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## **HISTORY, HERITAGE AND COMMEMORATION: NEWPORT 1839-1989 <sup>1</sup>**

**'Some forms of a tradition do not merely encapsulate a past, they sterilise it; they remove it from the historical equation of the present.'**

**(Gwyn A. Williams).**

**Chris Williams**

Once, in the pages of this journal, Gwyn A. Williams examined the ways in which Dic Penderyn and the Merthyr Rising had been commemorated and celebrated since 1831. He expressed alarm at what he saw as a 'Celebration of a Heroic Past which seems rarely to be brought to bear on vulgarly contemporary problems ...'.<sup>2</sup> Such a concern has found wider echoes in much of the recent debate surrounding Britain's 'heritage industry'. There appears to be considerable support for Robert Hewison's view that 'Heritage, for all its seductive delights, is bogus history.'<sup>3</sup> Patrick Wright has expressed a specific worry about the Labour movement, which he considers to have:

**'... a tendency towards the comforting simplicities of an evocative and sentimental nostalgia: in its current uncertainty, it does tend in its radicalism to fall back on the vanished solidarities of a time when a coherent and unified working-class may seem to have been properly resistant, conscious and oppressed...'.<sup>4</sup>**

This paper sets out to consider whether similar criticisms may be levelled at the tradition of commemoration surrounding the Newport Rising of 1839. The Newport Chartists have long received attention at the hands of some of Wales's leading social historians.<sup>5</sup> Historiographical debate has focussed on a series of interrelated issues: whether or not the Chartists intended to make a violent revolution or simply to demonstrate in support of their aims; whether the scope of their ambitions were British or more specifically Welsh; whether they aimed to take control of the means of production; and whether John Frost was in any sense a representative or effective leader of the local movement. Academic studies of various aspects of the 'Rising' continue to emerge, but the concern here is not with what historians think the Newport Chartists did or intended to do, but rather with what they are both remembered and honoured for having done or intended.<sup>6</sup>

Many works of general cultural production, ranging from novels and poems to folksong and comic television documentary, have contributed to popular memory of the Chartists.<sup>7</sup> This paper concentrates primarily upon official and semiofficial works. By 'official' is meant a work sponsored by the local authority. 'Semiofficial' includes those works which have aimed to 'speak' on behalf of Newport and district: whose authors or editors saw themselves as representing Newport's identity to its populace and to the wider world.

An obvious place to begin a search for the commemoration of the Rising is its fiftieth anniversary in 1889. Significantly, there was no commemoration in that year. The anniversary on the 3rd and 4th of November went unmentioned in the local newspaper the *Monmouthshire Merlin and South Wales Advertiser*, unless one reads as relevant the comment that the 'only celebrations outside the Westgate [Hotel] in the course of the week were Guy Fawkes ... it appears no damage was done'.<sup>8</sup>

Any surviving Chartists would have been galled by the report, in the same edition of the paper, of the Ninth Annual Dinner of the Newport Cab Drivers, at which the local magnate Lord Tredegar was present. Not only was there a toast to 'The Army, the Navy and the Reserve Forces' but the local Borough Councillor proposing a toast to 'The Lords and Commons', claimed that:

'There was no other nation on the face of the earth that had a Parliament like ours, and no country on the face of the earth could be more proud of its Parliament and its institutions, than were the people of this country. [Hear, Hear]. In drinking to the House of Lords it must not be forgotten, although we are landed now in a democratic age, that the Lords were in the early times the leaders of the democracy, for it was the Barons at Runnymede who secured the liberties of the people in Magna Carta. [Cheers].'

The paper also carried, on its front page, a regular column entitled 'Merlin Redivivus, or Chronicles of the County', in which the reader was treated to reports of political history culled from back copies of the paper. It must have been an ironic coincidence that this particular edition sought to cover the 1830s. But any reader expecting a mention of Chartism would have been disappointed, the column being filled by successive accounts of the 1831 parliamentary and 1841 municipal elections. An earlier number of the *Merlin* explained the reason for such silence regarding 1839:

'From 1830 to 1833 the great reform agitation may be said to have raged almost continually, and but for the terrible cholera visitation it might be said that the attention of the whole country was absorbed by it. Then toward the end of the 'thirties' the chartist agitation grew more and more fierce, and it culminated, so far at least as Newport and district was concerned, in the riots in front of the Westgate. What happened almost everybody knows, and it is hardly necessary to wade through the many columns of reports which appeared in the MERLIN of the time, to repeat the story which has been so often told.'<sup>9</sup>

Of course, at the time the rising had received a great deal of largely hostile press attention. The hero of the hour had not been John Frost who was castigated as a 'madman' and 'firebrand', a 'wretched' and 'deluded' man, but instead Mayor Thomas Phillips, subsequently knighted by Queen Victoria for his efforts, and rewarded with eight hundred guineas' worth of silver plate.<sup>10</sup> Banquets, dinners

and testimonials had been held in Newport in both his honour, and that of the 45th Regiment of Foot which had held the Westgate against the Chartist assault. In 1846 the longterm opponent of Frost, local magnate Sir Charles Morgan, had died, and in 1848, the year of European revolutions and of the Chartist demonstration on Kennington Common in London, a statue of Sir Charles had been erected in Newport's High Street, facing Westgate Square and the Westgate Hotel, where less than a decade before Chartist blood had been shed.<sup>11</sup> The previous year had seen the publication of a *History of Newport*, whose author, J.M.Scott, having given an account of 1839, concluded that 'Even this notice of the Chartist Riots, we fear, is too long, considering that the events connected therewith, are those which should now belong to oblivion.'<sup>12</sup> Insofar as there was any commemoration of the rising, it was, at this stage, a commemoration of its defeat by the forces of authority. John Frost's return to Newport in 1856, following his pardon, had not altered this pattern. A committee established in the town to welcome him had been denied use of a local theatre for this purpose, and had decided against organising a public procession. Nevertheless, when Frost did arrive he turned the occasion into something of a personal triumph. Welcomed by a large crowd who drew him in a carriage through the streets past the Westgate Hotel to a temperance hotel nearby, Frost spoke to his audience, stating that his opinions were unchanged. Predictably the press showed its disapproval, suggesting that the people who welcomed Frost were the canaille of the town and that Frost had shown ingratitude to the government which had pardoned him.<sup>13</sup> Such press hostility prevailed as late as 1877, the year of Frost's death. An obituary writer in the *Western Mail* considered that 'The Chartist Riots formed a dark episode in the local history of Newport', whilst the *Merlin* viewed them as 'a treasonable movement resulting in riot and bloodshed'.<sup>14</sup> Not all commentators continued to feel so strongly: Samuel D. Williams in his *Illustrated Guide to Newport* published in 1892 to mark the meeting in the town of the Association of Chambers of Commerce of the United Kingdom noted that the 'Riots' were 'alluded to as conferring a sort of political notoreity upon the town'.<sup>15</sup> In his later work, *Who's Who in Newport*, he remarked (with a touch of pride perhaps) that they had given the town 'a certain historical value'.<sup>16</sup>

By the time of the Rising's centenary in 1939, the official attitude had shifted very considerably from the general tone of hostility characteristic of the late nineteenth century. To some extent this may have been due to the mere passage of time, as suggested by S.D.Williams's comments above, but it seems likely that it was also influenced by the achievement by that date of five of the six points of the People's Charter. Even more significant may have been the rise of the Labour movement in South Wales. Labour controlled Monmouthshire County Council after 1919, had a substantial presence (though not control) on Newport Borough Council by the late 1930s, and returned many M.P.s for local constituencies (including Newport itself between 1929 and 1931).<sup>17</sup> Some in the Labour movement saw the Chartists as forerunners of socialism. In 1924 Ness Edwards had written a pamphlet entitled *John Frost and the Chartist Movement in Wales*. He opened by noting with regret that Chartism had been 'conveniently ignored by the modern British working-class', and lambasted 'English labourists' in particular for their condescending

attitude. In his opinion such marginalisation was unfortunate, because since the end of the Great War 'the vigour and robustness of the Chartists has been almost as necessary as during 1839':

'This ashamedness of our Chartist days has existed side by side with the support of imperial wars and the upholding of the 'glory of the Empire.' The desire to be 'constitutional' has dominated the Labour movement since the decadence of Chartism, and can be traced from the 'moral persuasion men' of the Chartists through the 'Fair day's wage for a fair day's work men,' the Lib-Labs, down to the 'Rightists' of the modern movement. This constitutional pacifist domination has led to the spurning of the physical force indiscretions of the infantile days of the labour movement, the expulsion of 'physical force' men from the political organisations, the attacks upon the Bolshevich elements, and the emulation and praise of the constitutional, moralising idealists. In the same way the heroic doings of our Chartist forbears have been hidden away in the family cupboard.'<sup>18</sup>

Edwards's approach was later echoed by the South Wales Miners' Federation, whose May Day celebrations in 1939 took the form of a pageant to celebrate the centenary of the Newport Rising. The union considered itself as 'ready to resist oppression today as it did in the Chartist movement one hundred years ago.'<sup>19</sup>

Such an explicitly radical interpretation of Chartism, full of combative contemporary relevance, could not, however, be accepted by public institutions outside the Labour movement. Their commemorations, if they were to command widespread support, would need to be essentially neutral. And the efforts of Newport Borough Council, as the centenary of the rising approached, were undoubtedly aimed at securing such support. In July 1938 a letter was drafted to canvass opinion on the suitability and form of a commemoration. The official line was that:

'Today the movement can be regarded without political bias. Only one of the famous 'Six Points' of the Charter has been regarded as undesirable, viz., the demand for annual Parliaments. ... For many years the town suffered an unsavoury reputation as a result of the Riots. Today, the matter is regarded in a better historical perspective, but that perspective has never been adequately expressed nor have any attempts been made to study the lives and characters of those who were responsible for the rising and the parts they played.'<sup>20</sup>

To remedy these deficiencies in historical and public memory, a Chartist Centenary Committee was established, the first stated object of which was that it 'must be kept absolutely free of political bias.'<sup>21</sup> Accordingly, and in light of the current international crisis, it was decided that the commemoration would draw 'attention to the democratic institutions of this country as compared with the systems now being established on the continent.'<sup>22</sup> The Committee consisted of representatives from (amongst others) the local Historical Association, trade unions and trades councils,

all political parties from Conservative to Communist, the Newport Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club and the Westgate Hotel. Its patrons included the Lord Lieutenant and High Sheriffs of the County, the Mayor of Newport and the Chairman of the County Council, along with most local M.P.s.<sup>23</sup> The Committee seems to have spared little effort to make the commemoration an impressive one. A fullscale life of John Frost was commissioned from David Williams of the History department at University College, Cardiff; a pamphlet for schools was written by a local history teacher; a bibliography of material on Frost and Chartism was assembled; Newport Museum staged an exhibition on the subject; a play - *The Rock and Fountain* - was commissioned from Gwyn Jones of the English department at U.C.C.; Richard Crossman was to give a public lecture; and the B.B.C. was to broadcast a radio programme including renditions of Chartist songs.<sup>24</sup> Most of these activities took place, although some were curtailed due to the outbreak of the Second World War, two months prior to the date of the centenary itself. Their tone, although not uniform, was generally supportive of the movement and of John Frost, whilst recognising the premature and impetuous nature of the 'riots' as they were seen at this time. The proceedings were not, it was stated 'a celebration of the Chartist Riots ... but an educational study' of an 'almost entirely untouched' phase of history, and once war had broken out their importance was accentuated by the 'attack by other political systems' upon 'the principles of democracy'.<sup>25</sup>

The official view may best be captured by the account of the unveiling of a plaque marking John Frost's birthplace, in Thomas Street, Newport, on 3 November 1939. According to Newport's Mayor, Frost was 'a man of vision, but not always of sound judgment'; to other speakers he was 'with all his mistakes, ... a champion of liberty'. Speeches in Frost's honour were made at a luncheon across the High Street in the long room of the King's Head Hotel, the place where, in 1839, Frost and other captured Chartists had been held prior to being taken to Monmouth for trial. The *South Wales Argus* devoted an editorial entitled 'The Torch of Justice' to the whole event:

'A hundred years have redeemed John Frost's name and reconciled errors of commission with inherent good faith: the last fifty years particularly sanctified his intent and raised him to the hierarchy of heroes. Though the Riot was a dismal failure, except for the second regeneration it afterwards inspired, later and more enlightened generations were fundamentally in accord with Chartist ideas. Within the Chartist movement were a Moral Force Party who pressed upon the extreme physical action Chartists counsels of wisdom and prudence similar to those urged upon Hitler before the present War, but, in each case, the voices of restraint were not heeded. The Chartist Riot might have made Chartism impossible of translation into practical politics, but, fortunately, Frost and his associates were reclaimed by the spirit they so nearly destroyed. The moral of Chartism survived the stormy night of November 34, 1839, and then was fostered by men from whose eyes the scales of suspicion and distrust had fallen. By constant address to constitutional justice, they secured, in time, popular approval of

nearly all the principles for which Monmouthshire's disgruntled labourers fought. Out of Chartism was born the workingclass movement strong, virile, free, now playing a distinguished part in the struggle Britain is forced to wage. Chartists carried banners of Liberty, Security, Justice. One hundred years ago they fought to establish those ideals in their own country for their own kith and kin: we fight today to establish the same principles internationally. A century ago the need was the same as in the Twentieth Century, for the workings of the spirit that seeks to uplift mankind, to ennoble, to enrich, spiritually, morally, economically, the spirit through which oppression is negated everywhere, and full and complete justice is enthroned. Would that more individuals and countries carried the Torch of Justice today.<sup>26</sup>

Despite such eloquence the commemoration sidestepped vital questions such as the place of violence in the events of 1839 (a jink largely in the steps of David Williams, whose view was that it was a 'monster demonstration' that had got out of hand), and the socially radical content of the Chartist programme. By focussing on the six points of the Charter alone, it was possible to dilute the radicalism that Chartism represented. By placing the commemoration in the context of the Second World War any remaining ambiguity, particularly about the educated and articulate middle-class figure of John Frost, could be removed. Frost (after all a Newport man unlike most participants in the Rising) could be reappropriated as a fighter for the democratic values now under threat from fascism. One of his opponents of the time, Thomas Prothero, could be presented as the nineteenth-century 'Mussolini of Monmouthshire'!<sup>27</sup>

There was an irony about the centenary celebrations, acknowledged even by those involved in them. David Williams himself, in *The Welsh Review*, noted that:

'... of all celebrations, possibly the least expected is one to mark the centenary of a riot, especially when we remember that the celebrants, had they been alive a hundred years ago, would, almost without question, have been on the side opposed to the rioters. Yet, on reflection, this need cause us no surprise. The rebels of yesterday are often the heroes of today, while time can lend enchantment to the greatest discomfort, and cause even the mildest mannered of men to exclaim of a bloody riot: 'Those were the days'.<sup>28</sup>

The 1939 commemorations officially placed John Frost and the Newport Rising at the centre of Newport's municipal identity, and ensured that the events of 1839 were now very much in the public domain. However, this did not imply that the significances assigned to the Rising were settled, and the postwar period has seen a shift in the meanings visited upon the event. Such movement has only in part been stimulated by academic reinterpretations of the David Williams orthodoxy, as both the continued rise of the Labour Party in the locality and the emergence of a popular interest in history 'from below' must also be credited with an effect.

After the 'struggle for democracy' had been won Newport Borough Council did not fail to develop further awareness of its turbulent past. In 1960 mural artist Hans Feibusch was commissioned to paint murals depicting episodes from the town's history on the four walls of the Civic Centre's Central Hall. One, 'The Chartist Riot', showed John Frost 'haranguing' an 'angry crowd' at the top of Stow Hill, shortly before the attack on the Westgate.<sup>29</sup> As part of Newport's urban regeneration scheme in the 1960s an office block erected on the site of the old Town Hall was named Chartist Tower, and the rebuilt Dock Street area John Frost Square.<sup>30</sup> And in 1978 Kenneth Budd's tiled mural portraying the attack on the Westgate was unveiled in the Square.<sup>31</sup>

The most intense period of commemoration came, naturally enough, in the late 1980s. In October 1986 John Frost's grave, discovered in Bristol by members of the Newport Local History Society, was given a new headstone by the Borough Council, unveiled by Neil Kinnock.<sup>32</sup> This act of remembrance was seen as important, because, as the Chairman of the Local History Society put it, 'many of the political questions raised by the Chartists (if not by the actual Charter) remain unresolved today'.<sup>33</sup> In November that year the Society revived the practice (begun in 1840) of leaving red roses on the North side of the graveyard of St. Woolos' Cathedral, in honour of those killed in 1839 and buried by the authorities in unmarked graves.<sup>34</sup> And in November 1988 a plaque honouring these Chartists was unveiled there by Alexander Cordell, following a service attended by Newport's Mayor and by local M.P. Paul Flynn.<sup>35</sup>

Such developments were a prelude to the 150th anniversary celebrations of 1989, organised by the Borough Council with the assistance of many local organisations and other local authorities. There were conferences, lectures, plays, publications, exhibitions, a flower festival with a Chartist theme, a musical, and march by schoolchildren drawn from the Gwent valleys to the Westgate, where they were welcomed and addressed by dignitaries including Newport's Mayor, its two Newport Labour M.P.s, and Neil Kinnock.<sup>36</sup> The latter in his speech drew parallels between Newport in 1839 and contemporary Soweto, Nicaragua, Berlin, Warsaw, Budapest and Guam.<sup>37</sup>

The most lasting tribute to the Chartists was the bronze sculpture which now stands in front of the Westgate Hotel. In October 1986 the Borough Council had decided to commission a statue of John Frost, and had taken advice from the Welsh Arts Council and the Welsh Sculpture Trust on how to proceed.<sup>38</sup> Existing sentiment that the statue should not only 'honour John Frost but the ordinary men and women who came down the valleys and supported him' was reinforced by these bodies.<sup>39</sup> Following a public competition the designs of Cardiff based sculptor Chris Kelly were chosen for their 'immediate appeal', the fact that they 'captured the spirit of Chartism and Newport's history', and for making 'a strong and positive statement about the town's future'.<sup>40</sup> Kelly himself saw his work as 'more than just an adornment'. For him 'it fulfils a practical need because everything the Chartists

strove for is still relevant today'.<sup>41</sup> Rather than produce a work focussing simply on Frost the sculpture is a collective interpretation of Chartism which makes radical political points of contemporary significance.<sup>42</sup> It not only remembers the Chartist dead, from whose bodies the spirit of victory rises, but emphasises the importance of community and of equality between the sexes in the Newport of today. It does not shirk the violence of the movement, for Kelly argues that 'change comes from smashing up whole values.'<sup>43</sup> This is a work of art which challenges any complacency about the Chartist message, and which clearly attempts to situate the Newport Rising in 'the historical equation of the present'.

These developments did not proceed without adverse comment, some of a party political nature. The initial proposals for a sculpture led a publicity seeking Conservative Councillor to denounce John Frost as 'a miserable little rebel who should have been hung, drawn and quartered', only to find himself rebutted on all sides.<sup>44</sup> A Plaid Cymru activist claimed that the whole thing was a 'bizarre circus' and that the Labour Party had a 'damned cheek' in monopolising the anniversary, whilst a prominent Liberal put forward the view that the Chartists would have supported proportional representation.<sup>45</sup> Some Newport residents considered that the money put towards the sculpture could have been better spent on a set of traffic lights, on reducing the Poll Tax bill, or on charitable causes.<sup>46</sup> Others disagreed with the principle rather than the cost: local historian Derrick Vaughan saw Thomas Phillips not John Frost as the hero, arguing that Chartism would have brought to an end Britain's 'immature democracy' in a sea of atrocities and bloodletting far worse than the French Revolution!<sup>47</sup> Diorama maker Tony Friend shared this view: 'To me it was something of a Rorke's Drift situation'!!<sup>48</sup> But on the whole local reaction was favourable, and the sculpture received considerable artistic and popular acclaim.<sup>49</sup>

Of course, amidst the variety of commemorative events, ambiguities remained. Despite the fact that the official interpretation of 1839 was that it was an attempt at 'a British revolution' the 1989 'Programme of Events' leaflet viewed the Rising as 'a demonstration that led to bloodshed', whilst none other than Islwyn Borough Council had been concerned that the reenactment of the Chartist march on Newport might be viewed 'as a political statement'.<sup>50</sup> Equally, although the tone of the 1989 celebrations was very much pro Chartist, the mayoral speech delivered outside the Westgate in November acknowledged that 'Whatever one's view of the events of that fateful day 150 years ago, both men [John Frost and Thomas Phillips] were doing what they believed was right.'<sup>51</sup> But it would fly in the face of the collective evidence to argue from these instances that the 1989 commemoration was in any sense a 'domestication' or 'pacification' of 1839.

Since 1839 Newport Borough Council and those who have considered themselves spokesmen for the town have had to confront three issues concerning the Rising. The fundamental question was whether the event should be commemorated at all: not answered in the affirmative until 1939. The next was to consider what it was that was being commemorated: an accidental riot or an insurrection? Finally there

was the form that the commemoration was to take. Should it focus on the leader and upon its central but no longer controversial Six Points? Or could it embrace the collective aspirations of the movement for a society remade, aspirations which had not been satisfied (to a large extent) by a series of electoral reforms ending in 1918? The answers given in 1989 differed substantially from those of fifty years earlier. The final question which the official commemorators must have asked themselves, if only quietly, concerned the function of the commemorative process. In 1939 its purpose was both to educate, and to bolster public morale at a time of international crisis. In 1989 the official line was far less politicised, although the content and the historical interpretation tended to be rather more radical than that of 1939. Instead emphasis was placed upon the secular benefits that commemoration brought with it. The Council's Recreation Sub-Committee was able to report even before the 150 year celebrations that:

‘The Chartist commemoration had already achieved many of its objectives by enhancing community activity, providing a heightened sense of the town's historical importance, a raised tourism profile and opportunities for visitors and local people to experience artistic excellence and highly enjoyable and informative events.’<sup>52</sup>

In 1989, as in 1939, there had been considerable public involvement in the organisation of the celebrations, through consultative meetings and committee representation.<sup>53</sup> One of the ‘central themes’ of the official Newport Tourism Feasibility Study carried out in 1989 was that ‘The economic benefits of tourism should not be regarded in isolation from its importance as an image builder, a generator of civic pride, and provider of enhanced amenities for local people.’<sup>54</sup> Once the celebrations were over the official verdict was that they had been successful.<sup>55</sup>

Although Robert Hewison is justifiably worried that an ‘obsession’ with the past may make us unable to face our future, this paper suggests that the commemoration of the Newport Rising has had (changing) contemporary relevance, and that it can be seen as challenging and progressive: as fertile rather than sterile.<sup>56</sup> Inevitably it will continue to be located within a process of historical and public interpretation and negotiation: those of us still around for the bicentenary in 2039 may find a wholly different commemoration underway.<sup>57</sup>

1. Originally delivered before the Victorian Studies colloquium at Gregynog Hall, Newtown, Powys, in March 1992, this paper has undergone substantial revision. I would like to thank Peter Cole, Rob Humphreys and the staff of Newport Reference Library for their assistance and advice.
2. Gwyn A. Williams, ‘Dic Penderyn, the making of a Welsh workingclass martyr’ *Llafur* Vol.2 No.3 1978, pp.110-120. Reprinted as ‘Dic Penderyn: Myth, Martyr and Memory in the Welsh Working Class’ in Gwyn A. Williams, *The Welsh In Their History* (1982), pp.135-149, from which these quotations (pp.137-138) are taken.

3. Robert Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline*, (London, 1987), p.144. For some highly public criticisms relating to the Welsh 'heritage industry' see J.Geraint Jenkins's introduction to his Museums Association Guide, *Exploring Museums: Wales* (London, 1990), pp.xxii.
4. Patrick Wright, *On Living in an Old Country: The National Past in Contemporary Britain* (London, 1985), p.157. See also Hewison, *op.cit.*, p.47.
5. Most notably David Williams, *John Frost: A Study in Chartism* (Cardiff, 1939); David J.V. Jones, *The Last Rising: The Newport Insurrection of 1839* (Oxford, 1985); and Ivor Wilks, *South Wales and the Rising of 1839: Class Struggle as Armed Struggle* (London, 1984).
6. For example of a recent work see Raymond Challinor, *A Radical Lawyer in Victorian England: W. P. Roberts and the struggle for workers' rights* (London, 1990), especially Chapter Three.
7. For example, Alexander Cordell, *The Rape of the Fair Country* (Sevenoaks, 1976 edition); *idem*, *Requiem for a Patriot* (London, 1989 edition); Idris Davies, 'The Sacred Road' ( in *The Collected Poems of Idris Davies* ed. Islwyn Jenkins (Llandysul, 1980 edition)); Harri Webb, 'The Stars of Mexico (an old Chartist remembers)' (in *idem*, *Rampage and Revel* (Llandysul, 1977)); Keith Hudson, 'The Chartists: Contemporary Political Songwriting', *Planet 70*, August/September 1988, pp.48-51; Terry Underwood, *Yesterday's Newport* (Newport, 1980); Kath Nash, *Town on the Usk: A Pictorial History of Newport* (Cwmbran, 1983); B.B.C.2. T.V., *And God Blew*, 9 May 1992.
8. *Monmouthshire Merlin and South Wales Advertiser*, 8 November 1889.
9. *Ibid.*, 27 September 1889.
10. See, for instance, Edward Dowling's hostile *Records of the Rise and Fall of Chartism in Monmouthshire* (London, 1840).
11. Due to the increased volume of traffic in this area the statue was moved in 1860 to Park Square (*Merlin* 15 December 1860). With the continuing pedestrianisation of Newport town centre it is intended that it shall once more be relocated, this time in Bridge Street, close to the original site.
12. J. M. Scott, *The Ancient and Modern History of Newport, Monmouthshire: With a Guide and Directory* (Newport, 1847), p.92.
13. This account is drawn from David Williams, *John Frost*, pp.318-319.
14. *Western Mail* 30 July 1877; *Merlin* 3 August 1877. Sir Thomas Phillips's death a decade earlier had occasioned contrasting obituaries which granted him 'the esteem and admiration of the people of Newport' (*Merlin* 1 June 1867).
15. S. D. Williams, *Illustrated Guide to Newport* (Newport, 1892), p.17.
16. *Idem*, *Who's Who in Newport* (Newport, 1920; first edition 1907), p.252. As early as 1873 *Percy, Butcher & Co.'s Cardiff and Newport Directory* (London) could view Chartism as 'the modern event for which the town is somewhat famous' (p.239).
17. Labour returned sixteen of the forty Borough Councillors in Newport in 1938. Gwyn A. Williams (*op.cit.*, p.138) notes that it took until 1945 for the commemoration of Dic Penderyn to become 'official'.
18. Ness Edwards, *John Frost and the Chartist Movement in Wales* (Abertillery, 1924), pp.1-2. One example of Labour movement 'ashamedness' is the account given in *Newport: A Handbook of the Fortieth Annual Cooperative Congress*, published by the Cooperative Wholesale Society Limited (Manchester, 1908), where the 'turmoil of the Chartist riots' were considered to have had a 'disquieting effect upon the general tone of affairs in our town ...' (p.115).
19. The words of Oliver Evans, Miners' Agent for the Eastern Valley, in South Wales Miners' Federation, *Pageant of South Wales* (1939). For another 'left' interpretation,

- see Geoffrey Trease's novel *Comrades for the Charter* (London, 1934).
20. Letter by William Mordey, Chairman, Library Management Sub-Committee, Newport Public Libraries, 5 July 1938). In addition it was later acknowledged (Statement Handed to Mayor, 30 January 1939) that 'The Centenary offers us an excellent opportunity of advertising the Town and County'.
  21. Agenda for and Minutes of Preliminary Meeting of the Chartist Centenary Committee, 26 July 1938. These and similar documents are to be found in the Minute Book entitled 'Chartist Centenary, Newport, November 1939' held in Newport Reference Library.
  22. *Ibid.*. Following a suggestion made by J. E. Edmunds of the Newport Branch of the T.G.W.U. at the above meeting.
  23. Although not, curiously enough, Aneurin Bevan. One explanation for his absence might be that Bevan shared some of the contemporary resentment at large in Newport's hinterland at the town's newfound enthusiasm for the Rising and its monopoly of the celebrations. See the report of the Monmouthshire Education Committee, *South Wales Argus*, 7 December 1938.
  24. For the pamphlet see James Davies, *The Chartist Movement in Monmouthshire*, (Risca, 1981 edition). In addition the Poet Laureate was asked (and refused on grounds that are not made clear in the records) to write a suitable poem.
  25. Statement of the Chartist Centenary Committee, 27 September 1939.
  26. *South Wales Argus* 3 November 1939.
  27. David Williams, reported in the *Western Mail*, 4 November 1939.
  28. David Williams, 'The Chartist Centenary', *The Welsh Review*, November 1939, pp.218-224, p.218. See similar comments by Hilary Marquand in the *Western Mail*, 4 November 1939.
  29. The phrases are those used in the descriptive leaflet 'The Civic Centre Murals' available from the reception desk at the Civic Centre. See also 'Murals in the Civic Centre' in the *Newport Official Handbook 1969/70*, pp.19-21.
  30. For the office block, see the Minutes of the Public Works Committee, Newport Borough Council, 28 April 1966 and 26 May 1966. 'John Frost Square' was chosen because the original name, 'Town Square', was felt both to be too unimaginative and already in use in Cwmbran New Town. See Public Works Committee Minutes 25 January 1968, Council Minutes 13 February 1968 and the *South Wales Argus*, 14 February 1968.
  31. See letter from Kenneth Budd to D. P. Cartwright, Director of Technical Services Newport Borough Council, 1 April 1976 (in Chartist Celebrations File Two), which indicates Budd's obvious sympathy for the demands of the Chartists. Budd had already completed the Old Green Interchange mosaics for the Council depicting Newport's growth as a commercial centre in the years 1851-1853.
  32. See *Western Mail* 2 October 1986, 10 October 1986; *South Wales Argus* 10 October 1986.
  33. Martin Culliford, in *Newport Local History News: Chartist Special 1986*.
  34. *South Wales Argus*, 4 November 1986. At the headstone unveiling ceremony Neil Kinnock had stated that the Labour Party's recently adopted red rose symbol had been chosen in memory of this practice.
  35. *Ibid.*, 5 November 1988; *Western Mail* 5 November 1988; Order of Service, 4 November 1988.
  36. See *South Wales Argus* and *Western Mail*, October November 1989 *passim*; also the 'Chartist Celebrations' Files kept by the Borough Council's Leisure Services Department for the period 1985-1990.
  37. *Newport Free Press* 7 November 1989. For extended comments on a similar theme see Neil Kinnock, 'The value of hard won freedom', in 'The Chartists' (Supplement with the *South Wales Argus*) 15 August 1989.

38. Leisure Services Committee Minutes 7 October 1986; Council Minutes 28 October 1986.
39. Labour Councillor Harry Jones in the *South Wales Argus*, 9 October 1986.
40. The view of the Selection Committee reported in the *South Wales Argus* 14 July 1988.
41. *Ibid.*, 29 January 1991. Due to technical problems the sculptures, originally intended to be ready for November 1989, were not unveiled until January 1991.
42. The *South Wales Argus's* correspondent Mike Buckingham asked (31 January 1991) 'Is it not ironic that the freedoms for which they [the Chartists] fought and died are so frequently and meanly abused?'
43. Cited in Noel Davis, 'The Chartists', *Gwent Leisure Line*, November 1991.
44. *South Wales Argus* 6, 9, 21 October 1986; *Western Mail* 6, 8 October 1986.
45. *South Wales Argus* 23 October, 3 November 1989; *Western Mail* 8 November 1989.
46. *Newport Free Press*, 23 July 1987; *South Wales Argus*, 1 February 1991..
47. *South Wales Argus*, 4 November 1988, 25 October 1989. Vaughan repeated these claims in his compilation volume, *Newport First Stop, 1800-1900* (Newport, 1990), p.85.
48. *South Wales Argus*, 25 November 1988, 2 November 1989. Such views met with a variety of hostile responses from other residents.
49. See *ibid.*, 16 February 1989, 23 August, 22 September 1990, 28 January 1991; *Western Mail* 25 January 1991; Policy Resources Committee Minutes, Newport Borough Council, 10 and 11 January 1990.
50. Minutes of a Meeting of Local Authorities held at Ebbw Vale, 24 April 1987 (Chartist Celebrations File One). The involvement of schoolchildren in the march was considered to 'alleviate this situation'.
51. Text in Chartist Celebrations File Two. The speech also contained the phrase 'a British revolution'.
52. Minutes, 21 March 1989. For a discussion of the involvement of 'local states' in this type of activity see John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze* (London, 1990), pp.114-115.
53. To a large degree the limited resources of the local authority in 1939 necessitated such involvement; in 1989 this was seen as an opportunity rather than as an imperative. Leisure Services Committee Minutes 7 October 1986.
54. Minutes of the Joint Economic Development and Leisure Services Committees, 29 June 1989.
55. Leisure Services Committee Minutes, 7 November 1989.
56. Hewison, *op.cit.*, p.9.
57. See David Lowenthal, 'Dilemmas of Preservation', in David Lowenthal and Marcus Binney (eds.), *Our Past Before Us: Why Do We Save It?* (London, 1981), p.220.