members of the *Workers and Soldiers Council*. It seemed as long as the vicious bastards were whistling the National Anthem when they were giving Swan and his friends a good kicking, the whole thing was right and just.

Not surprisingly, the ambush took place less than a week before an arrest warrant was served on the Russian Revolutionary Socialist Georgy Chicherin, Secretary of the Communist Party on Charlotte Street, St. Pancras. Sylvia Pankhurst's *Worker's Dreadnought* duly informed its readers that Chicherin had been arrested by Police on August 7 based on 'hostile associations with Germans and pro-

Germans'. As a result of 'pro-German activities and sentiments' he was a danger to public safety under 14b of the Defence of the Realm Act (Woman's Dreadnought, 01 September 1917, p.2). That the *Workers and Soldiers Council* who had assembled at the Brotherhood Church had been directly inspired by the groups that had launched the revolution in Russian had probably done little to assist either Swan's or Chicherin's cause. The two events smacked of desperation. Attempts were being made to avert a brewing crisis. And this time it wasn't a shortage of Boddingtons.

Brockway and Harrop's post-war pacifist work would continue well into the 1920s with the launch of the *Resist the War Committee* with Herbert H. Elvin drafted in on the committee's General Council and Harold E. Wild among its more active boots on the ground.

Although scheduled to appear at the October demonstration in Winnats Pass, the man responsible for presenting the Access to Mountains Bill to parliament, Charles P. Trevelyan, was unable to attend the meeting. In his place he sent a telegram that was read out in full by Harold Wild on the slopes just yards from the cave where Fallows and Stewart had perished: *"We ask that the wild moorlands of our country should be legally open to the walker ... why indeed should not the waste places of Britain, the grouse moors and sheep runs be legally accessible to the thousands of men who merely want to see their changing moods, drink their grand air, and rejoice in their beauty"* (Rambling Freedom, Manchester Guardian, 03 Oct 1927, p.3).

Trevelyan would subsequently become President of the Society of Cultural Relations (with Russia), the British branch of Stalin's VOKS. His close friend Edward Frank Wise, who served alongside him in the Ministry of Trade, would play a crucial role in the development of the first Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement, only resigning his post as economic adviser to the Lloyd George government to spearhead Centrosoyuz (Central Union of Russian Co-operative Societies) at its

British Trading HQ in Holborn, London. Trevelyan's response to the as yet un-ratified new General Treaty with Russia under Ramsay MacDonald in August 1924 was even more enthusiastic: *"We have got a new treaty with Russia which our opponents said we could not make. Now e have got a condition in which Europe may begin to go down a different road, in which prosperity may begin to come, in which the hatreds of the war may begin to subside, in which new hatreds will not arise."* (The Observer, Aug 31, 1924, p.12) Parallel attempts by Trevelyan to bring 'Bolshevik teachers' to Britain was met with horror in the Conservative press. The Bolsheviks couldn't educate or look after their own children, so what chance had they with ours?

Sadly, Harold Wild's NCF comrade, Joe Harrop didn't live long enough to see the development of conciliation and trade cooperation between Britain and the Soviet Union. On November 15 1924 at the age of 29, Joe died suddenly at his home in South Benfleet, Essex. It came just one week after Labour had suffered a disastrous defeat at the General Election, helped in no small part by the scandalous Zinoviev Letter. After the war, Joe was moved from the Manchester-based printing offices of Henry Brailsford's *Labour Leader*, to its central London HQ, where he gained a solid reputation as a 'doughty fighter for Socialism'. His funeral at the London City Cemetery in Ilford took place just 48 hours before the incoming Baldwin government scrapped the un-ratified treaty with Russia that he and his friends at the *Labour Leader* had sweated like Trojans to achieve.

The day prior to his death, Harrop's editor, Henry Brailsford had printed a ferocious rebuke to the timely arrival of the 'obviously fabricated' Red Letter that destroyed his friend MacDonald and Independent Labour at the previous month's General Election. The 'Soviet leaders', Brailsford wrote, were 'on the same side of the dividing trenches as we are in' in the struggle against imperialism. As a predominantly agrarian economy, Russia offered a substantial market for British manufacturers, and the promotion of commercial ties promised opportunities for

the unemployed in Britain. Brailsford sought revolution, expressing concern for a Labour Party that was dropping into the usual habits of traditional government challengers who promised little in the way of changes and would content itself with offering 'a slight working-class bias to legislation' (New Leader, November 14 1924). The Manchester Guardian's Ted Scott who chatted to Brailsford at Harrop's funeral, found him 'overworked and much depressed'.

There was another crass casualty almost nine years later to the day when Edward Frank Wise, the man who helped midwife the Anglo-Russian Trade Deal for Ramsay MacDonald dropped dead in the grounds of Wallington House, owned by his friend and ally Charles Trevelyan. He and several other members of the Socialist League were spending a weekend there as Trevelyan's guests. Wise died suddenly whilst out walking. Young Liberal and Tyneside film critic Ernest F. Dyer, who had been with him when he died, said the pair of them had been engaged in a most vivacious discussion about a pacifist movement that he was interested in, when Wise just keeled over and died (Bury Free Press 11 November 1933, p.12). In his obituary the Manchester Guardian made special mention of the 'surprise and criticism' his move to Centrosoyuz and his friendship with Krassin had attracted, although it stopped short of hatching conspiracies. Wise had been close to Soviet money ever since his time with the *Anglo Russian Supplies Committee* during the war. The extra cash he derived from Russian films and Russian oils during the Anglo-Russian honeymoon of the early thirties, were the dividends of a game well played.

The significance of Charles Trevelyan's *Access to Mountains Bill* being presented to the House of Commons on the very day of the Police raids on the *All Russian Co-Operative Society* in London shouldn't be overlooked but this is something we'll need to come back, as the details of a Soviet Spy-Ring operating from Wild's hometown of Longsight in Manchester demands much closer attention.

Harold Wild's own commitment to Anglo-Russian Trade co-operation is revealed in a diary entry he makes on June 9th 1917 reporting a meeting at the Milton Hall, when he was one of several Manchester delegates at a meeting called by the Anglo-Russian Co-operative Committee (subsequently re-imagined as ARCOS). One of the main speakers there that night was Councillor R.J Davies, the man who presided at the mass demonstration in Winnats Pass in June 1926.

In light of Harold's status in the Manchester Rambling Federation, is it possible the thirty year old footpaths inspector was related to Harriet Wild who married young Fred Bannister in Hayfield in 1932? It's certainly possible. On the couple's 1932 marriage certificate, Harriet lists her address as High Street, New Mills. There had been a Wild family living on this same road in the first and second decades and it's just possible that Harriet was a near or distant relation. The village of New Mills stands just a mile or so West of Hayfield.

Five days after the 'Battle of Benfield' on Sunday March 26th, the body of another missing man had been found. 45 year old James Stewart Walker of 34 Shakespeare Street, Chorlton-on-Medlock was discovered on a wild and lonely stretch of moorland, just a few miles from the centre of Hayfield by a group of four young ramblers trudging along the old Monks Road footpath from New Mills to Glossop. As with Fallows, a bottle labelled 'poison' lay by his side. And again, there was a series of anomalies in the youngsters' statements to the press. Twenty-six year old motor mechanic Harry Hebb had been in the area on his motor cycle. It was Hebb who assisted the ramblers in the discovery of the body. According to Hebb, he and the group had found the body at 3.00pm, about 40 yards from the roadway in a clearing at Coombs Rock. But several people who had passed the same spot just two hours before had seen nothing out of the ordinary, and certainly not a body. The High Peak Deputy Coroner, Mr G. Wilson would subsequently report that the man had been dead some three to four days, having disappeared the previous Thursday. If the coroner's guess was accurate, how did a

dead man make his way to the Coombs Rock clearing between 1.00 pm and 3.00 pm that afternoon?

The curiosities didn't end there. After a careful review of censuses and old Chorlton and Hulme street maps, it transpires that Harry Hebb's *Greenheys Lane* address placed him within just a few minutes' walk of Fred Bannister on Upper Duke Street. Harry's previous home on Pigott Street placed him even closer. Just two a two minute journey at maximum. It would also be close to Hulme Communist Party Club House which at this time served as a rallying point for rambling events and lectures given 'fraction' section members like Ewan MacColl aka James Henry Miller. According to entries on MaColl and his YCL associates in the records of Mi5, the Club House at 98a Stretford Road would be little more than 300 metres away from Bannister's home at 21 Upper Duke Street. The Club House did in actual fact stand on the corner of Bannister's road (James Henry Miller, TNA, KV2 – 47221).

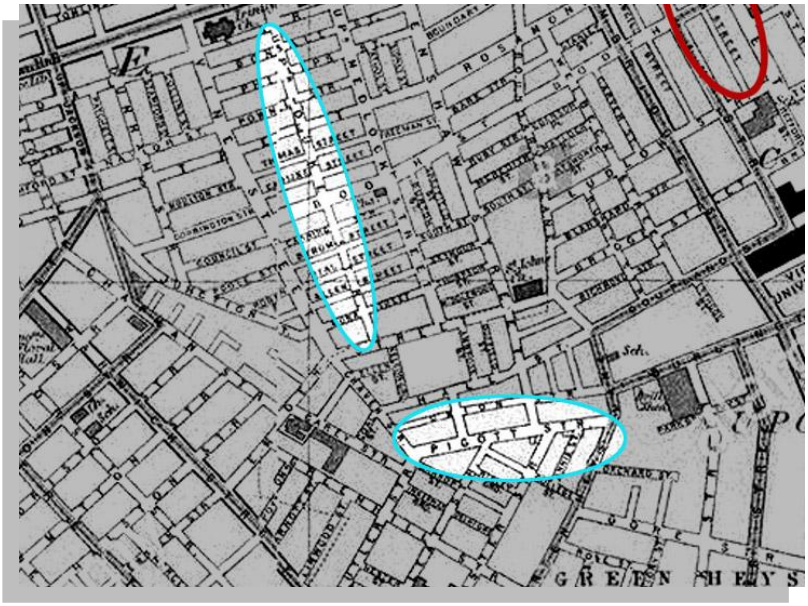
> *"Workers in Cheetham, who slave every day, in waterproof factories at starvation pay,*
>
> *Young engineers, and girls from the loom, workers from Salford, from Cheetham and Hulme."*

Manchester Youth Song, Ewan MacColl

Within a few short weeks of each other, two young men from Manchester had died as a result of poisoning in the lonely Dark Peaks of Derbyshire. In each of the incidents, the men had been found by youths out for a day's ramble, the two main witnesses living within minutes of each other in Hulme. Both men had been found on a Sunday, and both had been dead between 2-3 days.

James Evans, the member of the Manchester Rambling Club found dead in January 1925, and who G.H.B Ward toasted at the Clarion event on New Year's Day, was also found near Hayfield after turning around prematurely on Kinder Scout to make his descent from the plateau alone. The man who organised the

search party that week was J. Taylor of the New Inn in Little Hayfield, Secretary of the Manchester Rambling Club. In October 1927, the new landlady of the same New Inn was found brutally murdered. All the doors had been locked from the inside and there were no signs of intruders. A Salford man, George Frederick Walter Hayward, residing previously at Alpha Street West was hanged for her murder the following year.



Map of Hulme and Chorlton on Medlock, Manchester. Bannister lived on Upper Duke Street (left) Hebb lived on Pigott Street (right)

The coincidences were stacking up.

Another twist of fate would lead us back to Benny Rothman, the cocky Young Communist Leaguer who led the assault on Kinder Scout from Hayfield in 1932. Several of the youngsters charged and jailed alongside him were, like Fallows, from the Cheetham Hill district of Manchester. Those standing alongside Rothman in the dock that April were Julius Clyne of Elizabeth Street, Harry Mendel of Townlet Street and David Mussbaum of Red Bank Road. All were found guilty of unlawful assembly and breach of the peace. In a move that was

entirely consistent with attempts to quell an insurgency, the jury consisted of two Brigadier Generals, three Colonels, two Majors, three Captains and two aldermen. Most of the youths, including Rothman, had been either casual or devoted attendees of Manchester's radical debating club, the County Forum, and most had extreme bias towards the Left. Rothman was living on Granton Street at the time, just a five minute walk from Aubrey Aaronson — Percy Toplis' right-hand man at Etaples. The streets on which both men lived were dominated by Polish and Ukrainian exiles forced out of Russia by the Tsar during the pogroms of the 1880s and both men were Russian heritage. But the two men weren't Toplis' only links to Manchester.

Naval deserter, George Patrick Murphy, charged and convicted alongside Sheffield's Cecil Green, for the theft of a Bristol taxi-cab in March 1920, was another of Percy's Pennine pals. In actual fact, Murphy's home in Hulme put him literally around the corner from Fred Bannister. It was alleged that Police had become so concerned that Toplis had fled to the North West that they stopped to check the licences of every car passing through Denton, Stockport, Hyde and Manchester (Manchester Guardian, 18 May 1920). At the time of the offence Murphy had been living at 47 John Street, little more than 500 yards from the Bannister family on Upper Duke Street, making a sneaky incursion into South Manchester a reasonable option for the fleeing Toplis. He had friends there. He had support.

By contrast, Percy's other Pennine pal, Cecil Green lived on Hunsley Street in Sheffield. His Brightside address put him within a whisker of G.H.B Ward, leader of the Sheffield and Brightside Labour Exchange on Cricket Inn Road and the Stanley Street meeting house of the Young Communist League, where Rust and Knickerbocker Communists parted the red seas of the Don. This was Sheffield's formidable steel district. Cecil's father Robert was an Iron Turner in the local steelworks.

Map of Hulme and Chorlton on Medlock, Manchester. Bannister lived on Upper Duke Street (left). Toplis associate Murphy lived on John Street (right)

Even if the particulars were still difficult to determine, it was becoming increasingly apparent that the revolutionary legends of Toplis were knitting themselves quite firmly with the post-war hurly burly of militants in Sheffield and Manchester. And the one man providing much of the yarn was Cheetham Hill's Harry Fallows, whose suicide in The Pass was bringing the anarchy of Etaples and the pandemonium of a dramatic manhunt to the breezy moors of the Peaks. Understanding the events that led to the Police ambush on Percy Toplis were now promising to shed some light on the fate of Fallows.

The Bristol Motor Gang

The 'Bristol Motor Gang' as they became known, was an unlikely collection of lads. Toplis had just enlisted with the RAF whilst Murphy and Green had recently gone AWOL from HMS Vivid 1, a sprawling signalling and telegraphy training school at a naval base in Devonport. Both men had served capably during the war and despite Murphy spending several days in the cells for drunkenness, the

character and abilities of both men were ranked ‘good’. It’s impossible to say for certain how their paths might have crossed, buts cars, girls and gambling probably featured somewhere, a shared restlessness too, perhaps. Regular exposure to danger would have pushed their tolerance for excitement upward and the boys were making every effort to recapture the thrill and the risks of war. As far as the government were concerned, such a reckless pursuit of adventure made the postbellum Adrenalin-junkie dangerously susceptible to radical callings and harebrained criminal schemes.

The trial of the men took place little more than a week after Toplis was gunned down in Plumpton. The four men had assembled at the YMCA ‘Dug Out’ in Bristol on the afternoon of March 5th. Murphy, a mouthy Irishman with a cocky disregard for court formalities, gave a flippant, but fairly accurate description of the legendary Toplis: he had a ‘proper swanky way and was wearing a monocle’. Killing time that afternoon Percy had sung hymns and played the piano. The group were observed by Reginald James Reynolds, a YMCA steward, who confirmed the presence of an auburn-haired man around 25 years of age wearing a brown suit, a trilby hat and a three quarter length officer’s warm coat who the others referred to as ‘Ginger’. It was a Saturday afternoon and the group were in ‘close conversation together’.

Within hours the two young naval recruits and a third man, Henry Sutton were in custody. A full account of what took place was provided by the four men’s victim, Frederick William Hugo, a cab-driver with the Bristol Tramways and Motor Company, owned and controlled by Sir William Verdon Smith of the Bristol Aeroplane Company, a regular target for spies and swindlers.

The heist described by the cab-man Frederick Hugo was as absurd as it was elaborate. Whilst en-route to pick up a fare he was flagged down buy four men – two sailors and two civilians. Toplis was the first to step forward and asked the driver if he was engaged. Hugo replied that he was, but had half an hour to spare

if the trip was local. Toplis said he would need the car for a couple of hours, and accepted the driver's offer to pick them up at the Tramway Centre an hour or so later. The men met him there and entered the cab, giving him instructions to drive to RAF Filton. As they approached the aerodrome near Patchway Bridge, Toplis directed him down a country lane where they arrived at Hempton Farmhouse in Almondsbury, some two miles from the base. At the side entrance the men hopped out, and instructed the Hugo to wait. After 30 minutes, the cab-man started complaining of the long wait and indicated his intention to leave. In an effort to stall him, Toplis made some light conversation about the car. What kind of engine did it have? Was it easy to drive? The chap they had come to collect was having a cup of tea, and wouldn't be long. A full half hour went by.

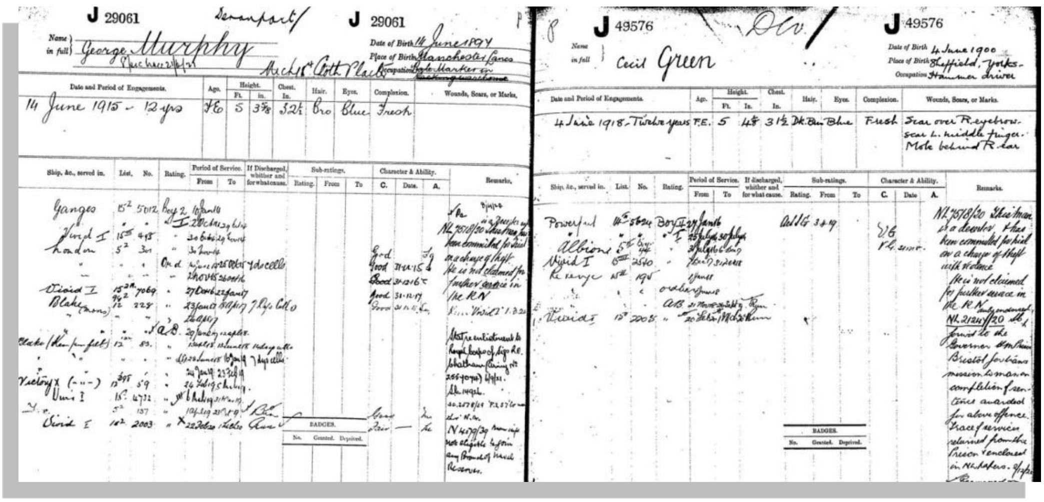
Seeing the driver's frustration with the continued delays and a stream of flimsy excuses, the gang directed him to a nearby hotel, and all four went inside for a drink. A little time later they returned to the farmhouse and it was here that the attack took place. The driver was subdued with chloroform and then coshed on the back of the head, the gang making off for Newport with the car.

Resting in a lay-by near Llanvair Discoed on the Newport side of Caerwent in the early hours of Sunday morning the four men were confronted PC Davies. They had broken into the nearby Pill House Farm and stolen several items of clothing, some paint brushes and green paint – evidently to disguise the car. When PC Davies found the vehicle, it was still wet and it was clear from the inexpert way it had been handled, that the lettering on the index plate had been tampered with. In his opinion the men had made attempts to camouflage the car with the paint – although for what purpose, he didn't know. A spate of ambushes on Police and Military barracks in Northern Ireland had featured cars repainted a similar colour. It's entirely likely that Murphy's Irish accent and the car's proximity to RAF Filton may have made PC Davies fear the worst. A ten year beat in South Wales

meant he was no stranger to violent radicals, having been drafted in to disperse the riots at Tonypandy in 1910 and again at Newport in 1919.

Reports would emerge a few months later of a plot by the Irish Self Determination League to drive taxis packed with explosives into Whitehall. According to a Home Office Intelligence report dated February 12 1920, over 500 members of the Irish Self Determination League were currently active in the South Wales area and trouble was brewing. Support was strongest in nearby Newport at a branch controlled by Richard Crowley and in Longsight in Manchester by Liam McMahon. In a plot as complex as it was audacious, it McMahon was who had helped co-ordinate the escape and transportation of IRA leader Eamon de Valera from Lincoln Prison to Manchester the previous year. Passing through Sheffield he was assisted by members of a co-operative group operating in Norton (Liam McMahon, Bureau of Military History, 1913-1921, WS0274).

Word on the ground was that some kind of action was being planned for St Patrick’s Day in ten days time. Further Home Office reports were describing the ‘temper’ as ‘ugly’ and warnings to that effect were being circulated among Police. A few minor raids had been launched on aerodromes on Ireland, so the trip to RAF Filton is likely to have aroused suspicion once the gang had been caught, heaping further pressure on Toplis to escape north to Scotland.


J 29061
Name in full: George Murphy
Date of Birth: 14 June 1897
Place of Birth: Manchester, Lancs
J 49576
Name in full: Cecil Green
Date of Birth: 4 June 1900
Place of Birth: Sheffield, Yorks

As far vigilance was concerned, the Police and the press needed little encouragement, as the weekly 'scare bulletin' compiled by Director of Intelligence Sir Basil Thomson, was doing a consummate job of subsidizing national paranoia all on its own. Two parallel threats were emerging in Britain: Communism and Irish Republicanism. The intelligence may been speculative, the tone may have been alarmist but the weekly Report on the Revolutionary Organisations of Great Britain, cheerfully distributed by former Secret Service man and Under Secretary of State John Baird, was producing all the fear and loathing necessary to defeat the Green and Red Armies. And there was no shortage of support from Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland Sir Denis Henry. A government white paper, commissioned by Henry, revealed that Fenian parliamentary candidate, Patrick McGartan had made a secret trip to Moscow to negotiate a treaty between the Soviets and the as yet unrecognized Irish Republic. The trip was alleged to have been made during the latter half of May 1920 and if true, would have been the first tangible sign of 'intercourse' between the Bolsheviks and Sinn Fein (Intercourse Between Bolshevism and Sinn Fein, Parliamentary Papers, Session 1921, Vol. XXIX, p.489).

A few weeks prior to the drama, a rally had taken place at the Albert Hall in which thousands of Irish residents from Manchester, Liverpool, London and South Wales had declared their allegiance to the Republican cause. In among the predictable quota of Irish songs were rousing renditions of the Russian National Anthem and the Internationale (Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom, TNA, CAB 24/98/20). The following year, Charles Murphy, a former Belfast Volunteer who had recently re-located to George Patrick Murphy's hometown of Chorlton-on-Medlock 3, turned Kings Evidence at the trial of 19 Irishmen at Manchester Assizes. The trial followed a raid at the nearby Irish Club in Hulme in which one man was shot dead (The Irish Conspiracy, Evidence for

the Crown, Manchester Guardian, July 9, 1921, p.12). Edward M. Brady, a member of the Irish Secret Service would subsequently allege that Murphy was in the pay of the English as an agent provocateur. Police would subsequently discover a large cache of firearms and explosives stored at a property on Upper Chorlton Road (Secret Service In England, Edward M. Brady, Talbot Press, 1928).

Exactly 12-months after Percy Toplis was shot in Penrith, another story emerged in the press. William Maud Alphion Robinson, Jeremiah Minihane, William Affection and Dennis Tangley — an unlikely combination of students and labourers — had ambushed a taxi-driver, stolen the cab and embarked on a series of wire-cutting raids on railway signals boxes throughout London. Confronted by Police they had opened fire with hollow-point 'dum-dum' bullets wounding an officer in the neck. In their Greenwich flat were found copies of The Irish Exile, The Irish Self-Determination League, the Case for Irish Independence and Sinn Fein Series No.12. As was the case with the Bristol Motor Gang, some improvised means of altering the number plates had been made. The men were sentenced to defiant cries of "God Save Ireland" — the same phrase used by the Manchester Martyrs (Sinn Fein Raids, Daily Mail, June 18 1921, p.6, p.7).

Is it possible there was a link?

After their arrest, there's little doubt that Murphy and Green's substantial Signals and Telegraphy training, Murphy's Irish heritage and the crude attempts to camouflage the car would have been a huge concern to Special Branch. Especially the part about Signals training.

In a ROROGB bulletin dated November 4th 1920, a report on a 'Red Officer's Signals Course' provided a full military briefing for the would-be Red Officers in Britain. Alleged to have been written by Navy and RAF officer-turned-Communist, Cecil L'Estrange Malone, the handbook instructed the movement's

recruitment agents to “pick out ex-Servicemen and earmark the specialists” including “Signallers and Engineers”. According to a statement made by Soviet Spy and Spy Handler, Jacob Kirchenstein in 1952, the Russian Secret Service focused on recruiting “men of Irish origin … with strong nationalist sympathies with Ireland” (KV2/1391, FBI Interview, p.62). Another group that ranked highly in their list of priority targets were the rank and file NCOs of the Royal Corps of Signals at Chatham Dockyards. According to other files in the security archives, the Signals Corps at Chatham was a ‘centre of Communist activity’ and had been ever since the armistice (TNA, KV2/1594, Report/Aldershot, 1928).

Within weeks of leaving prison, Toplis pal, George Patrick Murphy would be dishonourably discharged from the British Royal Navy and re-enlist with the Royal Corps of Signals at Chatham, only leaving in June 1927. But the timing of Murphy’s discharge and Jacob Kirchenstein’s Manchester spy factory, is something we’ll need to come back to.

Back in Bristol, PC Charles Davies described the scene to the court. Although amenable enough at first, Percy is alleged to have grabbed the steering wheel, put his foot down on the accelerator and torn off into the night with Davies still in the car. The policeman made a valiant grab for the wheel and the car overturned. In a fit of desperation, Toplis is alleged to have kicked and bundled the officer out of the way and made a dash for it across the fields, disappearing off toward Portskewett.

It was a perplexing and faintly farcical sequence of events by any standards and couldn’t have been any more different to clinical execution of the cab-driver Toplis is alleged to have murdered six weeks later in Andover: one shot to the back of the head, fired at close range using hollow point ‘dum dum bullets’ — a method favoured, at least in the press, by political assassins and Irish rebels.

The farmhouse where Toplis and the gang had stopped appears to have been a deliberate part of the ruse. The man they intended to meet there didn't exist. Its sole occupant was 70 year old Ellen Biss, the widow of a local coal supplier whose only son Reginald had died in Gallipoli in 1915. Toplis had gone to the side door out of sight, making some bogus claim about needing water for the tank. The four men could easily have overpowered the driver and used the chloroform when they had stopped the cab near RAF Filton or had pulled up near the farmhouse. Instead, Toplis is alleged to have embarked on the elaborate charade of engaging Mrs Biss in a diversionary conversation without any discernible benefit. And not once but twice; first when they arrived at the house and the second time when they returned to the farm after having drinks at the hotel. If anything, the conversations were risky and counter-productive, his encounters with Mrs Biss providing the gang and the Police with another positive ID of Toplis.

If the sole intention of the gang had been to steal the car, then what was with all the stalling?

The re-painting of the car was another mystery. The crude paint job the gang had done to disguise the car could only have been a temporary measure at best, and what use they would make of the stolen clothes was anybody's guess. Murphy remained chipper and dryly flippant throughout the trial, the laughs and jokes only subsiding when a sentence of 12-months hard labour was awarded by the judge. When pressed by the judge on the identity of 'Ginger', the prosecution alleged that his identity was known and that there was "good and sufficient reason for his absence from the dock."

In all fairness, 'Ginger' was dead. He'd been shot by Police in Penrith the previous week.

More Red Bandits

The timing of the whole Motor Bandit story was a little peculiar too. In Germany, the Communist Max Hoelz, a lively desperado with a striking resemblance to Toplis, was producing similarly sensational headlines that very same month. Using a fleet of stolen vehicles, the London-trained revolutionary had led a string of successful raids against German officials in Plauen. Shops were being plundered, locals were being terrorised and the generous proceeds of the spoils were now believed to be funding his marauding Red Army. By March 1920, the 'Red Bandit' as he became known in England, had a thousand pound bounty on his head. Four hundred miles across the border in France, the few remaining members of the notorious 'Bonnot Gang' were launching a final and bloody assault on Paris, the Anarcho-Socialists and former mechanics dying in a wild, bloody shootout with Police at the Ambrais Railway Station. Among the items found in their possession was chloroform.

Shortly after Murphy and Green were convicted and Toplis had been shot dead, the Admiralty had another crisis on their hands. Stoker Douglas E. Springhall and Able Seaman, George Edward Crook were found to be distributing Communist materials at the naval base in Devonport. Like Murphy and Green, the two men had served on the HMS Vivid I before being transferred to Vivid II. Both men were discharged on November 13th 1920, Springhall's removal being none to gracefully expedited when it was found that he had penned a mildly seditious article for Sylvia Pankhurst's Worker's Dreadnought under the alias 'HMS Hunter' (Discontent on the Lower Deck, HMS Hunter, Workers Dreadnought, 16 October 1920). A previous article written for the same newspaper had seen him gloating over the crucial role the navy had played during the recent revolution in Germany and the Russian Revolution of 1905. This would have been a double blow for Special Branch and the Conservatives as one of the ringleaders of that particular mutiny Ivan Beshoff was now deeply embedded in Ireland. Shortly after

taking part in the so-called Potemkin Mutiny, Beskoff had fled to England. Six years later he was dragged back into politics by Irish revolutionaries, Countess Markievicz and Maud Gonne, where he claims to have played a minor role in the legendary Easter Rising. Springhall, by contrast would go on to become Secretary to the Young Communist League, taking personal responsibility for the six young delegates dispatched on a tour of Moscow in 1927 (Schoolgirl Reds, Sunday Mirror 12 June 1927, p.2).

Another belligerent naval deserter who had lived close to Cecil Green in the Attercliffe district of Sheffield had been making headlines of his own in mid-January that year. John Frederick Hedley and his Russian-heritage wife Bella Sarah Hedley, had been charged with sedition in Rotherham. The Home Office weekly report on *Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom* painted a pretty disturbing picture. Fred had told the 200-300 people who gathered for a 'Red Guard' meeting that during the war he and his fellow seamen had been instructed by the Admiralty to sink several their own submarines as part of an ongoing propaganda exercise (TNA, CAB-24-97-24, Jan 29 1920).

Curiously enough, Fred Hedley was also found to have had close links with Sinn Fein, and had faced similar charges of inciting a revolution in Belfast in June 1919 (Sentenced for Sedition, Sheffield Daily Telegraph 21 May 1921, p.8). Fred remained active in both Irish and Communist politics, founding the short-lived *Revolutionary Socialist Party of Ireland* with Charles O'Meagher and Simon Greenspon, and eventually organizing a series of mini-Soviets in Munster for Big Jim Larkin's ITGWU. The ship he'd absconded from in 1919 was the HMS Vindictive, which suffered a spate of non-violent mutinies on account of it being deployed against the Bolsheviks in the post-Armistice war with Russia.

In sinister twist, the Hedleys' friend, George William Frengley, charged alongside the couple in May 1921 was found dead in the sea at Southsea shortly after completing a six week jail sentence. A verdict of "suicide while insane" was

returned at the inquest. The 44 year old man was the son of respected watchmaker and jeweller, Jacob Frengley of No.5 Crow Street Dublin. George had served his apprenticeship in Devonport, Germany and Switzerland under the watchful eye of Charles Dietschey, a senior board member at the Catholic Young Men's Society in Plymouth. There were even greater surprises in store when another of Hedley's partners, the Reverend Thomas Edward Pickering became the unexpected poster-boy of the 1922 Hunger March. The event, co-organized by Etaples Mutineer turned Branch Secretary of National Unemployed Workers' Movement, James Cullen, saw some 100,00 ex-service men march to Whitehall to present a petition to the Prime Minister. The press were quick to dismiss it as a Bolshevik plot and an exploitation of the unemployed ahead of the General Election (Pall Mall Gazette 21 November 1922, p.2)

In reports published shortly after Toplis' death in June 1920, special mention was made of an entry in his diary placing him in around Plymouth and Portsmouth in the first few months of the year. The Police quizzed friends and former sweethearts on the matter, and there may be several clues as to why. There had been a spate of naval mutinies arising from fleet-wide objections to the Admiralty's post-war activity in Russia, the disaffection experienced on the HMS Vindictive little more than the tip of the iceberg. The problem was simple: the men had enlisted to take on Germany, not the Bolsheviks. The ringleaders of this particular group of militants were believed to be colluding with their counterparts in the British Army. Credible or not, if rumours were already circulating of Percy's involvement in the mutiny in France, any possible link to the rumblings of discontent on the 'Lower Decks' would have almost certainly grabbed the interest of Special Branch (Percy at Plymouth, Cornishman 16 June 1920).

Toplis' own politics were less than clear. A natural contempt for authority may have seen him drawn into the orbit of various radical groups, but evidence is thin on the ground. Aside from the posthumous reports of him leading a 'Free Love'

anarchist group in the East End of London and being described as ‘one of those intellectual Socialists’ by one of his friends in Mansfield, the only indication he had any Irish sympathies were reports of him posing as an ‘Irishman from Dublin’ and a ‘Sinn Feiner’ whilst on the run. And sure, he was known to bang out the Russian National Anthem on the old Joanna from time to time, but Lenin, he was not.

What Toplis did have was a passion for reading detective stories. During long absences from duty Percy had immersed himself in the worlds of heroic Scotsman, Richard Hannay and the tirelessly mercurial shapeshifter, Sherlock Holmes. The lines between fantasy and reality were becoming blurred. One day he would dress as a Sergeant Major and the next, an itinerant traveller. A flair for acting had been with him since childhood. A touring theatre company in his hometown of Mansfield had been so struck by the eleven year old’s precocious acting abilities that they had offered him a full-time place in the show. His sister Winifred recalled that the greater part of his time on stage was spent in dodging policemen.

If the unpredictable demands of war had taught Toplis anything, it was that appearances could be fluid. Like so many other men returning from Europe, Toplis had found no small amount of fault lines developing along traditional class boundaries, where all the unnatural resources of wealth and privilege could now be tapped. The influence enjoyed by the elites had always been something of a confidence trick. All you really needed was the guts, energy and the dedication to perform, the skills to memorize dialogue and the ability to enter another character and truly engage with an audience. In war, all men were re-created equal. The differences between men were arbitrary, and could be easily overwhelmed by some simple affectations; the addition of a few pips and chevrons, the wearing of a monocle, the swaggering of a stick — and building oneself the platform and opportunity to amaze.

According to Scotland Yard, the well-educated former Blacksmith was a "wizard at disguises" and could wriggle out of any scrape (Western Gazette 07 May 1920, p.12). On one occasion Toplis had kept a promise to write to Fallows, and did so telling him to reply to the Union Jack Club in Waterloo, under the name of Private Wilson, RAF. The letter had been posted outside the Union Jack Club a day or so before Fallows' arrest. Fallows, under the direction of Scotland Yard, addressed a decoy reply to Toplis as Private Wilson, the Police then waiting at the club to pounce when Toplis claimed the letter. Toplis, anticipating the move, is believed to have watched quietly from afar, using the identity of a sailor called Mabb whose discharge papers he had robbed at breakfast. Chairs were kicked over, tables were overturned, rooms were ransacked, random servicemen pushed and prodded but the raid by Police produced no sign of Toplis who had simply melted into the crowd, confident that Harry Fallows was now in the pay of Police and that his support network had been rumbled. If there was a flaw, it was that Percy's innate ability to add flesh to his idle fantasies was drawing him into an increasingly dangerous confrontation with Police. As a result of his plausibility the daydreams were becoming real, and so too was the threat he posed.

Percy's dissolute band of brigands may not have had a formal strategy, or even as something straightforward as a plan during their Almondsbury ambush, but one thing was clear at least: they weren't short of imagination. Criminal anarchy, it seems, was trending.

Back To Winnats Pass

In contrast to Toplis and his gang, the groups who converged in Winnats Pass were generally made up of good-natured young men and women passionate about politics and determined to find its expression in the freedom of the great outdoors. The well-organised gatherings were generally successful in weeding out any obvious trouble-makers, but as with any group with plans to change the world

there were likely to be one or two militants among them, keen to abuse the causes for violent or criminal gain — and doubtless one or two spies. Just as the various criminal and Jihadist milieus have been merging in recent years, the extremist impulses of the post-war revolutionary were flourishing in the shadows of petty and organised crime. The shitty trade-off between disaffection in Her Majesty's Forces and the gruelling shortages they were now experiencing meant a crime-terror nexus was developing apace. The line between the fledgling revolutionary and the socially estranged delinquent, whose violence was a scream to be heard, was becoming dangerously blurred. With some subtle re-tuning and calibration the indiscretions of a misspent youth could be transformed into a noble cause. Skills developed in stealing cars, forging documents and handling weapons would prove indispensable to their life as insurgent. The ferocious clashes between the legendary Razor Gangs made famous by fascist Billy Fullerton and the Young Communist League were becoming as common in Cheetham Hill and as they were in Glasgow and London. In September 1925 a pitched battle took place between Communists and Fascists in South Islington. The fight had started when Communists tried to break up a meeting protected by some 200 fascists in support of Conservative candidate Tom Forrest Howard.

On the whole though, the anger among the Clarion youth of Sheffield and Manchester was just pocket fluff, the shit that came out in the wash. And for the old, any fresh, freckled fury they'd experienced as young men had now grown as weary and benign as liver spots. There'd been too much exposure to widespread apathy for them to make any last-minute waves.

The same might not be said of the new breed of radicals fired up by William Rust from 38 Great Ormonde Street.

In the municipal elections of Sheffield in October 1926 the Conservative manifesto squared up to the challenge presented by the three '-isms': Communism, Hooliganism and Socialism. In the eyes of many they were one and the same (Sheffield Daily Telegraph 30 October 1926). Gang violence was on the rise in certain districts of Sheffield and as a result, the Chief Constable, P.J Sillitoe had found it necessary to make an unprecedented appeal to magistrates to award exemplary sentences in a bid to repress both the crimes themselves and to reduce the increasing prevalence of hooligan gangs at Conservative meetings. Just two weeks before the death of Fallows and Stewart in The Pass at nearby Castleton, stiff sentences were passed on three members of a razor gang operating from the Shalesmoor district of Sheffield.

The attraction presented by the Clarion Ramblers in the dilapidated districts of Shalesmoor and Cheetham Hill wasn't terrifically complicated: rambling offered an escape from slum-life and the uphill struggles of the underclass in which slag heaps had replaced the hills. It was simple; the rough hewn clefts of the Peaks were a far more persuasive option than the cheerless 'Valley of Ashes' that defined the slums. Better to cough-up your lungs tackling the slopes than to have them lacerate and shrink on the fumes. For the majority of working class people, being born into the slums of Manchester, Glasgow or Sheffield was like being

handed a shovel and shown the ground where you would be told to dig your own grave. But *out there*, there was a future. *Out there* was a place without walls. Trudging in the pit-black silence of the moors at night one could look up and see not stars in the sky but bullet holes, great shafts of leaky protons — the blinding light of total freedom spilling out from behind the veil.

The poor and the vulnerable were as susceptible to being radicalized as much then as they are now. High levels of social isolation would inevitably result in issues of identity, making the young people of Cheetham Hill and Gorbals easy prey. Groups or individuals offering to solve these issues by violent means were pushing the blackest of candy. On the surface of things, Ward and his Clarion group were offering a route map for self improvement. Communist Kid Commodore William Rust, on the otherhand, was offering rebellion. Kids stopped kicking their heels and started kicking one another.

The concern among right-leaning patriots wasn't totally unfounded; hooliganism was on the rise and wide cracks were beginning to show in the leaden skies above Salford and Hulme.

Peaky Radicals

As early as 1925 the British Fascisti in Manchester were attempting to enlist as Special Constables in the regular City Police Force to help keep law and order (Rejection of Fascisti at Manchester, Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer, 08 October 1925, p.8). The previous year, a clash between the Fascisti and the Communists at Clapham Common in London had resulted in a spate of arrests. The same thing would happen in Hyde Park, first in March 1927 (*Hyde Park Scene: Fascisti's Skirmish with Communists*, Manchester Guardian, March 7, 1927) and again in August when mounted police faced down battles between hardcore factions of the far-Right and far-Left, spurred on by the fiery addresses of Manchester's Harry Pollitt (*Mounted Police Disperse Crowds, Manchester*

Guardian, 11 Aug 1927). An earlier clash in mid January had seen skirmishes break out between Communists and Fascists in Trafalgar Square. The Fascisti had gatecrashed a demonstration demanding the release of over 200 workers imprisoned during the Great Strike under the Emergency Powers Act. Words had developed into blows and one man was detained by Police.

Attempts by a J. Clare to set-up a British Fascisti branch in Manchester had only been narrowly defeated the previous year. 'Jix's Playboys of the Post-War World' as they were regularly lampooned by the Left, had turned up at the Memorial Hall in Albert Square only to be heckled down by an unusually large number of Communist and Labour supporters. The room for the public meetings in the hall was relatively small, and despite the much vaunted-arrival of head fascist, R.B.D Blakeney the Manchester branch was pathetically outnumbered. It was a meeting that began in order, then stalled by regular silliness and one that ended in chaos with one half of the room belting out the National Anthem and the other half drowning it out with The Red Flag. A speaker, not always intelligible blamed Britain's downfall on the German Illuminati and the whole thing descended into farce (Uproar in Manchester, The Manchester Guardian, Dec 17, 1925, p.11).

Despite its slapstick beginnings, January 1927 didn't just mark the death of Harry Fallows, it marked the birth of violent extremism among the Fascisti and the Radical Left, attracting thugs and opportunists from both ends of the political spectrum. And in a High Peaks region famous for its vast landslides, the stresses and fractures being experienced among its youth couldn't have been better placed.

This whole subject of criminal anarchy is explored in some detail in Detective and Secret Service Days by Edwin T. Woodhall — the former Special Branch detective who claims to have encountered Toplis in France. As the Toplis detective saw it, criminal elements would 'creep in and use the movement as tools to bring about their desired ends'. In Woodhall's estimation the East End revolutionary Peter the Painter never organised a burglary or a robbery without

first emphasizing to his comrades a ‘political angle’ to his schemes: anarchist last and criminal first. As Woodhall puts it, his anarchy was ‘used as a cloak’ to ensure the loyalty and commitment of a symbiotic political underground. His experience in the Special Political Department of The Met had proved that there was little difference between the ‘hysterical fanatic’ and the ‘definitely criminal’. Indeed he thought the criminal the lesser of the two evils, often avoiding many of the ‘extreme measures’ that would almost certainly land him in jail.

Seconded to the Military Foot Police in the immediate aftermath of the Etaples Mutiny, Woodhall claimed encountered Toplis, a military deserter of ‘singularly ferocious character’ in the deserter camps that sprang up around the wells, woods and tunnels of Camiers. After an exhaustive hunt Woodhall describes running the villain to ground in the village of Rang de Fleur, only for Toplis to make an audacious bid for freedom with another notorious prisoner with a death sentence hanging over his head. Toplis is alleged to have tunnelled down under the sand of the barbed-wire detention camp and escaped into the woods around Le Touquet and then to Paris. It might be the legendary ‘Painter’ Woodhall discusses in the earlier chapter, but Toplis is clearly defined in the strokes: a shadowy figure directing burglaries and other outrages in the East End of London — a ‘rogue rat of society’, despised by government and Bolshevik alike. Not that Woodhall wasn’t without sympathy; ‘extreme poverty and conscious inferiority were always at the root of crime’, he wrote (Detective & Secret Service Days, Edwin Thomas Woodhall, Jarrolds, London, 1929).

The Winnats Pass rally of June 1926 was a key turning event in relations between ramblers and landowners, marking a shift from cheerful defiance to outright provocation. The politics that charged the movement was now well and truly out of the rucksack.

Several leading Labour stalwarts addressed the crowds that day, including Philip Milner Oliver MP for Salford and Blackley as well as Westhoughton MP and

Trade Unionist Rhys Davies. It was Rhys Davies who campaigned alongside Willie Gallacher, George Lansbury and Tom Mann in the belligerent *Hands Off Russia Committee* (1919-1920). It was like two opposing weather fronts colliding in the Peaks that day; the cool common-sense of the Labour veterans meeting the prickly rising heat of the restless Socialist youth. A storm was inevitable.

The overlap here is an interesting one as it was Tom Mann and Guy Bowman — an associate of and G.H.B Ward — who had played a leading role in the infamous, *Don't Shoot* pamphlet. The pamphlet, sub-titled, *An Open Letter to British Soldiers,* had been printed in Bowman's *Syndicalist* newspaper, and caused no shortage of ripples. The letter, based around a series of caustic requests, asked British Soldiers not to shoot on their fellow countrymen if ordered to do during a National Strike. A previous version of the letter had appeared in the *Irish Worker*, at that time unsigned. The year was 1912, the year of the first National Coal Strike and it couldn't have kicked-off in a better place: the Sutton and Blackwell Pits of Alfreton in Derbyshire where a 16 year old Toplis made an occasional display as Pony Driver. On February 26th 10,000 men downed tools and walked out prematurely. The *Derbyshire Miners Association* had scheduled the strike for the following week, but Toplis and his workmates had clearly had enough. At four o clock on the Monday, the pit lifts stopped and the men walked out. Like William Rust some twelve years later, Guy Bowman and Tom Mann were convicted under the Incitement to Mutiny Act 1797. Their prison sentences were quashed only after considerable public pressure.

As a prominent member of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers and a man with strong religious convictions, it was easy enough to understand the shared interests of Mann and Ward. What was a little less easy to explain was the relationship between Ward and Bowman. Bowman was a frustrating elusive figure. The press were no surer of him then than historians and biographers are now. *"Who is Guy Bowman anyway"*, asked C.J Woodward in a February 1913

edition of *Justice, "this French man with an English name? And where does this struggling journalist get his money to pay his own salary and the wages of his assistant secretary, his organiser, and the Secretary of the (Socialist Democratic) Federation? What has he done for trade unionism?*

It was a fair comment in the circumstances. No one was quite sure where he had come from When arrested in Madrid for trying to relay messages to the anarchist Francesco Ferrer, then awaiting trial on a charge of complicity in an alleged bomb plot, the Spanish Police certainly didn't know who he was. And neither did the English Press. *"He is a man of striking appearance, more French than English in feature; ruddy and slightly bearded like a peasant type from Provence. His shock of stiff-curling, dark, snow sprinkled hair; his narrow deep set eyes; the obstinate curl of his nostril, all suggest the agitator, the fanatic."* (Liverpool Daily Post, 26 October 1906). Just days before his arrest in his Spain, Bowman had been in touch with Ward whose friendship with Ferrer was well known. In a letter to the Sheffield Independent, Ward explained that Bowman had written to him some time ago asking to be supplied with information on the Ferrer case. Based on his conversations with Ward, Bowman set about writing an article which subsequently appeared in *Justice*. Knowing in advance of his trip to Spain, Ward had also furbished him with letters of introduction to several of Ferrer's friends who were fighting to clearing his name. Ward's next remark about Bowman only added to his mystery: *"Guy Bowman is a Socialist and married a well known radical lady and is a gentleman known to English journalists."* (Sheffield Independent, 26 October 1906). If English journalists were already familiar with Bowman, then they certainly weren't letting on.

Despite contemporary references to his 'olive skin' and a 'pronounced foreign accent' Bowman and his friends maintained that he was born in St John's Wood, London in 1871 to a French mother and Scottish father. This may well be true as by August 1907 he was standing as a candidate for the Fife Branch of the SDF. A

report in the Fife Free Press on August 3 described him as having his home in Paris but being of ‘Fifeshire extraction’. There was certainly a prominent Bowman family in Fife that had big stakes in Fife Coal Company and this might account for obvious financial security, and it may be that Bowman was educated in France. By 1910 he was translating the works of French Socialist, Gustave Hervé so a strong Gallic background seems inevitable. His insistence that he was born in London’s Westminster district may have been little more than poetic licence as there are no records of a Guy Bowman being born in that or any other year in London.

A report by the Daily Mirror of October 1906 only heaped further ambiguity on Bowman. The Secretary of the Social Democratic Federation had informed them that Mr Bowman had only joined the Social Democratic Federation that year. Despite not having made himself prominent as a speaker, his writings in Quelch’s Justice had engaged swift and considerable attention (Daily Mirror, 31 October 1906, p.5).

Whatever the truth of Bowman’s history and his meteoric rise through the ranks, it was clear that G.H.B Ward, the man who organised the Clarion weekend on which Fallows disappeared certainly had deep, extensive roots in the ‘direct action’ movement. The only thing not showing signs of action or even movement now was Fallows.

Wheels within Wheels

Another trusted ally of Ward, Rust and Rothman was Herbert H. Elvin. Like Ward, Elvin had emerged in Britain’s blooming Trade Union movement, quickly recognising the positive trade-off between working men’s groups and sport. The Clarion Ramblers and Clarion Cyclists were among his earliest successes. Combining his role as General Secretary of the National Union of Clerks with his passion for physical and spiritual improvement saw him play a central role in the

formation of the Workers Travel Association (1921). A letter signed by Elvin, described how a 'cooperative effort' was needed to make foreign travel as cheap as possible. The war meant that nations would need to rebuild and reconnect, not as enemies now but friends. Fascinating holidays and knowledge of continental people would help broaden Britain's horizons and lead to a spirit of fellowship. There would be another positive outcome; properly organized travel would not only help heal a fractured post-war world, it would greatly increase the spread and resilience of International Socialism among its workers.

The class politics that dominated the period between 1918 and 1926 had seen unprecedented militancy. Workers' organisations had taken a sharp intake of breath and prepared for the imminent collapse of capitalism. The General Strike, six months before the death of Fallows, had represented something of a watershed moment. First the Unions had realised that large industrial action had the volume and the potency to influence government decisions, now it was the turn of sport. And it was from this same chamber of egalitarian high spirits that the *British Workers Sports Federation* would emerge, first with global competitions like the *Workers Summer Olympiad* in 1925, and then with more localised 'shock and awe' efforts like the Mass Trespass on Kinder Scout. The BWSF's first Secretary was 55 year old Tom Groom, the original founder of the Clarion Cycle Club. His mantra remained constant throughout: through mutual aid and good fellowship 'the Propaganda of the Principle of Socialism' would remain strong. The future peace of the world could be secured in the 'democratic arenas' of International Sport. It was 'footballs instead of canon balls'. The group's formation, however, instinctively provided a lucrative opportunity to push International Communism. Within years of being formed, the well-meaning Groom was none too gracefully shouldered out. In his place were two emerging talents of the mighty Young Communist League — Wally Tapsell and George Sinfield. Under this famously obstinate pair, the BWSF would be re-calibrated under the banner and direction of the International Marxism. The change couldn't have been more profound or more

successful. It put flesh on its bones and fire in its belly, trebling membership overnight. But solidarity was short-lived. To reap any real benefits at the polling booths, the aims, objectives and sympathies of the Sports Federation needed to remain close to those of the TUC and the newly formed National Labour. Even Lenin had acknowledged the value of an affiliation with Labour during the 'Open Turn' debate of the Second Congress of the Communist International. And what he was thinking about was 'mass'. Labour was in a more capable position of revolutionizing the masses; the Reds could get in on the Labour ticket.

As a result of an increasing misapplication of agitprop and a cruder, more truculent influence within the Manchester branch in particular, the mood amongst Labour members shifted from one of support of the BSWF to one of intransigence and in 1931, some months ahead of the General Election, Herbert H. Elvin and champion Clarion Cyclists, Ernest and John Deveney formed the *National Workers Sports Association* as an attempt to wrestle sport back into the more electable Labour mainstream. So far so straightforward.

The Derbyshire-born Elvin, however, had a skeleton in his closet that betrayed his public switch to the more press-friendly National Labour.

The Brotherhood

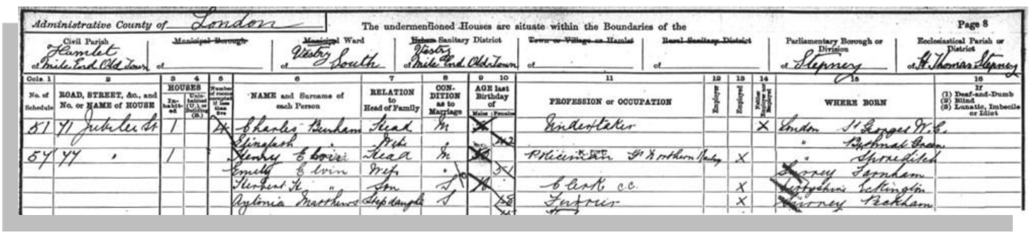
By the unlikeliest coincidence, the census of 1891 reveals that Elvin's old family home at 77 Jubilee Street, in London's East End was used by revolutionary fugitive Joseph Stalin during his attendance of the 5th Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party in London in 1907. Some thirty years later, 'Stalin's Englishman' Guy Burgess, of the notorious Cambridge Five spy ring, found his way to the heart of the British Government as a Private Secretary in Ernest Bevin's post-war Foreign Office. In September 1937 Elvin had replaced Bevin as President of the T.U.C but the Union men had remained close allies ever since lending their support to the founding of the *National Travel Association* in

the early twenties and the formation of the *Scientific Advisory Council* in the thirties. Both men saw science as the key to progress in the fight against 'Social Evils' (New Advisory Committee, Guardian, 21 Aug 1939). Elvin's youngest son Harold, who would eventually marry Indian actress, Tanguturi Suryakumari, would subsequently write of seeing Stalin at a four yard range with nothing between them. Harold, at that time serving as a member of staff at the British Embassy in Moscow, remarked that few pictures did Stalin justice: *"Where do they show the sensitiveness? It is some water quality behind the pupils of the eyes. He looks like a too good father"* (A Cockney in Moscow, Harold Elvin, 1958). *The Sunday Post* was quick to pick up on the author and film maker's knack for being in the right place at the wrong time. *"On a peaceful tour of Yugoslavia he was suddenly plunged into the turmoil which followed the assassination of King Alexander. When trouble started in Austria Mr Elvin was right on the spot and was thrown into prison for blowing up a railway bridge."* (Sunday Post, Aug 6 1939, p.18). Harold, who married Russian ballerina, Violetta Prokhorova on his exit from Moscow, was also at the Russian Embassy when Stalin learned of the surprise attack on the Soviet Union. Doubt still remains as to what his position was at the British Embassy. Contemporary accounts place him within the Ministry of Information, but from 1953 onwards, Harold was telling the press he really nothing more than a 'lowly night watchman'. Whatever reason he had for being there, the dictator certainly took a shine to him as Stalin personally granted Elvin a rather exceptional exit visa for his new bride, Prokhorova (Daily Herald, 27 June 1952, p.1).

A closer look at the early life of Harold's father Herbert H. Elvin reveals just as many mysteries.

At little more than six months old, Elvin was scooped up in the arms of his mother and taken on a month-long passage to India. His father Henry Elvin was a Troop Sergeant Major in the 9th Queen's Royal Lancers. The troopship Euphrates left

Portsmouth on January 9th 1875 and arrived in Bombay on February 10th with over 1,400 men and women on board and some 145 children in tow. One woman and two children had died during the crossing and there is some indication that Elvin's Derbyshire-born mother, Mary Ann Parr may have been one of those women not to survive. On the Unit's arrival back in England in the mid 1880s, the family took up residence at 77 Jubilee Street. Within a few years of landing in Whitechapel, the young Elvin attached himself to the East End congregational movement and embarked on the rough and ready life of street preacher, slowly accustomising himself to the disrespectful mobs and the regular lobbing of horse shit and rotten eggs. From the age of fifteen Herbert would take to the labyrinth of courts and lanes around Dean and Dorset Street and drum up a crowd for impromptu prayer meetings, regularly being moved on for obstruction and unlawful assembly, and occasionally being prosecuted. Large gatherings in Hackney and Lambeth would usually degrade quite quickly into noisy, disorderly nuisances and thoroughfares would become congested. The vast mass of the lower stratum of East London life moved on a different plane, with most shunning the lasting salvation of communion wine for the short-lived comfort of a Ha'Penny gin. In the maze of incestuous alleyways and squalid courts of Stepney, the light at the end the world wasn't the promise of divine grace but the ineffectual glow of the gas lamp revealing the sanctuary of the gutter where you would sleep.


Administrative County of London — The undermentioned Houses are situate within the Boundaries of the — Page 8

Civil Parish: Hamlet of Mile End Old Town | Municipal Borough of | Municipal Ward of Vestry South | Urban Sanitary District: Vestry of Mile End Old Town | Town or Village or Hamlet of | Rural Sanitary District of | Parliamentary Borough or Division of Stepney | Ecclesiastical Parish or District of St Thomas Stepney

No. of Schedule	Road, Street, &c., and No. or Name of House	Houses Inhabited	Uninhabited	Number of rooms occupied if less than five	Name and Surname of each Person	Relation to Head of Family	Condition as to Marriage	Age last Birthday of Males	Females	Profession or Occupation	Employer	Employed	Neither Employer nor Employed	Where Born	If (1) Deaf-and-Dumb (2) Blind (3) Lunatic, Imbecile or Idiot
51	71 Jubilee St	1			Charles Benham	Head	M			Undertaker			X	London St Georges W.C.	
					Linplash	Wife								" Bethnal Green	
57	77 "	1			Henry Elvin	Head	M			Policeman Gt Northern Railway		X		" Shoreditch	
					Emily Elvin	Wife	"		51					Surrey Farnham	
					Herbert H. "	Son	S			Clerk C.C.		X		Derbyshire Ilkington	
					Aylonia Matthews	Step daughter	S			Furrier		X		Surrey Peckham	

1891 Census showing TUC President Herbert H. Elvin at 77 Jubilee Street, London with his Policeman father Henry. A young Joseph Stalin would lodge here in 1907.

Direct engagement was the only credible solution.

Within a few years Elvin had married 24 year old Mary Jane Hill, the daughter of Congregational Minister, George J. Hill of Commercial Road in the Mile End district of Whitechapel. George had been leading the Seamen's Chapel on George Street, subsequently re-named the Stepney Temple and it is almost certain that Elvin's associates in East End Congregationalist movement brought him into contact with Reverend Arthur Baker of the Brotherhood Church on Southgate Road — scene of the 1917 'peace riot'.

As with most Congregationalist churches of the period, the politically charged, people-oriented Southgate Church mixed planned community ethics with copious measures of anarchism. Christian anarchism, fuelled partly by the commercial success of Tolstoy and partly by the emergence of Socialism, was based loosely on a statement made in the Book of Judges: *"there was no king of Israel in those days, everyone did what they thought was right in their own eyes"*. To this end, all Christians were anarchists. In early press briefings it was stated that the object of the church was to "reorganise society so that mutual help and good may gradually supplant the state of warfare ... cooperation would take the place of struggle'. Its' plain-dress ministers — ditching the customary ruffles and gold of the High Church — might just as readily be glimpsed attending a meeting on Irish Home Rule as a scout club jamboree. There could no boundaries between countries. There could no rulers in those countries. There could be no property, no ownership. In fact, the Southgate Church's place in the rapidly emerging class struggle was pitched somewhere between Circus Ringmaster, Greek Chorus and John Lennon's 'Imagine' (Hackney and Kingsland Gazette 02 February 1894, p.4).

Although by no means a stranger to the church or the Nonconformity movement, Baker's rise within its ranks was swift. The Church's founder J.C Kenworthy had handed him leadership of the East End church shortly after returning from a trip to Moscow where, it was alleged, the Russian novelist and political reformer Leo

Tolstoy had given Kenworthy full rights to publish English translations of his work (J. C. Kenworthy and the Tolstoyan Communities in England, W. H. G. Armytage, 1957).

Like Elvin, Baker had been born in Bombay. His father William Adolphus Baker was a respected general in the Royal Engineers who indulged in flights of outrageous religious prophecy based upon complex arithmetical calculations and morbid daydreams about the Antichrist. For several years William had served as the city's Under Secretary of State, serving additionally as the director of the Ganges Canal Railways in the country's Public Works Department. In May 1907, the 45 year old Arthur Baker invited Lenin, Stalin and Trotsky to the hall of his church on Southgate Road to host the 5th Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party — a three week event, staged in thirty five gruelling debating sessions. These meetings, pulling together some 300 Bolshevik, Menshevik, Bundist and Baltic delegates, would play a pivotal role in advancing the truly momentous revolution in Russia in 1917.

As news of the secret meetings leaked out and the word spread, the press photographers had a field day. Crowds of gawping loafers and Special Branch detectives mixed freely with the swarthy cortège of 'dangerous revolutionaries'. For the first few nights of the two week congress, Russia's future President, Joseph Stalin is believed to have stayed at doss house on Fieldgate Road before being offered the relative comfort of a cramped first-floor apartment at Elvin's former home on Jubilee Street. As the recently elected Secretary of the National Union of Clerks, one can imagine Elvin bunking off the various trade galas and meticulously minuted meetings and taking his seat in the chapel, overwhelmed by the ferocity and passion of debate, before creeping sheepishly back to the cosy sanctuary of his home in Buckhurst Hill.

BAKER Arthur of 2 Dunraven St. Saviour's-road **Jersey** died
6 8 November 1917 Probate **London** 1 January to Ann Read
Baker widow. Effects £1872 2s. 2d.

Were either Elvin or Baker responsible for moving Stalin from Fieldgate Road to the flat on Jubilee Street? It seems plausible enough, although in later years Stalin himself would remain unusually quiet about his stay in London. Both men seemed surprisingly comfortable with villains, revolutionaries on the more visceral fringes of rebellion, Baker having already made the acquaintance of Manchester Anarchist and later Sheffield Trade Unionist, Alfred Barton, during his missionary work in Salford. A pamphlet written by Baker and published by the Socialist newspapers, *The Clarion* and *New Moral World* in 1896 paid tribute to the early Tolstoyan communities and co-operatives being popularized by the likes of J.C Kenworthy and the Brotherhood Trust. The *Labour Chronicle* even went as far to describe it as the 'handsomest and most interesting series of pamphlets in the Socialist movement'. Baker's follow-up publication, *A Plea for Communism* (1896) would go that little bit further, providing in one handbook, a 'sound and practical guide' to Communism built around tried and tested facts rather than theory. This 'touching' and 'convincing' series of sketches, published under the auspices of the Brotherhood Church, even featured a favourable review of Barton and William MacQueen's 'Free Commune' in Chorlton on Medlock — a vibrant

and experimental community that would be partially successful in knitting together the far-reaching philosophy of Nietzsche and Engels with the rich moral tapestries of Tolstoy. Barton, who joined the Communist Party of Great Britain upon its launch in August 1920, was on close terms with exiled revolutionary Prince Kropotkin whose pamphlets he would publish through the *Free Commune Press* in the late 1800s. MacQueen, meanwhile, would later be jailed in America for playing a leading role in the Paterson Silk Strikes. Like Toplis associate George Patrick Murphy some twenty years later, Barton and MacQueen had taken up residence on Cottenham Street in Chorlton on Medlock and it was here that the Christian Socialist Baker had forged a mutually constructive bond with the bellicose pair.

Barton, Bingham and the Anarchist Ramblers

There's a common misconception that the Right of Way movement that underpinned the 1932 Mass Trespass on Kinder Scout was somehow hijacked by an unruly and unsanctioned — and disproportionately Jewish group of youths — pushing the policies of the Young Communist League. This couldn't be further from the truth. The rambling movement of the early to mid 20th century had its boots planted firmly in anarchism. It was in its DNA. As was the case in William Blake's *Jerusalem*, Kenworthy was quick to recognise that the recovery of lasting freedom began not the hearts of men but in what was beneath their feet. In stark contrast to the dark satanic mills of rampaging industry were the 'clouded hills' and mountains that defined our 'green and pleasant lands'. Heaven was here already. And you sure as hell couldn't put a fence around it.

Property, as Kenworthy saw it, was the denial of the so-called 'love principle'. No man had a right to own *more* than he really needed. Inspiration for the Brotherhood group was derived from the various Land Restoration League movements which demanded the legal return of common land or pastures and the

recovery of men's rights to use their own soil. According to the League‘s manifesto, land was the ‘storehouse and workshop of men’. Every citizen had an equal right to ‘the use and enjoyment of the land of his country’. This right began with birth and terminated with death (*English Land Restoration League Manifesto*, June 1884). The very earth beneath one's feet had started to become politicized. To men like Kenworthy and Bruce John Wallace the rocks and stones that made up the High Peak or the commons in Hackney or Clapham had already written into the constitution of the British spirit. They couldn’t have put it any plainer: the earth was the *Lord’s* and not the *Landlord’s*.

Delivering a lecture at the Southgate Church in January 1894, Kenworthy reviewed the transgressions of landowners who were disobeying the basic tenet of Christ’s teachings in their talk of ‘ownership’ and property. ‘The land was the Lord’s and man was only the tenant’. The solution, Kenworthy explained, was the creation of ‘Christian Communist Brotherhood’. The lecture concluded by referring to the parable of the rich man and Lazarus as proof that the amassing of wealth and ownership of land and property was retarding broader social progress (Islington Gazette 09 January 1894, p.2). Just a few years before Kenworthy visited Tolstoy in Moscow, he had set up a Brotherhood Church in Croydon. Its activities cantered around two Sunday meetings and attended by fewer than four or five people. In addition to discussion groups and physical education classes there was a rambling club (New Order, July 1895, p.2). Inspired by the half-naked mass tramps and pilgrimages of the Russian Doukhobor settlers and the self-improvement classes of Croydon’s Young Men’s Christian Association, Kenworthy pursued the holy grail of social regeneration through self-regeneration.

Whilst the Croydon branch did eventually break with Kenworthy and Wallace — principally on Tolstoy’s advice — the Church and those who influenced it were the first stone laid at the cairn that marked the birth of the Right to Roam

movement in Britain. But it wasn't the first time that trouble had brewed as a result of fences and enclosures.

Just twenty years before, on an area of common land just a mile or so from the church, a riot had broken out as over 20,000 Londoners assembled to hear land reformer and Irish Republican John de Morgan speak on the issue of enclosures. The 'Hackney Downs' riot as it became known, was the last of five weekly demos and saw hundreds of fences torn down, tarred and burned in a frenzy of spontaneous anarchy. The year was 1875. It was mid-December. At 4.30pm, just as a frost was beginning to settle John de Morgan stepped forward and announced that every man and every woman standing there that day had a perfect legal right to rip the railings from the ground and recover their commoners rights. The 30 or 40 officers of the Metropolitan Police's N Division could do little more than watch as a wave of cheering commoners reduced to the wrought iron railings to scrap metal, and deeply embedded posts were furiously wrestled free from the ground. To a wild huzzah of triumph a bonfire was set blazing and dancing broke out around the smoking mass. Not one arrest was made.

It was a wanton act of destruction carried out with the purity and exactitude of a sacred rite.

Rumblings of further protested persisted in parish councils but it was in Manchester and Sheffield that the Right of Way movement really gained some traction.

Among the more permanent figures that made up Barton and McQueen's *Free Commune* movement in Manchester was Alfred Barton's brother-in-law, Herbert Stockton whose description of an annual anarchist gathering at Monsal Dale in the Wye Valley, just 10 miles south of Winnats Pass, vividly evokes the bountiful "fresh air and fellowship" enjoyed by the early Clarion Ramblers and Socialist League:

"We roamed through splendid mountain and river scenery and forming in a group close to a waterfall, we sang revolutionary songs amidst the splashing of the water. The effect was enough to arouse the enthusiasm of all hearers. Thus without government, policemen or social democratic would-be political despots everything passed off harmoniously. There being no authority we went where we liked and rambled in groups along the river banks till we came to some boards which said on them, Trespassers Will be Prosecuted. We held a discussion as to the meaning of the words and finally decided that they were relics of the Antedeluvian period and thought it best to knock the boards down and throw them into the river."

Herbert Stockton, August 1893 — Herbert Stockton's Strangeways, Christopher Draper

The meet on this occasion had been organised by Robert Sykes Bingham of the Sheffield Anarchist Group from its base at 63 Blonk Street in the city's perpetually bristling Brightside district. A few years earlier the group's volatile linchpin members David J. Nicoll — editor of the *Sheffield Anarchist* and the *Commonweal* — and Frederick Christopher Slaughter, had been jailed as part of the so-called Walsall Anarchists plot. An agent-provocateur by the name of Auguste Coulon had infiltrated the group and planted bomb-making plans and instructions on one of their Walsall members. Working on behalf of Special Branch and Russia's Secret Police, Coulson was able to incriminate a further six men on charges of conspiring to supply French and Russian anarchists with explosives. The bombs, it was alleged, were to be used against the Russian Tsar, Alexander III.

The founder of the group in Sheffield was Limerick-born physician, John Creaghe, an associate of Ferrer and G.H.B Ward who had narrowly escaped prosecution himself by grabbing a boat ticket to South America (via Spain) just ahead of the police raids.

Upon his release in 1896 David Nicoll used his temporary base at in Sheffield's Broomhall to launch the Walsall Amnesty Committee. From his home at 7 Broomhall Street, just off Hanover Way, Nicoll would work tirelessly on securing

the release of all remaining anarchists from Pentonville jail and exposing the police conspiracy that had led to the men being framed. The 1893 bank holiday gathering at Monsall Head that Stockton described so beautifully, had been called in direct response to the efforts of the campaigners and marked a shift in terms of location. The Annual Picnic and Conference — with its blanket cost of around £2.10 — had traditionally been held in around Rowsley and Chatsworth Hall. This time it sought the rather more dramatic setting of Monsal Head with its 70 feet Headstone Viaduct and its breathtaking views of the river valley. It was a tradition that Barton and Stockton would continue for many years to come, with tea at 'Mrs Bridges' an integral part of scheme and 'full justice' being done to the 'good things' that she provided.

Among the campaign's more animated supporters were legendary Manchester Chartist, William Henry Chadwick and the Brotherhood Church's J.C Kenworthy, fresh from visiting Tolstoy in Russia.

At an address made in Hayfield, where Fred Bannister would make his home and the hell for leather mass tramp of 1932 would commence, Chadwick staked the claim of the common man to Kinder Scout. Considering the age of the world, Chadwick explained, the passing of its lands into the hands of a few landlords was a comparatively modern phenomenon. We had a 'moral right' to enjoy these open spaces and they far exceeded the legal rights of the few. A letter was then read from Moss Side's Richard Pankhurst, husband of the famous Suffrage activist, Emmeline Pankhurst. In a statement that must have sounded as remarkable then as it does now, Dr Pankhurst explained that to have any chance of success one must seek the "enthusiastic support of the entire community". To preserve public rights over open lands such as Kinder Scout was of the "highest importance" not just to the people of Manchester but the whole nation. Chadwick added no shortage of dynamite by saying that he'd be ready to cross the mountain even it risked imprisonment. An old magistrate had written to him assuring that there certainly

was right of way from Hayfield to Snake Pass, as he had used on occasion for over fifty years himself. And it didn't end with Kinder Scout. Chadwick had no sooner led his army of heavy-booted Kinder-ites over the promised lands of the Scout than he set about liberating the tremendous gritstone escarpments of Blackstone Edge. With the backing and support of Moravian solicitor, Charles T. Tallent-Bateman and a formidable army of ramblers Chadwick paved the way for the revival of The Manchester Districts Footpaths Preservation Society. This would be extended by some ten years later by Ward, who organised its Sheffield counterpart (Kinder Scout Right of Way, Manchester Guardian, 1894 Aug 1907).

If any single one person was responsible for putting the wind in the sails — or even a spring in the step — of the Mass Trespass movement, it was Chadwick. Another force of nature from Manchester's Chorlton on Medlock, this irrepressible Primitive Methodist had a prodigious protest record stretching right back to the 1840s when he had been jailed at eighteen for conspiracy and sedition during the last of the Chartist Riots in '48. A shop had been taken in Tib Street that had been used for picking oakum and Chadwick was preparing to torch it. His youthful over-exuberance cost him six months hard labour and earned him the much coveted moniker, 'The Last of the Manchester Chartists' (Obituary, Manchester Guardian, 02 June 1908, p.5). What better heritage could trespassing have? The economic basis of class consciousness had been laid at the heart of Britain's cotton industry. Manchester was the birthplace of the economic radicalism that would drive and inspire Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx's *Communist Manifesto*. Without the Chartists there would have been no Peterloo Massacre and without the Peterloo Massacre there would have been no electoral reforms, no Guardian newspaper, no Anti-Corn-Law League, no right to vote. It might seem a slightly breezy and facile way of looking at things, but symbolically at least, it was true.

After a rummage through the archives of press reports from this period, one item serves better than most in pulling together many of the various threads mentioned in previous pages. The report in question featured details of a well attended meeting at the South Place Ethical Institute in Finsbury in honour of the remaining Walsall Anarchists still languishing in jail. Those who assembled for the talk read like a veritable 'Who's Who' of the early British Anarchist and Labour movement: J.C Kenworthy was there, representing the interests of the Brotherhood Church, future Labour leader Keir Hardie, mutineer Tom Mann, Hampstead's Amy Morant, and jailbird journalist David Nicoll (Walsall Anarchists, Liberty 01 May 1896).

Among the audience there that day was fourteen year old Ezra Holloway, one of the youngest and most diligent members of Alfred Barton and Herbert Stockton's 'Free Commune' anarchists back in Manchester. In a sad, but peculiarly ironic turn of events, Holloway was discovered dead just months after the body of Harry Fallows was found in the cave in Castleton. The 44 year-old former Sunday school teacher had opened the door of the oven, turned on the gas and let time, fate and a surfeit of carboxyhaemoglobin in the blood take care of the rest. It was all over in minutes. During the period in which he'd served as Secretary of the local branch of the Socialist Democratic Federation, Holloway had lived on Rumford Street, just a five minute walk from the young Fred Bannister on Upper Duke Street and Toplis associate George Patrick Murphy on John Street. It was a miserable and desperately pointless end to someone who'd served in engine room of Manchester Socialism. The dramatic farewell note was found by his side read simply: *"I know the hour when it strikes. It has struck for me"* (Nottingham Journal 05 August 1927, p.5).

Another wretched casualty on the cenotaph of Socialist dreamers was the Reverend Arthur Baker, MA of infamous Brotherhood Church on Southgate

Road, whose founder J.C Kenworthy had aligned himself so closely with the Anarchist and Revolutionary movements.

Shortly after the conclusion of the 5th Russia Congress in June, Reverend Baker packed up his missal and Geneva gown and relocated to a Congregational Chapel in Truro, Devon, where he served until he resigned his post in 1912. From here he left the Channel Islands. In a deeply macabre twist it transpires that Baker, whose chapel had provided such a sound, compassionate birthing room for the Russian Revolutionaries back in 1907, died on the very same day that Lenin and the Bolsheviks stormed the Winter Palace in St Petersburg. The event would subsequently become known as the October Revolution (November 7th — November 8th on the English or 'New Style' calendar). The impact the two week congress in London had on the revolution shouldn't be underestimated. What it did was compound the fractious rift between the moderates and the extremists, leading to the emergence of the Bolsheviks as a credible leading force. Peaceful regeneration was rejected in favour of violent revolution. According to the Manchester Courier of May 31st, the Extremists had finally 'wrested control'.

What were the odds on the man who effectively performed its baptism dying on the very same day the Revolution came of age?

The champion chess player and speaker of 13 languages was dead at fifty-four. The date would be scorched into history forever: November 7th 1917. How the Reverend quantified his intervention in Russia's future isn't known.

Whether there was any plausible connection between Baker, Elvin and Saklatvala at this early stage isn't known. There's no recorded evidence of Shapurji Saklatvala attending the congress at the Brotherhood Church, but given his frequent incursions into the East End of London from his home in Manchester at this time, his commitment to Revolutionary politics — and his eventual conversion to Communism — it's entirely likely that he did. What we do know is

that Elvin and Saklatvala were *both* active players in the *National Union of Clerks*, *both* were long-term Clarion members and along with Reverend Arthur Baker *both* men spent the first years of their life in Bombay. There was also a very strong possibility that Baker's father William Adolphus Baker was on nodding terms, at the very least, with Ratan Tata of Tata Steel (Saklatvala's uncle). As Under Secretary of State, Baker Snr's regular dealings with the Bombay Trade Council would almost certainly have seen the paths of the Tata and Baker families cross at some point.

Shapurji's daughter Sehri maintains that her father held 'virtually Socialist views' as early as 1905, the time of the 3rd Russian Congress in London and was already on good terms with Labour leader Keir Hardie and future Communist Sylvia Pankhurst — both regular speakers at the Brotherhood chapel. Saklatvala's rental of a flat at 730 Holloway Road in Highgate, just a few minutes' walk from the Tomb of Karl Marx, also suggests he may have derived some succour and inspiration from Communism a little earlier than is generally accepted. According to his daughter's biography, Saklatvala move from Manchester to Highgate came in 1907, the year that Lenin and Stalin's arrived at the Reverend Baker's Brotherhood Church. Saklatvala's subsequent emergence as 'Star Communist' in Britain makes an earlier encounter with the Russians all the more plausible. His personal file in the archives of Mi5 is a little sketchy about his activities at this time, so a good deal of speculation is needed. Sehri Saklatvala's biography of her father may, however provide a clue.

At the time of his move to Highgate Saklatvala was already active in the India Reform Group whose cause in Britain, at least, was taken up by the Working Men's Institution and Annie Besant of the Theosophical Society. The Society's founder Madame Helena Blavatsky was one of Russia's more mysterious and eccentric exports and fiery publications like *Lucifer* and *Isis Unveiled* had done little to soften her reputation as sinister occultist amongst god-fearing Europeans.

To the gentle, attentive church-goer in the parish of St John's Wood, Besant and Blavatsky were wicked charlatans intent on destroying the very foundations of civilised life. To others, like Special Branch, they were Russian Spies converting leading Anglo-Indians on their subversive Theosophy mission with the nefarious intention of slowly undoing the Empire. The fact that Blavatsky was kin to both Tsarist expansionist, Rostislav Fadeyev and future Prime Minister, Sergei Witte can't have eased their fears a great deal, but it was the 'secret correspondence' between Blavatsky and Russian Ambassador, M. Zinovieff that disturbed them more. Zinovieff was a key player in the much sought after Anglo-Russian Treaty which at this stage could weaken or strengthen Britain's imperial grip on India (Are All Russian Ladies, Russian Agents, Pall Mall Gazette 03 January 1889, p.7).

The Reverend Arthur Baker had been pastor at the Brotherhood Church little more than eight weeks when he booked Besant as a speaker. Blavatsky had died some ten years before, but she and Besant's home in St. John's Wood now served as the headquarters of the Theosophy Mission. Nearby was Kaiko Mehta — the son of 'uncrowned King of Bomaby' Pherozeshah Mehta — and an old friend of Saklatvala and a regular visitor to his Highgate home. Metha's home at 39 Grove End Road put him just five minutes' walk from the Theosophy HQ at 17-19 Avenue Road and just yards from Besant's old family home at No.8 Grove End Road.

The Theosophy movement, which Besant would lead in both India and Britain at the time of the Russia Revolution in 1917, combined the more mystical elements of Christian and Buddhist thought with substantial doses of Hinduism and reformist politics. A report in the Islington Gazette in October 1902 gave a brief report on her Brotherhood Church address. Besant had just returned from India and arrived back with a barely concealed argument for Indian Home. The talk that she was giving was on 'Theosophy and Imperialism'. Looking every inch the

prophet with her short iron-grey hair and the white robes of an arch-priestess Besant described the insufferable conditions that 'Indian Estimates' were now enduring under British rule. The cost of governing India was far too great and complaints were being aired by Indian manufacturers that great volumes of Indian industry had been scarified to Lancashire. In his first ever appearance in the British Press, a letter published in the Manchester Guardian, fiercely condemns the 'unrighteous and iniquitous" excise duties on cloth that was crippling the Indian cotton industry and, more to the point, greatly reducing the value of the family's *Tata Textiles* (Shapurgi Saklatvala, Manchester Guardian, 05 May 1909, p.12). Immediate reforms were needed at both economic and parliamentary levels.

Within months of seizing power in Russia, Lenin and Stalin's Bolsheviks set about destabilising Britain's capitalist grip on the world, and the British Raj was top of the list. As author Giles Milton explains in his 2017 book, *Russian Roulette*, Lenin had been in power just weeks when he tore up the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907. The treaty, which was the result of years of extensive diplomatic efforts between Britain and Tsarist Russia, guaranteed the preservation of British trading interests in India by closing the gates at the Afghanistan border and awarding exclusivity of Britain in smaller zones. As Lenin was to reiterate in 1920, England was Russia's greatest enemy and it was in India that they must "strike them the hardest" (Field Marshal Sir Claud Jacob, Bexhill-on-Sea Observer 27 February 1932, p.7).

His personal file in the archives of Mi5 reveals that Saklatvala had come to the attention of Special Branch as early as 1908. Police in Bombay had contacted them that August with intelligence that suggested his brother Beram was a political extremist in Paris (TNA, KV2-611). Whilst no specific mention is made of his being among the 488 guests at the Brotherhood Church convention, it is it curious to note that several individuals that Shapurji Saklatvala is known to have met during this period, made their way to Paris that same year. Once in France,

Hemchandra Kanungo, Madame Cama, Shyamji Krishna Varma and P. M. Bapat would all be trained in the art of explosives and propaganda by maximalist Russian emigrés Nicolas Safranski and Ilya Rubanovich. Each would become prominent Indian radicals. His old friend Arthur Field — a former Clarion scout — would also become a founding of the Communist Party of Great Britain and take up an active role in Indian politics. Both of brothers would later move to America, taking up lucrative positions at an oil company in New Jersey.

Saklatvala's brother Beram wasn't the only one with friends in Paris. His old university mentor, Professor Haffkine had well established links in the city too. A former member of Russian's revolutionary organisation, the *People's Will* (Narodnaya Volya), Haffkine had been forced to escape to France as a result of the Tsarist purges of the late 1880s. In 1893 he moved to India where he became a success in Cholera research. With their methods and skill-sets greatly extended by their Bolshevik tutors, Indian Nationalists like M.P.T. Acharya and Mohammed Barkatullah would go on to play a vital role in Soviet attempts to destabilize the British Empire and set India on the road to freedom.

In light of the timing of their move to Paris, and the scale of Russian input into their development as revolutionaries, it seems plausible that Saklatvala's meteoric rise in British Communism had been anticipated or even planned as early as June 1907. If true, then the networks established by Saklatvala within the Clarion movement in Manchester immediately following the London congress, may have been far more deeply rooted — and more dangerous — than previously thought.

Saklatvala's colleague at the National Union of Clerks, Henry H. Elvin would eventually go on to become Chairman of the TUC in the late 1930s but much of his early energies had been poured into Clarion Sports. The Clarion-offshoot, the BWSF would provide the basis for 'Labour Sport' which in turn would form the basis of an international fraternity that would replace Militarism with Olympianism.

But what did any of this have to do with Harry Fallows and his untimely passing in Winnats Pass? Well in the context of the *World's Pictorial News* report that linked Toplis to a 'secret and infamous' anarchist organization operating in the East End of London it was certainly curious to see Percy's sidekick, Harry Fallows arrive in Castleton on the very same weekend in January that Clarion 'anarchist' and Right of Way advocate, G.H.B Ward had organised his mass tramp on the Kinder moors. And if that wasn't intriguing enough, we had Saklatvala's old friend and colleague, Walton Newbold arriving back in the High Peak shortly prior to Harry's death, to fight an election partially based at least, on the ongoing Right of Way issues relating to Kinder Scout and Sir Charles Philips Travelyan's *Access to Mountains* Bill.

Reference had always been made to the often staggering distances covered by Toplis on foot or on a bicycle — stolen, borrowed or otherwise. In the letters of Superintendent James L Cox, the man who led the investigation into Spicer's murder, special mention was made of a 13 year-old Toplis 'tramping' to Newport in South Wales and elsewhere in the UK between the years 1910 to 1912. Such triumphs of stamina were repeated as Toplis fled first the hills in Monmouthshire and then to the highlands of Scotland, where a witness saw him grabbing a bike in the Muir of Ord, north of Inverness on 31st May and arriving back at the gamekeeper's bothy in Tomintoul on June 1st. If the witness accounts were accurate then Percy had completed some 65 miles in 24 hours, much of it over mountainous terrain. Even on the day of his death he was said to have been ambushed as he rambled the twenty or so miles south from the barracks at Carlisle Castle to Penrith.

Did Percy have the same itchy-feet and compulsion to get outdoors as the young Fred Bannister? The same contempt for game-keepers as Alfred Barton, Benny Rothman and G.H.B Ward? Whilst it is difficult to envisage such un-tethered young tearaway as Toplis taking up membership with any formal group like the

Clarion Ramblers or Clarion Cyclists, was it possible that the young Percy had derived support and inspiration from associates within these groups? That Percy was rolling around the country like some Lone Clarion Ranger? Few would have the spirit, much less the stamina to keep this up over such a period. By the time of his escape this was something that came naturally to him. The freedom that he had sought had always been outdoors. The road map in his hands had always doubled as an escape route.

And then there were the rumours of Percy's anarchist sympathies. Though it did its level best to avoid the word 'Bolshevik' altogether, there was no mistaking the anarchist organization that the *World's Pictorial News* was talking about in its posthumous exclusive on Toplis*: "The declared objects of the group were to destroy the very foundations of ordered life and government and to set loose the wildest and most violent of human passions. One of the avowed objects of this gang of miscreants was the destruction of marriage laws. They openly avowed the profession of Free Love. It was the avowed intention of the desperadoes to make the world unfit to live in. Laws were to be defiled and society outraged".*

In tone, scope and content, the 'Amazing Revelations' the Berry Brothers' rag was reporting in June 1920 had been recycled from an earlier article that had first appeared in the *Lloyd's Sunday Newspaper* whilst Toplis was hiding-out in Scotland. The *Lloyds* article, published on Sunday May 10th 1920, described how 'Red emissaries' had entered the UK from Russia and assisted by funds of dubious means were embarking on a series of political and criminal activities in London. Ostensibly political in nature, these 'Bolshevik societies' were rumoured to consist of British criminals employed in radical 'stunts'. Once of these 'stunts' was to denounce the institution of marriage and practice the 'Russian custom of Free Love'. What's more, the emissaries hadn't just appeared in London, but in other industrial towns and cities across Britain and had been given the order to

‘foment unrest’ by their Soviet masters (Secret Terrorist Societies Unearthed, Lloyd’s Sunday Newspaper, May 10 1920).

There’s little denying the debt owed by *World’s Pictorial News* to the *Lloyd’s Sunday Newspaper* article, but was it the result of plagiarism or a subsequent intelligence leak? Was the posthumous emergence of Toplis as the leader of East End anarchist group based on evidence or poetic licence? Interestingly, the diary alleged to have been kept by Toplis and produced — perhaps a little too conveniently — at the inquest into his death on June 8th 1920, featured the same use of the word ‘stunt’. A pencil entry in his notebook read simply, *“May 28th — Edinburgh stunt”*. Both items could have been made up by Police in the immediate aftermath of the shooting, desperate for readers to draw a parallel between the riotous activities of the Bolsheviks and the more criminal adventures of Toplis, but it’s an interesting repeat nonetheless.

Steering the sympathies of readers in the direction of the Westmorland Police Officers wouldn't have been a difficult task. Just a few weeks prior to the police ambush on Toplis, 66 year-old Frank Robert Lark had stabbed ‘anarchist-communist’ Sidney Albert Hanson in the back of the neck with an ice-pick. The story really struck a chord with the public. Lark claimed the Hammersmith-based Socialist was inciting people to revolution. Addressing the jury, Lark said that he had worked in various munitions factories and “knew the mysterious strikes were the result of Bolshevism under the name of trade unionism”. The judge summing up at the Old Bailey displayed little sympathy with the anarchist, dryly stating that it was a ‘curious irony that in this case a man preached anarchy and communism, and that when somebody stuck an ice-pick in his neck, he immediately shouted for the Police and called for the officers of law and order” (Daily Mail, May 13, 1920, p.8). Recommending mercy from the jury, Justice Lawrence awarded Lark a very lenient one month’s imprisonment in the second division, acquitting him completely of any intent to murder or grievously wound Hanson. Additional

clarity was added when Justice Lawrence announced to the court that if home-grown anarchists continued in this way "they will get very much worse than ice-picks in the back of their necks" (Communist Orator Stabbed, The Times, May 13 1920). The *Freedom* newspaper remarked that it wasn't Lark that was being tried for attempted murder, it was Hanson being tried for having anarchist opinions.

In retrospect, it was perhaps more of a 'curious irony' that the *Lloyd's Sunday News* article on Bolshevik cells in London should be published just days before the Justice Lawrence and the jury convened to sentence Lark.

Despite the unlikelihood of any genuine 'anarchist' threat in light of the raging prejudice and anti-Bolshevik press bias of the 1920s, there were actually solid links between the networks of radicals operating in the East End of London and their counterparts in Manchester. Was Toplis really the violent anarchist who had just returned from Russia or was he — as John Fairley and William Allison allege in their book — a lying, thieving rogue and military deserter whose momentary attack of conscience had wreaked havoc at a military base camp during the war?

The problem here was that it was difficult to separate genuine criminal intent from the climate of fear and loathing that made any kind of activism seem dangerous in the immediate post-war period. There was Toplis and there was Fallows. And then of course there were episodes of militancy, Bolshevism and sedition to varying degrees and outcomes. The suicide in Winnats Pass may have been nothing more than that — a tragic suicide — but it was difficult to ignore that it was a young Manchester rambler — with possible links to the Young Communist League — who had discovered the body of Fallows. And not just on any weekend of the year, but on the weekend of the annual Clarion New Year ramble. A heady brew of thrills, spills and espionage was certainly clouding the issue but there were patterns there all the same.

The common link between the anarchists of London's East End and those of Manchester was Cheetham Hill — home to six of the Mass Trespass ramblers arrested and charged by Police. It was also the birthplace of Harry Fallows. The Clarion Fellowship had held its meetings at 27 Cheetham Hill Road for some years, and Socialist campaigner, Robert Blatchford, who had launched the Clarion Movement back in 1891, had founded one of the very first Independent Labour Party branches at Cheetham Hill Institute on Tyson Road, just across the road from where Harry was born. There are also several other curious links between Cheetham Hill and Percy Toplis that provide another mysterious layer and one that links directly to the mutiny at Etaples in 1917. And the man who provides that connection is Aubrey Aaronson.

The Cheetham Hill Mutineer

Aubrey, born at 56 Elizabeth Street, Cheetham Hill in 1897, was the youngest son of Russian diamond dealer Harry Aaronson, a globetrotting émigré wanderer whose international business dealings would occasionally land him in trouble. In April 1917, at the age of 20, the young jeweller's assistant and watchmaker enlisted at Carlisle Castle Barracks with the 3rd Border Regiment, landing in Etaples just before the riots kicked off in August and transferring in December after a period at the 24th General Hospital after suffering shell-shock. At 5 feet 2 inches in height and just seven stone at the time of enlisting Aubrey was hardly to going to grow into the formidable, teeth-baring infantryman that General Haig and the Brass Hats were demanding and little resistance was offered by medical board to keep him on frontline service after his stint in hospital. Where he developed shell-shock isn't clear. His service records provide no clear deployment details and his medal card features only the standard Victory medal. The little bronze medal was awarded to practically every Tom, Dick or Harry who had served overseas during the war. The combat he saw was certainly in France, and in all likelihood, at Passchendaele. Either way, Aaronson was duly transferred to the

Royal Engineers of the Inland Waterways & Docks and by March 1918 the newly promoted Sapper was moved to Sandwich in Kent (War Office 363 - First World War Service Records, Service No.34136).

When interviewed by William Allison for their 1978 book, *The Monocled Mutineer,* Aubrey had one seriously sensational story to tell. Speaking from his home at Penrhyn Drive in Prestwich, the retired jeweller described how he had met Toplis as the Camp Police tried to restore order at Etaples. Ten days into the riot a fresh body of Red Caps had been drafted in from other units, made-up almost entirely of former Police Officers. The hundred or so Foot Police, including special agent, Edwin T. Woodhall, formerly of the Political Division at Scotland Yard, were to replace the original Red Caps so loathed by the troops at the camp. As attempts to regain control of the camp commenced, the task of re-mustering the units and pushing them off to the tragic bloody killing fields of Passchendaele was speeded up. In a boisterous attempt to delay the anticipated bloodbath, Aaronson joined Toplis and his men ripping up sections of track and laying gun-carriages across the lines in an effort to stop the progress of the trains.

The scene presented by Brigadier Thomson in the Base Camp Diary during this period switches alternately between organized 'councils of action' and riotous scenes of bedlam, attempts by the original deputation of Red Caps to quell the violence being routinely frustrated by the disabling of military vehicles and men lying in protest in front of cars. The Field Punishment Enclosure, where the men thought the more sadistic of the Red Caps were hiding, was overrun by a throbbing mass of men looking to have their revenge. A contingent of about 800-900 officers from the 9th Cavalry Brigade were requested but failed to show. An administrative 'error' had seen the wrong number dialled, the eventual request being much delayed.

One of the Officers commanded to defend the bridges that provided escape from the camp to the town was Captain Charles Cecil Miller (b.1887) of the 2nd Royal

Inniskilling Fusiliers. In a letter to his daughter, Miller described the brutal murder of a Red Cap who had been dragged kicking from a hut close to the lines where Toplis and the rebels had drifted. The men had pulled him from the hut and laid into him with boots and fists flying. The claim is backed up either in full or in part by other observers. Lady Angela Forbes, the nuisance tea-lady who had refused to shut her canteen when the rioting started, described how several of the fleeing Red Caps had sought sanctuary in the station-master's office (Memories and Base Details, 1921). 'S.J.C.R', a junior officer writing in the Manchester Guardian in 1931, described much the same scene. With a "roar of rage" the crowd had rushed the Policemen who fled the camp down the steep embankment of the railway and along the cutting toward the river. When news of the attack reached the Scottish regiments, "the Jocks poured out vowing vengeance, and the Red Caps disappeared from the railway bridge" (The Mutiny at Etaples, Feb 13 1930, Manchester Guardian, 1930). According Miller, at least one man died as a result of his injuries at the bridge and John. A Lee's account supports this claim. As the DCM-winner was to put it: *"Red Caps went to the grave like ninepins*" (Civilian to Soldier, John A. Lee, 1937). The tyranny of authority had inevitably given way to the tyranny of the mob.

Miller was no squeamish new recruit. In another letter home to England, he described the immense excitement of hand-to-hand combat in no-man's land, adding rather blithely that it was a good deal better than being "torn to pieces by a screaming piece of metal fired from several miles away." He was certainly no Socialist either. After marrying Rhoda Mitchell Innes, the daughter of a prominent Scottish barrister in Bombay in 1920, Miller embarked on a successful diplomatic career, serving at the Bengal Chamber of Commerce in the 1920s and as Acting Consul to the Argentine Republic in Calcutta the following decade. Despite his rank and his privileged status, his sympathies had been with the rebels. As John and Fairley and William Allison explained in their book, the vast prison camp that was the Etaples transit base had seen quarter of a million British troops subjected

to what Miller described as "constant nagging, petty irritation combined with rotten rations and wretched organization" (The Monocled Mutineer, Souvenir Press, p.103). Socialist politician, John A. Lee who served with distinction in the Wellington Infantry Regiment, described the Bull Ring as the "toughening location for the hot-house recruit". The Sergeants here were not parade-ground militarists, but mad-bull "martial realists". The camp itself was filthy, with "poor beer and poor food". Worse still, the thrills and spills of the bars and brothels in Paris Plage were naturally off limits to anyone but commissioned officers. Democracy could not be tolerated, not even at the level of shagging. The Etaples Red Caps hit first and asked questions later, "on the principle that it was better to break an innocent head than to have break a hundred or two in a riot". Military justice was "swift, rough and frequently blind". It had never been uncommon for a man to die at their hands (Civilian into Soldier, John, A. Lee, 1937)

There was absolutely nothing faintly honourable about being a soldier: it was bleak, it was dangerous, but worse still it was deprived. His letter to Charles Cecil Miller daughter held nothing back. In his view the British Army had "certain shibboleths", one of which had cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of soldiers: *when you were attacked you could under no circumstances run away*. In Miller's view the French were "much more logical" in that they were more than happy to run away and then return when the clobbering was over to deliver a ferocious counter-attack. Perhaps if Tommy Atkins had been trained by the Clarion Ramblers whose boots were fast as their bullets, they may have lived to tell the tale. The mighty push on Passchendaele that would also kill tales of an embarrassing mutiny was summed up rather poetically by Miller: *"the Ypres battleground just represented one gigantic slough of despond into which floundered battalions, brigades and divisions of infantry without end to be shot to pieces or drowned, until at last and with immeasurable slaughter we had gained a few miles of liquid mud."* (Imperial War Museum, C.C Miller, 'A Letter from India to My Daughter in England'). Plantations of young men were being

mechanically logged and piled just as their sap was beginning to rise. The rioting seen at Etaples was the sound of roots being torn from the earth and log piles tipping over.

The man at fault in Miller's opinion wasn't Tommy Atkins ripping up the train track or going ballistic on the Red Caps, it was the Base Camp's commandant Brigadier Thomson who was duly removed from his post when the troubles subsided in mid-October.

At the time that Harry Fallows and his girlfriend Marjorie Stewart went missing from their homes in Moston, Aubrey was living just at 7 Smedley Lane in Cheetham Hill. The Fallows family home was roughly a 15 minutes' walk on nearby Coke Street. As hard as it was to believe, the most crucial witness to Percy's offences at Etaples lived just yards away from the man who would end up at the centre of his legendary post-war shenanigans. But Harry and Aubrey had more than their postcodes in common. Looking closely at both accounts and those provided by other witnesses, a particular kind of pattern begins to emerge: Toplis's most violent impulses appear to have been reserved for the Police. The 'hired thugs' who enforced the thin blue line had always been the target of anarchists. Ever since the murder of Police Officers Tucker, Bentley and Choate by Russian and Latvian revolutionaries ten years before in London's East End, anarchists had worn assaults on law enforcement officers like a veritable badge of honour. That Toplis detective Edwin T. Woodhall, revisited the Houndsditch story immediately before his chapter on Toplis in his 1929 memoirs, may have been intended as a hidden clue, but equally we have to remember that attacks on Police officers was generally something of an occupational hazard. You were just as likely to be shot by your common or garden villain if you disturbed him on the job as you were a revolutionary. It was interesting but not conclusive.

Even if you were to put the issue of the Red Caps aside for one moment, Toplis is believed to have been responsible for at least two attacks on police officers — one

in Scotland and one in Wales — with a third suspected on PC James Kelly in the grounds of Leopold de Rothschild's residence in Acton in February 1920 (Sunday Post 13 June 1920, p.16). Aaronson's personal reminiscences about Toplis certainly offer a glimpse of an explosive character, capable of shaping the prevailing chaos into a more purposeful campaign:

> *"It was one hell of a riot that went on for nights and days. Some nights, drunken soldiers broke into the WAAC billets and chased the girls through the streets. Later the word came down from Toplis; 'Stop chasing the girls, get the military Police instead'. His order was obeyed. I remember six military Policemen shot during the riots, being buried in one grave just outside Étaples … In the end we got what he wanted, the end of the Bull Ring, freedom of the town and so on."* (The Monocled Mutineer, Souvenir Press, p.102)

Doubts prevail as to whether any of the Red Caps had been shot or beaten to death during the riots. Accounts from witnesses vary considerably. One old New Zealand Sapper who talked to the Australian Sun newspaper in 1930, offered his own variation on the tale:

> *"N.Z reinforcements, which had arrived from Rouen that morning, were hurriedly sent as an armed guard, but when they learned the trouble they downed arms and joined in the riot. All troops cheated of their original quarry turned towards Etaples and every Red Cap that was sighted was hunted down. Altogether six were killed that day"* (Saw Red, The Sun - Sydney, Sat 17 May 1930, p.3)

The old Sapper had been responding to an extract from a book by Henry Williamson, published in 1930. *Pilgrim's Progress* was novelised autobiography of his experiences in the war and featured a two-page account of the mutiny. The only thing the veteran disagreed with was the author's reference to the outcome of

the episodes on the bridge: *"The author of that book states that they were thrown over the bridge into the river, but he is wrong, for there was no river. Beneath the bridge were the railway lines, and it was to these that the Police were hurled."* If Toplis featured anywhere in the orgy of violence, then it was most likely here at one of the bridges. It was terrifically unlikely that anyone would be hunted down and shot in the period after the war for the simple crime of sedition, not unless they could be sure it was politically motivated, and even then it wasn't enough. In the immediate months that followed there were further mutinies in France — including Etaples and Calais. Two of the men court-martialled, Alfred Killick and John Pantling were both life-long Socialists. One could respond to this by saying that on all other occasions the mutinies and the strikes came after the November armistice and most were carried out respectfully by those involved without any recourse to violence. A number of other lesser mutinies — or episodes of 'collective indiscipline' as some nitpickers like to call them — had occurred previously on the Western Front and the culprits were duly executed, Gunner William E. Lewis of the 124th Royal Field Artillery among them. It was broadly the case with the smaller camp disturbances that one or two men would be offered to the guns as scapegoats with other supporting rebels receiving commuted prison sentences of anywhere between one and fifteen years. In October 1916 at Blargies near Rouen death sentences were awarded to six men who had rioted as part of a mass protest at camp conditions. General Haig subsequently commuted all but two of the sentences (Shot at Dawn, Julian Putkowski/John Sykes, 1990).

If there is any truth in the rumour that Toplis was pursued to his death over the Mutiny in Etaples, then it terrifically more likely that it was for the murder of a commissioned officer, tossing Red Caps from a bridge or for being deemed a continuing threat — either criminally or politically — in the chaotic post-war period. In her 1933 autobiography, *Testament of Youth*, feminist and socialist Vera Brittain described how a young officer in Percy's regiment the Royal Army Medical Corps, was found dead in the Bull Ring, the victim of an apparent

suicide. As a young nurse at the 24th General Hospital, Vera wasn't allowed to write home of the incident. But what if it had not been suicide at all? What if Toplis had come under suspicion?

If the witness accounts of Williamson and the New Zealand Sapper were correct, three days of rioting had left at least six men dead and an inglorious trail of dissent rattling through the British Army's principal depot. Williamson's book gives a frank account of the creeping nightmare that was trench warfare. The brutal droning of shells would rob men of sleep, and a deep savage buzzing would see them crouch, sweat and cringe in the screaming darkness of the dug-outs. Men would be sleeping with one eye open, and when they dreamed it was in the "sharp and jagged" fits of a fever. You know you're well and truly buggered when you can't even escape by kipping.

Contrary to other accounts, Williamson describes how the mutiny had begun with the "organized defiance of orders at the Bull Ring" and not as others claimed, with the shooting of Corporal Wood. That, he says, came later, when attempts were made to restore some semblance of order at the camp. But the references to the ex-champion boxer, the looting of the estaminets and the anti-war sloganeering matched most of the witness accounts made available in the post-war period: *"Jerry didn't want the war, nor did we. It's only the bloody profiteers who want it to go on. They are the enemies of the masses."*

Writing to T.E Lawrence in March 1930, Henry Williamson expressed his frustration at the publisher's inevitable recourse to self-censorship. *"Damn! I wanted 60,000 words recreating the Etaples mutiny: now I've popped it off in 600 words".* Like Etaples Mutineer James Cullen, Williamson would lurch from Communism to Fascism, believing the now prevalent conspiracy notion that the 'Jewish Plutocrat' was entirely to blame for the war.

Even the normally truculent military historian, Julian Putkowski, who worked with Alan Bleasdale on the BBC drama about the mutiny in the 1980s, believes Williamson's account to be accurate, explaining in *Shot at Dawn* how the author "correctly records both the rank and the regiment of the main offender" and how a worsening of the riots had been prevented by the tact of senior officers (Shot at Dawn, Julian Putkowski/John Sykes, 1990).

The one thing that can't be agreed on is how many of the mutineers were shot. Williamson wrote that he saw *"dozens of poor sods handcuffed wrist to wrist, two by two outside the commandant's office, awaiting court-martial and the firing squad".* If the account of the Blargies insurrection by Putkowski and Sykes is accurate then the execution of just one man as a result of a much larger, more violent mutiny seems unusually merciful in the circumstances — certainly by British standards. A major revolution in Russia was underway, a major military campaign in Ypres was in the offing and various French and Russian units were mutinying all over the Western Front. The pressure to launch a crackdown would have been immense.

Between April 1917 and January 1918 as many as 40,000 men had been involved in various uprisings in the French divisions. As a result, 554 men were condemned to death. 26 were of those were executed. As Captain Charles Cecil Miller had explained in his letter to his daughter, the French were generally more tolerant than the Brits. The Brits by contrast were stubborn and uncompromising. A study of military discipline during the First World War by David Englander found that British and Belgian soldiers were more at risk from execution than either their French or German counterparts ('Mutinies and Military Morale, David Englander (1998, p. 191). The figures just speak for themselves. The British condemned more than 3000 men compared with the 2000 in the French army, despite the French army being twice the size.

On 5 September 1917, just a few days before the mobs started rioting at Etaples, men of the 73 Egyptian Labour Company stationed at Boulogne downed tools, unhappy with working conditions. The following day, they refused to work for a second time, and made a break for it out of camp. They were immediately shot down. According to historian Julian Putkowski, seventeen of the men were killed — one a British soldier — and twenty-five suffered serious injuries. Four days later at Calais, the No. 74 Egyptian Labour Company also refused to work. On September 11, the camp commandant ordered his men to fire. Four men were killed, fifteen wounded, and dozens of other awarded prison sentences (*Toplis, Etaples and the Monocled Mutineer*, Julian Putkowksi, Stand To!, Winter 1986, No.18).

If the scale of the Etaples disturbances was so much larger, then why would a headstrong camp commandant like Thomson, well known for his routine toleration of the physical abuses being meted out on the Bull Ring and field punishment enclosures, offer so little in the way of resistance or retribution?

Captain Owen Charles Guinness (OBE), Camp Adjutant at the time of incidents, told historians Douglas Gill and Gloden Dallas that one particular group of men raided the offices of Brigadier Thomson, lifted him onto their shoulders and paraded him through town before dumping him in the river. This would have been a humiliating defeat and an outright rejection of his command. It would have also been intensely personal. Guinness's claim is backed up by Charles Carrington, who would go onto be a Professor of Commonwealth Relations at the Royal Institute of International Affairs (*Mutiny at Etaples Base in 1917*, Douglas Gill and Gloden Dallas, Past & Present, Nov 1975).

On May 15 1920, just as suspected ringleader, Percy Toplis was plotting his next move in the Highlands of Scotland, Sylvia Pankhurst's *Worker's Dreadnought* published their most sensational headline to date. A former member of staff at General Headquarters had wandered in to their 152 Fleet Street office and made a

dramatic claim. According to H.V Clark, a total of 37,900 men had 'suffered death by being shot' during the five years of hostilities. The actual figures were as follows: 1914 (523), 1915 (10,488), 1916 (12,689), 1917 (13,165) and 1918 (1,035). Clark claimed all the men were privates and that he copied the information from the General Routine Orders records over the course of several months. To avoid additional scandal, the Officers amongst that volume of men had been stripped of their commission prior to being shot. On June 7th 1920, little more than 24 hours after Toplis was gunned down in Penrith, Pankhurst received a visit from Scotland Yard, and on June 12th that month published an apology and full retraction of the claims: *"we now wish to withdraw all such statements"*, Pankhurst wrote, and "express our sincere regret". Contrary to what Clark had claimed, only 343 soldiers had been executed (Workers Dreadnought, May 15 1920/June 12 1920).

Whilst the 37,900 figure that Clark had claimed originally seems more than a little fanciful, the 343 accounted for in the official records, seems terrifically unlikely given the ease with which the 27 men of the Native Labour Corps were systematically mown down at Boulogne and Calais. If more men "had suffered death by being shot" in the aftermath of Etaples, the death notices could have easily been aggregated and consumed by the staggering loss of life that came with the Passchendaele campaign that followed. It wouldn't be the first time a man had been shot by firing squad and then reported as 'killed in action' — Alfred Leonard Jefferies being just one (Shot at Dawn, Julian Putkowski/Julian Sykes, 1989).

Over 20,000 men could be transiting through Etaples at any one time. The scope for multiple viewpoints and different narratives was enormous. Men would have been arriving in the middle of the mutiny and leaving before the end. Getting any meaningful consensus out of any of this was impossible. The depot itself consisted of hundreds of acres divided into hundreds of different zones, with 15 acres alone reserved for base camp's cemetery. The focus of the riots described in

most of the main witness accounts took place around Three Arch Bridge and Iron Bridge, opposite the Railway Transport Office but disturbances were breaking out right across the depot. A roaming aerial movie camera is really what was needed. This was bedlam on a massive scale with multiple angles and multiple viewpoints. To those enduring the vile abuse of the Bull Ring, the riots started in the Bull Ring, to those desperate to visit the town, it had started when a gang of Anzac troops were refused entry into town, to those forced to endure the routine abuses of the Field Punishment Detention area, the violence had spilled over when attempts to release the men at the compound was met with resistance by the Red Caps. The problem is, when a wildfire has been raging for several hours it is always going to burn more fiercely where it encounters more oxygen and more fuel. The intensity of the heat isn't defined by the spark that starts the fire, but by the carbon-rich matter it meets as it spreads. The depth of resentment was simply greater here. The riots started and then just kept right on starting. `The ladies at the YMCA and Church Army huts saw a mass of swarming Anzacs bearing down on the Red Caps and assumed it to be a colonial issue. The men who witnessed the shooting of Corporal Wood assumed it started as a result of an altercation between a decorated war hero and a bully-boy champion boxer. Whatever issue you wanted resolving, whatever ground you wanted conceding, whatever axe you wanted grinding — *that's* where the mutiny started. For veterans it was the out-of-bounds restrictions, for raw recruits it was the Bull Ring. A well-organised insurrection could well have taken hold in several separate locations.

Letters submitted to newspapers in response to Williamson's novel by other Etaples eye-witnesses shows that historical authority cannot be ascertained by simply having been there. Even those who were present in the camp can get it wrong. Writing to The Observer in 1964, Mrs G.F Oppenshaw, who was a V.A.D ambulance driver at the time of the mutiny, describes it as an 'orderly affair' with officers mingling with the men in sympathy. Nor did she see or hear of any troops

coming to restore order. Both statements are easily contradicted by even a cursory glance at the official camp diary kept by Brigadier Thomson.

As regards the exact number of men who died as a result of the disturbances — either at the hands of the rioters or the firing squad — nobody will ever be sure, but we do know that a series of court-martials followed. And one man was present at those sessions was Captain Charles Cecil Miller, who had been ordered to remain in camp. The last of the battles on the bridge had seen some of the more violent ringleaders had been taken captive and it was possible he could identify them. One of the men was Corporal Jesse Short of the Northumberland Fusiliers, the only man ever officially acknowledged by the War Office to have been executed as a result of the Mutiny. As described in an earlier chapter, a mob of a hundred men carrying notice boards and armed with sticks had convened on the Bridge over the River Canche. As the officer in charge of the picquet confronted the men, Short was alleged to have instructed his men to put a rope round his neck and toss him into the river (WO 71/599, Field General Court Martial). Captain Miller describes in his letters a little man with a big "Turkey's egg" of a bump on his head as among. At just five feet two inches in height, Short had been rejected by the board when he'd first volunteered in 1914. James A. Mitchell with the Scottish Rifles, arriving in Etaples with a remnant of his regiment from Arras, reported that a committee of around six men were the ones holding the "noisy meetings" in Paris Plage referred to by Brigadier Thomson in his diary entry on September 10. Writing to the authors Gill and Dallas in October 1965, Mitchell alleges that a committee of around six men was elected and chaired by a corporal in the Northumberland Fusiliers. If Jesse Short was this man, then it may well have contributed to the capital sentence he was awarded on September 12th. A spontaneous and justified outcry was one thing; an organized mutiny was another.

Aaronson's account of Red Cap fatalities was a little more generous. According to Aubrey, about ten of the main ringleaders were rounded up and shot. Glasgow

Communist, James Cullen, writing of his own experiences of being court-martialled after the mutiny, said that the Provost Marshall would never tell any of the prisoners at the field court-martial if they would receive the capital sentence or not. If you were unfortunate enough, you were just "politely wakened up in your sleep" and told you were going to be shot. Cullen was pretty clear about what happened next: *"Two of my fellow prisoners were wakened up at four-o-clock next morning and told to get their clothes on — I never had occasion to see them on this earth again. I can only picture to myself how they met the firing party."* (Arrested as a Rebel, Glasgow Weekly Herald, February 19, 1927). A copy of Cullen's army service records confirm that on October 27 1917, he was sentenced to 12-months hard-labour for "disobeying a lawful command". His death practically ensured by the upcoming Passchendaele offensive, Cullen's sentence was duly suspended and he was quickly packed off to the Front (WO 363, First World War Service Records, No. S/20838).

Around this time, Detective Edwin T. Woodhall, seconded to the Military Foot Police from the Passport Control Office in Boulogne arrived at the Etaples Base. Passport Control Offices had long served as cover for Britain's Secret Intelligence Service and it certainly chimes with Woodhall's claim that he had served as an agent in the field. Among the more successful 'passport officers' over the years have been Frank Foley, William Kendrick, Douglas Hurd and Raffaele Farina — who as Head of Passport Control in Riga, had the deep misfortune of processing the notorious Zinoviev Letter (MI6: The History of the Secret Intelligence Service 1909-1949, 2010, Keith Jeffery, p.188).

A trawl through his not inconsiderable service records reveals that Woodhall received his transfer from the Cameronians to the security wing of the Intelligence Corps in December 1915 (WO 363, Service no. 8559). Duties here would have included clearing permits to cross the Channel, running a team of informants and generally keeping track of the more 'interesting' individuals seeking access across

BEF flanked borders. His experience as a Special Branch detective would have been an indispensable asset. Among the Intelligence Department's more illustrious officers was the 24 year old Alistair Cumming, son of Sir Mansfield Cumming, at that time serving as director of the Secret Service Bureau. Alistair would die in a tragic car accident shortly prior to Woodhall's arrival. Sir Mansfield was with him when he died. The tyre had come loose and Alistair had skidded. There was no time to correct the steering before the car thumped into a tree. Concern was raised by an expert on the scene as the road was long and straight. The surface was dry and the weather was fine. Despite this the car had literally wrapped itself around the tree. The body of young Alistair was swept clear of the chassis and found some 25 yards away (The Sketch, 2 December 1914).

At the time of Woodhall's secondment to the Military Foot Police on October 21 — the day prior to the removal of Brigadier Thomson — work had just been completed on a new Court Martial Prison and Detention Camp, built as a temporary clearing house for the vast swathes of sand dune revolutionaries still malingering around the beaches of Le Touquet. The compound, as Woodhall describes it in his book, was built on sandy, unbalanced soil, with views across to the railway. On the other side of the compound was the marshland of the Canche, a broad and unpredictable stretch of water running inland from the English Channel. Any prisoner desperate enough to have clawed his way through the fiendishly erratic mesh of razor-wire and stakes at low-tide would have been drawn like flies into its stodgy, clinging mud banks. Woodhall's brief was simple: he was to take his place in a commission of former Policemen who would replace the inexperienced and much loathed Red Caps. The team of 100 or so officers would then be tasked with rounding up the last of the rebels and thugs who had absconded after the mutiny and whose privileged existence was now being heavily subsidized by a thriving gambling empire and a lucrative black market.

The former Detective painted a fairly sterile picture of the compound. It was “a sort of stockade erected from huge wooden stakes about ten feet in height”. Around the inner perimeter was a double layer of “heavily woven barbed-wire entanglements” It was here that delinquents, absentees and deserters from all parts of the British line were to be brought. Edwin and the other officers would flush them from their dens in the various chalk dug outs and caves around the Canche estuary and frog-march them back up the coast.

And it was here — in the cursed amusement park of ‘Pleasure Island’ that Woodhall claims to have encountered Toplis, a “military deserter of singularly ferocious character” rumoured to have been responsible for a spate of brutal attacks and robberies on soldiers and civvies alike.

After a series of cat and mouse capers and a manhunt that possessed all the spirited daring-do of a Dick Barton Special Agent episode, Woodhall says he eventually caught up with Toplis in the village of Rang-de-Fleur. It was in a restaurant that he found him. Toplis had stepped from behind a curtain as Woodhall had entered the door and fixed him grimly with his revolver. After a brief exchange of words, the villain gently pulled back the trigger. Just as he was about to say, “Got you” the bullet must have jumped crimp and the cylinder jammed, allowing Woodhall to overpower him.

After being borught to the prison compound for questioning and identification, Toplis is said to have launched a daring escape bid with another prisoner. According to Woodhall, the prisoner had his name down for the firing squad, and leapt at the opportunity. Waiting for night, the two men got down on their knees and started tunnelling under the sand, wriggling beneath the barbed-wire entanglement, before dissolving into the woods around Le Touquet. Despite a posse of armed men on his trail, Toplis had broken free (Detective and Secret Service Days, Edwin T. Woodhall, 1929).

Aaronson's role in the attack on the Red Caps must have been fairly inconspicuous, as there is nothing to speak of on his disciplinary record. By the time he left for the front on November 14th the vast majority of the ringleaders had all been rounded up and shot. He would tell authors William Allison and John Fairley that detailed notices of the executions were pinned to the walls of the various orderly rooms, but he didn't have an exact number.

How reliable is Aaronson's testimony? His account of the Red Caps being chased down to the railway track is accurate enough, and that it climaxed in a series of vicious assaults — and even deaths — is backed up by both the old New Zealand Sapper and Henry Williamson. But a closer look at Aaronson's background reveals certain skeletons in his closet. Further patterns were emerging.

The Cheetham Hill Radicals

Infantryman Aaronson had been born into a family that was itself no stranger to crime and intrigue. In the spring of 1912, Aubrey's 45 year-old father, Harry Aaronson, still listed as Russian subject at his home at 361 Cheetham Hill Road, was at the centre of an International jewel heist. The local and national press described how after returning from Belgium, Aaronson had checked in at a hotel in Southampton Row in London before planning his return to Manchester. Half-way through his stay it is alleged that Harry was hustled off a bus by a gang of four men. The men bundled him to the floor and robbed him of a leather wallet containing an assortment of precious stones purchased just days before on the continent. The value of the bag was estimated to be around £3500 (about a £250, 00 in modern currency). Despite the rough tactics used the gang the Police were of the opinion that this was no random robbery. From what they could ascertain, Aaronson Snr had been followed to and from to the continent by Bloomsbury-based commission agent, George Windred who had been charged just twelve months before for a similar offence in Leicester. Windred, who had previous

convictions in South Africa and Australia, was believed to be a notorious and clever jewel thief, operating with organized criminals in Europe.

Another man who lived close to the Aaronsons during the pre-war period was Joseph Tragheim. Just twenty years before, Joseph and his brother Samuel had been accused by Leo Hartmann — an infamous Russian anarchist — of being a Tsarist double agent. Exiled for the murder of Tsar Alexander II, Hartmann had fled to New York and it was here that he exposed Tragheim and his brother as agent provocateurs operating between the continent, Manchester and London. The brothers subsequently fled to New York to escape arrest.

In a full page interview with the New York Herald, Hartman expanded on his claims. The accused, Joseph (Theodore) and his brother Samuel Tragheim, had been at the centre of a devious plot by Russian secret agents to blow up a sizeable portion of track on the North Western Railway which would then be blamed on exiled revolutionaries who secreted themselves around London's East End. The plot dated back to August 1880 when a cylinder packed with dynamite had been found on the track between Bushey and Watford. The whole kit had been rigged to explode when a train passed by. Scotland Yard detectives eventually traced the dynamite to agents in the pay of the Tsarist secret police. The objective was pretty simple: wreck the train and land a deal with the British Home Office that would see the hundreds of revolutionary exiles extradited back to Russia (Hartmann's Revelations, New York Herald, August 1881).

Tragheim's plot, conceived under the direction of the Okhrana had been funded by forged bank notes and bonds made on the continent. The brothers had been partners in a well known jewellery firm in Brussels. Curiously enough, it was Brussels that Aubrey's father had been returning from in 1912 when he had been the subject of a violent struggle with diamond thief, George Windred and his gang. Tragheim's apartment at 81 Greenfield Street in Whitechapel placed him at

the centre of a thriving anarchist network with well established branches in Manchester. But the biggest coincidence was yet to come.

It transpires that in the latter part of the 1800s, Aubrey's father Henry Aaronson and Joseph Tragheim were both living on Elizabeth Street in Cheetham Hill — Tragheim at No.27 Elizabeth Street and the Aaronsons at No.54 Elizabeth Street. A subsequent trawl of newspaper articles during this period provided another intriguing revelation: Tragheim had previously been employed by Aubrey's grandfather George Aaronson. The Aaronsons had a long-standing reputation as diamond dealers in the city and Tragheim had been employed in a sales capacity, giving him plenty of opportunity for travelling around the continent (Huddersfield Chronicle, 10 October 1884, p.3). Several of Tragheim's family would remain in Manchester well into the 1920s, renting houses in both Salford and Chorlton on Medlock.

Curiously, during the period in which Toplis was alleged to have been criminally active in London, Tragheim's nephew — Alfred Tragheim aka. George Ingram — was carving out a nice little career for himself as one of Britain's most successful jewel thieves. Like Toplis his career in crime had started at Borstal in 1911. After seducing the servant of Conservative peer, Arthur Steel-Maitland, Ingram is said to have been able to access his house and make off with a windfall collection of jewellery and watches. In London he set up a network of successful fences, nestled in the Hoxton and Whitechapel area, and steadily worked through a list of houses compiled, fairly imaginatively, from Burke's Peerages. Whether there was any political dimension to the choice of targets isn't known, but one can see how rifling through the paper's and letters of these men may have been almost as lucrative a heist as half-inching Sir's jewels.

After his release from prison in 1930 he wrote a book with American Press Military & Foreign Affairs journalist, De Witt Mackenzie. Alfred would subsequently become a successful chemist and aerospace engine for Ukrainian

industrialist Bern Dibner in Canada and the US (Property Crime in London, 1850–Present, W. Meier, Palgrave, 2011).

In all fairness, Fallows couldn't have been brought up in a more vibrant, more complex and more radical Manchester neighbourhood. And Toplis — who wasn't unknown to lift the odd jewel himself — couldn't have had more fascinating friends and mentors. But in terms of drawing any conclusions it offered little in the way of certainty. There was lots of fuzzy clustering in terms of locations and addresses, but it would be wrong to aggregate all the coincidences, curiosities and loose-ends to arrive at anything firm. Mapping has its uses, but in the absence of something a little more concrete, hot spots such as these told us where crime and militancy was taking place, but didn't they provide evidence of more meaningful relationships or formal networks between the various elements.

That would come later.

A Short Eventful Life

Was there some intricate criminal connection that would draw all these various strands together? Did Fallows die as the result of some grisly underworld clash combining local radical politics and the more brutal and bloody mechanisms of organized crime? Had Fallows been rumbled as a police informer? The riotous strike action that rippled through Britain's largest base depot during the war had just been well and truly out-performed by the 10-day General Strike of 1926 that saw nearly 2 million key workers walk out and left the country's basic infrastructure crippled. Buses didn't run, train didn't, the molten brine of the foundries cooled and the black banded deposits of biota and natural chemicals were allowed to mature for another two weeks in the coal seam. The solidarity and pig-headedness that had disrupted the pace of war during a three-day protest at Etaples had achieved something of a first in Europe: the first Nationwide, General Strike in modern history — active participation greatly exceeding that of

Germany's Ruhr Uprising in 1920 or the fractured industrial action seen in Russia in 1905. But in spite of the all the effort, the strike failed. An increasing military presence and dwindling public support put a strain on the TUC General Council and it was now on its back-heel. Sectional divisions, inter-union rivalries and a clash of personalities were weakening it still further. For its various leaders, the personal burdens had become too great, the demands too narrow and the political impulses too weak. Britain had got its revolution. What it lacked were revolutionaries.

The sense of betrayal experienced by the radicals was off the scale, especially in industrial Manchester, where the 'Workers of the World' had first been told to unite. United they had, and in their thousands. But it hadn't prevented them coming apart like degraded cotton — lacking in evenness and tenacity — in little under ten-days.

If the Young Communist League of Manchester and Sheffield had been looking for spies and informers in the immediate aftermath of the revolution that never was, or practically anything they could find at hand that might pass for a back-stabbing snake in the grass, then 26-year old Harry Fallows would have presented a soft and pleasing target. Whether the story of Toplis and Etaples was based in fact or in legend, in whispers or in wishes, it was hard to deny his evidence had seen the notorious — if purely symbolic rebel — shot-down by Police on an out of the way road near Penrith. After receiving his discharge from the RASC in September 1920, Fallows would have returned home to Cheetham Hill, and it seems inevitable that the story he would tell about his 24-hour joyride with Toplis would have kept him in drinks at the very least. As a loudmouth young Manc with no war stories to fall back on, a kiss and tell story about his friendship with the monocled villain would have gone down a treat at the pub, practically guaranteeing him a hero status.

But even so, perhaps his story had never been that convincing

For Fallows, it had been a short, eventful life and the seemingly innocent, supporting role in the whole sensational Toplis drama is not without its problems. Even his arrival at the Bulford Camp had been a mysterious and slightly awkward affair. Despite claiming he had been on close terms with Toplis, Fallows had been with the Royal Army Service Corps at Bulford little more than three weeks before Toplis deserted. A transfer across from the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserves at the H.M.S. Victory VI training base in Crystal Palace had seen the 18 year-old Harry arrive at Bulford Camp in December 1919, shortly after enlisting at Aldershot in mid-November. A look at his service records shows that on March 18 1920, just weeks before Spicer was murdered, Fallows had been absent from tattoo. After being spotted by Military Police breaking out of camp, Harry had been awarded 12 days detention. After a transfer to the adjacent Sling camp in September 1920, he was in trouble again, this time for failing to comply with orders and loaning the Supply Coy bicycle to unauthorized personnel. That was followed by another unlawful absence. After serving a further 10 days detention, Fallows was discharged. Extraordinarily, his joyride to Swansea with Percy Toplis in a vehicle stolen from a man who'd been shot just hours before, earned him less in the way of punishment than the borrowing of the bike. An entry dated April 27 shows him confined to barracks for several days by Captain R.W. Lovegrove, his commanding officer,

Despite several desertions and an arrest on suspected murder, Fallows was honourably discharged under King's Regulations 392, 'Services No Longer Required' on September 27 1920 — some two months short of completing his 12 month contract. The explanation provided in his service records reads simply, 'neglect of duty'.

The name of the approved society that Fallows disclosed on proceeding to discharge was Salford's Sons of Temperance, a popular benefits and insurance choice among Wesleyan Methodists like Fallows. The family had been regular

attendees at the Wesleyan Victoria Chapel on Queen Street. Such was the growth of Methodism in Cheetham Hill, that the chapel was just one of thirteen in the immediate district. Harry's older brother, William Edward Fallows, who'd enlisted in the 15th Battalion of the Royal Scots (Lothian) Regiment in October 1914, had wed his own sweetheart, Lizzie here at the turn of the century. Sadly, any marital bliss was short-lived. The 37 year-old former print setter was to die during the gruelling Passchendaele offensive just a few weeks after the mutiny on October 22nd 1917. Lance Corporal Fallows had just enjoyed several weeks 'base details' at Etaples camp where he would have inevitably caught sight of the riots. According to his service records, William arrived at the camp in May that year and left for the mud and blood mayhem of Third Battle of Ypres at the Bronbeek in early October. Whether Toplis had used this information as a route into Harry's confidence or his sympathies, isn't known. It might have been put to just as good use by Police Superintendent James L. Cox as part of his efforts to persuade Fallows to give the scoundrel deserter up. *Your brother didn't die so that shirking, idle cowards like Toplis could throw-dice, drink beer and shag women in the cosy bloody whorehouses of Paris Plage.*

Maybe William took part in the mutiny. Maybe he didn't. We might never know either way. What we do know is that it was the CO and adjutant of William's regiment, the Royal Scots who were none too graciously dismissed in the wake of the Etaples mutiny (WO 95/4027/5, Etaples Base Camp Diary, 19 September 1917). Members of the regiment were even there to witness the shooting of Corporal Wood by Harry Reeve. Talking to authors William Allison and John Fairley in the mid 1970s, Private Albert Charles Lumley of Bramcote in Nottingham recalled seeing the bully-boy Red Cap with a pistol in his hand fire at the Scottish soldier as he was talking to a WAAC girl. Lumley's friend, who had been by him at the time of the incident, had gone ballistic and raced through the camp shouting "an English bastard has shot a Jock". Harry Hall and James M.

Marchbank were others, even going so far as to remember the dumping of Brigadier Thomson in the river.

If Privates Lumley, Hall and Marchbank were in ear shot of the incidents, then there is every possibility that Lance Corporal William Fallows was too.

Did Fallows and Marjorie attend the mass rally in Winnats Pass in June 1926 and stumble across the cave then? It's certainly plausible. But if they had, then it seems equally likely that Fallows was active politically in some way. That said, if Fallows and Stuart had arrived for the mass ramble on New Year's Day, then why were they wearing city clothes? And if they were intent on seeking a private, secluded spot to take their own lives, then where was the logic in choosing the weekend of the New Year's Clarion Ramble when there would be literally hundreds of giddy ramblers penetrating the caves around the hills?

Then there was the issue of the cave itself. The cave isn't quite visible from the narrow mud-track road that leads through The Pass to Castleton so it seems probable that the couple knew about the cave in advance, most likely through rambling circles.

Winnats Pass. The Suicide Cave is about 200 yards up this rough track road on the right

By all accounts Marjorie had left Manchester in her party clothes on New Year's Eve. It might have been an adequate get-up for a glass of bubbly and a shrimp cocktail at G.H.B Ward's annual New Year's bash at the Peak Hotel in Castleton on the Saturday, but she would have been ill-equipped for any kind of hiking — manicure set or no manicure set. So had the couple been preparing for a few nights at The Peak Hotel rather than a weekend roughing it on the moors?

Either way, the possibility remains that the couple met their deaths at another location and that their bodies were dumped in the cave sometime between Wednesday January 5th and Saturday January 8th. Had it all been part of a cynical ploy to smear the Clarion's Lefty radicals with rumour and innuendo? A Novichok-style poisoning in some sleepy High Peaks village? The original 'Salisbury poisoning'?

It wouldn't be the first time there'd been a murder in The Pass. Far from it. Local legend had it that a couple who had eloped here from Scotland were robbed and murdered by a gang of local miners as they made their way through Castleton. The story, first told by Thomas Hanby in John Wesley's Arminian Magazine, described how the men had driven miners' picks into the young lovers' skulls and dumped their bodies in very same cave in which the bodies of Fallows and Stewart had been found by young Fred Bannister (Arminian Magazine, 1785, Volume VIII).

It was a mystery alright.

The outcrops around The Pass are made up of limestone layers, long vertical and horizontal bedding planes that offer glimpses of the earth's secrets, and leave clues to lives long passed. It this particular region of Britain, nothing can stay buried forever. From time to time the rain washes clean the soil, the sun punches light into the darkest of caverns and the very air that pounds against its ridges

renders the stone soft. The ground around here collapses and its secrets, as fragile as its fluorite seams, are exposed. Sometimes they are dull. Sometimes they are sparkling.

The inquest into Harry and Marjorie's death took place on Tuesday 11th January at the Castleton Restaurant — home to substantial high teas and Mothers Union meetings but seldom suicide investigations. It was presided over by Sydney Taylor, the District Coroner for Buxton and longtime associate of Samuel Hill-Wood, the Bolshevik loathing MP who would be going up against Communist J.T Walton Newbold for the High Peaks ward at the next election. The pair sat together on various local committees including one for the Buxton Cottage Hospital (Buxton Advertiser 12 November 1910, p.3).

Battling Castleton & High Peaks MPs Major Samuel Hill-Wood (left) and former-Communist J.T Walton Newbold. Hill-Wood was a long-time associate of Buxton Coroner Sydney Taylor

Like most things relating to Toplis, the inquest into the couples' death would leave us with more questions than it would answers. The coroner ruled that there was no evidence to indicate that either party was of 'unsound mind' but offered no explanation for why they took such extremes measures. Most of the suicides

featuring Lysol intake were dominated by women in disturbed or manic states or men suffering prolonged ill-health and unemployment. It wasn't straightforward, by any means.

For one of the first time in the history of Winnats Pass and its gem-rich mines, the secrets didn't sparkle, and the seam didn't mine.

Lysol Poisoning

The formal inquest that took place on Tuesday January 11th ruled that the couple's death had been caused by Lysol poisoning. This would have been a horrible and prolonged death, although by 1911, ingesting it had become the most common means of suicide. Swallowing Lysol would have caused nausea, vomiting, circulatory failure, respiratory failure, central nervous system depression, liver dysfunction and eventual kidney failure. Given the relative availability of service revolvers still in circulation after the war, this would have been a slow and agonizing way to go. Death would not have been instant and it seems inconceivable that their screams wouldn't have been heard by the scores of jolly ramblers swarming around on the slopes and in the caves around Winnats Pass. The cave, whilst not visible from the roadside, was still only a matter of yards away from what would have been a busy thoroughfare during the weekend of the annual Clarion Ramble.

Marjorie's father, William Stewart a driller at Newton Heath Carriage and Wagon Works told the inquest that he had received a telegram from his daughter handed in at a Manchester Post Office on the Friday evening telling him that she had gone away with Harry. The following morning he received a separate message from Fallows, confirming the arrangement. Marjorie's father had spoken to Fallows a few years previously and expressed his desire to see Harry's relationship with his daughter terminated. As a result, Harry was forbidden from entering the house. The father was unaware that the relationship had continued, and said the messages

he'd received from the couple had dealt him a serious blow. Fallows was unemployed and had separated from his wife just nine months before by mutual agreement. Much of the money he received was sent to his wife in Crumpsall.

It had been a tough twelve months for William. Just eight months earlier he had been among 3,000 workers walking out at the Newton Heath Carriage and Wagon works. The one day strike came just 72 hours before the General Strike was announced on May 2nd, but hadn't been called with the backing of the union (Newton Heath Carriage Works, Leeds Mercury 29 April 1926). The last time he saw his daughter alive was at 7.00 am on the morning of December 31st — New Year's Eve — when the girl had left the house for work at the fabric mill.

Despite the messages from the pair, William reaffirmed that there was no indication that the pair were about to take their life. Harry's telegram had stated fairly prosaically that whilst he regretted the impact their decision to elope would have on the Stewart family, there was nothing at all wrong in their relationship.

Lysol — "Kills in dark corners"

As far as William was concerned, his daughter had left that morning, “happy, contented, bright and cheerful” (Sheffield Daily Telegraph, 12 January 1927, p.6). Her employer at Greengate in Salford said much the same thing; Marjorie was ‘artistic, bright and cheerful’. All who knew her were dumbfounded by her death: she was an ‘expert’ pianist and a talented singer. She was a good designer, liked her work and was well thought of by all who knew her. How she had been taken in by the charms of a bespectacled married layabout like Fallows was anyone’s guess. Speaking to a reporter at the Sheffield Daily Telegraph, the forewoman in charge of the girl’s department described how Marjorie had taken part in the Christmas Festivities and when paid her wages on New Year’s Eve had made no mention of her trip to Castleton.

For those who convened at the inquest that day, it must have seemed like a tale as old as time. Even if the aching simplicity of forbidden love was better expressed some forty years later by the counter-culture of the fifties and sixties, romance of the post-war period was no less driven by hormones, or the bittersweet thrill of a heavy heart. *Wouldn't it be nice if we could wake up in the morning when the day is new?And after having spent the day together, hold each other close the whole night through?* But was there something that they were missing?

Harry’s sister Lily White of 28 Hinde Street, Moston was the next to face the coroner. Lily lived just a few yards down from the Stewarts and had last seen her brother at 2.45pm on December 31st. He had been living with her on and off since the previous March, arriving back in Moston some weeks ahead of the General Strike. He had found some occasional work as a cab driver and mechanic, but had been living mostly off unemployment benefit and some regular gambling wins for the duration of his stay. One man came forward to say that Fallows was always boasting about his winnings. “One day he would say he had won £50 and then another day it would be £60 — and all on a tanner double.”

Like William she too received a letter from Harry the following morning saying he was unlikely to be back in Moston for several weeks. He had gone away with a girl he was very fond of. As with the message received by Marjorie's father William Stewart, there was nothing to intimate they were going to take their own lives. On the contrary. When asked by the Coroner if there was anything to suggest that Harry was tired of his life or wished he was dead, she said that he was "much too happy for that". He'd gone away on other occasions and always come back.

Fred Bannister, the boy who had found the bodies during the second of two visits to Castleton was the next to face questions. He repeated his claim that he visited the entrance to the cave the previous week, but this time there were two subtle changes in young Fred's narrative; this time he was alone when he made the first of the visits and he hadn't seen Marjorie Stewart:

"In reply to the coroner, witness said he visited the cave a week previously, but only went into the entrance.

But did you go far enough into the cave to see if the woman was there then?—She was not there."

(Sheffield Independent 12 January 1927, p.5)

This statement Fred made was a complete contradiction of what he had told the Sheffield Daily Telegraph and Sheffield Independent reporters just 48 hours before: "We (Fred, Ambrose and Sunshine) arrived during our walk just outside where the bodies were found. **We saw this couple — I am quite certain they were the same two — sitting side by side in the dark at the entrance"**
(Sheffield Daily Telegraph, January 10th 1927, p.5)

In the statement he provides to the reporters shortly after finding the bodies, Fred says that he, together with his two friends 'Sunshine' and 'Ambrose' observed

Marjorie Stewart sitting with Fallows in the entrance to the cave on the first of his visits to Castleton, yet in the account he gives at the inquest, Fred arrives alone and Marjorie is missing.

The Coroner continued the inquest with some questions about the second of the trips Fred made to the caves on Saturday 8th — the day Fred discovered the bodies. Among the items he found were a ladies brown crocodile leather handbag, a pair of leather gloves, a green felt hat, a pair of broken spectacles, a gent's bowler hat and a cup and saucer marked, 'A present from Castleton' — quite possibly purchased from the tea-room and gift shop owned by the couple that Bannister was visiting. The owner of the gift-shop asserted that 'unknown woman' had bought the cup and saucer on Saturday the 1st — New Years Day — and the day of the annual Clarion gathering (Sheffield Independent, January 12th 1927, p.5).

Dr John W.W. Baille told the inquest that there was no sign of violence on the girl's body and he had come to the conclusion that she had died as a result of a corrosive poisoning. The back of the man's throat had a 'white, puckered appearance' and there was a brown stain on his chin from vomiting. The usual tell tale signs of severe burns to the lips and mouth were not recorded. The next part was a little more confusing. When asked how long Harry and Marjorie had been dead, he replied that the couple had probably met their deaths between two to three days before the discovery of their bodies on the evening of Saturday 8th. Rigor Mortis had just begun to pass off the body (about 36 hours). If correct, then Harry and Marjorie had survived the best part of a week in the cave without once being seen by anyone in the village with the exception of young Fred Bannister.

The coroner had a problem. He'd clearly got wind of Fred's statement to the press and was keen to press him on the subject of Marjorie and whether she was or wasn't sitting in the mouth of the cave on the Saturday. The two accounts related by Bannister were beginning to provide more questions than they did answers.

The basic gist of what the young lad was now saying was this; Fred walked alone from Manchester to Castleton on Sunday January 2nd. As he explored the caves in Winnats Pass he saw Harry alive in the entrance to one of them — but not Marjorie. A week later on Saturday January 8th he walked again from Manchester to Castleton, retraced his steps to the cave and this time found the bodies. According to the doctor, the bodies had been lying in the state they were in around two or three days, suggesting death took place between the Wednesday 5th and the Thursday 6th January.

What the couple had in the way of food provisions isn't known. Despite exhaustive door to door enquiries, no one was able to shed any light on the matter. The residents of Castleton had absolutely no knowledge of the pair. The only person who appears to have seen them was Fred Bannister and his friends on the Saturday. No shops or tea-rooms had served them food, no one had sold them blankets, no hotel, inn or guest house had provided them with rooms and yet the couple had stayed the best part of a week just five hundred yards away from the village without arousing any kind of suspicion.

This was a tight-knit place, with a population just short of five hundred. Whilst the weekend of their arrival would have seen Winnats Pass swarming with excursionists from the surrounding towns and cities for the New Year Clarion Ramble, a stranger in a bowler hat and a lady in a green felt hat would certainly have made an impression when the village returned to normal the following week.

How Did the Couple Arrive in the Pass?

If the couple had arrived with the necessary provisions to spend a full week in the cave, then it's likely they had arrived in Winnats Pass by car. But if they had arrived by car, then where was the car? And if on the off-chance they had been dropped-off in The Pass by a friend, hired a cab or taken a bus, then why had a driver or other passengers not come forward? More bizarrely still, the couple had

arrived at the cave little better equipped than for a night on the town. A gentleman's bowler hat? A lady's mackintosh? A crocodile skin handbag? They would have been lucky to survive a night in the High Peaks in winter dressed like this. Conditions in the cave were far from comfortable with several eyewitnesses recording that pools of waters dominated the areas around their bodies, formed from the drippings that percolated through the side of the gorge. The chances of catching a few hours sleep would have been slim.

Winter conditions in the High Peaks are notoriously unstable. Night time temperatures at this altitude will rarely exceed 1°C on average, which over the course of several hours or several days, would inevitably lead to mild to severe hypothermia. To have survived five or six nights in the cave as indicated by the coroner would have been close to a miracle. The couple's resolve to end their lives would have needed to endure an enormous practical challenge. Putting it off and extending the wait under such pitifully shit conditions would have demanded a greater sense of fortitude and patience than Lysol suicides typically possessed. The vast majority of Lysol poisonings being reported at the time were either preceded by a significant trigger event or carried out during intense manic episodes. And why bother waiting at all? Their clothes would be wet, their brains confused, their stomachs empty. If any one of them had been in the least bit unsure about the extreme measures they were about to take, the reflex action would have been to bolt. And if they had, like the Coroner suspected, spent the week in lodgings elsewhere then it was fairly customary among suicides to end their lives in the relative comfort and privacy of their own hotel room. The press columns were full of them.

If you were to follow the logic, there was two real possibilities: the couple had not been seen by Fred outside the cave on Sunday January 2nd but had arrived at a later date, or the post-mortem had it wrong and the couple had died within hours

of arriving in the cave sometime between Wednesday January 5th and Thursday January 6th.

More Echoes of the Toplis Case

Despite the unusual circumstances and many unanswered questions, the coroner advised the jury to record a verdict of 'Death from Lysol Self Administered'. The Press mentioned the story's relevance to the Toplis investigation, but it was not explored in any significant detail. 'Dead Man's Connection With Toplis Case' wrote the Dundee Telegraph, 'Toplis Case Recalled' wrote another. Many of the reports recalled the startling ease with which Fallow had avoided criminal charges. He had been acquitted and discharged, probably on account of his cooperation during the manhunt launched to find him.

The Toplis case was further recalled just a few months later when Superintendent James Lock Cox, the detective who led the hunt for Toplis and brought Fallows in for questioning, died suddenly at his home in Andover. A keen sportsman and active Councillor, the detective was dead at just 49 years old (Daily Mail, May 09, 1927, p.9). If the news story about Fallows had grabbed the attention of the former Superintendent in the last few weeks of his life as he thumbed through the headlines of his morning newspaper, then he sure as hell wasn't going to be able to pursue it now. Short of springing back to life, the unexpected suicide of his key witness in the most baffling and tragic of circumstances, meant any lingering doubts that ex-Superintendent Cox may have had about the Toplis case, would now be buried with him.

For Charles de Courcy Parry, the Cumberland and Westmorland Police Chief who orchestrated the ambush on Toplis, the future wasn't quite so grim.

On March 12th it was reported that the new British Home Secretary, Sir William Joynson-Hicks would be bringing Parry out of early retirement and appointing

him HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary for South Wales with effect from April 1st. It was an appointment that would mark the beginning of a new and urgent offensive against the domestic Communist threat. As far as the Conservatives were concerned, the Bolshie heartlands of 'Little Russia' — the Rhondda Valley — and the colliery districts of Monmouthshire remained of key strategic importance in Soviet efforts to extend the Communist International.

Within five weeks of Parry taking up his new role at the Home Office, Special Branch mounted a raid on All Russian Co-operative Society and Soviet Trade offices in London. The raid was based on intelligence provided by the SiS and Mi5 indicating that the Communists had illegally copied SIGINT documents from a military training base in Aldershot. Joynson-Hicks, the man responsible for bringing Parry out of retirement, was a fierce anti-Communist, and in light of Harry's death in Winnats Pass, it's intriguing to note that it was also Joynson-Hicks who conceived of the show trial of 'mass ramble' organiser, William Rust of the Young Communist League just 14 months previously.

Ahead of Parry's reappointment, Home Secretary 'Jix' as he was known told members of the Commons that the anti-British activities of Communist agitators were being closely monitored and that he would seeking new statutory powers to deal with the emerging threat (Leeds Mercury, February 25 1927, p.6)

THE LEEDS MERCURY, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 1927.

"JIX" WATCHES THE COMMUNISTS.

Activities Against Britain.

WILL SEEK POWERS IF NECESSARY.

The anti-British activities of Communist agitators in this country are being closely watched, Sir William Joynson-Hicks (Home Secretary) told the House of Commons yesterday.

Sir WILLIAM JOYNSON-HICKS informed Mr. Clarry (C., Newport) that he was devoting his constant attention to Anti-British activities in this country of certain Communist agitators.

DO YOU KEEP FOOD CLEAN AT HOME?

DOCTOR ON THE WAY TO SAFEGUARD IT.

TINNED GOODS WITH NO DANGER.

The Home Secretary's announcement was accompanied by a series of articles in the Glasgow Weekly Herald which saw Etaples Mutineer, James Cullen provide a blistering four-part insiders' account of Russian interference in the 1926 General Strike: "I am quoting from the Official Press of Russia when I say that that millions upon millions of Russian Workers contributed part of their wages to help promote the General Strike … the Second International is endeavouring to sow dissension among the struggling British workers." Cullen went on to describe to his readers how throughout the General Strike private negotiations had taken place between the Secretary of the Miners Federation, Arthur J. Cook and senior officials in Moscow. The claim was fortified by an account of his own experiences of Etaples and the Bolshevist agitation that led to the riots:

"My own connection with this movement dates from the year 1917. It was while I was in France with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders that a seditious leaflet fell into my hands. It was of a most inflammatory nature, and bluntly asked the troops to ground arms and stop this war. At this time the Bolshevists knew the troops in France were in no very nice mood. In fact they were at fever-pitch, and it only wanted a spark to cause a first-rate explosion. That spark came when a corporal in the Military Police stationed at Etaples shot a Gordon Highlander."

Despite there being no specific reference to "Bolshevists" and "Russian brothers" in the official camp diary kept by the depot's much maligned Camp Commandant, Brigadier General Thomson, Cullen's claims echoed the diary entries of Field Marshall Douglas Haig who wrote that "some men of new drafts with revolutionary ideas" were among those who had triggered the violence. A short eyewitness account of the riots published in The Worker's Dreadnought some six weeks later supported the claims: "About four weeks ago about 10,000 men had a big racket in Etaples, and they cleared the place from one end to the other, and when the General asked what was wrong, they said they wanted the war stopped" (Worker's Dreadnought, November 3 1917, p.1).

If the question is whether it was a spontaneous groundswell of fury and exasperation among the troops over appalling camp conditions that led to the riots or a coagulation of radical influences taking shape among the Socialists and shell-shocked veterans at the sprawling depot, then the truth probably lies somewhere in between: there was the tinder, and there was the spark.

Tensions at Etaples camp had been running high for months. Copies of The Worker's Dreadnought and The Weekly Herald — the official organ of the Independent Labour Party — had already been banned from the base. Alfred George Killick, a keen Clarion rambler and cyclist was The Herald's distribution manager in France. Alf was subsequently charged with sedition during the Calais Mutiny of 1919. John Thomas Pantling, charged alongside Killick, was another lifelong Clarion Socialist. As Killick explained in a pamphlet he published years later, they "weren't just another lot of disgruntled and dissatisfied men … there was a large element of political consciousness". To make matters worse, the former, Socialist Revolutionary Victor Grayson — a lifelong friend of the paper's editor, George Lansbury — had marched into Etaples on the very same day and the very same camp in which the riots would erupt.

The riots also coincided with a campaigned launched by Lansbury to tag the rights of the British Soldier onto the upcoming Representation of the People Act. Lansbury's objective was to ensure that every man over the age of eighteen serving in the British Army was given the right to vote.

Surely the British Parliament will wake up and before the Reform Bill goes through, add it to a clause securing to every man serving with the colours the full rights of citizenship. Officers already have these rights. They have only to change out of their uniform into private clothes and at once they can take part in politics.

The Herald, November 10 1917, page 3

The Herald had made the same appeal on September 1st, when it was reported that a cease and desist order had been posted up in camps calling attention to Kings Regulations Paragraph 451, forbidding men to institute or take part in any meetings, demonstrations or processions for any party or political purposes, in barracks, quarters, camps, or their vicinity — and certainly not in uniform.

Extraordinarily enough, Lansbury's appeal for Soldiers' Rights had also sought the support of the ultra-patriotic National Party, launched by General Henry Page-Croft just one week prior to the mutiny (National Party Manifesto, Statement of Aims, The Times August 30 1917). The purpose-built party's objective was pretty straightforward: settle existing class, sectional and sectarian issues without recourse to Socialist principles and give the soldier and munitions worker what they needed: fair wages, a kick-ass National Defence and a 'vigorous diplomacy to support the fighting men in their heroic struggle for victory'.

Page-Croft had campaigned on the issue of Soldiers Votes for years. Just 12 months previously a meeting had taken place at the Queens Hall to demand that soldiers and sailors on active service abroad or at home should be given the right and facility to vote at the 1918 General Election. On that occasion, Page-Croft was joined in his appeal by 'Unseen Hand' conspiracy theorist, Leo Maxse, proto-fascist Arnold White and British Suffragette, Emmeline Pankhurst. Pankhurst

didn't mince her words; our fighting men, she said, had proved their entitlement to vote by making it possible to keep a country in which to vote. Not doing so, Leo Maxse went on, was akin to disfranchising the Victoria Cross.

Horatio Bottomley — a close friend and ally of Page-Croft — had arrived 'by chance' in the town of Etaples, just days before the riots took place. The newspaper editor and Hackney MP and would end up negotiating a settlement to the demands of the troops and play a vital role in persuading the men to dump their placards and return duty. Upon leaving the army in 1919, Grayson ditched his support for the Revolutionary Socialist movement and moved across to the no less revolutionary National Party who had a more insidious new battle to fight: the illegal sale of honours in David Lloyd George's government.[5]

What, if any part, Grayson played in the mutiny isn't known but his appetite for direct action was well acknowledged, both in London and in Belfast [6]. He was a specialist mob orator. The rhetoric was strong, the metaphors were rich and blood would literally boil as the verbal blows and the bombast flowed. Syncing his arrival at Etaples with a 'spontaneous' grassroots rebellion may have been all Lansbury and Page-Croft needed to bulldoze the Rights of the Soldier on to the Representation of the People Act. Faced with an abrupt end to the war with Germany, the British Government would be forced to listen. It was something that every anarchist and every patriot could get behind.

In October 1909 Grayson had addressed 8,000 members of the Social Democratic Federation and Labour Party who had gathered in Trafalgar Square to express their fury at the execution of anarchist Francesco Ferrer. From the base of Nelson's column Grayson denounced the killing with a rousing and violent speech, advocating 'a life for a life' before declaring that even if 'the heads of every King in Europe were torn from their trunks tomorrow it would not pay half the price of Ferrer's life'. By whatever means, the death of Ferrer "would be paid in full" (The Execution of Ferrer, The Times, Oct. 18, 1909, p.8). Immediately

after his speech, a breakaway procession made its way to the War Office where they were charged down by mounted police. The man who had helped organise the demonstration in London was Ferrer's close personal friend, G.H.B Ward, the man in charge of the Clarion Rambler's annual celebration in Castleton.

Grayson and Ward were reunited again in 1912 when their mutual friends and comrades, Guy Bowman and Tom Mann were charged with authoring a pamphlet encouraging British troops to mutiny. According to Mann's memoirs, there is some indication that Victor Grayson was very nearly arrested too alongside the pair (Tom Mann's Memoirs, MacGibbon & Kee, 1967). The words written by Bowman's shortly after Ferrer's arrest in 1906 were eerily reminiscent of Cullen's some twenty years later when he described the role of Bolsheviks in fomenting the trouble at Etaples: "The discontent of the people is profound, and the fire of their revenge is smouldering; it needs but a little spark to set it aflame" (Guy Bowman, Justice 29 September 1906, p.3). As explained in a previous chapter, Bowman's introduction to Ferrer had been initiated through Ward, who had provided him with letters of introduction. On Ferrer's death, Bowman took up with Ferrer's wife, Leopoldine Bonnard and their son, Riego (Sheffield Independent, 26 October 1906, p.9).

If Cullen was right and it was only tinder the 'Bolshies' needed at Etaples, they had it in spadefuls. Within weeks of Cullen's article being published, the rancorous former Communist had moved across to the British Fascisti, whose party organ, The British Lion serialized it again in full that same summer.

4 GLASGOW WEEKLY HERALD, FEBRUARY 19, 1927

HOW COMMUNISTS WORK

A Peep Behind the Scenes of the Glasgow Agitation

RUSSIA'S EXPLOITATION OF THE UNEMPLOYED

In this series of articles, an ex-Communist agitator gives the inner history of recent unrest in Glasgow and the West of Scotland, and his experiences on the Clydeside are only typical of what has been taking place in other industrial centres throughout the country. As he shows, Bolshevism started its nefarious work among the British soldiers in France during the latter stages of the war, and since then the emissaries of Russia have, in Glasgow as elsewhere, lost no opportunity of exploiting our unfortunate post-war conditions, particularly unemployment and the housing shortage, the No-Rent campaign being one of their chief cards.

WHEN I think of the thousands of men, women, and children in this country of ours who are corrupted by the gospel of Communism, I ask myself

year 1922, when we were in the throes of industrial disputes, etc. He was the individual who was sent specially from Russia to try to bring the desired revolution about in this country. He was well fixed [illegible]

Mr James Cullen, the writer of these articles, was until lately president of the Gorbals Branch of the National Unemployed Workers' Com-

James Cullen, a founding member of the Communist Party of Great Britain was sentenced to one year's hard labour for the part he played in the Etaples Mutiny

The move by the British Fascists couldn't have been better timed. Having an experienced former Communist spill the beans about Soviet meddling in the British Trade Union movement provided concrete evidence of Russian hostility. Again, all it needed was a spark, and the spark this time around came when over 200 uniformed and plain-clothed officers launched an astonishing raid on the All-Russian Co-operative Society building in Moorgate, London. As a result of the raid, Britain severed ties with Stalin's Soviet Union and hundreds of Russian diplomats were expelled. In spite of the practical and diplomatic losses, the dormant will of the Communist Party in Britain received an indispensable boost, the inevitable backlash in the left-wing press seeing membership rise to 12,000 and re-energizing campaigns by radicals.

According to the spooks, Communists were now channelling their efforts into infiltrating military training bases. A tip-off from inside Arcos was passed to Mi5 claiming that it was now in possession of a Signals Intelligence manual from the base at Aldershot.

Soviet Signals

As strange as it may sound, the Soviet interest in British Signals Intelligence brought us right back round to Fallows' old friend Percy Toplis and his Bristol Motor Gang.

12 months after receiving his punitive discharge from the navy and serving six months in prison, Toplis associate George Patrick Murphy found a way of resurrecting his Signals career by re-enlisting with the British Army's Royal Corps of Signals at Chatham base (service no.2557074). This would have been remarkable enough in itself, where it not for the fact that Russian and British Communists were focusing their efforts on infiltrating the Signals Corps for the purposes of training and propaganda. This becomes apparent in the security service file of HMS Vivid activist and later Communist, Dave Springhall.

In the course of conversation with Captain Gravely about Communism in H.M Forces, particularly the Royal Corps of Signals, he mentioned that he had had a similar experience in a way of having to keep an eye on certain individuals in the Royal Corps of Signals. He told me a long story as to how KUDITCH, Secretary of the Russian Trade Delegation, was brought into contact with members of the Signals in Constantinople during the years 1922-23.

TNA, KV-2 1594

According to Springhall's personal file, the Secretary of the Russian Trade Delegation had been brought into contact with members of the Royal Signals regiment as early as 1922 (TNA, KV2/1594). The application and development of Signals Intelligence also featured strongly in the so-called 'Red Officer Course' prospectus devised by Cecil L'Estrange Malone and reproduced at excitable length in the Home Office 'scare bulletin', Report on Revolutionary Organisations in November 1920. According to Malone's 8-page manual, training in signals and communications would, in the event of a revolution, be absolutely essential in the Communist fight against the capitalists. Ex-servicemen were to be picked out and

specialists like N.C.Os, signallers and engineers earmarked as potential leaders (Red Officers Course, November 6th 1920, TNA, CAB 24/114/68).

Recruiting from the raft of skills and talent in the Armed Forces was nothing new. Come the day of the revolution the rebels would need trained and experienced men capable of launching a credible offensive. The success of the Revolution in Russia owed more to soldiers and sailors than it did the proletariat. It really was now a case of, "Full Steam Ahead!" Militarizing the masses would be decisive.

The whole thing chimed neatly with an appeal made by Lenin in 1916, who similarly opined that 'an oppressed class which does not strive to learn to use arms, to acquire arms, only deserves to be treated like slaves'. To take up arms against the bourgeoisie, the men would need to be given a gun and 'learn the military art properly' (The Military Programme of the Proletarian Revolution: II, September 1916). Men, Lenin went on, must 'set to work to organize, organize, organize'. Within weeks Victor Grayson was repeating the very same mantra:

The men who have reaped the experiences of the trenches would come back trained to use guns and bayonets, and to act unitedly, and they would never again be satisfied with the old life of unemployment and want and hardship. They would make demands upon their governments … and knowing the value of organization they would be in a position to enforce their demands.

Victor Grayson speaking to the Wellington Social Democratic Party, Maoriland Worker, Volume 7, Issue 293, 27 September 1916

Within days Grayson had enlisted in the Canterbury Regiment of the New Zealand Army and was making his slow, patient way to Etaples.

The Arcos Raid and Manchester

Among those associated with the Arcos raid in Manchester were Frederick Ewart Walker of Longsight (near Hulme) and Fred Siddall of Higher Openshaw (KV2/1020, National Archives). According to Security Service files relating to

their handler Jack Tanner, both men were leading figures in a Russian Espionage organisation being run by Cheka agent, Jacob Kirchenstein — aka. Johnnie Walker, the notorious Soviet master spy whose Arcos Shipping Company was responsible for transporting the six Young Communist League delegates to Moscow that same June.

Like Clarion Rambler Ward, Fred Walker had served as a senior member of the Amalgamated Engineering Union and the Metal Workers Minority Movement. By the time of his death in 1964 he was Manchester District Secretary of the A.E.U. The Chief Constable of Manchester, John Maxwell reported in February 1927, that although not a formal member of the Communist Party, Walker was an active revolutionary, deeply enmeshed in the inner workings of the British Socialist Party and Trades Union Congress. Just what radicalised him isn't clear, but there may be clues in his service record.

Like Toplis's Manchester buddy, George Patrick Murphy and Communist activist Dave Springhall, Walker had spent much of his service career at the HMS Vivid naval base in Devonport. The only real exception to this was a 12-month stint on the HMS Centaur [7], a C-Type light cruiser berthed between Chatham in Kent and Rosyth in Scotland. Built by Manchester's Vickers Ltd, the ship would eventually play a part in allied attempts to break the Bolsheviks in Russia. The government's decision proved unpopular with recruits, after betraying a pledge that any post-war involvement in the Russian Civil War would be mounted on a volunteer-only basis. A series of protests and strikes had broken out on many of the ships being earmarked for active duty in the Baltic. Among them was the First Destroyer Flotilla, the HMS Velox, the HMS Versatile, the HMS Vindictive and the HMS Wryneck. Men were demanding to be sent home, with many being sympathetic to the Bolshevik propaganda being distributed among sailors in the ports around Malta and Copenhagen. The problem was simple. A good proportion of the men had served alongside the revolutionaries on ships like the Rendi and Dwina when

stationed at Archangel and Reval. During this time they'd all been comrades. Now they were meant to be enemies. A Gunner on the HMS Lucie would later tell The Worker's Dreadnought how they'd observed first-hand the appalling conditions in which men of the Tsar's Imperial Russian Navy were forced to serve and could well understand the turn of events that had given rise to the Revolution (With the Red Navy in the Baltic, Workers Dreadnought, 25 September 1920, p.5).

For the military top brass, Bolshevism was like a virus, spreading insidiously from base to base, barrack to barrack, camp to camp and man to man. When the Spanish Flu finally experienced its second biggest wave in the winter of 1918, the American press went one further and presented the two explosions as an insidious binary threat: *"Bolshevism and the Spanish Flu are pandemic and equally mysterious and indefinable. No country or government or climate is exempt from their attacks. What are they? Whence they came? These are questions unanswered and up to now have proven unanswerable."* (Pharos Reporter 18 December 1918). The Polish, identifying it with their fiercest, closest rivals, even went so far as calling it 'the Bolshevik Flu'. For many they were contemporary twins, jointly and separately they defied the customary wisdom of modern civilisations, and yet despite all this, there was probably a reason for the twin poisons. For some pacifists and Socialists the problem could be traced to poor government. Somewhere in society there was something that allowed for the poison of Bolshevism to gain traction. For these people and others like them, the pandemic could not be cured until the root cause of the virus was located and corrected. A similar line of thinking has been taken some 100 years later during the recent Covid-19 pandemic. Dr. Paul Gillespie, of the University College Dublin and Socialist columnist with the *Irish Times* described the *Coronavirus* crisis and global warming as "symptoms of rapacious capitalism". A capitalist system that failed to respond, Gillespie went on, "did not deserve to survive" (Irish Times, Sep 26, 2020). As Gillespie's predecessor in the *Pharos Reporter* had commented a full century before him, it was in the dark, flabby recesses of unregulated

markets and growing social inequality that the causes of both afflictions should be "located, cleansed and purified".

Curiously enough, the research of leading military historian Douglas Gill placed the outbreak of Spanish Flu at the Etaples Base Depot in France. As queer as it sounds, the most ruthless pandemic in recent history, killing some 50 million people worldwide, may have emerged early as 1917 at the sprawling infantry base depot. An almost identical disease similarly broke out spontaneously and simultaneously, at the Aldershot base at the height of the First Revolution in Russia. Writing in their 2019 paper, *A Possible European Origin of the Spanish Influenza*, Gill and his co-author, Professor John S. Oxford of St Mary's University, explained how a specialist medical team at Etaples had treated hundreds of soldiers infected with what they could only describe as an "unusually fatal disease". According to a study by Hammond, Rolland and Shore that appeared *The Lancet* medical journal in the Summer of 1917, this pernicious, fast-moving disease was accompanied by "a symptom complex so distinctive as to constitute a definite clinical entity" (*Purulent Bronchitis: A Study of Cases Occurring Amongst the British Troops at a Base in France*, The Lancet, July 1917)

Likewise in Aldershot, doctors Adolphe Abrahams, Norman F. Hallows and J.W.H Eyre were tasked with tackling a problem whose disturbing signature features were an exact match for those at Etaples. Their paper, published in *The Lancet* just one day prior to the mutiny, described the disease as "different from anything they had been familiar with" in civil life (*Purulent Bronchitis: Its Influenzal And Pneumococcal Bacteriology*, The Lancet, Sept 8 1917). In both cases, this 'purulent bronchitis' — which was not unlike Covid-19 — was characterised by a rapid progression from quite minor symptoms to death (*A Possible European Origin of the Spanish Influenza*, John S. Oxford & Douglas Gill, Human Vaccines Immunotherapeutics, May 2019).

It was an incredible scene to picture. In March 1917, just as tens of thousands of women massed on Nevsky Prospekt in St Petersburg to protest for equal rights, thousands of sick British troops were just beginning to overwhelm the 150,000 beds allocated by the War Office at its most crucial military bases. For the revolutionaries, the irony couldn't have been sweeter. A new kind of virus was taking hold in the cramped and insanitary birthing rooms of a barbaric capitalist war. The just desserts must have tasted heavenly. Not even pulling on a face covering and observing the two metre rule was likely to stop this one from spreading.

In October 1919, the tensions among servicemen spilled over into full scale industrial action when 150 seamen of the First Destroyer Floatilla broke free from their ships at Port Edgar. Whilst most of the mutineers were arrested, some 44 men made their way to London to present petitions at Whitehall. They were arrested at King's Cross and sent to Chatham Barracks. The code-name used to trigger the protest, bizarrely enough, was 'My name's Walker'.

Fred Ewart Walker had been demobilized to shore at the end of March 1919, and though its inevitable he would have witnessed and perhaps even participated in some of the protests, it's unlikely he would have led any of them. It is nevertheless, a tantalizing prospect that Fred's influence may yet have been felt at those events with the recycling of his (and Kichenstein's) name.

Siddall, by contrast, was Walker's spy at Armstrong Vickers. An entry in the KV2 security files claims that there was "nothing in the gun shop about which Siddall does not know" (KV2/3754, National Archives). For £5.00 a week, Siddall would pass the secrets on to Walker, Walker would pass them on to Tanner and Tanner would give them to Kirchenstein. At the time of Fallows's suicide both men were the subject of a Home Office Warrant order issued by Scotland Yard. They could be observed but not interrogated. Their mail could be intercepted but under no circumstances could either man be approached. The benefits of questioning them

now were thought to be negligible. Word from higher up the chain of command at Mi5 was that the men would "probably learn far more of what we knew of their activities … than we should learn about them". If they waited just a little while longer they would "be in a position to link up the whole of this Russian Espionage Origination in the UK", with the possibility of missing links in other investigations also falling into place (KV2/1391, National Archives).

Sometime between December 1926 and January 1927 — just weeks before Fallows went missing — there were strong indications that work on a new aircraft engine at A.V Roe was making significant progress. Word went around that Siddall had the plans and was keen to arrange a meet with Messer at a secret address.

Despite Walker and Siddall's activities playing a key part in the government's decision to launch the Arcos raid in the first place, no charges or arrests could be brought against the pair for fear of blowing the cover of undercover agents at work in the Manchester area (KV2/770, National Archives). By the end of 1927, Walker was living in Stretford just a twenty-minute walk from Clara Bellass, the supervisor at Armstrong Vickers who was married to Fred Bannister's friend in Castleton, Harry Young.

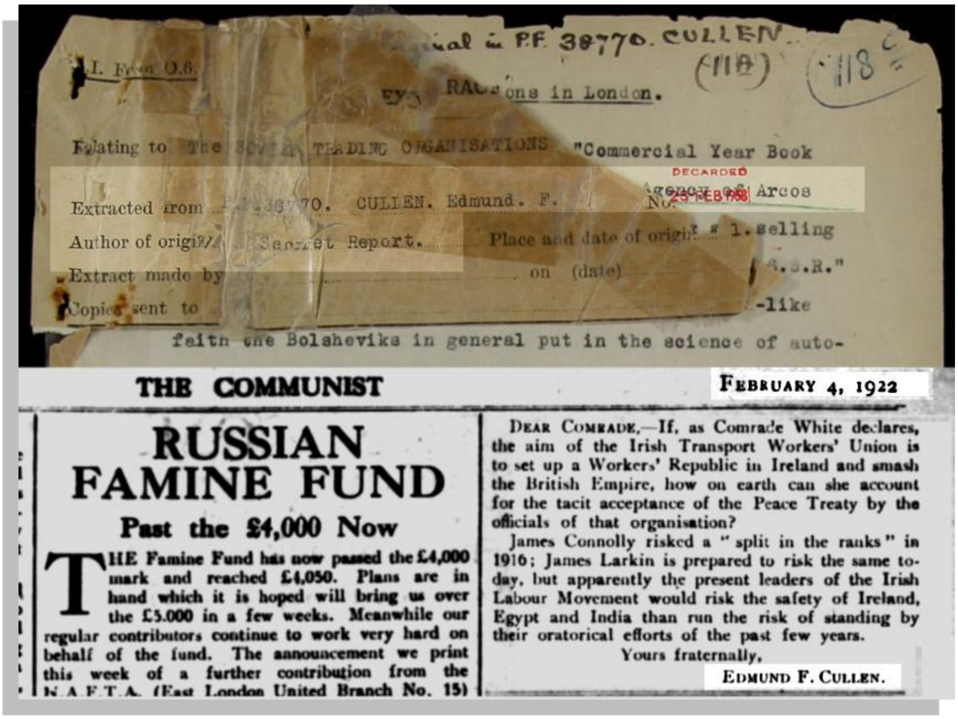
The more one looks at the clusters of coincidences, the more plausible it seems that the worlds of Toplis and Fallows were colliding with the Manchester radicals. The links may have been based chiefly around certain names and certain locations, but there's no doubting their regularity. Take the naval base at Devonport. HMS Vivid was at the centre of three seemingly unrelated lives: Toplis associate George Patrick Murphy, the Young Communist League's Dave Springhall and his co-agitator George Crook, and Soviet Military agent, Fred Ewart Walker — each with solid links to Manchester. Sedition featured highly in the lives of all five, as did the Murphies, Fred having married into the Murphy family in 1929 (Caroline M. Murphy). Caroline's brothers Alfred John Murphy

(1901) and William Goodier Murphy (1897) would both enjoy distinguished careers in engineering with Professor William Goodier Murphy earning a CBE for his work at British Aerospace and the prodigious Cranfield Institute.

The links were patchy yet persuasive. As the world's first industrial city, Manchester had been a hotbed of radical movements for years, whether it was the agitators of the Anti-Corn Law League or the rioting Wesleyan Chartists. As a result, its history was steeped in revolution. Marx was a regular visitor and Friedrich Engels made his home here. Without it, the pair's Communist Manifesto might never have been written. Engels even lived out his days with fiery Irish sisters, Mary and Lizzie Byrne on Thorncliffe Street in Chorlton on Medlock, just minutes around the corner from the family homes of Bannister and Murphy some thirty years on.

The eventual raid on the Arcos offices came on May 12th, just days after Toplis detective, James Lock Cox was found dead at his home in Andover.

Peculiarly enough, a Secret Report passed to Mi5 director Vernon Kell in February 1927 explaining the activities at Arcos had been authored by an Edmund F. Cullen, who was at this time working for Soviet spymaster, Jacob Kirchenstein at the Russo-Norwegian Navigation Company. It was Kirchenstein who was running Siddall and Walker as agents in Manchester and it was also his company's ship, the Youshar, that ferried the Young Communist League children to Russia that same June (KV2/818, KV2/1391). Cullen's report arrived in Kell's hands just weeks before Etaples Mutineer-turned-Communist, James Cullen published his similarly worded articles in the Glasgow Weekly Herald.



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Extracted from ... 38770. CULLEN. Edmund. F.

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THE COMMUNIST FEBRUARY 4, 1922

RUSSIAN FAMINE FUND

Past the £4,000 Now

THE Famine Fund has now passed the £4,000 mark and reached £4,050. Plans are in hand which it is hoped will bring us over the £5.000 in a few weeks. Meanwhile our regular contributors continue to work very hard on behalf of the fund. The announcement we print this week of a further contribution from the N.A.F.T.A. (East London United Branch No. 15)

DEAR COMRADE,—If, as Comrade White declares, the aim of the Irish Transport Workers' Union is to set up a Workers' Republic in Ireland and smash the British Empire, how on earth can she account for the tacit acceptance of the Peace Treaty by the officials of that organisation?

James Connolly risked a "split in the ranks" in 1916; James Larkin is prepared to risk the same to-day, but apparently the present leaders of the Irish Labour Movement would risk the safety of Ireland, Egypt and India than run the risk of standing by their oratorical efforts of the past few years.

Yours fraternally,

EDMUND F. CULLEN.

Is there any connection between Communist Mutineer James Cullen and Edmund F. Cullen, the author of a Secret Report on the activities of Arcos?

Arthur James Cook Returns. Harry Fallows Goes Missing

Extraordinarily, trade unionist A.J Cook arrived back in Britain from a trip to Moscow on the very day that Fallows and Stewart were noticed missing from their homes. Cook was the man at the centre of James Cullen's claims about 'Soviet Secret Funds'. It was Cullen's belief that it was these funds, secured by Cook during his frequent trips to the Soviet, that were propping up Communist agitation during and after the General Strike. Cook's return on the morning of New Years Day was accompanied by a series of fresh claims in the Conservative press. According to speeches he made in Moscow, Cook was promising not only to destroy the British constitution but to start a revolution. In Cook's words, the government under Stanley Baldwin was 'sitting on a volcano'. Subsequent attacks

on Cook were made by George A. Spencer, Labour MP for Nottingham. A letter Spencer published in the Nottingham Journal on Saturday January 8th — the day that Harry and Marjorie's bodies were discovered in the caves by Fred — was claiming that Cook had misappropriated £2,500 in relief funds intended for miner's families (Miners Fund Mystery, Nottingham Journal, January 8 1927, p.3).

But this was just the tip of the iceberg.

In parliament far greater attention was being paid to the £1 million Cook had secured from Russia from the time the strike was called at the beginning of May till late November, when even the most persistent of the strikers had gone back to work. Officially, the money had been coming from aid donations made by Russian miners. If the cash had come directly from the Soviet Government, the TUC would have had to reject it.

Strangely enough, Cook's mission to Moscow in the autumn of 1926 coincided with that of the Blaina Cymric Miners Choir who were there to drum up funds on behalf of their hard-up striking comrades back home. In their final week in England they had paid a visit to Sheffield, performing under the auspices of Dr Marion Phillips' National Women's Committee in Firth Park. A notice advertising the performance appeared under a series of Ramblers letters and updates in the Sheffield Independent. In Moscow the choir would be guests of the All Russian Trades Council.

During the 1920 manhunt for Fallow's accomplice Percy Toplis, a man matching Percy's description was seen entering a chapel in Blaina where he was greeted by Lower Deep Colliery miner and church deacon, Henry Coburn. The Dundee Evening Telegraph of May 13 had described how Toplis had pierced the Police net around Swansea and Cardiff and entered the remote and mountainous colliery district in mid-May. A prayer meeting had been in progress and Toplis had arrived

in his customary muffler and seated himself at a back pew at Salem Baptist Chapel. He was heard telling Mr Coburn that he had found himself down on his luck, having walked here all the way from London. He was a member of a similar congregation at a Brotherhood Church in Hackney. For the duration of the service Toplis had sat nervously at the back twirling his cap between his fingers, not singing like the rest. An earlier sighting had placed him at the Gospel Mission in nearby Cross Keys. His Aunt Ruth, his mother's sister, had been headmistress of a school in nearby Monmouth and Toplis had spent many a summer tramping cheerfully around these same mountainous districts in his youth. As there was no lodging house in Blaina, Toplis intimated that he would continue up to Brynmawr at the foot of the Brecon Beacons. A suggestion that he try the Police Station had been met with an emphatic, 'No!'. The deacon is alleged to have handed seven shillings to him before Toplis went on his way (Toplis at Blaina, South Wales Gazette 14 May 1920, p.15).

The same Salem Baptist Chapel would feature in the news some eight years later when it was used as a rallying point by local Communist Brinley Jenkins during the so-called Blaina Riots. Salem Baptist Chapel had also been used by the family of Etaples Mutineer Jesse Short, who was born in nearby Nantyglo.

In his third article for the Weekly Herald, Cullen stated that he had evidence in his possession "to show conclusively that the Communist Party in this country is in league with the Soviet in Russia". The article, published in March, fleshed out the details; four of the most notorious men in Russia — Schwartz (Chairman of the Soviet Miners), Gorbachev (the Miners Secretary), Akulff and the President of the All Russian Trades Council — were responsible for transferring the money to Cook. The cash hadn't come from the hard-up Russian miners afterall, it had come from the Kremlin. Churchill had been no less cynical about Cook's claims. Addressing parliament in mid-December, Winston thought it "extraordinary" that Russian miners, whose wages, he was assured, were one third less than British

miners, had either the spontaneity or the resources to donate two and half times more than the whole of the British Trade Union movement.

EXTRA. EXPRESS EDITION.

Sheffield Independent

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WINNATS MYSTERY.

THE WINNATS.

"I WAS HORRIFIED."

RAMBLER RELATES HIS GHASTLY EXPERIENCE.

DISTRIBUTION OF MINERS' RELIEF FUNDS.

MR. COOK'S REPLY TO MR. SPENCER.

"NOTHING TO HIDE"

MYSTERY OF LETTER FROM CANADA.

Harry Fallows (26), 28, Hinde street, Mosley, Manchester.

Marjorie E. Stewart (17), 41, Hinde street, Mosley, Manchester.

The bombshell that miners' leader A.J Cook had misappropriated funds competed directly the Winnats Pass Mystery on the front page of the Sheffield Independent on January 10th

On December 28th it was alleged that an amateur radio enthusiast in Bromley, Kent had picked up a speech on wireless receiving set on a wavelength of 1,400 metres. It was being made by a man speaking English in Russia. The speaker said that the first thing he was going to do when he got back to England to "work to his uttermost to create a revolution." The Daily Mail only had one question on its lips; was this Mr Cook? (Daily Mail, December 28th 1926, p.10)

At the lower opening of Winnats Pass there is a volcanic plug called the Speedwell Vent. Cook's claim that Baldwin's Government was 'sitting on a volcano' and his dreams of an Anglo-Soviet pact with Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire miners couldn't have been better geographically placed or better timed.

An Unusual Series of Coincidences

The mysterious death of Harry Fallows, the series of articles by Etaples Mutineer and former Communist James Cullen, the launch of a new anti-Soviet campaign by Home Secretary Joynson-Hicks, the re-appointment of de Courcy Parry and the sudden death of Superintendent James Lock Cox all took place with weeks of each other. That Castleton and the High Peaks were also facing a stiff election challenge from J.T Walton Newbold — the go-to man for boisterous agit-prop ramblers, the Young Communist League prior to William Rust — can only have cloaked the valleys and peaks of The Hope in a thicker red mist than usual that year.

The couple's disappearance on New Years Eve 1926 coincided with two major fires in Manchester. The first was on Peter Street, the site of the legendary Peterloo Massacre where the 15th King's Hussars had torn into a crowd of over 60,000 would-be revolutionaries some 100 years before. Over 2,000 party revellers were forced to flee the Free Trade Hall as the fire ripped through an adjacent building, bringing to an abrupt end the New Year festivities. The second fire broke out in the Sharples Building on the corner of Cannon Street and New Cannon Street. The building was at one time the home of Jeremiah Garnett's Manchester Guardian, launched specifically for the task of championing the causes of the Peterloo protesters.

It may have been packed with symbolism, but if this had been a deliberate arson attack by rival fascists and not some darkly ironic coincidence, then it didn't deliver much of a payload. Despite its continuing significance among the Clarion faithful and earnest young Reds an attack on the Free Trade Hall would have been an ambiguous and unpopular move. It had certainly been the venue of choice for New Year and Christmas Festivities among Manchester's radical left and had even played host to Harry Pollitt's series of Lenin memorials in 1924, but such

crude and barbarous methods from angry young fascists in Manchester might easily have risked alienating ordinary people. An attack on the Young Communist League HQ in Openshaw would have sent a far more powerful message.

Despite 1927 terminating rather abruptly for Harry and Marjorie, the first few months of the year would provide critical events in the war on Revolutionary Communism.

A Hasty Burial

Within 48 hours of their discovery, the bodies of Harry and Marjorie were buried together in the one grave in St Edmund's Parish Churchyard. The church, dedicated to a long dead Anglian martyr who had failed to renounce his faith after defeat by the marauding Heathen Danes, was situated in a hollow, little more than a mile from the wild, craggy hillside on which they died. A small crowd of relatives and well meaning villagers had assembled beneath the shadow of a spreading elm where the white surpliced clergyman, Reverend E.W. Hobson held a special graveside service in accordance with the law on suicides that forbade such things in church. Nothing was offered in the way of eulogies and no hymns were sung, the mourners having to make do with the energy of last month's Christmas carols still echoing around on the peaks.

Harry's coffin was lowered into the grave first, followed by his sweetheart Marjorie who was laid immediately on top of him. Beneath a tribute of gaunt trees and huddled sympathies, Fred Bannister bowed his head.

A subsequent search of the cave by locals, in the days prior to their burial, had revealed a woman's brooch in rolled gold with a common red stone inset. Another bottle of poison was also found with the name of 'Boots Cash Chemist Manchester' on the label.

Among the more mysterious items were a large quantity of burnt papers. Although the fragments included a large quantity of burnt newspaper, clearly destroyed for warmth, some of the charred remains had been letters (Sheffield Independent 11 January 1927, p.6)

As the Sheffield Independent quite rightly pointed out, the couple were strangers to Castleton. They had no known associations in the village and there was no evidence to suggest that had spent so much as a night in any hotel or lodging house anywhere near the Castleton area. It was ascertained by Police that the couple were still in Manchester on the night of the 31st, but where they'd spent Saturday night, or any of the five or six days that followed, wasn't unclear. It seemed improbable that they had spent the entire week sitting brooding alone in the cave or rambling around on the moors. Certainly not in winter.

Among the profusion of unanswered questions and riddles surrounding the death of the couple, one conundrum in particular stands out; not one single newspaper mentioned that the couple's arrival in Winnats Pass on New Year's Day coincided with the annual mass ramble organized by Ward and the Clarion Ramblers.

On Monday January 3rd, the Sheffield Independent had published a 600 word report describing the Clarion mass tramp around Castleton on the first Saturday and Sunday of the New Year. "Ramblers were everywhere", they wrote. They'd arrived from all parts of the surrounding districts: "Sheffield, Manchester, Rotherham and Glossop — their eyes bright after tramping since morning". At every bend in the winding path, and at each guide-post that marked the twisting lanes around Winnats, the press men had encountered a swarm of giddy youths "hatless and bare-necked". GHB Ward's name was sprinkled liberally throughout.

But by January 10th, the same newspaper was reporting that the area had been "comparatively deserted" at the time of the couple's deaths.

How was this so? Were there concerns among leading figures in Sheffield that the couple's macabre and mysterious passing might somehow tarnish the Clarion movement or aggravate tensions with local landowners? That readers might draw the wrong conclusions? It seems clear that the 17 year-old Fred Bannister had arrived in Castleton that first weekend in January as part of Ward and the Clarion Rambler's New Year celebrations, but any speculation that Fred was part of an organized ramble is completely obfuscated in the press.

Lead rambler Ward though, was very well connected in press circles.

In June 1907, Ward's close personal friend, Francesco Ferrer had been arrested for a second time in Spain. It was alleged that Ferrer and José Nackens, the editor of the revolutionary journal, El Modin had conspired to murder King Alfonso and the Queen Victoria Eugenie. Ward and the Sheffield Daily Telegraph launched a nationwide appeal in England to secure the mens' release. Ferrer, in turn, made no secret of his appreciation. A letter, received by Ward, described the anarchists every intention to not let the summer pass without 'the pleasure of clasping the hands' of his dear friend in Sheffield (A Letter from Ferrer, Sheffield Daily Telegraph 06 June 1907, p.7). Ferrer was to thank Ward and the paper's editor Robert Haig Dunbar personally when he came to Sheffield in August, shortly after securing his release from prison.

Ward enjoyed an even closer relationship with the paper's rival, the Sheffield Independent. The newspaper's senior director and major shareholder was Sheffield's William Wilson Chisholm, a 'fearless and outspoken' journalist who served as the city's Justice of the Peace at the time of the Winnats Pass suicides.

Ward and Chisholm had forged their friendship through a shared passion for rambling — sharing committee duties on the board of the John Derry Ramblers, led by their friend and Clarion Rambler, John Derry, one time editor of Chisholm's newspaper. Ward, Derry and Chisholm had been among the first to

negotiate a right to roam agreement along Froggatt Edge with the Duke of Rutland in the 1924. The Duke had reneged on the agreement in the summer of 1926 after persistent abuse from overzealous youths among the Sheffield and Manchester radicals. That was the Duke's official explanation, at least. Word on the ground was that the Duke had objected to Ward and Chisholm's demonstration at Winnats Pass in support of the Access to Mountains Bill some weeks before.

The trio stayed close, with Chisholm printing and publishing Derry's 'Across the Derbyshire Moors' book with a foreword and contributions by Ward from the Fargate offices of the Independent.

As the local and national press took their lead from the Sheffield Independent's front page coverage of the Winnats Pass suicide story, it's possible the connection was missed. Afterall, the only coverage Ward's Clarion event had received had come courtesy of the Independent and the Telegraph.

The only people unlikely to have missed the connection was Chisholm's Sheffield Independent, now under the management of Worksop-born editor, William Edward Bemrose. Why was no parallel being drawn between the two events? Fallows and Stewart had arrived in Winnats Pass on the weekend of Ward's annual Clarion rambling event. The bodies were found by a regular rambler. In spite of all this, the author of the 'suicide' report on January 10th makes no reference at all to the couple's arrival during the New Year Clarion celebrations it was reporting in considerable depth just five days previously.

But it wasn't the only press mystery by any means.

There were also two significant differences in the reports published by the local newspapers. The Sheffield Daily Telegraph report featured the names of the Manchester ramblers, 'Sunshine' and 'Ambrose' — the mysterious Manchester

ramblers who had accompanied Fred on the 2nd — and Mr and Mrs Young of The Island Gift Shop who Fred said he was visiting on the 8th. In the write-up by the Sheffield Independent, each of the names was left out.

These details were also left out at the inquest.

Fred Bannister had told the Sheffield Daily Telegraph that he had set off on his first trip to Castleton on Sunday January 2 with "two friends" 'Sunshine' and 'Ambrose'. Neither of the boys was requested to attend the inquest and neither boy was mentioned. As subsequent newspaper reports proved, one of the boys, 'Sunshine' was well known in rambling circles. Given that the boy was one of the last people to see the couple alive, it seems curious that no attempt was made by the coroner to call him as a witness. There was also no mention of Mr and Mrs Young of The Island Gift Shop in Castleton. Fred had told at least one reporter that he was going to stay with the couple over the weekend but neither of Mr or Mrs Young were brought before the jury to corroborate the story. Fred simply revised his story: he had set off walking alone from Manchester on the Saturday and arrived at the cave around 5.00 pm.

A Light Goes Out, a Light Goes On

Irrespective of how the couple the died — by their own hand or by the hands of others — politicizing the tragic circumstances may only have risked triggering a violent backlash by the various radical groups amassing in Derbyshire's valleys, or undermined, at the very least, the tremendous progress being made by Ward and his 'Right to Roam' groups. As far back as the 1880s, gangs of football supporters called 'roughs' would simulate attacks on fans to spark full scale riots at derby matches. It would be a trick perfected by proto-hooligan and fascist razor gang leader, Billy Fullerton and the infamous Billy Boys a few years later. Helping Bannister cook-up his unlikely explanation may have been a legitimate exercise in damage limitation, a way of averting a greater crisis — especially

when news would eventually leak of Fallows' connection to outlaw anarchist, Percy Toplis and his pals in the Cheetham Hill area.

The spark designed to cause a first-rate explosion may have simply been blown out, saving the reputations of the honest, hard-working men and women among them.

A lack of witnesses to the couple's last 24 hours alive made the circumstances leading to their deaths impossible to determine. The telegrams delivered to Marjorie's father and Harry's sister Lily, could have been written by anyone, the couple could have been driven at night to The Pass and their bodies dumped, they could have been gassed or died after an evening of celebration bubbly laced with arsenic or strychnine — with the Lysol administered post-mortem — the options were endless. Modern forensics makes it possible to identify all toxic agents but in those days the bulk of poisonings simply went by unnoticed. The speed with which they were buried would have only added to the uncertainty. The only evidence that pointed to the couple being in Castleton on New Year's Day was the testimony of Fred Bannister and the owner of the village gift shop who appears to have sold the cup that was used to drink the poison.

A week after the discovery of the bodies in the cave, Bannister's friend 'Sunshine' reappeared in another press story. Two members of a Sheffield ramblers club had got into trouble on the snow-covered moors between Bleaklow and Edale. They fell in with a couple Manchester ramblers and one of them, the newspaper reported, "was a youth known as 'Sunshine', a companion of Fred Bannister who discovered the bodies of the man and the girl at Castleton" (Plucky Rambler Sheffield Daily Telegraph, 18 January 1927, p.8). Again, despite the best efforts of the press, the phantom rambler failed to materialize. 'Sunshine' emerges from the mist with his compass, loans it to a fellow rambler, flags down a passing car and saves the day. Was he for real or was he made up? It's difficult to tell. Grafting 'Sunshine' onto another tale of adventure would certainly be one way of

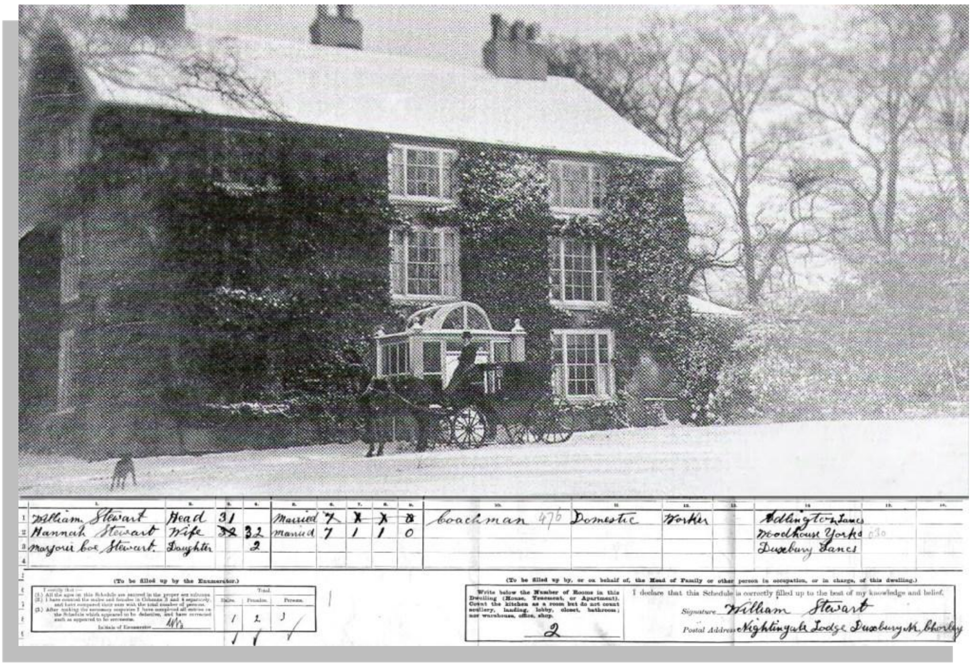
adding credibility to Bannister's tale, should the locals or Police have been harbouring any doubts.

But if the couple had been murdered and their deaths made to look like a suicide, then why?

One clue might lie in the man that Marjorie's father William Stewart was working for prior to arriving in Manchester. In the census of 1911, the 31 year-old coachman William and his wife Hannah Stewart neé Coe, are living at Nightingale Lodge in the grounds of Ellerbeck Hall, a handsome manor house some four miles south of Chorley in Lancashire. William's employer here is Sir Arthur Dalrymple Fanshawe, Admiral and Commander-in-Chief of Her Majesty's Royal Navy in Portsmouth. The house had been passed to him by his grandfather, the former Secretary of War Sir Edward Cardwell, a military reformist and close friend of Gladstone and Peel. Interestingly, records show that Fanshawe was personally responsible for the appointment of Intelligence Chiefs Sir Mansfield Cumming-Smith in 1909, and Hugh Sinclair in 1923.

In the paranoid hurly-burly of the Great Strike, had Mr Stewart been recommended by his former paymaster as an informer? His job at Newton Heath Carriage and Wagon Works on North Road would certainly have placed him in a lucrative position for picking up news and gossip among its more radical workers from the Communist hubs of Cheetham Hill and Higher Openshaw. The father of Communist and Clarion Fellowship member 'Charlie Openshaw' (a close friend of Harry Pollitt) had worked as a wagon builder at the same company. The R.C.A union at the works had seen a steady rise in Communist Party members attempting to join for the purpose of disrupting it and every effort was being made to stave-off further infiltration. George Makgill's Industrial Intelligence Bureau had done much to acquire intelligence on industrial unrest using well placed sources like these. Early warning systems were crucial in fending off strikes and maintaining a spirit of negotiation rather than rebellion among union members. At

the forefront of this fight was the Economic League of National Propaganda, a head-strong coalition of high-ranking businessmen and industrialists, co-founded by an old naval colleague of Commander Fanshawe — Vice Admiral Reginald Hall. Now a tough-talking Tory MP, the former Director of Naval Intelligence and his group had been taking a leading role in opposing the General Strike with solid support from Fanshawe in the House of Lords and his son Guy in the House of Commons.



Top: Marjorie Coe Stewart and her family at Nightingale Lodge, Ellerbeck Hall Bottom: 1911 census showing Stewart family at the attached lodge

Once the head of a family had been recruited, it wasn't uncommon for other members to follow suit. Had William's attractive and seemingly very talented young daughter Marjorie Coe Stewart, assisted by the capable ex-Navy Reservist, Harry Fallows, been tasked with infiltrating the mixed-sex rambling groups who made up the Young Communist League?

It's not as outrageous a suggestion as you might think.

A few years after the deaths of the couple, 25 year-old Manchester girl Olga Grey was recruited by Mi5's Maxwell Knight to spy on Manchester Communist Harry Pollitt. The girl's family home at 27 Montgomery Road in Longsight was just a mile or so from Bannister's house in Hulme and the Young Communist League HQ on Margaret Street in Openshaw. Olga's mission was staggeringly successful. As a result of her work, Soviet agent Percy Glading was arrested and his Woolwich spy ring smashed. Curiously enough, Glading had returned from his activities on the continent within weeks of Fallows' death in January 1927 to join his place on the Communist Party of Great Britain's Central Committee (Class Against Class: The Communist Party in Britain Between the Wars, Matthew Worley) .

There was another thing. Prior to their move to Manchester, Marjorie and her parents had lived on Church Street in the village of Adlington near Bolton. Just 200 yards down the road at 46 Market Street was the family of George E. Crook, the man at the centre of Communist agitation at the HMS Vivid naval base in the summer and autumn of 1920. Marjorie and George had been born within ten minutes walk of one another.

Harry's ten page formal statement to Police shortly after being taken in for questioning over the Toplis affair had shown no small amount of savvy. He anticipates potential lines of enquiry in an agile, confident fashion and then just as nimbly heads them off. Whenever he describes his alleged meetings with Toplis the scenes and circumstances that he relates make witnesses practically impossible. Fellow soldiers at the camp have always 'just left' or 'just about to arrive'. Had he fabricated the entire encounter to cover-up the part he and others may have played in the murder? One thing is certain, the man with a 'jaunty air' was clearly accustomed to talking himself out of a scrape.

Were the £50 notes Harry was alleged to be always flashing at neighbours the result of some fluky series of gambling wins or the spoils of a trusted crook or

informer? This was no small change. In today's money this would come to approximately £2,000 or more. A skilled labourer would need to work half the year to earn anything like this amount. If Fallows was on the take it was a risky business and one that could make either of them vulnerable to all kinds of pressure and intimidation [8].

A Thousand Black Balloons

Whatever the exact circumstances of their painful, untimely deaths and whatever tragedy had befallen them, the grim secrets of the cavern would be taken with them to their grave. Any thoughts they may have had in their last few minutes alive will never be known. There were no suicide notes and whatever personal items the couple had taken with them had all been burned in the cave. All that remained now were the possibilities. Setting fire to the letters had left their friends and families mourning at home in Manchester with only fragments of words — random signposts among the ashes. Snippets of phrases might still have been visible, but any explanation they may once have provided was now free from the burden of meaning. Only the words would ever remain. The truth would be lost forever.

But if it had been suicide, had there been a final rush of regrets? A sudden urge to run for their lives? Or had any remaining doubts been well and truly drowned by a good old soaking of gin? Like words that got stuck in the throat, or letters that got lost in the post, certain regrets may have been felt but not communicated.

When Harry's torch finally went out, did the light go on for Marjorie? The intense black veil that would have fallen over The Pass in the evenings is likely to have smothered all remaining optimism, but maybe the girl had had second thoughts. What might we have seen in the darkness that day; a gradual shift from gutsy, youthful conviction to awkward compliance perhaps? And from awkward

compliance to screaming fear. What would have been the look on the pretty girl's face when Harry finally offered her the cup of kindness?

"And there's a hand, my trusty fiere,

And gie's a hand o' thine,

And we'll tak a cup o' kindness yet

For auld lang syne!

Auld Lang Syne"

Perhaps there was no fear at all. In the last few moments of Marjorie's life, maybe the common, practical things the 17 year-old had taken to the cave — the crocodile leather handbag, the green felt hat, the powder puff and manicure set — had already been discharged as trite, superfluous objects buried in the deep black seam of forbidden desires and failed Christmas wishes. These were things that could be readily be shoved in boxes and packed away, fragments of a life whose rules they were no longer bound by. What 'things' did she really need? Stripped of a reason to live, only misery could ever remain. Not even *Nat Shilkret and his Ragtime Orchestra* were going to be able to be fix things this time around.

In the final moments of consciousness, suicides are said to experience a much needed rush of blood to the face and a sudden surge of adrenaline will pump short extraordinary bursts of air to the lungs. In a bitter, tortured irony, their final desperate act would be the scream that proved they ever existed, the 'scream that would fill a thousand black balloons with air' and send them soaring over the moors of the Windy Pass [9]. The summit of Mam Tor may have offered breathtaking views of the Hope Valley, but in the cool, misty twilight of the New Year it clearly offered little in the way of hope. Breaths would be taken for a final time. The cup of kindness supped clean.

What was the last sound the couple heard? Was it a sigh? A scream? The squeal of a late New Year's reveller making merry in the village? Or the sound of the last

shred of meaning in their impossibly short lives being torn like flesh from the bone.

The cave remains there to this day, as does Winnats Pass, demoted to playing host to a regular stream of Tour of the Peak cyclists and purposeful northern ghosthunters. By and large though, the various stories they have to tell are muddled up and the well-meaning spook investigator will end up calling out the names of tragic men and women who died elsewhere on the Pass, or died without any kind of drama, lying snoozily in bed at home. They wave their damaged radios earnestly at the walls of the cave, hopeful of picking up some meaningful spirit transmission. By and large though, the voices of the dead emerging from the garbled frequencies are nothing more than static, a torrent of white noise that would, as likely as not, lull the dead right back to sleep. The drips are still dripping and the mildly acidic water still pools in the same old places and evaporates in the same old places every year, gradually wearing down the sharp, urgent edges of the mystery in the same way it degrades the limestone.

The man with the jaunty air just laughs and the girl in the green felt hat adjusts her make-up in her cracked, vintage compact. They knew all about the ghosts stories, but as with most things that came whispering through the gates of the ‘windy pass’, there was probably nothing in them.

Notes

[1] Harry’s brother was William Edward Fallows, killed in action on Oct 22 1917 at Passchendaele. William served with the Manchester-Edinburgh Royal Scots (15th Bat). His Service Records suggests he was at Etaples Base Camp around the time of the mutiny.

[2] A young Percy Toplis had lived next door to The Primitive Methodist Chapel in Stanton Hill with his grandmother Alice Webster. The Primitive Churches were firmly rooted in the nonconformity movement of various religious ‘dissenters’ and had a long-standing affiliation

with ‘Saints and Socialists, Ranters and Radicals, Schismatics and Separatists’. The feeling among Conservatives in the area was that its ‘politics are more of their religion than the gospel’ (Mansfield Reporter 14 September 1888, p.5) . The church retained strong links with Christian Socialism and Charles Bradlaugh, whose suspected Horatio Bottomley became ‘Soldiers Champion’ during the Mutiny at Etaples in 1917.

[3] Percy Toplis did have extended family in Chorlton on Medlock, including his father’s namesake Herbert Topliss, born the same year as Percy’s father and who died just 12 months later in the third quarter of 1919. The Manchester side of the family were related to the same root line in Ticknall Derbyshire which dated back to the early to mid 1800s. Herbert Topliss from Chorlton served as a Solicitor’s Clerk like his father George. They also lived in Ardwick during the peak of the Ardwick Anarchists Herbert Stockton, Alfred Barton and Billy MacQueen.

[4] If Percy’s re-enlistment as an engineer in the RASC served any militant objectives, then its curious that he should enlist into the same unit within a week or so of Manchester’s John (Jack) Deveney who became a leading member of the Clarion Sports Committee and the National Sports Association alongside its President Herbert Elvin whose old family home on Jubilee Street was used by Joseph Stalin during the two week RSDLP congress at the Brotherhood Church in 1907. Jack’s brother Ernest was also a strong Clarion supporter. There’s currently no evidence to suggest the Fred Walker who enlists alongside them is Fred E Walker, recently discharged from the navy.

[5] General Page-Croft was willing to go before a judicial enquiry and provide evidence taken on oath to make his case. “The party funds ought to be audited and a list of subscribers of over £500 deposited for inspection at Somerset House. Aspirants for honours ought to be reported on by the committee of the Privy Council.” The motion, read out in parliament, was seconded by Horatio Bottomley. Cash for honours, the pair alleged, was as perfidious as Lenin himself diverting large sums of money to assist Sinn Fein in Ireland, or buying the support of the Swedes (Party Funds and Titles, The Daily Mail, May 29, 1919, p.3). Victor Grayson vanished for good in September 1920. Several authors have accused Maundy Gregory, the man who arranged the sale of honours for the Government, of murdering him as a result of threats made by Grayson to expose him.

[6] In the Winter 1986 edition of war magazine, Stand To!, Julian Putkowski, the historical adviser on the BBC’s Monocled Mutineer, acknowledged that the character Charles Strange was partly based on Victor Grayson. Strange appeared as the Socialist sidekick of Percy Toplis in the Alan Bleasdale’s Monocled Mutineer (see: Stand To!,Winter 1986, No.18, page.6). In 1907 Grayson was again very nearly arrested for inciting a mutiny, this time in Belfast in support of his Liverpool friend, James Larkin and Irish Dockers. It practically ended his parliamentary career.

[7] In a deeply ironic twist, the HMS Centaur would play a role in securing Britain’s post-war Trade Agreement with Russia, after steaming to Constantinople on a prisoner exchange mission with Lenin’s Bolsheviks (Edinburgh Evening News 06 November 1920, p.5).

[8] Former RAF engineer, Walter Fallows (born 1900, Salford Manchester) was in Russia at the time of the Metro-Vickers Affair (1933). He was one of a dozen or so engineers arrested on suspicion of espionage and sabotage charges. He discusses his experiences in a report entitled, Russia From the Inside published in The Horsham Times (Tue 26 Sep 1939, p.3). Colonel Allan Monkhouse of Mi6 was also arrested. Fallows would have been working at Westinghouses Works (Vickers) at the same time as supervisor Clara Ballas, the friend of the family that Bannister was visiting in Castleton. Walter Fallows had been sent to Russia by Vickers in 1929.

[7] Scott Hutchinson, Frightened Rabbit, The Loneliness and the Scream

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