Article:
Chase, M (2017) The Popular Movement for Parliamentary Reform in Provincial Britain during the 1860s. Parliamentary History, 36 (1). pp. 14-30. ISSN 0264-2824

https://doi.org/10.1111/1750-0206.12262

The popular movement for parliamentary reform in provincial Britain during the 1860s

Malcolm Chase

Abstract

Provincial perspectives are largely lacking in accounts of the emergence of the second reform act, but a vigorous and innovative popular movement for reform emerged in the mid-1860s. A burgeoning newspaper press both conveyed and itself did much to create a sense of accelerating movement unparalleled since chartism. Former chartists, notably Ernest Jones, were significant organisers, but the infusion of this movement into communities hitherto untouched by organised popular politics was widespread. Formal organisations can be identified in at least 282 separate localities outside London. Conservative working men's associations, by contrast, were slow to emerge and ephemeral. A rich material and performative culture bore witness to workers' sense of property in their skill, their education and importance as wealth creators, but also to the popular reform movement's profoundly gendered character. Though committed in principle to manhood suffrage, by the spring of 1867 working-class reformers were largely reconciled to incremental change and middle-class opinion about reform similarly softened. This is demonstrated in the history of the Reform League's 'Yorkshire Department' and the success of its president, Robert Meek Carter, at the 1868 parliamentary election in Leeds.

Keywords: chartism; franchise; gender; provinces; material culture; parliamentary reform; Reform League; skill

The historiography of the second reform act is rich and contested, but largely lacks provincial perspectives. Royden Harrison, the historian who above all ascribed real agency to the popular

movement for reform, retrospectively conceded that his book *Before the Socialists* was 'too metropolitan'. It was dedicated to friends and comrades in the coalfields of Derbyshire and Yorkshire, but was 'full of the assumptions of London, the place where "real politics" occurred'.[1] Eugenio Biagini emphasises the vigour of provincial demonstrations in 1866, some of which matched or even exceeded London's in magnitude.[2] Yet equating pure pressure of numbers with political significance is a crude yardstick. Arguably, the popular movement was most influential not in its metropolitan tens of thousands but in its earnest dozens and hundreds in local halls and market places. John Morley dismissed the popular agitation as 'no tidal swell of national passion' but merely 'muddy circlings in a lazy pool'. Whereas the 1832 reform act had been 'forced on the privileged classes with a rush and momentum', the 1867 measure had been 'almost trundled through as on a barrow'.[3] Yet Gladstone clearly discerned much more than muddy circlings when, in May 1867, he castigated the 'insufficient zeal' of many Liberal MPs, and pledged himself to join 'every good citizen' in strenuously opposing the iniquities of the Disraeli bill (as then constituted) and to 'use every legitimate power' to bring it 'to a speedy end' in the event it became law.[4] Even Cowling's seminal study of the second reform act as a consequence of high politics concedes that the Conservative cabinet 'opened itself to any wind that blew'.[5] But whence blew the wind and to what effect?

I

These issues can usefully be illustrated with reference to events on 23 July 1866; not, as might be supposed, in riotous Hyde Park but in a temperance hotel 270 miles away in Kendal, Westmorland. Thirty people acted on a resolution to establish a reform association that a 500-strong demonstration in the market place had passed the week before. A borough of only 12,000 souls, which lacked a permanent association of any political complexion, Kendal had seen only one contested parliamentary election since 1832. From 23 July 1866, though, it could boast an organisation pledged not only to manhood suffrage but also 'to support any honest attempt made

by a Liberal government to amend the representation of the people'.[6] Twelve months later, the association's stature was sufficient to fill Kendal town hall for a meeting addressed by one of the Reform League's stellar orators, Ernest Jones. The evolving Derby-Disraeli reform bill was far from ideal, but 'of good savour and of fair promise. But what was the reason', asked Jones, for 'this extraordinary gift of something approaching political liberty?'

> Let no one imagine that the Tories had become Liberal, that they had become converts to the principles of true liberty. Liberty was never yet given as a present to a nation. It was always won by the people themselves. (Applause.) Neither the Tories had given us household suffrage, nor the Liberals in parliament … No; it had been taken by the people. It had been taken by the great meetings in Hyde Park; in the Camp Field, Manchester; on Woodhouse moor, Leeds; on Glasgow College Green; on Newcastle Town Moor; and at Brooks Field, Birmingham.[7]

That Jones was in Kendal at all suggests that he recognised a sea change in provincial opinion. Over the previous year he had spoken at mass rallies in Birmingham, Glasgow, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool, Manchester and Newcastle; but he had also addressed more modest meetings in Accrington, Ashton-under-Lyne, Banbury, Birkenhead, Bradford, Darwen, Derby, Edinburgh, Huddersfield, Lincoln, Loughborough, Newark, Peterborough, Portsmouth, Sheffield and York. Furthermore, in January Jones had emerged triumphant from a set-piece debate with Professor James Blackie, a Scottish critic of franchise reform. A defining moment in the 1860s reform movement, the clash was reported almost as widely as the great set-piece demonstrations themselves.[8]

Ernest Jones had been chartism's last leader of national stature and his capacity to attract 'old veterans grown grey in the service of reform' was widely attested.[9] At Bradford, an elderly member of the audience who candidly admitted that 'he had twice borne arms for the Charter … declared he had such an admiration of Mr Jones that he could almost worship him'.[10] Yet Jones

was no totemic survivor from a bygone era. That status was reserved for George Edmonds, chair of Birmingham's Hampden club in 1816-7, who made an electrifying appearance at the meeting that followed the 1866 Brooks Field demonstration; and also for the 'The Fathers of Reform': Peterloo veterans whose carriages concluded a massive procession in Manchester in June 1867.[11] Even those who had campaigned for the first reform act still presented themselves as activists for the second: they included James Moir, a Glasgow tea-dealer and a distinguished chartist, also active in the 1830-32 crisis;[12] Joseph Shepherd, once a blacksmith and a frequent speaker at Liverpool rallies, who called on the middle classes 'to pay the debt' accrued to the workers in 1832;[13] and in Bath, the roman catholic priest Thomas McDonnell, a former council member of the Birmingham Political Union.[14] The synergies between the two reform campaigns were symbolised by the 1832 banners paraded once more in 1866-7.[15]

Original chartist banners were similarly displayed, while the white and green rosettes worn by Yorkshire Reform Leaguers were 'emblematic of the old Chartism, a little more of which is required to leaven the indifferent Liberalism shown by the middle classes of the present day'.[16] Former activists for chartism were abundant in the popular movement of 1866-7 and far from merely emblematic. The participation of an aged few was ornamental: John Jaffray, signatory to the original 1838 People's Charter, appeared at Birmingham alongside Edmonds, while a letter from the leader of the 1839 Newport rising, John Frost, was read from the platform at Bristol's mass rally in September 1866.[17] The majority, however, were actively committed. John Bedford Leno (a leading London chartist in the 1850s) and temperance chartist Benjamin Lucraft were missionaries for the Reform League.[18] The lesser-known George Mantle was a full-time League lecturer, his imprisonment for sedition in 1848 excavated by the crusading Tory *Derby Mercury* in 1867.[19] Another former chartist prisoner, shoemaker John Snowden, spoke at League meetings in Halifax.[20] William Farish, a former handloom weaver, was a Chester liberal councillor (and subsequently the city's sheriff and then Lord Mayor).[21] Radical pressman Abel Heywood moved seamlessly from chartism through the Manchester Manhood Suffrage Association (1858-9) to the

Reform League, serving twice as mayor along the way.[22] Arthur O'Neill, a christian chartist gaoled in 1843-4, took a leading role in the Birmingham branch of the Reform League.[23] Manchester's branch was chaired by Edward Hooson, the leading Manchester chartist of the 1850s and co-founder of the Co-operative Wholesale Society.[24] The Plymouth branch was set-up by Thomas Allsop (Feargus O'Connor's confidante and financial backer).[25] James Maw, a former bricklayers' labourer and once Teesside's most energetic chartist, was a committeeman of the Middlesbrough Liberal Association (a body doubling as the local executive of the Reform League).[26] This listing is necessarily selective.

The 1860s' reform movement clearly derived much from the energy and experience of former chartists. Much less obvious was any debt to radical religious currents, beyond a generalised overlap between reformers and nonconformity. While dissenting clergy often appeared on reform platforms (Arthur O'Neill, for example, was a Baptist minister), the incidence of overtly religious rhetoric in the movement was low compared to chartism. When the aspiring Liberal MP Henry Yates Thompson appealed to 'the God of Battles' at a Liverpool reform rally in March 1867, he had recourse to a conscious archaism: 'the God of Battles has again reasserted his direct influence over the fray, and, to use the language of the seventeenth century … the Lord has delivered them into our hands'.[27] Similarly, the incidence of meetings in dissenting chapels or schoolrooms was lower than it had been in chartism. Reformers benefitted from a noticeably greater willingness of local authorities, and even employers, to provide premises for meetings, whilst there was a far greater range of clubs and institutes upon which they could draw than had been the case twenty or thirty years before. Meetings on religious premises persisted mainly in smaller communities: for example the National Reform Union in the Cleckheaton's Methodist Free Church School; and the Reform League in Cullompton's Independent Chapel and Forfar's United Presbyterian Church.[28]

II

The most influential Leaguer who had graduated from chartism was Robert Meek Carter, a Leeds corporation alderman and founder of the Leeds Manhood Suffrage Association. This evolved into the 'Yorkshire Department of the Reform League'.[29] An agricultural labourer from the age of six, Carter had acquired his education through and alongside chartism when his family migrated to Leeds, where he was employed in a textiles mill. His involvement in municipal politics began when he was elected on a chartist ticket to the Leeds highways board in 1843. The following year he became a coal merchant's clerk, eventually moving into business on his own account, first as a coal merchant and then as a cloth finisher. In 1852 he was elected, still as a chartist, to the Leeds corporation.[30] His relations with middle-class liberals in the town were frequently bumpy and Carter clearly saw the reform campaign that emerged in parallel with Gladstone's 1866 bill as the opportunity to re-instate a chartist perspective at the heart of popular politics. Working-class radicals 'had sacrificed principle to expedience. They had allowed themselves to be governed by the timid reformers of the country', he told one of the many Yorkshire audiences he addressed on reform. A return to manhood suffrage was necessary and then 'they must march as one man, shoulder to shoulder, determined to conquer'.[31]

Carter's appearances on Reform League platforms were not confined to Yorkshire. As one of its vice-presidents he contributed to set-piece rallies in Birmingham, Glasgow, London and Manchester. Carter was also one of the League deputation that met Disraeli and Lord Stanley in April 1867. His input there concentrated on technical evidence about compounding rates within rental payments, a standard practice in the West Riding that would negate the £5 rating franchise proposed at that point in the Tory reform bill. Carter told Disraeli that he foresaw

> no prospect that the agitation would be stayed if such a bill as that before the House were passed … in his part of the country men who had never advocated principles like those now expressed were coming into them by scores and hundreds, and if the question was not settled

> in the present year, they would have such an agitation as they had never known, and the agitation must not cease till justice and right were done.[32]

Carter's measured reference to scores and hundreds adopting reform underplayed what he and the League had achieved in the West Riding. Its rally on Woodhouse Moor, Leeds, in October 1866 attracted crowds variously estimated between 150,000 and 400,000.[33] Attendance at another the following April was agreed by all parties to be even greater. A few more parades 'of the democratic army' on that scale, Jones declared from one of the five platforms, 'would settle the question'.[34]

Only a cynic could fail to be impressed by accounts of such rallies. Each outdoor rally was prefaced by elaborately choreographed processions, converging from adjacent towns and accompanied by numerous bands – 41 at Leeds in October 1866, 50 at Manchester the following June. Even smaller processions usually mustered several: for example, sax horn and 'Garibaldi Drum and Fife' bands at Reading, or the Rochdale corporation drum and fife band, plus brass and temperance bands from across the region on new year's day 1867 at Conkeyshaw common.[35] The 2nd Hanley rifle volunteers' band headed a Potteries rally; that of the Exmouth volunteer artillery company was prominent at Exeter. Their participation underlined the patriotism of the reform movement. Volunteer corps included more working-class members than is often supposed; though they probably did not equate to the two-thirds of the whole claimed by one National Reform Union lecturer, the prominence of working men was something to which reformers pointed with pride. When Newport's leaguers were granted the use of the 7th Monmouthshire rifle volunteers' drill hall, it spoke louder than any words about the evolution of the reform movement in the town which had seen the most grievous confrontation with the military of the chartist era.[36]

The popular movement for reform also generated a rich material culture. It was a highpoint in the production of elaborate banners. These were not confined to slogans. Thus at Enfield (a hamlet outside Accrington) banners from Great Harwood proclaimed 'Remember Hyde Park and Tory

Mercy', 'Downfall of the Derby Government' and 'Be no longer political slaves'. The Padiham contingent brought a broom mounted on a pole with the legend 'We will sweep out the House of Commons'.[37] The Wortley Manhood Suffrage Association appeared on Woodhouse Moor with a black coffin inscribed 'Robert Lowe, Reviler of the Working classes'. Tyneside reformers mounted an effigy of Lowe on an ass. A Leeds banner depicted Lord Derby as Canute.[38]

At the 1866 monster meeting on Glasgow Green workers processed with a host of model furniture, houses, ships and even anvils and pulpits mounted on banner poles. At a local demonstration in Blackburn, engineering trades unionists marched behind a flat-top truck on which was a large scale model of a railway engine and tender.[39] 'Models were at a discount' on Newcastle town moor in January 1867: a local working men's club carried a model of a circular saw (inscribed 'Reform') sawing through wood (marked 'Tories'), operated by a figure depicting John Bright; and tinplate workers carried a bath inscribed 'A cooler for Lowe' which periodically emptied water over an effigy of him beneath.[40] A giant model of a smoothing plane carried by decorating tradesmen at Exeter was inscribed 'Bright's leveller' and 'Smooth our difficulties', while metal workers carried aloft a model furnace and an anvil on which a chain was being struck by a brawny arm, inscribed 'thus we sever the chains of bondage'.[41] Denton hatters paraded with an outsize cocked hat and Manchester's glassworkers with staves and hats of stained glass; their Midland counterparts exhibited a complete dessert service at an Easter 1867 rally.[42] Acts of physical labour themselves appeared in reform spectacles. One Edinburgh procession included two quarrymen squaring a ton-weight block of stone on the back of a horse-drawn cart. Leeds joiners built a float bearing a fully equipped workshop, in which 'two artisans, in the working costume of their trade, pursued their occupation amid the wonder and applause of the masses who lined the streets'. The mobile workshops of Glasgow's printers, pipemakers and nailmakers dispensed leaflets, clay pipes and 'horse-nails hot from the hammer' to crowds lining the route.[43] Giant models of hydraulic cranes, an Armstrong gun and a complete high pressure engine were carried

on carts to Newcastle town moor, along with a model steamship 'with steam and paddles and machinery all in action'.[44]

Displays of such complexity were more than merely humorous contrivances. They were more, too, than the 'construction and performance of social memory' which, it has been argued, was the principal function of material objects within the culture of popular reform.[45] They had been integral to the performative culture of labour in earlier times, for example in processions celebrating textile workers' patron saint, Bishop Blaize. At Leeds in 1812 '[e]very apparatus of trade from the Comb to the loom was exhibited in carriages adapted to the purpose, and all working as in a regular factory'. Though St Blaize's day had vanished from the popular calendar by 1830, working displays did feature in some demonstrations around the first reform act, and on at least one occasion in anti-poor law demonstrations in the late 1830s.[46] They were, however, conspicuously absent from Chartism, where they would have sat awkwardly alongside the assertion of the suffrage as a universal right rather than as recognition for the performance of a particular social function. By revivifying the form, workers in the 1860s strengthened a claim to citizenship that differentiated between perceived levels of skill and, therefore, economic and social importance. Complex models and *tableaux vivants* bore material witness to workers' skill, education and their role in creating wealth. Significantly most were associated with the wood, metals and, especially, shipbuilding and engineering trades – occupations where apprenticeship endured as the route to entry. Diminution of physical effort consequent on mechanisation (and in these trades the latter remained slender) was seldom paralleled by a significant reduction in the need for mental acuity and knowledge of the capacities of tools and the characteristics of the material to which they were applied. A concept of property in skill ran deep within the British working class.[47] The reform campaign asserted it with particular vigour in response to Robert Lowe's claims that working men should be disqualified from the vote on account of a lack of education, self-discipline and intemperate habits. 'Some coolness there was', a Bradford reformer conceded in a speech in the Delph co-operative hall, but 'Mr Lowe has supplied fuel sufficient to get up the steam'. Lowe had 'slandered, maligned, and insulted the

great masses of the working people', declared a Rotherham workman.[48] (Sensitive to appearances, the League was prepared even to expel council members for drunkenness.[49])

These elaborate processional displays were also profoundly gendered. The trades involved employed no women, in contrast to textiles, tailoring and shoemaking. Women were peripheral to the 1860s popular movement for reform. Hannah Law, a rare female speaker, was unable to find even a seconder for an amendment mentioning female suffrage at one Sheffield reform league meeting.[50] Emphasis on masculine skill and independence asserted that reformers' demands were reasonable. It also characterised those opposing them as prejudiced and extreme. Moir 'treated the claim for a "moderate" measure with contempt. As well speak of a moderately honest man or a moderately chaste woman', he told an Aberdeen mechanics' institute audience. It was not those 'commonly called ignorant' who had opposed the repeal of slavery and the taxes on knowledge, he declared on another occasion.[51] The working classes' 'vastly increased intelligence, education, and independence of character … fully qualified workmen for the franchise', argued York's Reform Association in a petition to parliament. 'Let us show those who traduce and malign us that we are Englishmen, that we are good citizens', a workman urged a Sheffield temperance hall meeting. Others deployed sarcasm, for example the speaker describing himself as 'one of the unenfranchised "roughs"' who moved the foundation resolution for the Reform League in Newport.[52]

The emphasis on skill, however, could also destabilise the movement. Many were content to enfranchise the skilled alone. This became particularly apparent when the first reading of Derby's bill, combined with his failing health and Disraeli's close interest in the measure, suggested that the final shape of franchise reform was open to debate. One Dalkeith shoemaker argued that any more inclusive measure would give the vote to those would not know how to use it, risking 'anarchy, confusion, and the degradation of our country'. An Oldham carpenter wrote to *The Times*, arguing that the line between skilled workers and labourers was as clear and straight as any

other social demarcation and deploring the increasingly common practice of lumping the two together as 'the working class'.[53]

Within a few weeks, this train of thought had also become evident in the initiative to establish a national union of working men's Conservative associations, enterprisingly convened at Leeds and attracting delegates from 16 other mainly northern towns. But the initiative was frail: although a resolution expressing confidence in government reform policy was readily carried, another to create a fully national (rather than exclusively northern) federation was carried by only one vote.[54] The Reform League targeted public meetings convened by operative Conservative groups (much as chartists had done those of the Anti-Corn Law League), taking over the proceedings and passing manhood suffrage resolutions.[55] The Leeds initiative finally bore fruit in a foundation conference held in Halifax after the reform act was passed. A *Times* editorial dutifully deemed it important but concluded that its 'oratory and arguments … betray a transition stage. They belong rather to a fraudful past and to the present year of paradoxes and surprises, than to any policy likely to hold its ground'. The new initiative was virtually eclipsed by the nascent National Union of Conservative and Constitutional Associations, itself 'rather stumbling' in its early years.[56]

III

The fault lines created by skill differentials, together with associated disparities in the extent and regularity of wages, are an important constituent in explaining why a popular movement that in 1866 had seemed implacable in advocating universal male suffrage was reconciled to the restricted franchise eventually conceded in August 1867. They are not, however, a sufficient explanation. A commitment to manhood suffrage was the over-arching context in which the majority of working-class reformers operated, but theirs was a campaign distinguished by a broad readiness to compromise on tactical grounds. It was the latter, rather than either capitulation by the government to the Reform League or opportunism by Disraeli, that shaped the second reform act. Reformers

should ‘not be crotchetty or too nice in the measure of Reform they should prefer’, a speaker observed at a York reform meeting.[57]

Ernest Jones alone threatened to resign when the League endorsed Gladstone’s bill in 1866, and he did so privately and was soon mollified.[58] As Gladstone’s intentions became clear, many provincial meetings passed resolutions for manhood suffrage, yet indicating a readiness to settle for a more-restricted franchise. The Liberal bill ‘was an honest measure and a step in the right direction’ was the usual formula.[59] This did not entail any diminution in political heat: for example, a Galashiels dyeworks foreman quoted Byron in moving such a motion: ‘Who would be free, Themselves must strike the blow’; at Leicester, John Biggs (a local councillor once closely associated with chartism) put the honest bill argument yet concluded by invoking Wellington as he urged his audience ‘up guards and at them!’ As another Leicester worker ruefully observed, in ‘years gone by, their policy was to either have what they wanted or nothing at all: and they had been very well supplied with the latter’.[60]

Acquiescence in the face of Gladstone’s bill was almost immediately overtaken by popular indignation at the lofty pronouncements of the Adullamites. Their claim that working men were not to be trusted with the vote was offensive enough; but as much opprobrium attached to the view that the Cave was mired in hypocrisy and doing the Tories’ dirty work for them. Adullamites were ‘disappointed office-seekers … the cat’s paw of the Tories’, a machinist told an Edinburgh meeting; and if Russell’s ministry was ejected from office because of its ‘honest adherence’ to the reform bill, working men could no more expect concessions from a Derby ministry than they could gather figs from thistles.[61] Bright and Gladstone spent much of the Easter parliamentary recess on the stump, nurturing the view that reformers of all persuasions should rally to defend the ministry against the ‘dirty conspiracy’ (Bright’s words) of the Opposition benches and the Cave, ‘a small section of men who do not accept the name Tory, but zealously do its work’. Supporting

Gladstone's bill was now 'a necessity forced upon them by the enemies of Reform', to quote a shoemaker speaking in Stirling's union hall.[62]

The practical outcome of popular indignation was a mass campaign of petitioning and memorials, initially for the reform bill but soon also calling for the Queen to refuse the resignation of the Russell ministry and, even, for the dissolution of parliament so that a general election might show the mood of the country. Petitioning was an opportunity for reformers to reach out to the moderate and the uninvolved. Ostensibly bland phrases such as 'electors and non-electors will be waited on this week in order to afford them an opportunity of signing the petition in favour of the Government Reform Bill', veiled a step-change in the micro-politics of shopfloor and doorstep.[63] These were canvassed petitions, not 'laid down' to await the signatures of the already converted, as the petitions of the anti-slavery movement, for example, had been. Like chartism's national petitions, they made a particular rhetorical claim for legitimacy and inclusiveness; since they did not necessarily commit their signatories to a particular definition of franchise reform, they attracted the support of a wide political spectrum.

News of Russell's resignation on 21 June pushed the petitioning campaign in the direction of memorialising the Crown for a dissolution. It also stimulated a flurry of resolutions voicing thanks to former ministers, particularly Gladstone ('one of nature's noblemen', one worker told a meeting at Grantham's market cross). The mood of these 'Indignation Meetings' was truculent. The meeting at which Abel Heywood moved a resolution to petition Queen Victoria, for example, was announced across the walls of Manchester in placards declaiming 'treachery and injustice'.[64] In Hanley, placards publicised a hastily convened meeting under the headline: 'The Ministerial Crisis, A Tory Government, Foreign War, No Reform, *versus* A Liberal Government, Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform'. Antipathies to the Whigs, largely quiescent since Russell's reform initiatives in the late 1850s, were rekindled. Moving a memorial to the Queen to dissolve parliament and force an election on the question of reform, James Maw declared that 'he hated the

Tories as much as the devil but he hated the old Whigs as bad as the devil and hell put together'. Supporters of Dunkellin's amendment, which had precipitated the change of ministry, were 'mean, cowardly, and paltry', 'factious, discreditable', 'cowardly and unmanly', 'sneaking' and a disgrace', a Hinckley radical councillor told a rally in Leicester's temperance hall.[65]

It was now that the concept of a reform crisis became current, a situation requiring a heightened response from working-class reformers. 'If the working men desired the franchise they must work for it themselves', Leno told a rally in Reading. 'He wondered how long working men would submit to be governed by that class who looked upon them as so many chattels', a workman told a nocturnal rally in Northampton's market square.[66] Official handling of the events at Hyde Park on 23 July considerably increased the sense of militancy. Those who had once been active chartists were especially vocal. At the Scottish reform conference in Dundee the following week, Moir urged the slogan 'Reform, and down with Lord Derby'. Henry Vincent, appearing alongside Edmond Beales and John Stuart Mill, spoke of a nationwide determination to topple the Tories: 'Loyalty to the crown … did not mean loyalty to Lord Derby'. At West Bromwich, Arthur O'Neill invoked the memory of Peterloo, adding that 'all great changes came neither from the Whig nor the Tory party, but from the people'. He doubtless had Peel in mind as he went on to argue that more measures had been forced from Tory than from Whig governments. 'They yielded when they saw the people determined', O'Neill observed and 'they might still get a great measure from the Tory Government'. Benjamin Lucraft, by contrast, predicted Tory resistance and violence.[67]

IV

More striking than such indications of popular opinion, however, was the extent to which the reform movement was penetrating almost every corner of Britain. By summer 1867 there were at least 430 formally constituted Reform League branches, 329 of them in the provinces across 282 separate localities (several towns had multiple ward and/or trades society branches).[68] William Farish claimed that 450 meetings had been held over the fortnight of parliament's Easter recess

alone.[69] The *Daily Telegraph* compiled a list of all the reform meetings it could identify between 14 March and 8 August. This totalled 440 but was certainly not exhaustive: meetings in at least 77 other locations (28% more) can be readily identified during the four week period around Easter; others must have been organised in the 160 provincial communities with Reform League branches where meetings were not recorded.[70] *Inter alia* the *Telegraph* commended the restraint of working-class audiences: while they had apparently been satisfied with Gladstone's reform bill, it added, they were now unlikely to accept any bill 'not of a more extensive character'.

Large demonstrations were recorded in places where there had apparently been no political meeting since 1848, such as Kendal and Hinckley (Leicestershire).[71] Meetings also took place in locations without any documented record of chartist activity. Some of these locations were essentially new communities that had mushroomed during the mid-Victorian boom: industrial towns (Jarrow and Widnes), ports (Gravesend, Holyhead and Shoreham), bathing places (Llandudno and Rhyl) and emerging suburban centres: Bromley, and (around Manchester) Altrincham, Sale, Rusholme and Whitefield. Meetings in old-established market centres without parliamentary borough status, such as Bicester, Cranbrook, Godalming, Luton, Maidenhead and Oakham, suggest a genuine surge in popular political awareness.[72] In addition to Llandudno and Rhyl, new ground was similarly opened up in Wales, with bi-lingual rallies at Corris (Merionethshire), Rhosllanerchrugog (Denbighshire), Cwmbran (Monmouthshire), Llanfyllin (Montgomeryshire) and New Quay (Cardigan).[73]

Even in the smallest new centres of political activity, the care devoted to ensuring meetings were successful was prodigious. The Buckinghamshire railway 'town' of Wolverton had returned a population of only 2,370 at the 1861 census. Yet it boasted a branch of the Reform League. Six trades unions and five friendly societies (their members in regalia, a sure signifier of respectability) were involved in a procession to an open-air rally that set out (accompanied inevitably by a brass band) from a baptist schoolroom one September afternoon. En route it merged with another from

even-smaller Stony Stratford, headed by two more bands. The national president of the Reform League, Edmund Beales, was one of two of its council members who addressed the demonstration and an ensuing evening meeting at Wolverton's Science and Art Institute. Total attendance was, perhaps optimistically, estimated at 3,000, though even the conservative *Bucks Herald* thought at least 1,000 attended.[74]

Earlier that month, Beales had attended the inauguration of the Leeds Manhood Suffrage Association. Ernest Jones accompanied him and delivered a passionate appeal for manhood suffrage, unashamedly appealing to audience loyalty to the chartist project and to him personally. Yet his message also stressed how the reform campaign was transcending class divisions: 'he said let those distinctions perish. He saw not a class, but a nation'. 'Everything now depends upon the vastness of the movement', he told Dumbarton reformers in October. Demonstrations must be numerous, widespread and frequent if truly national pressure was to be maintained and the government persuaded to introduce a reform bill of its own. Just because they could not muster numbers as Leeds or Birmingham did, Bright told Chelmsford workers, they should not imagine they had 'no part in the great work … the efforts of all will be needed'.[75] Open air rallies were held during parliament's Christmas recess, in 'drizzling, comfortless rain' at Birmingham and Manchester, and after overnight snow on New Year's Day in Blackburn, Dumfries and Rochdale. Snow did not deter a reported 7000 who marched ten miles from Preston to Blackburn, where they joined a crowd so vast that it needed to be addressed from three separate platforms around the town square. Resolutions condemned the Cave while praising Russell, Gladstone, Bright, Mill, Edward Baines 'and all other true friends of reform, for their patriotism in defence of the rights of the people'. Similar resolutions were passed at a nocturnal rally near Rochdale. Thousands processed through gas-lit streets with banners and torches to Cronkyshaw common 'where, with the snow to a depth of six inches, and the thermometer at freezing point, they stood for an hour to listen to the oft-told tale of reform'.[76]

Comparisons with chartism, some favourable but mostly not, were frequent at this point. *Blackwoods* commented acerbically on these winter rallies, while predicting that 'all the respectability of London' would soon mobilise as it had done in April 1848. The *Manchester Courier* detected 'the revolutionary tendencies of a revived Chartism' and the *Exeter & Plymouth Gazette* reminded readers of 'the balderdash' spouted by radical agitators from Jack Cade through chartism to the fenians.[77] Others invoked Thomas Macaulay's opinion of the 1842 chartist petition, that it indicated both the complete unfitness of the petitioners to exercise political judgment and the certainty of barbarism if their prayers were enacted.[78] 'Of all the illusions of the Cave, this is the most remarkable,' Macaulay's nephew George Trevelyan MP, told Tyneside reformers, pointing out that by 1852 his uncle had supported franchise reform, 'temperately and cautiously, but in a large and liberal spirit'.[79]

Liberals like Trevelyan recognised that the real historical parallel was not with 1842, when Chartism for all its strength had commanded very limited little sympathy within parliament, but with 1832, when members of both houses had come to accept (some more willingly than others) the need for reform. Compromise and conciliation were necessary for social and political stability to persist. Yet compromise and conciliation were beset by controversy. This had been strikingly illustrated in December at a thronged meeting organised by Burton-on-Trent's working men's reform committee. The Bass brewery provided accommodation for it, even though Michael Thomas Bass (MP for Derby) and his son (MP for East Staffordshire) – both constitutional liberals – declined to attend because manhood suffrage would be 'disastrous', 'uncertain and revolutionary'. However, after Beales and George Potter (editor of the labour paper *Beehive*) had delivered set-piece addresses, M. T. Bass sensationally rose from the floor of the meeting to speak:

> It seemed to him unbecoming to withhold his sympathy with their wants and wishes … [but] he did not think manhood suffrage was in the interest of the working classes themselves. (A Voice, "We are sure it is.") He did not think they were sufficiently instructed to enable them

> to fulfil their good intentions (Hisses.) … there were great numbers destitute of the requisite political information … It was useless to talk about natural rights in regard to this matter … He feared not the people but he was afraid lest they might be misled into measures that might produce irretrievable disaster (Confusion.)

'At this stage of the proceedings', a reporter concluded, 'the excitement and noise became so great that we are unable to continue'.[80] Both the Bass MPs went on cautiously to support the Disraeli bill, though any new-found respect for the aspirations of their employees was doubtless out-weighed by apprehensions that a restored Gladstone administration would introduce a more far-reaching measure.[81]

When the scope of Disraeli's bill became apparent in February 1867, pragmatism among liberals and radicals became increasingly apparent, with the aim of preventing the passage of 'a dishonest bill'. Members of the Reform League and National Reform Union (often seen as polarised) readily collaborated. Resolutions such as 'nothing short of Household Suffrage with the Ballot can be permanently satisfactory to the working classes' (passed at Durham) implicitly offered acceptance of a restricted franchise as an interim measure. A Birmingham League rally readily conceded universal male suffrage in favour of household suffrage with a lodger franchise. At Rochdale, League and Union combined at a public meeting and passed stringent resolutions against the bill ('a mockery, a delusion, and a snare'), fancy franchises and the duality of votes ('most disastrous to the country'). Middlesbrough's chartist veteran James Maw warmly supported a motion that any reform bill must enfranchise 'a large number of the working classes', without specifying how large or how defined. Another chartist, William Farish at Chester, accepted household suffrage without any neutralising caveats while urging Gladstone's son (beside him on the platform) to encourage his father to deal more decisively with that 'very slippery fish' Disraeli. And at Manchester, the demonstration that was so memorably crowned by the presence of 'the

heroes of Peterloo' was a joint League-Union initiative, hailed by Jacob Bright as indicating their effective merger.[82]

V

Of all the provincial Leaguers who reached out to middle-class liberalism from the spring of 1867, Robert Meek Carter was the most ambitious and significant. This was partly because Leeds was the hub of the League's Yorkshire department, its profile higher in the provincial movement than any other centre except Birmingham; and partly because Carter necessarily had to deal with Edward Baines, proprietor of the *Leeds Mercury*, one of Leeds' two MPs and the promoter in 1864 of the £6 borough franchise bill that first drew Lowe's anti-suffragist wrath. Theirs was a relationship of 'crucial significance in the coming of reform'.[83] Baines refused all connection with Carter's Leeds Manhood Suffrage Association, pointedly declining its invitation to speak at the great West Riding meeting on Woodhouse moor in October 1866. It is unlikely he would have been at ease among speakers who included two former chartist prisoners (Snowden and Jones) as well as Beales; but, at the widely reported evening meeting that followed, Carter's criticism of those who declined to participate was confined to another moderate Liberal, the MP for York.[84] Then in March, Baines attended at short notice a meeting Carter convened to energise local reformers against the government. In a carefully worded speech, Baines publicly committed himself to 'a large and generous admission of men within the pale of the constitution … and called upon the people by meetings such as that to support those who were inclined to do so in going forward'. Praising Baines as he did so, Carter in turn moved a resolution not for manhood suffrage but for 'a larger number of working men' to be enfranchised than either the new bill projected or Gladstone currently favoured.[85]

From this occasion there emerged a proposal for a second mass demonstration on Woodhouse moor at Easter, which Baines pledged to attend. While insisting that this should include at least one resolution affirming manhood suffrage as the ultimate aim, Carter was careful

to help frame others 'that would not offend those gentlemen who could not go quite so far'. However, this rapprochement was nearly wrecked by Gladstone's proposed amendment of the reform bill to base the franchise on a £6 rental, a measure Baines and his supporters warmly endorsed. Describing it as 'meagre and niggardly', Carter was coruscating:

> If the Liberals were going back again to their old talk about £5 rating and £6 rental … it was time that the people should tell them that they would regard them as little better than their enemies … they were seeking their rights and privileges, and they did not intend to give Lord Russell and Mr. Gladstone any more peace than they intended to give Lord Derby and Disraeli.[86]

Mindful perhaps that a new reform act, whatever its scope, would create a significantly expanded electorate, Baines stood by his undertaking to attend the Easter rally. Carter for his part publicly apologised for remarks made about Baines' brother at the time of the Gladstone amendment.[87] At the rally the two men shared a platform not only with Jones, Snowden and Beales but also with Charles Bradlaugh. Moving a vote of thanks to Carter that evening, Ernest Jones declared to cheers that Gladstone's strength lay not in those who occupied the opposition benches in the Commons, 'but in two or three millions [among] the people of this country'. Baines demurred, but it is unlikely many noticed, or worried if they did. The foundations for viable co-operation in Leeds between moderate (and mainly middle-class) liberals and advanced (and mainly working-class) reformers had been secured.[88]

The movement for reform diminished in urgency the further the bill proceeded into its committee stage. The sentiments expressed by Ernest Jones at Kendal, quoted at the beginning of this article, were shared by all reformers that summer: a certain astonishment at what had been achieved, interlaced with obviously qualified satisfaction at the emerging outcome. 'How the Reform League had been able to get together its hundreds of thousands of people was to him a mystery', Arthur O'Neill admitted in August to the Reform League's annual Midlands meeting at

Birmingham's oddfellows' hall. 'After so long a period of sleep on political subjects he never expected to see such a noble awakening as there had been during the last eighteen months'.[89] But reform in English and Welsh counties and (at this point) all Scotland and Ireland remained unfinished business, and the household suffrage delivered by the act was not unconditional. London newspapers found much mirth in the separate Crystal Palace celebrations organised by Conservatives and reformers, especially when first Russell, then Gladstone, and at the last moment Bright declined to join the latter.

In the provinces the mood was decidedly muted. The only celebrations of note occurred in October at Northampton and Leeds. Popular participation was limited as both events consisted of a carefully stage-managed meal. Northampton's was as much about its sitting Liberal MPs' management of a constituency that was already being cultivated by the National Secular Society, ahead of Charles Bradlaugh's first parliamentary challenge there the following year.[90] Similarly, the Reform League banquet in Leeds was intended to consolidate Carter's bid to become an MP for the borough at the next election. The electoral failures in 1868 of Beales, Jones and the League's secretary, George Howell, have rather obscured the success of Carter at Leeds: Baines headed the poll, but Carter was also returned with majorities of 5,668 over the best-placed Conservative and 9,447 over an establishment Liberal.

At the Leeds banquet in October 1867, Carter encapsulated the prevailing mood: 'they were to remember that they had only just got in the thin end of the wedge'.[91] Any triumphalism was neutralised by the consciousness of how much ground remained to be covered to achieve even a uniform household franchise, still more so universal male suffrage.

Herein lies the answer to the ostensible apathy that greeted the second reform act. However, it would be erroneous to interpret this muted reception as popular indifference. On the contrary, as this article has shown, popular mobilisation was significant in size and impact. It extended from mass rallies that rivalled chartism's a quarter of century before, to a multitude of

purely local initiatives. These were far from confined to communities that stood to gain from a larger enfranchisement or from the redistribution of seats.

A significant number were in communities with little if any previous history of political mobilisation. That many were widely reported beyond their immediate locality indicates the powerful hold the reform movement achieved over the public mind. Lengthy accounts of Wolverton's rally (detailed above), for example, appeared in the London *Daily News*, Edinburgh's *Caledonian Mercury*, *Croydon's Weekly Standard*, the *Hereford Journal*, *Morpeth Herald*, *Norfolk News* and *Shrewsbury Free Press*. The burgeoning newspaper press both conveyed, and itself did much to create, a sense of an accelerating movement unparalleled since chartism.

Crucially and unlike the chartists, however, activists for reform in the mid-1860s were mostly reconcilable to incremental change. This poses the question to what extent their protests really mattered. That the manoeuvres of party management were 'incidental to the progress of popular social movements' was a key principle of Maurice Cowling's magisterial history. While readily conceding that '[t]he passage of the Reform Act of 1867 was effected in a context of public agitation', Cowling was emphatic that 'it cannot be explained as a simple consequence'.[92] In offering its account of the provincial agitation for reform, this article makes no claim to instate a simple causal chain. However, one ventures to suggest that the extent and intensity of this agitation have alike been underestimated in previous histories. Parliamentarians were not unmindful of the increasing passion with which support for reform was being asserted; nor would they have been immune from speculating what the consequences might be if concessions were not made to it.

To assess how decisively such considerations weighed on the minds of MPs would require a detailed investigation of private correspondence far beyond the scope of this article. Likewise beyond its scope are the implications of events in 1866-7 for labour politics later in the century. However, as several of the localities discussed above reveal, the fluidities of local political culture had a considerable bearing on the relationship between 'polite' liberalism and the politics of labour.

Such fluidity increased rather than diminished in importance during the decade after the second reform act.[93] The popular movement for reform in 1866-7 itself re-ignited broad interest in political participation, an interest that in turn contributed to the subsequent consolidation of popular liberalism (and to some extent conservatism also, though this is less immediately obvious). Both the immediate and longer-term significance of the popular reform agitation derived not from the demolition of London park railings one July afternoon in 1866, but rather from a nationwide mobilisation of political opinion, on a scale without parallel since the 1840s.

---

[1] Royden Harrison, 'Introduction to the Second Edition', *Before the Socialists: Studies in Labour and Politics, 1861-1881* (Aldershot, 1994), xxiii.

[2] Eugenio Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform: Popular Liberalism in the Age of Gladstone, 1860-1880* (Cambridge, 1992), 262.

[3] 'The Liberal Programme', *Fortnightly Review* 7 (Sept. 1867), 359-69 (360, 361).

[4] *The Times*, 13 May 1867.

[5] Maurice Cowling, *1867: Disraeli, Gladstone and Revolution: The Passing of the Second Reform Bill* (Cambridge, 1967), 310.

[6] *Westmorland Gazette*, 21 and 28 July 1866.

[7] *Westmorland Gazette*, 8 June 1867.

[8] Ernest Jones, *Democracy Vindicated. A Lecture Delivered to the Edinburgh Working Men's Institute, on the 4th January, 1867, in Reply to Professor Blackie's Lecture on Democracy, Delivered the Previous Evening* (Edinburgh, 1867). Jones received over 100 invitations to speak in the weeks after this debate; see Miles Taylor, *Ernest Jones, Chartism, and the Romance of Politics, 1819-1869* (Oxford, 2003), 221–5.

[9] *Beehive*, 9 Sept. 1865.

[10] *Bradford Observer* [*BO*], 6 Sept. 1866.

[11] *Birmingham Daily Post* [*BDP*], 28 Aug. 1866; *Leeds Mercury* [*LM*], 3 Sept. 1867. 'Edmonds, George (1788–1868)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2013 [http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/view/article/74226, accessed 16 Sept 2015].

[12] *Glasgow Herald* [*GH*], 22 Oct. 1866; see also W. H. Fraser, *Chartism in Scotland* (Pontypool, 2010), *passim*.

[13] *Liverpool Mercury*, 10 Apr. 1866.

[14] *Bath Chronicle*, 16 Aug. 1866; see Carlos Flick, *The Birmingham Political Union and the Movements for Reform in Britain, 1830-1839* (Hamden, Ct, 1978), 75, 86, 101–2, 177; David J. Moss, *Thomas Attwood: The Biography of a Radical* (Montreal, 1990), 159–60, 210, 274.

[15] *Daily News* [*DN*], 17 Oct. 1866 and 3 Jan. 1867.

[16] *Leeds Times*, 13 Oct. 1866; *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, 26 Oct. 1866; *LM*, 3 June 1867.

[17] *Bristol Mercury*, 8 Sept. 1866; *BDP*, 28 Aug. 1866. Frost's importance hardly needs referencing; for the bookbinder Jaffray, see the Jaffray Collection in the British Library.

[18] 'Lucraft', *Dictionary of Labour Biography* [*DLB*], vol. 7; 'Leno' *DLB* vol. 11.

[19] Harrison, *Before the Socialists*, 140; *Derby Mercury*, 17 Apr. 1867

[20] *LM*, 9 Oct. 1866; see also Catherine Howe, *Halifax 1842: A Year of Crisis* (2014), *passim.*

[21] *Cheshire Observer* [*CO*], 30 June 1866 and 6 Apr. 1867; see *The Autobiography of William Farish: The Struggles of a Hand-Loom Weaver*, ed. O. Ashton and S. Roberts (1996).

[22] *BDP*, 25 Sept. 1866; Paul Pickering, *Chartism and the Chartists in Manchester and Salford* (Basingstoke, 1995), *passim*.

[23] *BDP*, 1 Aug. 1866; see *DLB* vol. 6.

[24] *Manchester Courier*, 7 July 1866; see also *DLB* vol. 1.

[25] B[ishopsgate] I[nstitute, George Howell Collection], HOWELL/1/2, Allsop to Howell, 22 Nov. 1865. 'Allsop, Thomas (1795–1880)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Sept 2014 [http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/view/article/416, accessed 25 Sept 2015].

[26] *Middlesbrough Weekly News*, 25 Jan. and 29 June 1866, 22 Mar. 1867, 12 Apr. and 27 Sept. 1867; *DN* 24 Apr. 1867; see also *DLB* vol. 10.

[27] [Liverpool] *Daily Post*, special supplement, 12 March 1867.

[28] *LM*, 1 Mar. 1867; *Exeter & Plymouth Gazette*, 1 Feb. 1867; *Dundee Courier*, 31 July 1867.

[29] *LM*, 7 Sept. 1866, 24 April 1867.

[30] Malcolm Chase, *Chartism a New History* (Manchester, 2007), 343-5; Derek Fraser, *Urban Politics in Victorian England* (Leicester, 1979), 106–7, 258, 263–4; D. G. Wright, 'Leeds Politics and the American Civil War', *Northern History* 9 (1974), 96–122.

[31] *DN*, 7 Sept. 1866.

[32] *LM*, 3 Apr. 1867.

[33] *LM*, 9 Oct., *BO* 11 Oct., and *Leeds Times*, 13 Oct. 1866.

[34] BI, HOWELL/11/2E/7, 'Yorkshire Reform Demonstration' handbill; *LM*, 9 Apr. 1867.

[35] *LM*, 9 Oct. 1866, *BDP*, 3 June 1867; *DN*, 3 Jan. 1867 and 9 July 1866.

[36] *Shrewsbury Free Press*, 15 Sept. 1866; *Exeter & Plymouth Gazette*, 1 Feb. 1867; *Caledonian Mercury* [*CM*], 15 Feb. 1866; *York Herald*, 10 Jan. 1867; *Western Daily Press*, 26 Sept. 1866.

[37] *Blackburn Standard*, 15 Aug. 1866.

[38] *LM*, 9 Oct. 1866 and 24 Apr. 1867; *Newcastle Guardian*, 2 Feb. 1867; *BO*, 11 Oct. 1866.

[39] *GH*, 17 Oct. 1866; *DN*, 3 Jan. 1867.

[40] *Newcastle Weekly Journal*, 29 Jan. 1867.

[41] *Exeter & Plymouth Gazette*, 1 Feb. 1867.

[42] *DN*, 23 Apr. 1867; [Liverpool] *Daily Post*, 3 June 1867.

[43] *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 25 Nov. 1866; *LM*, 24 Apr. 1867; *GH*, 17 Oct. 1866.

[44] *Newcastle Guardian*, 2 Feb. 1867.

[45] Mark Nixon, Matthew Roberts and Gordon Pentland, 'The Material Culture of Scottish Reform Politics, *c.* 1820 - *c.*1884', *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 32:1 (2012), 28-49 (46).

[46] *LM*, 15 Feb. 1812; *Manchester Times*, 30 June 1838. I am grateful to Katrina Navickas for these references and for discussing this issue with me.

[47] Malcolm Chase, *Early Trade Unionism: Fraternity, Skill and the Politics of Labour* (Aldershot, 2000), *passim*.

[48] *DN*, 26 March 1866, *Sheffield & Rotherham Independent* [*SRI*], 10 Apr. 1866.

[49] BI, HOWELL/11/2D/96 undated draft motion to expel Charles Wooltorton.

[50] *SRI*, 28 Mar. 1867. On gender and the 1860s reform movement, see Catherine Hall, Keith McClelland and Jane Rendall, *Defining the Nation: Class, Race, Gender and the Reform Act of 1867* (Cambridge, 2000), 71-178, and James Vernon (ed.) *Re-Reading the Constitution: New Narratives in the Political History of England's Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1996), 230-53.

[51] *Aberdeen Journal*, 3 Apr. 1866; *GH*, 26 Jan. 1866.

[52] *DN*, 23 Mar., *SRI* 3 Apr., and *Western Daily Press*, 26 Sept. 1866.

[53] *CM*, 23 January 1866; *The Times*, 19 January 1866.

[54] The southern representatives came from Birmingham, London and Reading, *LM*, 23 Mar. 1867. See also E. J. Feuchtwanger, *Disraeli, Democracy and the Tory Party* (Oxford, 1968), 123.

[55] E.g. Huddersfield, *LM*, 25 Mar. 1867; London, *The Times*, 18 June 1867.

[56] *The Times*, 28 September 1867; Hugh Cunningham, 'The Conservative Party and Patriotism', in Robert Colls and Philip Dodd (ed.), *Englishness: Politics and Culture, 1880-1920* (2nd edn, 2014), 308. See also Feuchtwanger, *Disraeli,* 45, 122–31.

[57] *York Herald*, 13 Jan. 1866.

[58] BI, HOWELL/1/3, Jones to Howell, 4, 12 and 17 May 1866.

[59] *LM*, 17 Mar. 1866. Numerous honest bill resolutions were passed in these weeks, especially over the Easter Holiday period. See, for example, *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 24 Feb; *BO*, 22 Mar; *DN*, 23 Mar; *BDP*, 27 Mar; *Derby Mercury*, 28 Mar; *Newcastle Courant*, 30 Mar; *Dundee Courier* and *Leeds Times*, 31 Mar; [Liverpool] *Daily Post*, 2 Apr; *LM*, and *SRI*, 3 Apr; *LM*, and *BDP*, 4 Apr; *BO* and *BDP*, 5 Apr. 1866.

[60] *CM*, 3 Mar., *Leicester Chronicle* [*LC*], 24 Mar., and *DN*, 26 Mar. 1866.

[61] *CM*, 3 Apr. 1866.

[62] *Western Times*, 29 Mar. 1866; *Stirling Observer*, 5 Apr. 1866.

[63] *Stirling Observer*, 5 Apr. 1866.

[64] *Grantham Journal*, 30 June, *BO*, 28 June and *Manchester Courier*, 23 June 1866.

[65] *Middlesbrough Weekly News*, 29 June, *BDP*, 30 June and *LC*, 23 June 1866.

[66] *Reading Mercury* and *Northampton Mercury* [*NM*], 14 July 1866.

[67] *Dundee Courier*, 1 Aug. 1866; *Manchester Times*, 4 and 18 Aug. 1866; *BDP*, 21 Aug. 1866.

[68] BI, HOWELL/11/2D/105, 'List of departments and branches', [July 1867?]. In 1860 the League had numbered only 24 London, and 21 provincial, branches: see HOWELL/11/2C/40, 28 February [1860].

[69] *CO*, 30 June 1866.

[70] Meetings, 18 Mar. to 15 Apr., listed in *Daily Telegraph* report reprinted in *LM*, 14 Aug. 1866. Additional locations for this period identified from British Library 19th-Century Newspapers on-line, parts 1-4 (accessed 16 August 2015). Both lists checked against BI, HOWELL/11/2D/105, 'List of departments and branches', [July 1867?].

[71] *LC*, 7 Apr. 1866.

[72] Comparison based on Dorothy Thompson, *The Chartists: Popular Politics in the Industrial Revolution* (1984), 'Location and timing of Chartist activity', 341–68.

[73] *Shrewsbury Free Press*, 15 Sept. 1866; *Wrexham Advertiser*, 18 Aug. 1866 *LM*, 14 Aug. 1866; Ryland Wallace, *'Organise! Organise! Organise!' A Study of Reform Agitations in Wales, 1840-1886* (Cardiff, 1991), 107; *Wrexham Advertiser*, 20 Oct. 1866. Comparison based on 'Location of Chartist activity in Wales' in Malcolm Chase, *The Chartists: Perspectives and Legacies* (2015), 111-15.

[74] *Bucks Herald* and *NM*, 22 Sept. 1866.

[75] *LM*, 8 Sept. 1866; *GH*, 22 Oct. 1866; *DN*, 3 Jan. 1867.

[76] *DN*, 3 Jan. 1867.

[77] 'Who are the reformers, and what do they want?', *Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine*, 101 (Jan. 1867), 115–32 (132); *Manchester Courier*, 8 Jan. 1867 (see also 15 Jan. and 5 Feb.); *Exeter & Plymouth Gazette*, 1 Feb. 1867. See also *SRI*, 22 Jan. 1867 and *DN* and *Standard*, 5 Feb. 1867.

[78] E.g. *The Times*, 14 Jan., *Essex Standard* and *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*, 16 Jan., *Devizes & Wiltshire Gazette*, 17 Jan., and *Hants Advertiser* and *Norfolk Chronicle*, 19 Jan. 1867.

[79] *Newcastle Weekly Journal*, 29 Jan. 1867.

[80] *BDP*, 10 Dec. 1866; *Derby Mercury*, 12 Dec. 1866.

[81] Cowling, *1867*, 54, 200, 234, 273, 299.

[82] *Manchester Times*, 2 Mar., *Dundee Courier*, 12 Mar., *LM*, 20 Mar, *York Herald*, 30 Mar., *CO*, 6 Apr., and [Liverpool] *Daily Post*, 3 June 1867.

[83] Fraser, *Urban politics*, 263 (see also Wright, 'Leeds Politics and the American Civil War'); Robert Saunders. *Democracy and the Vote in British Politics, 1848-1867: The Making of the Second Reform Act* (Farnham, 2011), 181, 184–5, 187, 203.

[84] *LM*, 9 Oct. and *Leeds Times*, 13 Oct. 1866.

[85] *LM*, 27 Feb. and 1 Mar. 1867.

[86] *LM*, 20 and 27 Mar. 1867.

[87] *LM*, 14 and 20 May 1867.

[88] *LM*, 24 Apr. 1867.

[89] *BDP*, 6 Aug. 1867.

[90] *NM*, 26 October 1867; Edward Royle, *Radicals, Secularists and Republicans: Popular Freethought in Britain, 1866-1915* (Manchester, 1980), 6-7, 23-4.

[91] *LM*, 16 Oct. 1867.

[92] Cowling, *1867*, 3.

[93] See James Owen, *Labour and the Caucus: Working-Class Radicalism and Organised Liberalism in England, 1868-1888* (Liverpool, 2014), chapter 1.