

Fred Hammill (1856-1901)
trade unionist and politician



~ a pamphlet ~

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“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

Fred Hammill

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

Summary

Frederick Parkin Hammill was always called Fred.

He was born on 4 May 1856, trained as an engineer, and married Ada Peel in Leeds and they had three children - Arthur, Helen, and Gertrude. They moved to London where Fred was working at Woolwich arsenal, a government-run munitions factory, becoming a well-known labour activist and trade unionist.

Fred reportedly gave defence evidence in the trial following the 1887 Trafalgar Square Riot. 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 successful strike of London bus and tram workers on pay and hours, and became the first president of the new transport workers union.

He was one of the founders of the Independent Labour Party (ILP). In 1893 he spoke at a demonstration and rally in Trafalgar Square on workers' rights.

In 1895 he was the first ILP member to stand for election to Parliament in Newcastle, but he didn't win. Needing an income, he changed tack to run a pub in Topcliffe, North Yorkshire, for which he was criticised politically.

He was elected to the Thirsk Rural District Council in April 1901, and he died on 8 July 1901 from influenza, aged 45 years. Ada dies aged 79 years in 1940.

Fred Hammill

Frederick Parkin Hammill (Fred) was born in Leeds² on 4 May 1856, being the oldest child of Thomas and Ellen, married in 1855.

His father Thomas was born in 1833 in Rawcliffe, he worked as a groom, iron driller and pub landlord, and died in 1892 in Leeds.

His mother Ellen (née Parkin), was born on 15 November 1829 in the village of Baldersby-St-James in North Yorkshire; and she died in Leeds around the start of 1901. She was the second of ten children.

Ellen's father was William (1804-1891), a labourer, born in Carwold and died in Leeds. Ellen's mother was Charity Chandler (1807-1898), born in Baldersby and died in Leeds.

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-?).

There are three different women called *Ada* in this immediate family.

² Wesley Street, Hunslet, Leeds.

The first Ada is Fred's foster sister, who is possibly the child of a relative of Fred's mother and being a different *Ada* to both Fred's and Joseph's future wives.³ Joseph's future wife is called Ada Jane Hargrave (1866-?), Fred will marry Ada Peel.

Fred's foster sister Ada is using the surname Parkin when she is aged 10, though Thomas and Ellen had called her Ada Hammill when she was a baby. Ada changes her surname back to Hammill later 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.⁴ At the time there was a Grey Mare Yard nearby.

1877

Aged around 21 years, Fred is reported as assisting John De Morgan⁵ and around 40,000 people in removing some of the rails from the new Middleton Railway on Hunslet Moor in protest against the railway company's

³ Generally found in birth, marriage and death registers, electoral rolls and national census forms.

⁴ 132 Low Road, Hunslet, Leeds.

⁵ Sometimes described in current accounts as being a 'Victorian eco-warrior'.

privatised use of open space against the rights of commoners.⁶

1879

Aged around 23 years, in 1879 in Leeds, Fred marries Ada Peel (1860-1940) who is then aged around 18 years.

Ada Peel's parents are Joseph (1816-?) born in Morley, Yorkshire; and Elizabeth (1831-?) born in Duffield, Derbyshire.

Fred and Ada have three children, the first two born in Hunslet (south east Leeds) and the third child born in Holbeck (south west Leeds):

Arthur Earnest (1880-1945),

Helen (1882-1904), and

Gertrude Wright (1888-1959)

Also in 1879, Fred's younger sister Mary Emily marries Charles Baldwinson, and they later have a son, Percy Hammill Baldwinson.

1881

Now married, their first child Arthur has been born and they are all living in a small house with Fred's parents⁷

⁶ 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.*

along with Fred's younger brother Joseph (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 regular printed reports sent to all branches, which showed details 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.

So, sometime between 1881 and 1887 Fred made the move from Leeds, where he was unemployed some or all of the time, to London to work at the Royal Arsenal in

⁷ 35 Marlborough Court, Leeds.

Woolwich. Their youngest daughter is born in Leeds in 1888. So it is possible that Ada (and the children) joined Fred in London after 1888 once he had become established with work and had a home suitable for a family; or possibly Ada came to London with Fred before 1888 and returned to Leeds to make sure she gave birth to her third child with the support and help of women she trusted in her family.

The archive of civilian employment records held by the Ministry of Defence does not give any details of Fred's work there, but a large number of these records were destroyed by fire during the Second World War.

1887

Fred was in Trafalgar Square⁸ on 13 November 1887⁶ 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

⁸ The Manchester school of economic and social studies, Volume 36, (1968).

Woolwich for the Law and Liberty League,⁹ working for two years, together with Annie Besant and [William] Stead, then of the *Pall Mall Gazette*.”⁶

1888

Fred was working at the arsenal in Woolwich¹⁰ when he was nearly sacked.

“He organised a collecting committee in the arsenal for Burns successfully, running the risk of discharge for his action in the matter.”⁶ Also, he “gave evidence for Burns in the Trafalgar Square trial”^{6 11} 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 (before October 1889), because he,

⁹ A self-help organisation to provide legal assistance to labour activists being taken to court.

¹⁰ Also sometimes called the Royal Arsenal, and the Greenwich Arsenal, which closed in 1994.

¹¹ Although his name does not appear in the edited transcript of the trial, ref: t18880109-223 [online]

“fought down a sweating system¹² 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.”⁶

Woolwich 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 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.”¹³

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

¹² The practice of ‘sweating’ was to contract out work to effectively unregulated smaller workplaces which were not being inspected properly under the Factories Act and were paying lower wages.

¹³ The Persistence of Victorian Liberalism: the politics of social reform in Britain 1870-1900, by Robert F. Hoggard.

“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.”⁶

Sometime after their youngest child Gertrude is born in Leeds in 1888. Soon afterwards Fred, Ada and their three children lived together in London,¹⁴ at least between 1890 and 1892.

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

¹⁴ 25 Coxwell Road, Plumstead, London.

Manningham Mills dispute in Bradford”.¹⁵ In recognition of her efforts she was 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*.¹⁶ 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”¹⁶ 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 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.

¹⁵ ILP@120: Isabella Ford – Socialist, Feminist and Peace Campaigner, by June Hannam (2013) [online].

¹⁶ The ‘New’ Trade Unionism: a reply to Mr George Shipton by Tom Mann and Ben Tillett, 1890 (pamphlet), page 14.

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 as the challenger at the last moment. Fred loses the election against George Shipton by 46 to 61 votes.¹⁷

The trade unionists in Woolwich, especially Bob Banner and Fred, learnt from the innovations of the nearby Poplar¹⁸ Fabians and in particular they studied and copied the Will Crooks 'College' method of holding regular large meetings at factory gates with key speakers.¹⁹ Fred has a growing aptitude for public

¹⁷ 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].

¹⁸ Poplar is a district within the East End of London.

¹⁹ Labour's Lost Leader: The Life and Politics of Will Crooks, by Paul Tyler, 2007.

speaking to large rooms and crowds, and he would speak indoors and outdoors to crowds of up to 6,000 people.²⁰

“He is a member of the Fabian Society, and ... between March 1890 and 1891, delivered 64 public lectures and addresses to clubs, etc.”⁶

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.”⁶

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.²¹

There is an account of a TUC Congress which met in Liverpool in 1890.¹⁷ Around half the delegates were

²⁰ Educate, Agitate, Organise Library Editions: Political Science Vol 59: One Hundred Years of Fabian Socialism, by Patricia Pugh (2013).

²¹ The Story of the Engineers: 1800-1945, by James B. Jeffreys, 1945, Lawrence & Wishart Ltd.

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 ordinary working clothes and not a top hat between 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 a 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”^{6 25}

In 1891 with Tom Mann, Fred established a Labour Representation League within their wider work in reorganising the London Trades Council,²² with a fund

²² Socialists, Liberals and Labour: The Struggle for London 1885-1914, by Paul Richard Thompson, 1967, Routledge, p57.

to give it substance.²³ 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 Strike²⁴ 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.

“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

²³ The Making of the Labour Movement: The Formation of the Transport and General Workers Union 1870-1992, by Ken Coates, Tony Topham, 1994.

²⁴ Overview at – <https://libcom.org/history/1891-london-bus-workers-strike>

Hammill is president of the Vehicular Traffic Workers' Union.”⁶

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

“while [Fred was] working for Mr. Lorrain,²⁵ 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

²⁵ James Grieve Lorrain (1852-1917) a civil engineer with progressive social views who led in the new skills of electrical engineering and installed the early telephone exchanges and cabling in cities for electric power. In some records spelt as – Lorraine.

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.”⁶

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”²⁶ This account also reported strong public sympathy in London for the bus strike, especially

²⁶ Otago Daily Times, 29 July 1891; a column by H. H. Chapman, a correspondent in Europe, dated 19 June 1891.

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.



*“Most of the Men” a contemporary sketch²⁷,
London Bus Strike organisers, 1891*

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

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.”²⁷ 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 about one month after the end of the strike, Fred is described as becoming the president of the London Amalgamated Omnibus and Tramworkers Union.^{28 29}

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.”

At the London Trades Council, Fred seconded a motion by Jack Burns to support the Scottish rail strike.

²⁷ 1891 London Bus Workers' Strike, 2009, online <https://libcom.org/history/1891-london-bus-workers-strike>

²⁸ Elementary Schooling and the Working Classes 1860-1918, by John S. Hurt, 1979, Routledge

²⁹ Red Scotland: the rise and fall of the radical left c.1872-1932, William Kenefick (2007), Edinburgh University Press, p43.

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 an engineer's 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 thesis³⁰

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 Jack Burns and Tom Mann had disagreed about strike tactics within 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 Jack asking for his support, Jack 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 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, Tom Mann narrowly loses to John Anderson, a conservative, older man.³⁰ Tom blames his

³⁰ The Amalgamated Society of Engineers, 1880-1914: A Study of Trade Union Government, Politics and

former friend Jack 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.”³¹

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

Industrial Policy, by B.C.M. **Weekes**, 1970. Thesis, University of Warwick [online]. (page 31).

³¹ Weekes (as above) (page 33).

later bought by Vickers. The strike lasts for 27 weeks from November 1889 to May 1990, 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 cross the 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 quality products, and Erith is the turning point where the ASE starts to 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 Jack 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”.³² A frequent assessment is that, when it became clear that Keir Hardie and not Jack 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”. He is described as having “lungs of leather and a throat of brass”.³² 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.”³² This betrayal of his roots by Burns must have greatly hurt Fred. Already in the 1889

³² John Burns: the rise and progress of a Right Honourable, by Joseph Burgess (1911) Glasgow: The Reformers Bookstall Ltd.

Dock Strike some people are remarking on 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.³³ 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*"⁶ 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

³³ Nineteenth Century Pamphlets Online, by Barbara Humphries, LSE, 2011, in *The ephemerist*, 153 Summer.

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”.¹⁵

1893

In April 1893 there is a newspaper³⁴ report of Fred addressing a meeting of the Colchester Trades Council, where he is introduced as the Independent Labour Parliamentary Candidate for Newcastle.

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.”³² Only Burns refused.

³⁴ Essex Standard, 29 April 1893.

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 -

“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”.³⁵

This Fabian Tract pamphlet also notes that three of the six MPs currently supported by trade unions in the UK have funds given by the Northumberland and Durham Miners’ Association. It adds that the ASE has raised a 3d levy on its members to support a parliamentary representation fund and as a result has raised £800.

³⁵ A Plan of Campaign for Labour, Fabian Society Tract no. 49, January 1894 (pages 24-25).

1894

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.³⁶

In 1894 Fred Hammill helped establish, with Robert Banner, the Woolwich branch of the Independent Labour Party.³⁷

On 21 February 1894 in Newcastle there is a press report ahead of the meeting that evening which would choose the Liberal candidate for the city in the next general election. Fred is mentioned as one of the four candidates nominated, “either by members of the Association themselves, or by sections of the electors.”³⁸ If Fred had been chosen that evening then the radical votes the following year would not have been split between the Liberals and the Independent Labour Party. However,

³⁶ 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.

³⁷ Labour’s Lost Leader: the life and politics of Will Crooks (2007), Paul Tyler, p36, p106.

³⁸ Collection: Hayler Newspaper Cuttings, Vol 3 (21 Feb 1894), Newcastle City Council Library, L029.3. Source untitled, possibly *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* or *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*.

the meeting chose to support the incumbent, who went on to lose his seat to the Tory challenger.

1895

Fred is mentioned on 22 January 1895 in a letter, one of the many, sent between Edward Carpenter and Alf Mattison. Edward and Fred had both been at a Fabian Society meeting where Fred spoke, as did Keir Hardie.

“... meeting at the Fabians on Friday and great fun it was – lively discussion – and mention was made of the deputn several times, by Pete Currant, Fred Hammill, as well as K.H. ... Ever, Ed C”³⁹

From newspaper reports, we know that “Fred Hammill, Newcastle’s Independent Labour Party prospective candidate, in a direct appeal to Irish voters, argued that, as there would be no Home Rule until the House of Lords had been abolished, and that, as the Liberals were never going to deliver this, all supporters of Home Rule ‘must join with the Labour Party, and force parliament to give them that measure’.”⁴⁰

³⁹ Special Collections, Brotherton Library, Leeds University.

⁴⁰ Newcastle Weekly Courant, 3 Nov 1894. cited in, Irish Nationalist Organisations in the North East of England

In 1895 Fred argued before the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress on the need to form an Independent Labour Party.⁴¹ In this year Fred was the secretary of the British Trades Federation Committee of the TUC.⁴² This year he is also representing the London County Council.

In 1895 he was the first socialist candidate to stand for parliament in Newcastle.⁴³ He gained over 2,000 votes but it wasn't enough to be elected.⁴⁴ Like every party

1890-1925. Stephen Desmond Shannon (2013), University of Northumbria. (thesis), p45.

⁴¹ Inclusion Report into the UNESCO Australian Memory of the World Register of the 1892 Manifesto of the Queensland Labour Party

⁴² Report of the British Trades Federation Committee etc, TUC, 1895.

⁴³ The Centennial History of the Independent Labour Party: a collection of essays, by J.A.Jowitt, pages 24, 31, Ryburn (1992).

⁴⁴ A brief examination by staff at the Tyne and Wear County Archive showed no further details of Fred Hammill's time in Newcastle, and this may be a fruitful area for further research, including Newcastle City

there were different factions or philosophies: Fred was seen as a hard-liner or an ‘impossibilist’ by some comrades, and some comments were quite plain, such as printed in the *Labour Elector*:

“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.”⁴⁵

The Newcastle women maybe thought differently. In the book, *Feminism and the Periodical Press 1900-1918 Vol 1*,⁴⁶ 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.”

Council election papers and minutes of local ASE branches.

⁴⁵ Cited in, *British Workers and the Independent Labour Party 1888-1906*, by David Howell (1984), Manchester University Press.

⁴⁶ by Lucy Delap, Maria DiCenzo, Leila Ryan (2006).

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 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.”²⁰ He also wrote for funds to the Fabian Society and was similarly refused.⁴⁷

Also in 1895, at the instigation of Jack 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 Jack Burns was a factor in closing down the route Fred had followed for years to attend the annual TUC congress as a delegate of the London Trades Council.

⁴⁷ Correspondence with Pease Reynolds, LSE Archives, GB 097 COLL MISC 0573.

“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.”⁴⁸

Weekes concludes this period with a comment that by 1895, Burns had become “the most powerful supporter of political conservatism and administrative incompetence.”⁴⁹

1896-1900

After losing the election in Newcastle, Fred took a remarkable decision and decided to run a pub in a village in North Yorkshire – The Swan in Topcliffe, near Thirsk. This had been his father’s occupation in Leeds around 35 years previously, and Ada’s father’s work too as an inn-keeper.

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,

⁴⁸ Weekes (as above) p55.

⁴⁹ Weekes (as above) p61.

“Twill be hard on us if Labour agitators descend to the level of prize fighters and footballers.”⁵⁰

A further quote indicates the tensions within the Fabian Society between those who supported the Independent Labour Party, and others who wanted to continue 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.”⁵¹

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 a family to feed and house, no funds and no work, and a reputation as an agitator which would stop him being hired. We can only imagine that Fred was fed up, or worse. Perhaps his only consolation was to have caused the sitting MP in Newcastle to lose his seat. That was John Morely, a

⁵⁰ With thanks to David Howell in correspondence for this quote.

⁵¹ Fabian Socialism and English Politics 1884-1918, AM McBriar (1966), Cambridge University Press.

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

The Independent Labour Party had to retrench because not one of its 28 candidates had been elected in 1895, and for the next few years it could not afford to fund many candidates.

Five years later, together with a number of other organisations, the TUC holds a special conference on 26-27 February 1900 and a system is established for trade unions to sponsor labour candidates in elections to Parliament. Fred would have been pleased with this outcome, even if it was too late for him.

Nevertheless, it seems that Fred continued with his political interests, now at a more local level, becoming an elected member of Thirsk Rural District Council.⁵²

1901

On 22 April 1901 the Thirsk Rural District Council held its Annual General Meeting, the first Council meeting after the elections, and Fred is listed as an elected

⁵² John Morley, Joseph Cowen, and Robert Spence Watson: *Liberal Divisions in Newcastle Politics 1873-1895*. E.I. Waitt. Thesis, University of Manchester (1972). This thesis also mentions membership of Topcliffe Parish Council, but Fred is not listed in the minutes nor in the candidates lists for 1895-1901.

member. He is one of the members appointed to the Finance and Work Committee. We can speculate that one of his interests would have been to check that the contracts being issued by the Council were only to fair pay employers.

On 6 May Fred voted that Council meetings should be open to the press, after a number of amendments.

In June, Fred proposed that the left hand side of the road between Topcliffe village and the station⁵³ should have both a proper drain and a footpath, which he won by 18 to 15 votes.

Fred does not attend the meeting on 1 July. The Clerk later reports the death of Cllr Hammill and a letter of condolence is sent to Ada. His vacant post is advertised for re-election.

We know from the census in April, in that Fred and his family are living in a pub⁵⁴ in Topcliffe, a village near Thirsk, 70 miles south of Newcastle. From earlier press⁵⁵ reports, the pub is mistakenly called the Angler's Arms, but was in fact *The Swan*. Fred had an annual licence

⁵³ Closed in 1959.

⁵⁴ 17 Front Street, Topcliffe, North Yorkshire YO7 3NZ.

⁵⁵ "The Decadence of Tom Mann" article in *The Star* (newspaper), 3 June 1899, p7. New Zealand: Christchurch.

starting on 10 October 1895,⁵⁶ and the owners were J. Milner's Trustees.⁵⁷

Topcliffe is three miles from the village of Baldersby-St-James where Fred's mother Ellen and his grandmother Charity were 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 debate for *sponsored* labour politicians, rather than only having paid trade union staff organisers able to stand, is difficult to say now. Later on, both Tom Mann and George Shipton also retire from politics to earn an income by running pubs.⁵⁵

Fred dies on 8 July 1901 from influenza, aged 45 years. He and Ada had been married for 22 years.

This is six months after the death of his mother Ellen⁵⁸ who lived in Leeds.

⁵⁶ Register of Licences (1889-1921), North Yorkshire County Records.

⁵⁷ A "Jonah Milner" is listed as a farmer in Baldersby in 1840, and again in Sessay in 1890 (maybe a son with the same name). Source: Topcliffe Directory of Trades and Professions for 1840, genuki.org.uk

On his death certificate, Ada reports Fred's occupation as having been a Hotel Proprietor, and this time it is not crossed out.

Five years later the first Labour Party candidates have begun to be sponsored and are beginning to be elected to Parliament from the 1906 general election onwards, including Keir Hardie. Trade unionists had sometimes been elected previously, but via the Liberal Party.

The General Alehouse Licence for The Swan was transferred to Ada on 29 July 1901, but she doesn't keep it long and it transfers to Robert Hudson on 28 April 1902.

Sadly, their daughter Helen dies three years after her father, when she is 21 years old in 1904.

In 1911 Ada is 50 years old and listed as living alone in Holbeck, Leeds, her birth town, and her occupation is 'Forewoman' at a factory making fire-lighters.⁵⁹

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

⁵⁹ 1911 Census: 1 Irwin Street, Hoggs Field, Holbeck, Leeds.

Later in 1931 Ada is 71 years old and shown on the Electoral Roll as living with two people in a house in Castleford.⁶⁰

Ada dies aged 79 years in Keighley, Leeds, and is buried on 6 March 1940.

A labour movement newspaper, and reportedly not one of Fred's political allies, (either *The People*,⁶¹ a paper based in New York 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".⁶²

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

⁶⁰ With Thomas Pearson Greenfield and Thomas Greenfield at 7 Crowther Place, Castleford in the Half Acres Ward.

⁶¹ Microfilm records are held at the Wisconsin Historical Society in Madison.

⁶² The History of the Social Democratic Federation, by Martin Crick, Keele University Press, (1994).

formation of the Labor Party, and was for years an active agitator in the Trade Union movement.”

Family notes

Mother

Fred's mother Ellen Parkin (1829-1901) was born and raised in Baldersby, near Topcliffe. Ellen is one of probably ten children, seven of whom are recorded as still alive in 1895 when Fred loses the election and is looking for work.

Aunts and uncles

These are Fred's aunts and uncles who were all born in Baldersby. Many had moved away from home – Leeds, Bradford, Hartlepool – but we can speculate that through, say, a friendship connection in the village, that one of Fred's relatives let him know about the vacancy for a landlord at the pub.

Grandson

Fred and Ada's oldest child is Arthur. Arthur is married to Jane, and they call their first child the *same name* as his late grandfather, Frederick Parkin Hammill (1903-1973).

Nephew

One of Fred's nephews is our great-grandfather Percy Hammill Baldwinson (1879-1950), also born in Leeds and he is around 21 years old when his uncle Fred dies. It seems likely that his uncle's political campaigning had inspired Percy to follow his path and definitely join the

Fabian Society and, probably, the ASE engineers union as well.

We have details of Percy writing and publishing his own pamphlet, and being the editor of a socialist campaigning newspaper in Leeds.

Whether Percy's reported breakdown in the early 1900s was triggered by the death of his uncle is hard to say now.

Great-nephew

In 1905 Percy and Alice called their only surviving child *Fred* Baldwinson (1905-1959) and not Frederick (not even for the birth certificate), possibly in honour of Fred snr. This younger Fred was our grandfather, also known as 'Bud'.

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 [1895]

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

Original print at –

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

Trades Union Congress:
Rules of the British Trades Federation

Published by Trades Union Congress, London, [1895]

Includes a Digest by Fred Hammill, Secretary of
the Committee; Introduction; Preamble; Rules; List of
Sectional Federations. Dated April 1895.

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 within: *The Necessity of an Independent Labour Party*, 1893]

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.

Isabella Ford & Tom Maguire

The following are only speculations, made from the proximity of dates and places in Leeds and in London.

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.

1884

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

1893

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.¹⁵ Whether her and Fred's paths crossed is a matter of conjecture.

1895

As well as losing in the general election, another pressure on Fred earlier in the year would have been the

death in Leeds of Tom Maguire on 8 March 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 the death of Tom Maguire 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. Tom Maguire is one of the main leaders by example of grassroots, community or bottom-up socialism, which was also Fred's belief. Tom Maguire is described as having shown many other labour activists how to be socialists with their "boots on".⁶³

Also around this time, Fred and Isabella Ford's paths might have crossed, possibly 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".'⁶⁴ Many people would visit her and her sister Bessie at their home, *Adel Grange*.¹⁵

⁶³ EP Thompson, *Homage to Tom Maguire* (1960), in *Essays in Labour History*, Asa Briggs, John Saville (eds), Macmillan.

⁶⁴ Glasier, *Bradford Pioneer*, July 1924.

Acknowledgements

Fred Hammill is mentioned in lots of footnotes. But he hasn't yet had a book or thesis published on his campaigns. Of all 28 candidates of the Independent Labour Party in the 1895 election, he was the only one to be without a Wikipedia page, now remedied.

I suspect that Fred 'fell from favour' in radical circles because he was too poor to continue as a politician. He had to earn an income and his reputation as an agitator had lost him his work. The chance to run a pub came to hand - a job his father and his wife Ada's father had both done. And even though he continued to be active in local government his life's history was written in footnotes. So this *pamphlet* seemed a fitting way to remedy matters, mirroring his own pamphlets.

Just to add, I know there will be some mistakes of mine in this account, and some gaps too, and I'd welcome any corrections and additions. If needed, there will be an erratum on my website.

I must particularly thank David Howell who suggested I look to see if there was a connection between my great-grandfather Percy Hammill Baldwinson (another radical) and Fred Hammill. There was: nephew and uncle.

I also wish to thank the following organisations for their help and for their useful website contents:

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- Leeds City Council, Libraries Dept
- London School of Economics Library, Special Collections
- Ministry of Defence, personnel records
- People's History Museum, Manchester
- Newcastle City Council, Libraries Dept
- North Yorkshire County Records
- Trades Union Congress, London
- Topcliffe Village Hall committee
- Tyne and Wear County Records
- University of Leeds Library, Special Collections
- University of Warwick, Modern Records Centre
- University of York, Prof David Howell
- Unite trade union, London
- West Yorkshire Archive Service

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Tony Baldwinson

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