



# CHARTISM

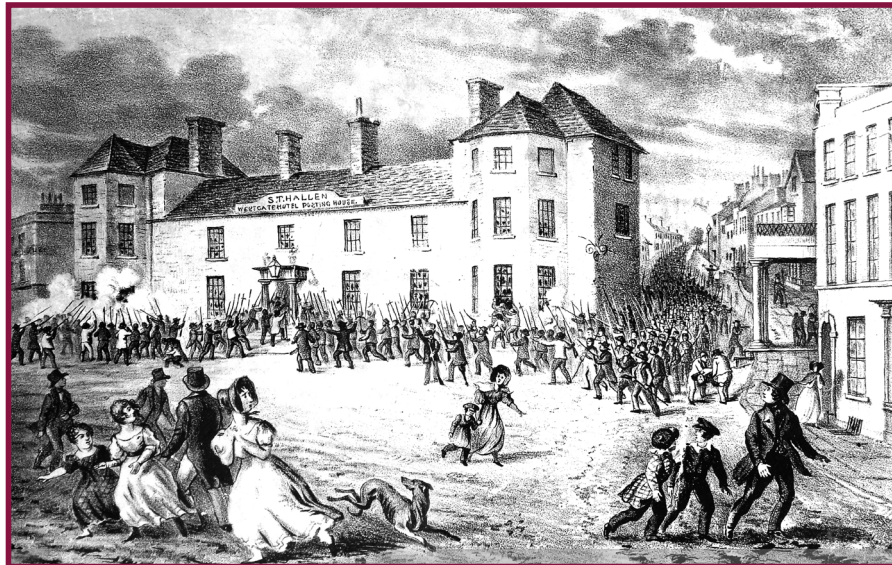
Celebrating the first mass movement for civil rights and social justice

## The Battle of the Westgate Inn 4 November 1839

**9 am: Over 3000 men marched into Newport down Stow Hill.** John Frost, draper and previously mayor of Newport and 'Jack the Fifer', stone mason at the Tredegar ironworks, were at the front. Zephaniah Williams (Blaina publican) positioned at the rear, kept the column moving forward.

Thousands more, ordered by William Jones (Pontypool watchmaker and publican), served as a reserve army positioned along the road from the Marshes toll house, north of Newport Castle, to Pontypool and near Usk.

9.20 am: The marchers turned the corner and faced the Westgate Inn, where the mayor had set up HQ that night. Urged on by John Lovell, a Newport



gardener, a group at the front rushed the front door. A Chartist gun went off, jammed when Oliver, a special constable attempted to close the door. Frost left the scene, sobbing. They surged into the hotel. The specials ran back, firing as they went. The insurgents trampled wounded bodies of friend and foe and those outside fired at the building, smashing windows.

Soldiers of the 45th, moved at 8.30 am from the Stow Workhouse, were hiding in the western wing of the building. Ordered by Lieutenant Gray, they loaded and pulled back the lower shutters. Before the mayor could read the Riot Act, he fell wounded in hip and hand. 'En fillade', the 28 privates and two sergeants fired into the crowd.

Driven back, 'Jack the Fifer' rallied his forces for another

attempt, with some effect as Sergeant Daily suffered six slugs lodged in his head. But the soldiers were now concentrating on clearing the Chartists from the building.

The fighting lasted only twenty minutes, but the soldiers stayed in position for nearly two hours anticipating a counter attack, which never happened. Twenty-two Chartists died, ten of whom were buried at St. Woolos churchyard.

More than fifty people were wounded. Over the next five weeks, over two hundred people were questioned at the Westgate hotel by the magistrates. The Government established a Special Commission held at Shire Hall, Monmouth of three judges headed by the Lord Chief Justice. Thirty men were tried

for treason, sedition, riot and conspiracy. Frost, Williams and Jones were sentenced to death on 16<sup>th</sup> January 1840 and a fortnight later, faced with a mass campaign across Britain, the Whig government relented and transported them for life to Tasmania. Totally pardoned in 1856, only Frost returned, dying 1877 at Stapleton, Bristol in his 93<sup>rd</sup> year. **Les James**

### What Did the Chartists Want?

#### THE PEOPLE'S CHARTER

launched by London Workingmen's Association May 8<sup>th</sup> 1838

- 1** The vote for all men aged 21 and over (votes for adult females were considered but it was decided that this was tactically unwise)
- 2** Equal electoral districts (to help equalise the value of the vote across constituencies)
- 3** Payment of MPs (to enable working men to stand and prevent corrupt practices)
- 4** No property qualification for MPs
- 5** The secret ballot (at this time voting was a public act and poll books were printed which recorded how people voted)
- 6** Annual parliaments (at this time a general election was required only once every 7 years and was thought to distance MPs from electors)



# 175th Anniversary Edition





## NEWPORT IN THE LIMELIGHT

**Two TV Films about the Chartists are coming...** Newport and Gwent are in the limelight. Michael Sheen has been seen filming in many locations this Autumn - outside the Westgate, on a valley's bus, in Blackwood Library, visiting the Newport Museum Chartist exhibition that he opened in 2010.

In his film, he has been talking with people living in places where the Chartists rose up in 1839 to fight for the right to vote. He has been asking what they think about voting and politics today. The film goes out on BBC Wales and BBC4 in the New Year.

**S4C is marking the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Chartist Rising** with a historical documentary presented by historian, Dr. Elin Jones. Elin is telling the story of the march of miners and ironworkers from the Nelson-

Blackwood districts, the heads of the Gwent valleys and from the communities of the eastern valleys, including Pontypool.

She will ask why we still

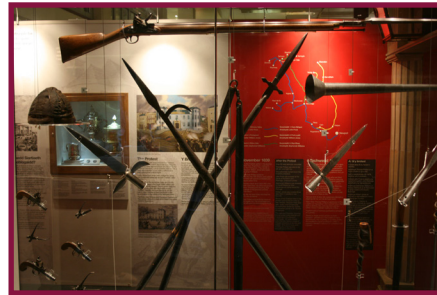


commemorate the Chartists in 2014 and why the movement continues to be relevant in 21<sup>st</sup> century Wales.

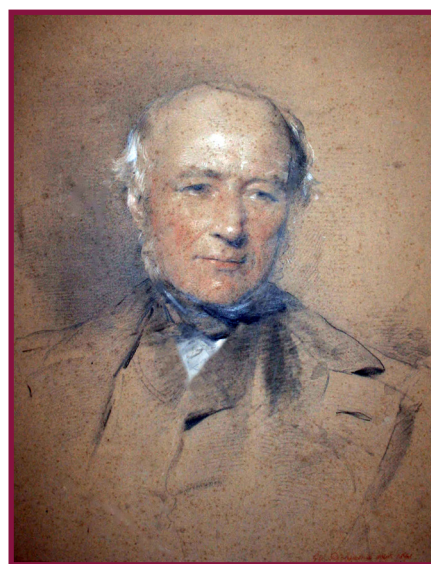


The adverts on this page from 1848 were taken from Kelly's Directory of Monmouthshire in Newport Museum and Library

## NEWPORT MUSEUM, ART GALLERY & CENTRAL LIBRARY



Newport City Council Museum & Library services are key to the City's Drive to raise the profile of the Chartist Story. They have played a major role in promoting the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with lectures and activities for all ages. The Museum contains the most outstanding Chartist exhibition in the UK and the Art Gallery is currently showing "Documenting the Chartists" – a special temporary exhibition



of letters, pamphlets, posters and prints. These are items that cannot regularly be exhibited as constant exposure to light damages paper. **SO DON'T MISS THE OPPORTUNITY** to see highlights of the important Chartist collection looked after by the City's Museum and Art Gallery.

Thanks to funds raised by the Friends of the Museum, a pastel drawing of Sir

Thomas Phillips (artist: George Richmond: above) has been conserved and is also on display and the Central Library also has a Chartism exhibition in its reference section.



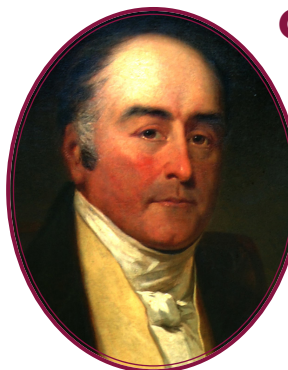
The most well known Portrait of the Mayor of Newport who stopped the Chartist uprising is the lithograph above that is also in Newport Museum

Here Thomas Phillips proudly shows the injuries he suffered during the rising.

He was rewarded with a Knighthood by Queen Victoria five weeks after the Westgate battle.







## Can anyone solve this heinous crime?

### INCENDIARISM.

#### ONE HUNDRED POUNDS REWARD.

WHEREAS, during the night of the 16th instant, a RICK of HAY, standing in a field in my occupation, on the west side of the tramroad leading from Court-y-bella, Machine, to Pillgwenlly, was WILFULLY SET FIRE to and DESTROYED :- I hereby offer a REWARD of ONE HUNDRED POUNDS, on the conviction of the Offender, to any one who will give me the information that will lead to such a conviction.

THOMAS PROTHERO.

January 17th, 1840

For the most plausible solution - the editor offers a copy of 'Voices for the Vote': 64 pages worth at least £100 and normally sells at the ridiculously low price of 4.99 in Monmouth Shire Hall and Newport Museum.

**CHARTISM magazine** (Sept 2014) ran this competition. For the most plausible solution, we could not afford the £100 offered by Thomas Prothero of Malpas Court had done, but offered instead a book on **Chartism - 'Voices for the Vote'**\*. Prothero's reward was huge. It would have taken an agricultural labourer 4 to 5 years to earn such a sum. Yet even though Sir Thomas Phillips 'communicated the circumstance to the Home Secretary', nobody claimed the reward. Such defiant resistance shows the scale of popular support that existed locally for Chartism. The cause of Chartism

who had been sentenced to death, but his punishment was immediately reduced to transportation. Perhaps his wife was amongst the gang? She was most certainly an activist Chartist. So too was the Betts (Beatty) family. Benjamin died 5 March 1840, aged 63, only 7 weeks after the rick burning incident. The cause of his death was given as 'mortification of a burnt leg'.

Sylvia has previously written about one of Benjamin's sons, Wright Beatty, her great-great-great-uncle, who was very actively involved in the preparations for the Rising. (*Who do you think you are? BBC Magazine, Spring 2008*)

He had not been arrested by the authorities in the months immediately after the battle at the Westgate, and if still at home he could have been involved in the rick burning. Months later in September 1840, he was arrested and charged with conspiracy, sedition and riot. Two witnesses accused him of being in an armed band of men that raided the home of John Lewis, a tin plate manufacturer at Ty Du, searching for weapons. Another witness recognised him at the front of the Chartist crowd on its arrival at Newport and claimed he pointed his gun at the soldiers inside the Westgate Inn and "fired his piece through the window". Wright Beatty was sentenced to 3 years hard labour.

\*Voices for the Vote: 64 pages, full of illustrations, tells the story of local Chartism and the trials that took place in 1840 and sells at the remarkably low price of £4.99 in Newport Museum.

## The cause of his death was mortification of a burnt leg.

did not die on the steps of the Westgate. The hay rick was set alight on the day after John Frost, Zephaniah Williams and William Jones were sentenced to death at Monmouth.

The prize was awarded to Sylvia Taylor, born in Newport, now living in Cardiff. At the Chartist Convention held on 1 November at the University City Campus, she produced a 'clinchier'. She brought with her the copy of her great-great-great-grandfather's death certificate. Benjamin Betts lived at the end of Courtybella road in Pillgwenlly, where there was strong support for the Chartists.

One of his neighbours was the milkman, Jenkin Morgan,

## Mayor of Newport Matthew Evans DESCENDANT OF A CHARTIST



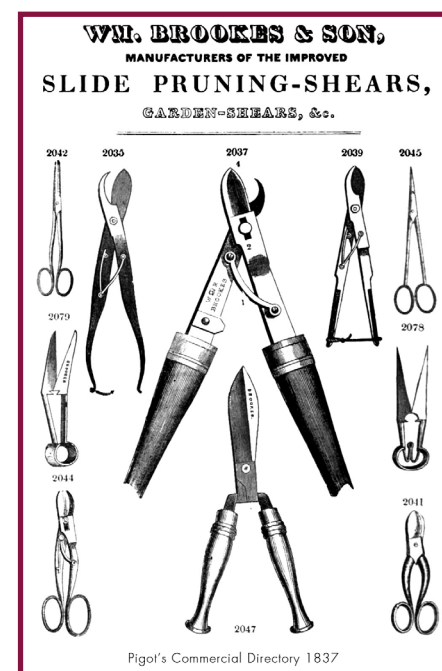
This is a speech delivered by Cllr. Matthew Evans, Mayor of Newport City Council, at the South Wales Chartist Convention on 1 November 2014 at the City Campus, University of South Wales

My great-great-great-great grandfather on my mother's side – five generations back – was the Newport printer and Chartist, John Partridge. He had at least five, possibly seven children - two were boys. I, and my mother, are descended directly through his eldest son, John. On the death of John Partridge, senior in 1844, John then aged 18 and Frederick aged 10, inherited all their father's 'Printing Materials, Printing Press, Type, Cases etc' Born in Wales in 1801, but we are not sure where, Partridge came to Newport in the early 1820s. His son John, my ancestor, was born here in 1826. John Partridge, senior, worked for many years as the foreman in the print shop of the radically inclined Samuel Etheridge. In the late 1830s, Partridge took over the running of Etheridge's press and working closely with John Frost, producing publications for the local Chartists. Examples of his work can be seen at Newport Museum in the special 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary exhibition 'Documenting the Chartists'. These include broadsheets and

pamphlets written by John Frost and Henry Vincent.

When the battle broke out at the Westgate Inn just after 9 o'clock on Monday morning, 4<sup>th</sup> November, John Partridge was seen standing on Stow Hill at the corner of Charles Street watching the Chartists marching down Stow Hill. When the fighting occurred, he disappeared into the slum land of Friars Field and the riverside, where the Museum is today and in 1839, the special constable feared to go.

It was there, later that day, that he bumped into Charles Waters, secretary of the Workingmen's Association, in a beer house. Avoiding the Westgate hotel, they both carefully picked their





(Matthew Evans cont.) way along the canal tow path to the Mill Pond, north of the castle and then went up Mill Street to Partridge's home. Only Amelia, aged 17, was at home.

From statements made to the magistrates and reported in the *Merlin* and other newspapers, we know that at about 7 O'clock that evening, obviously acting on a tip-off, a group of special constables arrived at his door and knocked loudly. Partridge called out 'I have gone to bed'. They forced the door and the bolt fell out. Once inside they could see Partridge standing in the room – he kept saying, 'I have gone to bed'.

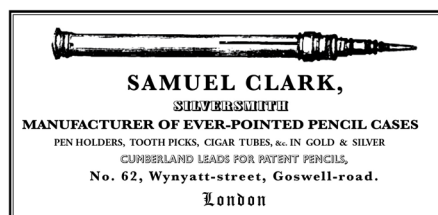
And there two yards further inside the room was John Frost. They grabbed the collar of his coat, declaring he was arrested.

Frost was not wearing his trousers. He had taken them off to dry. They let go as soon as he said 'I will come with you immediately'. Partridge was still repeating 'I have gone to bed', but now claiming he had just been roused from bed by Frost's arrival. Frost had spent a miserable day on the run and he had come to Partridge for food and shelter. But clearly, he had been there some time, for Partridge's daughter, Amelia, admitted that Frost had provided her with a shilling to go out and buy bread and cheese. Once they were right inside the room, they realised there was a third man present, Charles Waters.

All three men were taken before the magistrates at the Westgate inn, where they were charged with treason, refused bail and taken under escort to Monmouth gaol.

Partridge was sentenced at the Monmouth trials in mid-January 1840 to six months hard labour for riot and conspiracy. He clearly did not recover from the daily stone breaking that he was made to endure.

John Partridge, Chartist printer, was aged 43 years old when he died on 11 September 1844.



## UNLOCKING the CHARTIST TRIALS CYNEFIN

### Trails to Trial project

- Are you fascinated by the 1839 Chartist protest?
- Would you like to see the unique collection of trial documents available online?
- Would you like to find the places on the map where the Chartists were active?

### YOU CAN HELP AS A VOLUNTEER

**JOIN THE PROJECT** – you can transcribe the documents, which are digitally available. No specialist knowledge is needed and full training will be given. Join in at home, giving as much time as you like. There will also be opportunities to take part at the Gwent Archives, if you wish- Contact Rachel Lovering (Project Officer) at **GWENT ARCHIVES** 01495 353363

[rachael.lovering@gwentarchives.gov.uk](mailto:rachael.lovering@gwentarchives.gov.uk)



### SPECIAL 175th CHARTIST EDITION of Gwent Local History Journal

#### Articles by-

**LES JAMES:** The Confession of Zephaniah Williams and the 1839 Rising/ **COLIN GIBSON:** George Shell's Letter Revisited: Some Perspectives on its use at the Monmouthshire Chartist Trials/ **CHRISTABEL HUTCHINGS:** A juror's tale: The Travails of Edmund Jones at the Monmouth Chartist Trials/ **TONY HOPKINS:** Policing the Rising: The Career of John Roberts, Police Superintendent of Pontypool, 1830-1860/ **SARAH RICHARDS:** Finding Chartism in the Family: William Davies of Blackwood/ **DAVID OSMOND:** Newport and the Chartist Land Plan/ **JOHN EVANS:** William Shellard c.1797-1874: An Old Chartist fades away/

PRICE: £5 plus P&P  
ORDER from **Peter Strong**  
[strong@btinternet.com](mailto:strong@btinternet.com)



## THE FORGOTTEN

is a multi-media community musical, giving voice to the men, women and children who sacrificed their lives to the cause of Chartism that seeded democracy in this country. This is popular story telling – the 1839 Rising in music and song.

The music is by award winning television and music theatre composer Justin Nicholls and is a blend of Celtic folk and the driving rhythms of protest songs.

The 'flagship' song of the show is Use Your Voice For the People and we defy anyone NOT to be roused by The Chartists Are Coming!

This is NOT a one song show - *Saturday Night* and *Rattle Her Bones* are powerful

choral pieces. The region's singing clubs of Karl Daymond will be raising the roof. The memorable Libretto is written by Patrick Jones and Vanessa Dodd.

The show is supported by Newport's Community Arts Development Fund and the Arts Council of Wales. It is a Screwpacket Playwrights Production.

Performing at The Riverfront Theatre, Newport NP20 1HG on Wednesday 19 November at 7.30 pm and Thursday 20 November at 2pm and 7.30pm  
Box Office: 01633 656 757  
Tickets: £10, Concessions £8, Schools and students £5  
There are also performances at Llandogo Millennium Hall; Drill Hall, Chepstow and Savoy Theatre, Monmouth



Follow the events of the Chartist Rising as they occurred 175\_

Follow the arrests, magistrates examinations and the Trials at Monmouth Day by Day from November to January **@ChartistLive**



<https://www.facebook.com/thechartists>

Our Website will be operating soon so please add bookmark **<http://thechartists.org>**



Taken from the 1839 Monmouthshire Merlin

## CHARTISM

is a FREE Magazine delivered by email. If you would like to join our mailing list please contact [les.james22@gmail.com](mailto:les.james22@gmail.com) to receive regular issues of the e-magazine

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Back copies are available on request

Editor: Les James  
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**A very special thanks to Members and Officers of Newport City Council for publishing this magazine and for their marvellous support of the Chartist March and everything we are trying to achieve to make Newport the home of Democracy**