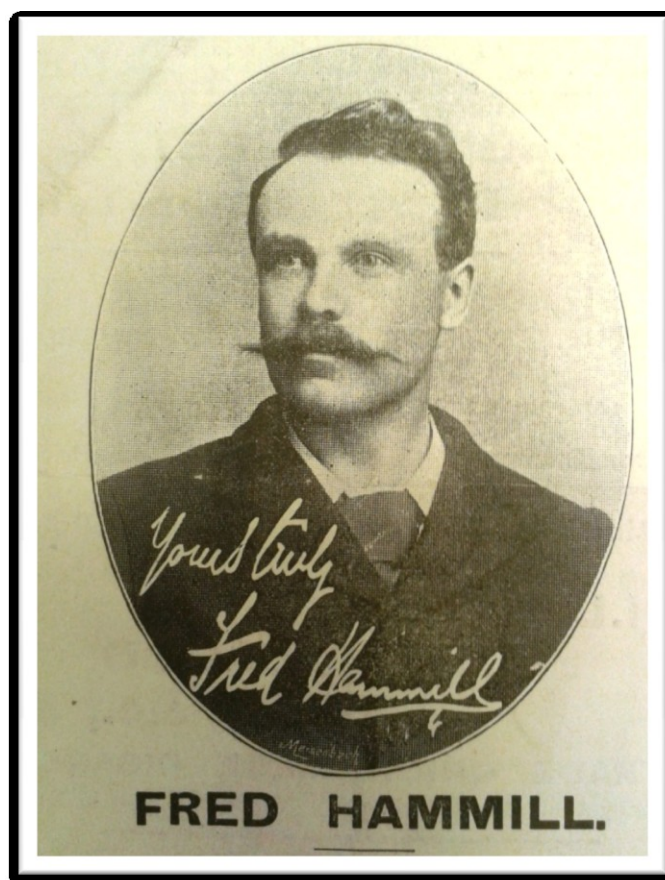


Fred Hammill (1856-1901) – labour activist and politician

“the workers of England have the power in their own hands, and can overturn the constitution of England in 12 months if they care to do it, and our work is to educate them to it.”¹



Summary

Frederick Parkin Hammill was always called Fred. He was born, trained as an engineer, and married in Leeds with three children before moving to London to work at Woolwich Arsenal, where he was a well-known labour activist and trade unionist. Fred apparently gave defence evidence in the Trafalgar Square Riot Trials. He was active in the Fabian Society, the London Trades Council and in the TUC, and he would speak indoors and outdoors to crowds of up to 6,000 people. In 1891 Fred organised the London strike of bus and tram workers and he was one of the founders of the Independent Labour Party. In 1893 he spoke at a demonstration and rally in Trafalgar Square on workers' rights. In 1895 he was the first socialist to stand for election to parliament in Newcastle, but he didn't win, and changed tack to run a pub, for which he was criticised politically. He died on 8 July 1901 from influenza, aged 45 years.

¹ The Necessity of an Independent Labour Party, by Fred Hammill (1893)

1856

Frederick Parkin Hammill (Fred) was born in Hunslet, Leeds in 1856, being the oldest child of Thomas, an iron driller **and pub landlord**, and Ellen (née Parkin, 1829-1901), who were married in 1855. Thomas' father was Archibald, a barber. Ellen's father was William, a labourer. Ellen was born on 15 November 1829 in the village of Baldersby-St-James in North Yorkshire; and she dies in Leeds around the start of 1901. His father Thomas dies **nine years** earlier in 1892.

Fred is the oldest child and his younger siblings are Mary Emily (1858-1932), Joseph Broughton (1866-1927), and an infant girl called Ada (1870-?), possibly the child of a relative of Fred's mother and being a different *Ada* to Fred's future wife.² Fred's sibling Ada is using the surname Parkin when aged 10, but changes her surname back to Hammill in her adult life.

1861

In the census, Fred as a young child with his family are living in a 'beer house' or pub which is run by their father – the Grey Mare Inn, 132 Low Road, Hunslet, Leeds. There is a Grey Mare Yard with houses nearby.

1875

Edward (Ted) Carpenter gives a series of lectures in Leeds on socialism. Isabella Ford attends, as perhaps Fred did too. Isabella is a year older than Fred, coming from a middle-class Quaker family and the youngest of eight children. She becomes a leading activist in women's rights, trade union activism, international peace, and like Fred will become one of the founders of the Independent Labour Party.

1877

Aged around 21 years, Fred is reported³ as assisting John De Morgan⁴ and around 40,000 people in removing some of the rails from the Middleton Railway on Hunslet Moor in protest against the railway company's privatised use of open space against the rights of commoners.

² Generally found in birth, marriage and death registers, electoral rolls and national census forms.

³ Fred Hammill – A Short Biography (1893), [online resource], Cornell University, Kheel Center; USA. *This text is a printed section at the start of: "The Necessity of an Independent Labour Party" pamphlet, cited here in his publications.*

⁴ Sometimes described in current accounts as being a 'Victorian eco-warrior'.

1879

Aged around 23 years, in 1879 in Leeds, Fred marries Ada Peel (1861-1938) who is then aged around 18 years and they go on to have three children (Arthur Earnest, Gertrude Wright, and Ellen Isabella). We can only speculate that their third child is named after Fred's mother and Isabella Ford **who by now might be** a family friend.

The same year Fred's younger sister Mary Emily marries Charles Baldwinson, and they later have a son, Percy Hammill Baldwinson.

1881

Now married, their first child has been born and they are all living in a small house with Fred's parents at 35 Marlborough Court, Leeds along with Fred's younger brother Joseph⁵ (14 years old) and younger Ada, described in the census as a boarder (10 years old). Fred's sister, our second-great grandmother Mary has left home by then. Fred describes himself as an unemployed mechanic.

Fred was probably already a member of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, ASE, while living in Leeds. From the local meetings he would have been aware of the printed reports sent to all branches, which showed reports from every branch on the state of local trade. Only the Woolwich, Barnsley and Ulveston branches had reported that local trade was "improving", while the vast majority of branches in England stated trade was "bad". Between 1885 and 1890 the ASE membership in Woolwich would rise by 13% each year for five years. The ASE also had a scheme of 'Travel Cards' where a branch could pay towards the costs of an unemployed member looking for work in another town or city.

1884

The Fabian Society is founded by Edward Pease, a cousin of Isabella Ford. Fred is an early member.

Mid-1880s

So sometime after their youngest child is born in Leeds (in 1883 or possibly as late as 1888) Fred, Ada and their three children move to London, living at 25 Coxwell Road, Plumstead, at least between 1890 and 1892.

"John Burns, Tom Mann, and Fred Hammill are all engineers and members of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, and all have been strong advocates of an eight

⁵ When Fred's brother Joseph later marries it is to someone called Ada Jane, possibly Ada who was the younger girl boarder who had been living with them since infancy.

hour day, and devoted years to the organisation of unskilled labour, as instanced by the fact that Tom Mann was president of the Dockers' Union, and Fred Hammill is president of the Vehicular Traffic Workers' Union.”³

1887

Fred was in Trafalgar Square⁶ on 13 November 1887³ for a large combined protest on unemployment and Irish nationalism, which ended in a violent riot involving the police and the **Life Guards** infantry and cavalry. It became known as Bloody Sunday, with hundreds of people arrested and hundreds more injured. One account reports of Fred there, that:

“He was in the front at Trafalgar Square when [Jack] Burns and [Robert Cunninghame] Graham were arrested, and was appointed local centre for Woolwich for the Law and Liberty League,⁷ working for two years, together with Annie Besant and [William] Stead, then of the *Pall Mall Gazette*.”³

Fred was working at the arsenal in Woolwich⁸ where

“He organised a collecting committee in the arsenal for Burns successfully, running the risk of discharge for his action in the matter.”³ Also, he “gave evidence for Burns in the Trafalgar Square trial”^{3 9} **in January 1888 at the Old Bailey**, but both were found guilty of **attempting to hold an unlawful assembly** and were sentenced to six weeks in prison. **They were acquitted of incitement to riot and of assaulting two police officers.**

Sometime later Fred *did* lose his job at the arsenal **around 1888**, because he,

“fought down a sweating system¹⁰ in the department of Woolwich Arsenal where he worked, fighting officials on their own evidence as given before a Royal Commission, and obtaining the abolition of the sweating and an advance of 4s. to 5s. per week per man to 400 men. The men presented him with his portrait and the officials with his discharge.”³

Woolwich (also called Greenwich) Arsenal was run by the government to create, store and test munitions. The government then was trying to save money by using the ‘sweating’ system

⁶ The Manchester school of economic and social studies, Volume 36, (1968).

⁷ A self-help organisation to provide legal assistance to labour activists being taken to court.

⁸ Also called the Royal Arsenal, Greenwich, which closed in 1994.

⁹ **Although his name does not appear in the edited transcript of the trial, ref: t18880109-223 [online]**

¹⁰ The practice of ‘sweating’ was to contract out work to effectively unregulated smaller workplaces which were not be inspected properly under the Factories Act and were paying lower wages.

of cheap, unregulated sub-contractors. For example, “Government contracts continued to be filled by sweated labourers; most egregiously, some of the workers hired to alter army uniforms under unhealthy conditions during the 1890s were directly employed by the War Office.”¹¹

But although Fred had been sacked by the officials, he **apparently** was back working there a few months later, and he was agitating again.

“Again we find him in the arsenal after five month’s absence. He had been working three days before the officials found out who he was, but too late to discharge him, because they knew their man. The Government attempted to thrust a pension scheme on the men. He fought it down at a memorable meeting never to be forgotten, where all the big men of Woolwich were assembled to carry it through. He even addressed six meetings inside the arsenal, organised the men and the scheme vanished.”^{3 20}

1889

Fred would have been involved in the five-week London Dock Strike in 1889, a massive success for the labour movement which energised trade unions widely for years to come. Similarly, Isabella Ford was strongly involved in the tailoresses’ strike, making “rousing speeches at public meetings, organising the collection and distribution of relief, and publicising the strikers’ cause in the press. The following year she helped in the Manningham Mills dispute in Bradford”.¹² In recognition of her efforts she is made a life member of the Leeds Trades and Labour Council.

This year Fred joins the London Trades Council.

1890

In 1890 Fred is the delegate from the No. 5 Woolwich branch of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE) union at the London Trades Council, and he is described as being one of the leaders of *New Unionism*.³ This meant unionising unskilled and semi-skilled workers like dockers and bus crews as well as the ‘old aristocracy’ of the better-paid, more highly skilled craft unions, in order “to stamp out poverty from the land”¹³ as an 1890 pamphlet declared. The pamphlet also states that the ASE membership had grown by 9,000 people that year, and Fred would surely have played a major part in that growth. Tom Mann writes in March that

¹¹ The Persistence of Victorian Liberalism: the politics of social reform in Britain 1870-1900, by Robert F. Hoggard.

¹² ILP@120: Isabella Ford – Socialist, Feminist and Peace Campaigner, by June Hannam (2013) [online].

¹³ **The ‘New’ Trade Unionism: a reply to Mr George Shipton by Tom Mann and Ben Tillett, 1890 (pamphlet), page 14.**

year that “The Trades Council is completely revolutionised during the last six months.” In nine months its membership rose from 18,824 to 45,000.

There had been a massive Mayday rally in Hyde Park with the dockers’ union taking pride of place. Shortly afterwards the new unionists in the London Trades Council, including Tom Mann as ASE delegate from Battersea, try to oust the old-style unionist George Shipton from his post. The challenger is W. Pamell, but he is de-selected by the old guard and Fred steps into his place at the last moment. Fred loses the election against George Shipton by 46 to 61 votes.¹⁴

The trade unionists in Woolwich, especially Bob Banner and Fred, learnt from the innovations of the nearby Poplar Fabians and in particular they studied and copied the Will Crooks ‘College’ method of holding regular large meetings at factory gates with key speakers.¹⁵ Fred has a growing aptitude for public speaking to large rooms and crowds, and he would speak indoors and outdoors to crowds of up to 6,000 people.¹⁶

“He is a member of the Fabian Society, and ... between March 1890 and 1891, delivered 64 public lectures and addresses to clubs, etc.”³

As an example,

“In December 1890, he addressed a mass meeting of bakers at the East End, and strongly advised co-operation. The result was that he and others formed a provisional committee, and now the men are in possession of their own bakeries in several districts in London, and based on the non-profit sharing system, higher wages with an eight hour day.”³

The ASE had formed the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society Ltd (RACS) at the end of a union meeting in November 1868 and 20,000 people celebrated its 21-year anniversary at an outdoor gathering on 25 June 1890. The RACS included a recently-built Brixton Bakery.¹⁷

There is an account of a TUC Congress which met in Liverpool in 1890.¹⁴ Around half the delegates were from the old guard unions, dressed in their fancy top hats and fine coats with gold chains and such like. The rest of the delegates were the new intake, dressed in their

¹⁴ In Pamphlets 26 and 27 of the History Group of the Communist Party, concerning the incomplete volumes 2 and 3 by Dona Torr of the Life of Tom Mann. Volume 1 was published before Dona Torr’s death, covering Tom Mann from 1856 to 1890 [online].

¹⁵ Labour’s Lost Leader: The Life and Politics of Will Crooks, by Paul Tyler, 2007.

¹⁶ Educate, Agitate, Organise Library Editions: Political Science Vol 59: One Hundred Years of Fabian Socialism, by Patricia Pugh (2013).

¹⁷ The Story of the Engineers: 1800-1945, by James B. Jeffreys, 1945, Lawrence & Wishart Ltd.

ordinary working clothes and not a top hat amongst them. The local Lord Mayor had invited all the Congress delegates to come on a jolly, a boat trip on the River Mersey. The new unionists said no and narrowly lost the vote to reject the invitation for everyone.

1891

Fred's employment at Woolwich arsenal did not last and he lost his job there **a second and final time in March 1891**, because he was:

“attacking the Government on contracting, speaking at Woolwich, Portsmouth, and Chatham, and was again discharged He is now working at Westminster doing John Burn's old job for Mr. Lorrain, consulting engineer who is an eight hours man”³

In 1891 with Tom Mann, Fred established a Labour Representation League within their wider work in reorganising the London Trades Council,¹⁸ with a fund to give it substance.¹⁹ Fred now describes his work in the census as being a steam engine maker's fitter. He was a leading member nationally of the Fabian Society, being on their Executive Committee from 1892 to 1895, and similarly on the committee of the ASE engineers union.

Perhaps his most intense period of labour activism was in the London Bus Strike of **June 1891**. The union had been recently founded by Thomas **Sutherest** and others in 1889, **and organising work was also done by Frank Smith. The strike followed a meeting at Fulham Town Hall on Saturday 6 June 1889 where over 3,000 workers attended, and a similar large meeting the following day in the Great Assembly Hall on the Mile End Road. The strike lasted a week, from 7-13 June 1889, and was a success with support from the public and from the press.**

A detailed account of Fred's tireless efforts that week states:

“while [Fred was] working for Mr. Lorrain,²⁰ the Great London Bus Strike of 1891 was taken in hand by the London Trades Council Executive, Hammill at the time being a prominent and popular member. He was given the whole charge of the largest area – the South Western District of London, comprising 43 Bus Yards and 5,000 men. John Burns and Hammill are old friends, and Jack, who was not a member of the Trades Council, was by his side day and night, and during the seven days of the strike,

¹⁸ Socialists, Liberals and Labour: The Struggle for London 1885-1914, by Paul Richard Thompson, 1967, Routledge, p57.

¹⁹ The Making of the Labour Movement: The Formation of the Transport and General Workers Union 1870-1992, by Ken Coates, Tony Topham, 1994.

²⁰ James Grieve Lorrain (1852-1917) a civil engineer with progressive social views who led in installing the first telephone exchanges and cabling in cities for electric power. **In some records spelt as – Lorraine.**

they addressed together, from the top of a hansom cab, 27 outdoor meetings, rallying and holding the men as firm as a rock, the one sitting on the cab top, while the other stood in the cabby's seat, addressing and encouraging the crowds of men; and so exhausted was Burns on the sixth day of the strike, he fainted in the arms of his friend, and thus they worked for seven nights and days, and during the whole of the week their total sleep was eleven hours. Hammill was fortunate in possessing a good employer, who gave him leave to fight the cause of the Busmen, and contributed his £1 to the strike fund. Hammill returned to his work at the close of the strike, but had been working one month when the London Trades Council of 270 delegates decided that he must leave his work to organise the Busmen and Tram men of London. A formidable task, indeed, with an area of 551 square miles, and the Bus yards scattered over the outskirts of the area. The task, however, was accomplished. For the first twelve months he held and addressed 52 midnight meetings, and has carried the organisation into the provinces as well, during which time the wages of Tram men and others have been advanced 2s. 6d. and 3s. 6d. per week per man, and a reduction of 7 hours per week."³

A contemporary newspaper report included a comment that "some of the Trades Council ... did the heaviest work, notably Mr George Bateman, a compositor, and Mr Fred Hammill"²¹ This account also reported strong public sympathy in London for the bus strike, especially for the call by the union for a working day of 12 hours a day, rather than 16 to 17 hours, and for a day off once every two weeks.

The London Illustrated News on 13 June 1891 reported that Mrs Reaney was helping organise the East End tram workers.

On 22 September 1891 the South Wales Daily News reports that the ASE is to hold an election for the post of general secretary after the death of the incumbent, Robert Austin. Six candidates have been nominated for the post, but "Burns and Hammill have refused to stand, and it is doubtful whether Mann will seek election. ... The appointment which is stated to be worth £300 a year, is virtually a life one, though there is a formal election yearly."

Immediately "After the strike had concluded the London Trades Council agreed to pay £10 towards Fred Hammill's costs [for a month] while he organised the busman's union in the capital."²² **He initially split in half his monthly pay with six men who were acting as union collectors, all having lost work for being victimised as strike leaders. Shortly after that, being**

²¹ Otago Daily Times, 29 July 1891; a column by H. H. Chapman, a correspondent in Europe, dated 19 June 1891.

²² 1891 London Bus Workers' Strike, 2009, online <https://libcom.org/history/1891-london-bus-workers-strike>

about one month after the end of the strike, Fred is described as becoming the president of the London Amalgamated Omnibus and Tramworkers Union.^{23 24}

That year in the London Trades Council, Fred seconded a motion by John Burns to offer support to the Scottish rail strike.

If there was any one place, outside of his family, that Fred put all his energy it was with his union, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, the ASE. And his activism was always done in alliance with the unions of unskilled workers through the London Trades Council.

But his allegiance to the ASE was going to be tested to the limit. When Fred started out in the ASE it was essentially a craft or elite union. Its job was to protect pay and conditions by setting national rates every year for around 50,000 members, and then policing workplaces to stop semi-skilled workers doing engineer work for less pay. The ASE's big victory was in 1871 when they won the nine-hour day. In reality, the length of the working day mostly stayed the same, just that the overtime pay rate started sooner each day. The usual 6am start before breakfast did change.

Fred was very close friends with John (Jack) Burns, as well as with Thomas (Tom) Mann and Ben Tillett. They were all four ASE members and had variously fought together in Trafalgar Square in 1887, then with the Dock Strike in 1889, and the London Bus Strike in 1891.

The ASE itself was at its strongest at the local committee level. The national executive were unpaid volunteers with other jobs, and mostly concerned themselves with deciding benefit payments to members in need.

But in the 1890s things began to change in the ASE, and these changes impacted closely on Fred. In his thesis on the ASE, Weekes describes the mid 1890s as being their "crisis years".

First, two of Fred's closest friends and comrades had a massive falling out. In October 1891 both John Burns and Tom Mann had disagreed about strike tactics concerning the Hermitage and Carron Wharves dispute in Wapping, concerning dockers wanting to be paid for meal breaks. At the same time, both men had independently decided to stand for election to the highest position in the ASE but crucially they hadn't consulted each other beforehand. When Tom finally wrote to John asking for his support, John took 15 days before sending a one-sentence curt reply saying he would have nothing to do with it. From extracts of their speeches later it is clear everyone could tell what was going on, and the raw bitterness of their

²³ Elementary Schooling and the Working Classes 1860-1918, by John S. Hurt, 1979, Routledge

²⁴ Red Scotland: the rise and fall of the radical left c.1872-1932, William Kenefick (2007), Edinburgh University Press, p43.

views. At this point, Tom Mann says he wants little to do with labour politics, and sees trade unionism as the only way forward for working people's improvement, although in a few years time he is back in national politics looking to be elected.

Secondly, the ASE reforms itself in 1892 with paid national officers, and the balance of power moves away from the local committees to the centre. In the election for General Secretary, Thomas Mann narrowly loses to John Anderson, a conservative, older man.²⁵ Tom blames John Burns for not bringing his supporters onboard to tip the balance.

The result was:	Anderson –	18,102
	Mann –	17,152
	Gennie –	738.

Weekes comments that: "There is little doubt that John Burns with his [then] reputation for honest consistency could have turned defeat [for Mann] into victory."²⁶

Now in charge of the ASE, John Anderson is no friend of Fred either, and when Fred later needs union funds to help him get elected to parliament as a socialist MP, Anderson is key to Fred's request being refused, as well as refusing support to other hopeful candidates.

Thirdly, there is a key strike which the ASE loses, along with losing wider political support, and as part of this Fred gets hauled over the coals by the national executive on a question of £5. The strike is at two factories seven miles from Woolwich in Erith. The firm is called Maxim-Nordenfelt and they make machine guns. It is later bought by Vickers. The strike lasts for 27 weeks from November 1889 to May 1890, a bitter strike including a court trial of some people on charges of intimidation.

There is a strike fund which raises around £3,800 and the Woolwich arsenal contribution here is £452 14s 4½d. Fred is travelling to Erith twice each week with donations that he and others have collected at the arsenal. The strike concerns other "labourer" workers doing engineer jobs and a move to piece-rate pay instead of hourly pay. In Erith the labourers walk out in solidarity with the engineers. But, crucially, in another strike in October 1889 led this time by labourers, the ASE tells its engineer members to their cross picket lines and to continue working alongside new strike-breaking labourers. From this, the owners of firms are by now getting wise to the ASE and start their own national organisation, the Engineering Employers Federation.

The whole saga is a mess and the Erith strike essentially fails. It is part of a longer and wider trend by employers to introduce new machines which need less skill to produce the same

²⁵ *The Amalgamated Society of Engineers, 1880-1914: A Study of Trade Union Government, Politics and Industrial Policy*, by B.C.M. Weekes, 1970. Thesis, University of Warwick [online]. (page 31).

²⁶ Weekes (as above) (page 33).

quality products, and Erith is the turning point where the ASE starts its decline in influence, no longer the most aristocratic or elite of the unions in the UK. There are plenty of recriminations, and the following year a union auditor reports on the operation of the strike fund. The paperwork was a huge mess, with bits here and there for 6,000 items of income and 2,000 of expenditure. The accounting was not sophisticated, and a payment to Fred of £5 becomes a matter of national importance with letters printed in *The Times* newspaper and with Fred's letters printed in full in the quarterly report sent to all ASE branches. Fred had asked to meet with the national committee to explain matters but they refused, saying he must write letters.

In short, Fred used the £5 to get an anonymous pamphlet printed and posted to all the shareholders of Maxim-Nordenfelt, including paying a local man for a tip-off he had received of allegations of the lies and misconduct of some of the managers at the firm. Fred later reports that his work resulted in those managers being visited at home by some directors and shareholders and those managers being dismissed. But Fred didn't want these pamphlets to be official ASE strike documents in case that undermined their impact, also in case the pamphlet backfired on the union if the tip-off proved to be incorrect. So when the auditor asked him what the £5 had been for, Fred first suggested they write it as a *secret service*, and when this explanation is rejected he said it was *propaganda work*. From reading his main letter to the national executive, Fred's attitude seems to be matter-of-fact: this is what I did, it worked, so what's your grumble? The national executive let the matter end there, but in what seems to have been quite a surly way.

Later, Tom Mann stood as an ILP socialist candidate in the 1895 general election in Colne Valley, as did George Barnes in Rochdale, neither successful that time. Both were ASE members. **Nor was Keir Hardie successful in West Ham South, London, and Tom tried for parliament again in by-elections in 1896 and 1897.**

We need to say a little more here about the character of John Burns. In short, many of the socialists at the time felt he had betrayed their trust by selling out to the Liberal Party in return for a safe seat in parliament, and following that a place in their cabinet as a government minister. Hyndman calls Burns "a turncoat from his class".²⁷ A frequent assessment is that, when it became clear that Keir Hardie and not John Burns would become the leader of the Independent Labour Party, Burns took his ball away. It had to be everything, or nothing. Contemporaries still gave Burns credit for his early years. For example, "He was, I think, the best stump-orator I ever heard". But soon a more narcissist side was being commented on. For example, on "his Barnum-like ability as a showman. He had an unfailing aptitude for discovering the centre of the picture, and posing there."²⁷ This betrayal of his roots by Burns must have greatly hurt Fred. Already in the 1889 Dock Strike some people are remarking on

²⁷ John Burns: the rise and progress of a Right Honourable, by Joseph Burgess (1911) Glasgow: The Reformers Bookstall Ltd.

Burn's tendency to wave the biggest flag at the front of every march, but to leave the organising to other people out of the limelight.

1892

In July 1892 Fred addressed the first conference of the National Vehicle Traffic Workers Union, a speech that was later published as a pamphlet.²⁸ The same year Fred's father Thomas died in Leeds aged around 59 years.

Fred seems to place a lot of importance on attending the annual congress (meeting) of the TUC, going as a delegate from the London Trades Council to the Congresses in Newcastle in 1891 and Glasgow in 1892, where he was hoping to be elected as General Secretary.

The published "*Short Biography*"³³ of around 1,200 words concludes with the remark that "his name was frequently mentioned as a candidate for the secretaryship of that important body", which may well have been written by Fred himself, or at least his friends, to build up support, being a mixture of facts and compliments. For example, it states "He was nominated for the secretaryship of the Amalgamated Engineers, but refused to stand."

In the early 1890s Isabella Ford stays with her sister Emily in a small flat in London, writing a book, *On The Threshold*. As the historian June Hannam explains, "Here they relished the freedom to mix with like-minded men and women, to discuss radical politics and to explore the possibilities that could open up for women if they remained unmarried".¹²

1893-4

In 1893 Isabella visited her cousin Edward Pease in his flat with others for "a series of meetings" there and these discussions led to the formation of the Fabian Society.¹²

Towards the end of 1893, the radical newspaper, the *Workman's Times*, carries an open letter from H Russell Smart, saying:

" 'To Messrs John Burns, Tom Mann, Fred Hammill, and others to whom it may apply', inviting them, now that the ILP had been purged of all connection with Champion and Barry, to throw in their lot with the party."²⁷ Only Burns refused.

In November 1893 the Fabian Manifesto for a Labour Party was published in the journal, *Fortnightly Review*. Two months' later in January 1894 this call was developed in detail in a Fabian Society pamphlet, Tract 49, which mentions Fred specifically in its discussions on how best to organise the elections. The pamphlet argues that trade unions -

²⁸ Nineteenth Century Pamphlets Online, by Barbara Humphries, LSE, 2011, in *The ephemerist*, 153 Summer.

“must avoid any appearance of taking the elections out of the hands of the constituencies. For example, if the Amalgamated Engineers were to say, in effect, ‘We wish to have a representative in Parliament; and we will make use of Newcastle for that purpose’, Mr. Fred Hammill would at once become, not the representative of the entire working class in Newcastle, but simply the Engineers’ candidate”.²⁹

In 1894 Fred is reported as campaigning amongst the Durham miners to persuade them to support the struggle for the eight-hour working day. The newspaper account calls him a full-time organiser of the Fabian Society, but although he is a member it is more likely that he was being paid by the ASE engineers union.³⁰

In 1894 Fred Hammill helped establish, with Robert Banner, the Woolwich branch of the Independent Labour Party.³¹

1895

Fred is mentioned in early 1895 in one of the many letters sent between Edward Carpenter and Alf Mattison. Edward and Fred had both been at a Fabian Society meeting where Fred spoke.³²

In 1895 Fred argued before the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress on the need to form an Independent Labour Party.³³ In this year Fred was the secretary of the British Trades Federation Committee of the TUC.³⁴ This year he is also representing the London County Council.

In 1895 he was the first socialist candidate to stand for parliament in Newcastle.³⁵ He gained over 2,000 votes but it wasn’t enough to be elected. Like every party there were different factions or philosophies: Fred was seen as a hard-liner or an ‘impossibilist’ by the social democrats, and some comments were quite plain, such as printed in the *Labour Elector*:

²⁹ A Plan of Campaign for Labour, Fabian Society Tract no. 49, January 1894 (pages 24-25).

³⁰ Durham Chronicle, 18 January 1895, as cited in Levels of Industrial Militancy and the Political Radicalization of the Durham Miners: 1885-1914, thesis by Craig Marshall, Durham University, 1976.

³¹ *Labour’s Lost Leader: the life and politics of Will Crooks (2007)*, Paul Tyler, p36, p106.

³² Special Collections, Brotherton Library, Leeds University.

³³ Inclusion Report into the UNESCO Australian Memory of the World Register of the 1892 Manifesto of the Queensland Labour Party

³⁴ Report of the British Trades Federation Committee etc, TUC, 1895.

³⁵ The Centennial History of the Independent Labour Party: a collection of essays, by J. A. Jowitt, pages 24, 31, Ryburn (1992).

“he cannot be blinded by his own egotism as to suppose that if the Newcastle men had any real hope of winning the seat outright that he would be their man.”³⁶

The Newcastle women maybe thought differently. In the book, *Feminism and the Periodical Press 1900-1918 Vol 1*,³⁷ the authors note that women could take part in general discussions and hold office in the branches of the Independent Labour Party. In particular, “in Newcastle the women have a union whose purpose is to raise funds to run labour candidates. A well-managed bazaar gave considerable help towards Fred Hammill’s election fund.”

Nor were these women passive supporters. The above account continues,

“I asked Miss Stacey whether the possession of the franchise [votes for women] would be sufficient to secure women’s independence, as some would have us believe. ‘By no means,’ she answered, ‘the franchise is but the first step to sex equality ... it must serve as a means of gaining the economic independence of women, with equal pay for equal work. A woman must be free to earn her own livelihood, independently of man, or in co-operation with him, receiving the full equivalent for her labour.’ ”

We know that Fred wrote to the Independent Labour Party [or the ASE?] asking for a loan of £50, with the reply to him that, “his welfare between elections was the responsibility of the people in the constituency.”¹⁶ He also wrote for funds to the Fabian Society and was similarly refused.³⁸

Also in 1895, **at the instigation of John Burns** the TUC decided to exclude local Trades Councils from having separate representations with their own delegates at the annual Congress. The rift with his former friend John Burns was a factor in closing down the route Fred had followed for years to attend the TUC congress each year as a delegate of the London Trades Council.

“Burns’ hatred of the ILP and jealousy of Mann ... had the upper hand. By 1895 he had drifted far from his old associates and was allied with the ‘old unionists’ [except Broadhurst] to exclude the trades councils from the TUC and to introduce the block vote.” (page 55)

Weekes concludes this period with a comment that, by 1895 Burns had become “the most powerful supporter of political conservatism and administrative incompetence.” (page 61)

³⁶ British Workers and the Independent Labour Party 1888-1906, by David Howell (1984), Manchester University Press.

³⁷ by Lucy Delap, Maria DiCenzo, Leila Ryan (2006).

³⁸ Correspondence with Pease Reynolds, LSE Archives, GB 097 COLL MISC 0573.

On 8 March 1895 Tom Maguire died in Leeds from pneumonia. He was 29 years old, a socialist, activist and a poet, unable to afford to heat his rooms. He was nine years younger than Fred, and by accounts his friends were not aware just how desperately poor he had been. One thousand people attend his funeral. A collection of his poems was published posthumously, *Machine Room Chants*, with an introduction by Keir Hardie. How much this impacted on Fred is impossible to say, but **Maguire's death** is frequently mentioned in the letters between Edward Carpenter and Alf Mattison that year.

Around this time Fred and Isabella Ford's paths might have crossed again. In the 1890s she was now active in "propaganda work for the ILP throughout the West Riding of Yorkshire, speaking 'often at street corners, in dingy club rooms, in hot, crowded school rooms' (Glasier, *Bradford Pioneer*, July 1924)". Many people would visit her and her sister Bessie at their home, Adel Grange.¹²

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After losing the election in Newcastle, Fred took a remarkable decision and decided to run a pub in a village in North Yorkshire. **This had been his father's occupation in Leeds around 35 years previously.**

This decision by Fred caused some comment at the time. For example, John Bruce Glasier commented in his diary in 1896 – a few years before he became Chairman of the ILP – some remarks about Fred that,

"Twill be hard on us if Labour agitators descend to the level of prize fighters and footballers."³⁹

A further quote indicates the tensions within the Fabian Society between those who supported the Independent Labour Party, and others who wanted to 'permeate' the Liberals and Tories.

"After the [1895] election, Beatrice Webb wrote: To us the result is not altogether unsatisfactory ... the field had to be cleared ... of the Harcourt faction ... So long as the ILP existed as an unknown force of irreconcilables, the more reasonable policy of permeation and levelling-up was utterly checkmated."⁴⁰

His union had refused him. Many of the Fabian executive had disowned him. His good friend Burns had attacked him politically and cut off Fred's cherished links with the TUC. He had no funds and no work. We can only imagine that Fred was fed up, or worse. Perhaps his only conciliation was to have caused the sitting MP in Newcastle to lose his seat. That was John

³⁹ With thanks to David Howell in correspondence for this quote.

⁴⁰ **Fabian Socialism and English Politics 1884-1918, AM McBriar (1966), Cambridge University Press.**

Morely, a right-wing Liberal who was dead set against the eight hour day. But by Fred splitting the Liberal vote, a Tory had won.

*

So by 1901 Fred and his family are living in a pub at 17 Front Street in Topcliffe, a small town near Thirsk, 70 miles south of Newcastle. **The pub is called the Angler's Arms.**⁴¹

Topcliffe is three miles from the village of Baldersby-St-James where Fred's mother Ellen was born, so maybe there was a Parkin family connection which was a factor in his new line of work. He insisted in the census as being known as a *Hotel Proprietor*, though 'hotel' was crossed out by census officials and replaced with 'pub'.

Whether Fred's decision in any way spurred the creation of paid labour politicians, rather than only having paid trade union organisers, is difficult to say now. **Later on, both Tom Mann and George Shipton also retire from politics to run pubs.**

1901

Fred dies on 8 July 1901 from influenza, aged 45 years, **six or so months** after the death of his mother Ellen⁴² who lived in Leeds nearby. A labour movement newspaper, and not one of his political allies, (either one in New York, *The People*,⁴³ a paper of the Socialist Labor Party of America, or a paper published by the Social Democratic Federation in Britain called *Justice*) reportedly "mourn[ed] the death of Fred Hammill".⁴⁴ On his death certificate, Ada reports Fred's occupation as having been a Hotel Proprietor, and this time it is not crossed out.

In 1902 the Fabian Society nationally gave a gentle assessment about Fred's change of direction in its Nineteenth Annual Report: "Recently he had lived in a country village in Yorkshire, where he did the political work which lay to his hand, the recovery of popular rights over parochial charities." They also recorded that Fred had been "an early and eager advocate for the formation of the Labor (sic) Party, and was for years an active agitator in the Trade Union movement."

⁴¹ "The Decadence of Tom Mann" article in *The Star* (newspaper), 3 June 1899, p7. **New Zealand: Christchurch.**

⁴² Buried on 6 January 1901, previously living at 58 Chatham Street in Leeds.

⁴³ Microfilm records are held at the Wisconsin Historical Society in Madison.

⁴⁴ *The History of the Social Democratic Federation*, by Martin Crick, Keele University Press, (1994).

Family notes

Our great-grandfather Percy Hammill Baldwinson, also born in Leeds, is around 21 years old when his uncle Fred dies, and it seems likely that his uncle's political campaigning had inspired Percy to follow his path and join the Fabian Society and, probably, the ASE engineers union as well. We have details of Percy writing and publishing his own pamphlet, and a socialist campaigning newspaper in Leeds.

In 1905 Percy and Alice called their only surviving child *Fred* and not Frederick (not even for the birth certificate), possibly in honour of Mary's brother. This Fred was our grandfather. Whether Percy's reported breakdown was triggered by the death of his uncle is hard to say now.

By 1911 Ada is back living in Hoggs Field, Holbeck, her birth town. She is 50 years old, living alone and she describes her work in the census as being a Forewoman. She dies in Leeds in 1938 aged around 77 years.

Draft - comments and corrections welcomed.

December 2015
Tony Baldwinson, Manchester.

Publications by Fred Hammill

An address at the first annual conference of the National Vehicular Traffic Workers' Union, 1892 (pamphlet)

Fred Hammill

[1892]

Original print held at – The Library, University of Glasgow, Scotland.

Unemployed Organisation Committee (leaflet)

A demonstration will be held in Trafalgar Square, on Sunday, Mar. 12, 1893. A resolution will be moved calling upon the Government to limit the working day in all its dockyards, workshops, &c., to eight hours, to pay not less than trade union rates of wages, or where wages are not so determined, to fix a minimum of 30s. per week, and to recognise perfect right of combination amongst all its workers. Processions will gather at the following spots: ...

Amongst those who have been invited to address the meeting are Keir Hardie, ... Murray Macdonald, ... John Burns, ... Tom Mann, Dr. Aveling, ... Fred Hammill, &c. ...

Authors: Edward B Aveling; John Burns; Fred Hammill; James Keir Hardie; J A Murray Macdonald;

Publisher: Twentieth Century Press, Ltd., 44, Gray's Inn Road, W.C., London, England.

[1893].

Original print held at - The British Library, St. Pancras, London, NW1 2DB, England.

The Necessity of an Independent Labour Party: speech at the annual meeting of the Newcastle Independent Labour Party held at Newcastle on 3rd January, 1893 (pamphlet)

Including a section at the start of the pamphlet: *Fred Hammill – A Short Biography*.

Fred Hammill

[1893]

Original prints held at –

British Library, St. Pancras, London, NW1 2DB, England.

International Institute of Social History (IISG) , Amsterdam, 1019 AT Netherlands.

Senate House Library, University of London, London, England.

Special Collections, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, England.

Working Class Movement Library, Salford M5 4WX, England.

The Claims and Progress of Labor Representation (pamphlet)

Fred Hammill

[1894]

Original prints held at –

The Library, University of Glasgow, Scotland.

Working Class Movement Library, Salford M5 4WX, England.

Out of Work: The Problem of the Unemployed (pamphlet)

Fred Hammill

[1894]

Original prints held at –

Fabian Collections, LSE Library, London School of Economics, England.

Special Collections, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, England.

Working Class Movement Library, Salford M5 4WX, England.

Onward to Victory (a chapter in) The New Party (book)

Pages 49 to 53.

Book Authors: Andrew Reid; Walter Crane

Publisher: Hodder Brothers, 18 New Bridge Street, E.C., Edinburgh and London, UK.

[1895].

Original print at - Working Class Movement Library, Salford M5 4WX, England.

Essays on Socialism

by Alfred Russel Wallace; W. J.; Robert B Holt; Harold Cox; Fred Hammill; J L Joynes; Alexander M Thompson; Sidney Webb; H M Hyndman; Beatrice Webb; Tom Mann; Robert Blatchford; Petr Alekseevich Kropotkin, Katharine St John Conway; H Russell Smart; Stewart D Headlam; Andrew Reid; John Arnott; Fabian Society (Great Britain); Land Nationalisation Society.; Labour Press Society, Ltd.; Liberal Publication Department (Great Britain); Social Democratic Federation.;

[1890s]

A collection of 25 pamphlets on socialist topics by various authors, published by a variety of British publishers including the Fabian Society, Land Nationalisation Society, Labor Press Society, Liberal Publication Department, Social Democratic Federation, etc. Individual publication dates range from 1890 to 1898, gathered under a collective title, ca. 1899.

Original prints are held at - University of Minnesota Library, Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA.

A Short Biography [preface in: *The Necessity of an Independent Labour Party*]

The *Workman's Times* of May 1st, 1891, says :- "Fred. Hammill represents No.5 Woolwich Branch of the Amalgamated Engineers. He has been on the London Trades Council nearly two years, and is a man of very advanced views. He was born in 1856, received a fair education, and commenced to work quickly. He attributes his quick grasp of problems, social and otherwise, to his nine years incessant study in science and arts subjects, and holds Queen's prizes and teacher's certificates in many. He has been, as he has often said, on platforms, "two steps up the ladder of fortune," but his spirit of outspokenness always knocks him to the bottom again. Having served as a foreman, also as a draughtsman, he has twice been discharged from the arsenal at Woolwich, for his views, and expressions. He is a Yorkshireman of long descent, has advocated the rights of his class for thirteen years, and assisted John De Morgan to tear up the railway rails on Hunslet Moor, Leeds, ten years ago, he soon became known. He was in the front at Trafalgar Square when Burns and Graham were arrested, and was appointed local centre for Woolwich for the Law and Liberty League, working for two years, together with Annie Besant and Stead, then of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. He organised a collecting committee in the arsenal for Burns successfully, running the risk of discharge for his action in the matter. He then fought down a sweating system in the department of Woolwich Arsenal where he worked, fighting officials on their own evidence as given before a Royal Commission, and obtaining the abolition of the sweating and an advance of 4s. to 5s. per week per man to 400 men. The men presented him with his portrait and the officials with his discharge. He then went to the Paris Exhibition as Lord Mayor's delegate, to report on the Ordnance. Again we find him in the arsenal after five month's absence. He had been working three days before the officials found out who he was, but too late to discharge him, because they knew their man. The Government attempted to thrust a pension scheme on the men. He fought it down at a memorable meeting never to be forgotten, where all the big men of Woolwich were assembled to carry it through. He even addressed six meetings inside the arsenal, organised the men and the scheme vanished. He went to the Liverpool Congress last year as senior delegate of three to represent the London Trades Council. He contributes alike to magazines and press, fights openly for the rights of labour, and is a hater of cliques, political parties, and class. He is a member of the Fabian Society, and last year, between March 1890 and 1891, delivered 64 public lectures and addresses to clubs, etc. He has been run twice for the Trades Council Secretaryship, and eight votes would have put him in last year. He is well-known in all countries through his connection with the international movement. He has lately been attacking the Government on contracting, speaking at Woolwich, Portsmouth, and Chatham, and was again discharged six weeks ago. He is now working at Westminster doing John Burn's old job for Mr. Lorrain, consulting engineer who is an eight hours man, and gave evidence for Burns in the Trafalgar Square trial. He will be at Hyde Park, Chatham, and Southampton May demonstrations. His work during the last five years is so extensive it cannot be enumerated here for want of space, as all prominent and active men in the movement know.

Since the above was written it may be further said; while working for Mr. Lorrain, the Great London Bus Strike of 1891 was taken in hand by the London Trades Council Executive, Hammill at the time being a prominent and popular member. He was given the whole charge of the largest area – the South Western District of London, comprising 43 Bus Yards and 5,000 men. John Burns and Hammill are old friends, and Jack, who was not a member of the Trades Council, was by his side day and night, and during the seven days of the strike, they addressed together, from the top of a hansom cab, 27 outdoor meetings, rallying and holding the men as firm as a rock, the one sitting on the cab top, while the other stood in the cabby's seat, addressing and encouraging the crowds of men; and so exhausted was Burns on the sixth day of the strike, he fainted in the arms of his friend, and thus they worked for seven nights and days, and during the whole of the week their total sleep was eleven hours. Hammill was fortunate in possessing a good employer, who gave him leave to fight the cause of the Busmen, and contributed his £1 to the strike fund. Hammill returned to his work at the close of the strike, but had been working one month when the London Trades Council of 270 delegates decided that he must leave his work to organise the Busmen and Tram men of London. A formidable task, indeed, with an area of 551 square miles, and the Bus yards scattered over the outskirts of the area. The task, however, was accomplished. For the first twelve months he held and addressed 52 midnight meetings, and has carried the organisation into the provinces as well, during which time the wages of Tram men and others have been advanced 2s. 6d. and 3s. 6d. per week per man, and a reduction of 7 hours per week.

In December 1890, he addressed a mass meeting of bakers at the East End, and strongly advised co-operation. The result was that he and others formed a provisional committee, and now the men are in possession of their own bakeries in several districts in London, and based on the non-profit sharing system, higher wages with an eight hour day. He again represented the London Trades Council at the Newcastle Congress in 1891.

John Burns, Tom Mann, and Fred Hammill are all engineers and members of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, and all have been strong advocates of an eight hour day, and devoted years to the organisation of unskilled labour, as instanced by the fact that Tom Mann was president of the Dockers' Union, and Fred Hammill is president of the Vehicular Traffic Workers' Union. Hammill was elected on the Executive of the Fabian Society at the commencement of 1892, and is an active member. He has advocated an Independent Labour Party since 1887, distinctly apart from Tory, Liberal, or any other party, notwithstanding the fact that at that time it was not only unpopular but dangerous; but in the words of a continental paper: "He with aptitude vanquishes his opponents." We next find him at the Glasgow Trades Union Congress in 1892, his name was frequently mentioned as a candidate for the secretaryship of that important body. His time is at present devoted to the organisation of the Vehicular Traffic Workers, whose Union, as before mentioned, he heads as president. He was nominated for the secretaryship of the Amalgamated Engineers, but refused to stand.
