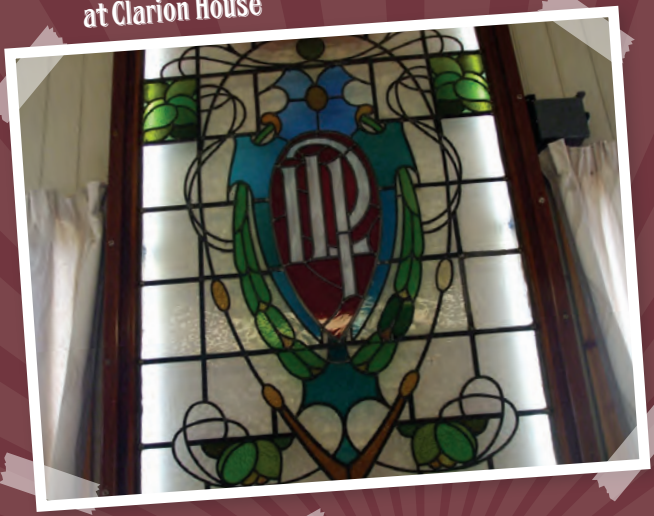
THE LAST CLARION HOUSE

MEMORIES OF THE LAST CLARION HOUSE

CLARION HOUSE

Stained Glass window from the ILP building in Vernon Street Nelson, now at Clarion House



Co-operative Women's Guild logo

The interior of the current Clarion House

Co-operative Women's Guild badge (1960)


Independent Labour Pa
FOUNDED AT BRADFORD, JANUARY, 1893.
President - KEIR HARDIE.
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Hn. Sec. - FRED BROCKLEHURST, B.A.
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Head Office: 55, FLEET STREET, E.C.
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Branch
Date

The Weathervane at Clarion House (made by Ken)

One of the earliest Clarion Vans at work

Out and about with Clarion Van No 1

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The Last Clarion House

Contents

	page
Introduction	7
Memories	8
Additional Research	45

Clapham Film Unit

We first came to Clarion House to film a scene for the Women's Peace Crusade. We realised immediately the place was a hive of history. We wanted to help tell their story - The Last Clarion House.

The original Clarion House book; *"Monument to a Movement"*, published in 1987, was out of print so we are reprinting the book with additional material gathered by volunteers. The book is freely available through Nelson Library and at Clarion House.

The Last Clarion House was a Heritage Lottery Funded project which engaged volunteers in uncovering and recording the history of the Last Clarion House.

Clapham Film Unit and Clarion House worked together with volunteers to create a documentary and an update to the booklet which tells the story of the Clarion through the memories of people who visit it. All these memories have been recorded by volunteers who were trained in oral history recording techniques by Andrew Schofield from the North West Sound Archive.

The documentary can be seen at www.claphamfilmunit.com. Full transcripts of the oral history recordings are available at Lancashire Archives.

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

Sue Nike

Clarion House volunteer
and chair of the ILP Land Society

Clarion House is an important part of our working class history. The vision that drove those early socialist pioneers to build the Clarion, set as it is in the beautiful open countryside, so that working people could escape the mills and factories and enjoy their small amount of free time should not be forgotten.

However some people, if not forgotten, were 'hidden'- as we discovered when researching the women who had led the 1917 Women's Peace Crusade in Nelson. These 'hidden' women as well as others, who were already well documented, are also remembered here.

Memories of the Clarion by past and present visitors are also recorded.

Now we must look to the future and hope that these stories and memories will inspire a new generation of like-minded people.

What a privilege it has been to be involved in this project which I hope will ensure the survival of the 'last Clarion House'.

Simon Clarke

(born 1957)

The politics and socialism of Clarion House is the main draw for me and also the tradition of walking from Nelson to the Clarion. The idea was that it was somewhere in the countryside where people who worked in the mills could walk, enjoy a cup of tea and enjoy a cheap snack or bring their own sandwiches. So it was set up almost as a respite and somewhere people could get out of the grime of the mill towns and somewhere to walk for fresh air and exercise, peace and quiet.

The fact it is run and led and supported largely by people who are active in the Labour Party is something you can identify with and just the posters and pictures, the banners. That trade union tradition is something that is important to me and I think it is a tradition that's important. It's symbolic of labour history and the fact that it is the last one too; it's nice to feel as though you can come and support it, even if you just buy a cheap cup of tea. It may not be financial support but it is moral support and I think it's a place that's really worth keeping.

I am an artist now and there was an exhibition at the Heritage

Centre and I wanted my work to reflect the community so one of the pieces I did was piece based on the Clarion. The ILP window is at the centerpiece and there's an image of a young family, the mum, dad and small child who have obviously walked from Nelson to the Clarion. And there's a view of industrialised landscapes, mill chimneys, terraced streets as one panel. And there's a clip of 'Socialism Our Hope 'at the bottom. I asked if I could put the batik up temporarily at the Clarion and it was quite a popular panel, so they offered to buy it and they have it on permanent display.

My favourite memories really go back to when we lived in Newchurch in Pendle when my boys were little because they used to love coming here, they played in the pond, there's a rope swing in the trees. And this line of trees at the bottom here, some of the volunteers at the Clarion had a tree planting day and my boys and Hazel my wife; we came and helped plant them. So that's quite a happy memory.

We used to have Labour Party meetings here. There would only be me and my friend Charlie and we'd probably drink tea and talk football as much as politics but they were happy times too.

But family times with friends and family in particular, my two sons playing football here on the grass in front of us and climbing trees.

There's a real strong community feel that even though people know each other, especially if it's cold and wet and people sat inside and the fire's going, and individual groups of people somehow tend to merge into one and you get chats across the table and people sit round the fire and it's a really warm and engaging sort of atmosphere.

People come on their bikes and I do quite a bit of cycling myself so there's bit of bike 'nerding' going on, talking about different bikes and different bits of kit , how much was your frame and how much were your handlebars-quite boring for some people - but I like that sort of stuff.

Sue Nike

(born 1946)

(The Clarion) has got lots of history about supporting marginalised groups really. I think about the conscientious objectors and people who are feeling a little be marginalised politically and socially. People continue to come up and I think they carry on the tradition because it's got history. It's got a history of the Labour movement and it's vital for people who feel that it's an important historical thing to keep going that we keep it going. And I felt like I was part of a group that was attempting to keep it functioning. So then I started working here as a volunteer as well, so making tea for people. And then you slowly meet more and more people who are like minded and it reinforces your opinions. And I think when we were going through the 1980s and 'early '90s it was a very difficult time politically, 'cause you felt like you were on the losing side the whole time and you weren't getting anywhere, and people were being so deprived of income and jobs and opportunities. And I just thought there's got to be a way forward, we've just got to keep going until we break through, I just felt like it was a solidarity thing, a matter of keeping going and supporting each other really. But I don't know how far we've got, to be honest. (I got involved) probably in the early '80s. Stan Iveson was in our Bradley (Labour Party) branch, he lived round the corner on Charles Street and I got to know Stan really well. But Stan was one of them people that sussed you out, he'd question you quietly, find out what your politics were, he'd started to become a really good friend and he introduced me to other things like the Clarion. So I started to come up here with the children on my bike. 'Cause I used to cycle everywhere and really enjoyed the countryside, walking, I used to drag the kids all over the place, walking miles. And then we got bikes and we were cycling everywhere. So I started to come up here regularly and slowly got drawn into it all really, through Stan and through the Labour Party, and became part of a really good group of people, we were comrades

I think it's really important that, especially as when I got involved it

was the start of Thatcherism really, and then the miners' strike. The miners used to come up. As a constituency Labour Party we adopted the Clipstone miners, they were in Nottingham, (it) was a very difficult area in the miners' strike, because there was a lot of working miners, but Clipstone didn't work, they stayed out on strike. And we adopted them and I used to go up and down with car loads of stuff for children and food and things like that. And we actually invited them up here, so they came in a couple of coaches and spent a couple of days in the area and we (brought) them to the Clarion, and we took them out for meals in local pubs and then they'd come here and have a day out, it was fantastic. And then when the strike was over they invited us all down to their miners' welfare club, we had a really great time. Music was brilliant, all appropriate music, all union stuff.

A lot of the elderly people who used to come here obviously aren't able to get here anymore, but some of them get brought by their relatives and they still keep going. And their children come, people who used to come as children come and bring their own families, so you get to know generations of people and that's really good to see, people continuing their family tradition of coming up here. Physically, the place has been improved, it's obviously got an extension, you've got inside toilets rather than just the outside long drops, but even they're important. That's how people used to live, isn't it? I like the idea that we keep something that's not primitive, but simple, simple living. And it's a lovely wooden building in the most beautiful setting, and it gives you a little bit of hope and lifts your heart a bit when people continue to come and you can be part of something that's so traditional and important politically.

I think it's a good way to commemorate all those people who struggled, really, in the early years, to get it going and keep it going. Today, for example, we've had two really big walking groups, but also we've had small family groups who've come. They come because they see the relevance of it, and if groups like that see that it's relevant it's worth keeping going. We do similar things to what Stan did, we don't vet people in, you know, a 'soviet' type way, but we 'suss' them out, you know. When you actually start to talk to people and you discuss things

in any depth, you actually find out that they're okay and they're the ones you want to encourage, aren't they? It's a subtle way of keeping things socialist really, that's the word I'm looking for, isn't it? Not a word that's used a lot but that's the word I'm looking for.

My favourite memory is a local art group that put on art things, called In-Situ, and they brought a lot of young people from the Asian community and a lot of families, and they put on the film called The Suffragette. And I've always been really involved in the women's movement as well, but they actually put the film on inside here and we just transformed the place into a small cinema, and it was so wonderful to see those young girls astonished at the film they were watching, that that woman who's the main person in that film really didn't have any rights to her own child. And you saw an awakening and to me, education of young people in their past history is so important, and I watched those young girls look at that and think wow, that's well wrong. And then enjoying explaining the history of working class women to these girls which they weren't learning at school, and I just think that's such a waste. And I really, I really enjoyed that. And then we all had tea and cakes afterwards and it was such a lovely example of how we can change the future 'cause that's what I'm about really, I want to change the world, I don't want it to stay the same, I want to change it for the better. So , that's one of my favourite memories, but another one is coming up with my children on their bikes, playing cricket with them, having a really good laugh and rolling about on the grass and just having a really, really good time and letting them see that there's more to life than iPads and the internet. And that a good game of cricket and football on the grass outside leaves you with a really happy memory. Yeah, they're sort of happy memories for me.

Carol Hopkins

(born 1952)

Well, I had joined the Labour Party in, oh, the early '80s and through the Labour Party I met people who were also members of the ILP and involved in the Clarion House, and that's how I was introduced to the Clarion House. At the time there was quite an ageing membership of the ILP and they were very concerned about the future of the Clarion House and wanting to pass it on to the next generation, and in essence they recruited a group of young people through the Labour Party who they thought were suitable to pass the Clarion House on to, people they could trust to look after the place and keep it going into the future. So I've been involved with the Clarion House now for over 30 years and I hope I'll be involved for quite a little while yet to come. I used to come here before I was actively involved as a team member on the Sunday rota, but it would've been about 1983 I think when I first came here.

Because one of my best memories is in 1984 when we had striking miners and their families come to visit the area and we brought them up here for an afternoon. It was lovely to see people--, we'd been supporting these striking miners from Nottingham, from the Clipstone pit through the Labour Party, and they really did have a hard time during the strike, so to be able to bring them up for a day out was lovely. And they enjoyed it, some of the men walked up the hill to the pub that existed in Newchurch at the time and I can remember them complaining about how steep the hill was. But no, it was a lovely day, lots of children playing out on the field, lots of food, a really good day.

It's a special place. As a socialist, to have a piece of land that isn't owned by any single person, that isn't owned for profit, has to be a good thing. It was built by socialists not just for themselves but for ordinary working people to enjoy the countryside, and that really resonates with me. It's a lovely place, it's got a wonderful history and I can't think of anywhere else I'd rather come on a Sunday afternoon than the Clarion House. And fortunately a lot of other people feel the same way.

There's been so many different events held over the years, and we once had bonfires up here. Now I was here when we had the 75th celebrations and that was special, and this time round, for the 100th I was much more involved. And it was quite a performance organising everything, bringing the sandwiches up, we had special cakes made, we opened on the Saturday and Sunday and we had hundreds of people come to celebrate with us, and that was good.

We've got very active Friends of the Clarion group who do wonderful work here, and, yes, I think there will be people to hand it on to in the future; it's far too valuable to lose.

I'm looking down the field now to where the pond is, hidden behind its beautiful hedge, that hasn't always been here, that was dug out in the late '80s by members of the Clarion, the Land Society. And it had to be 'puddled', so I can remember 'puddling' around in the clay on the bottom in my bare feet and that was quite good fun. The children enjoying just running wild on the field and if you think when you're small, long grass is really quite good. And then as they grew older they were allowed to cross over the road at the bottom into the field on the other side where there's a little bridge and a stream. So my daughter and other children have grown up with the Clarion, and they do, they still come back.

Jack Burrows

(born 1927)

The Clarion [has] been in my family ever since the Clarions were formed because my maternal grandfather, Michael Wildman, was a founder of the ILP in Nelson. So, I've always had an interest in the Clarion. It's virtually in the blood because after going to Socialist Sunday School on a Sunday, we would walk over from Vernon Street in Nelson over the hill and come to the Clarion for lunch. It was always nice to get out of the smog and the soot down in Nelson. On a Monday, when it was washing day, sometimes my mother couldn't put the washing out because she knew which way the wind was blowing and the washing would end up dirtier than it started, with all the soot. It seems to sweep in through the windows, the sash windows. When we were going back home on a Sunday evening, the mills would be stoking up for the day after and the smoke would be bellowing and, depending on the conditions, the smoke would just come down onto the town.

So, I've always come to the Clarion. I remember the Clarion when there was no electricity and the light was provided by paraffin power lamps and I remember seeing them pumping these lamps up to get a

bit of light. And in the kitchen, there were two massive copper boilers and one was always boiling, steam everywhere.

On busy days such as Good Fridays, Easter Mondays when the Clarion was open, there would be crowds all-round the outside of the field and in those days to get your tea you had to buy a ticket at the bar and then then the teenagers would get big enamel jugs with tea in and there were only two, one was tea with sugar, the other was tea without sugar, and we would go around and collect the tickets and fill the pint pots up or the gill pots, all the way round. My job in an early morning was to go over for the milk. Now the milk was across the opposite field, across the road and half way up the other side. All through the day me mother would come and say, "Jack, will you go and get some more milk please, there's a crowd coming over the top of Noggarth". It seemed at some time that half of Nelson came over.

The Clarion was always opened, however thick the snow was. And one Sunday when we came over I couldn't see the back door, because the snow was right over. I don't remember how my mother and father managed to clear it but the back door was absolutely invisible in the snow.

Going home in the evening, walking up to the top of Noggarth and then looking down into the valley of Nelson and Burnley, at a time when all the mills were stoking up ready for the following morning, you couldn't see a thing. At other times, us teenagers used to argue as to how many chimneys we could see and it usually worked out into about a hundred at Well Moor. Other times, when you could see, we used to count the mill chimneys, right on to Burnley if it was a clear day. We never got the right amount. It was always so many mill chimneys and now there are only two or three mill chimneys left, I think, in Nelson. The famous one being Lomeshaye Mill is still in existence and I hope that that never comes down because it's part of the Nelson history.

Trevor Stansfield

(born 1960)

Yes, I remember coming here as a right little lad and we used to have sports days here and they were great. All the families came out on runs and we used to come and cut all the bushes and the grass and we just to have cycle related sports as well as kids' sack races and egg and spoon, we used to have a slow race. You couldn't run free, you had to sort of propel yourself not too fast else you'd end up being last. Then they stick old canes in a line and put pots on, mugs and pots and then give you a cane like a lance and you had to unhook these cups, through the handles and who got the most – so really good fun. It was really happy days, sit out on the grass and have bottles of pop and stuff.

Carol Gibson

I've been coming to Clarion House since I was a little girl with the Newtonians, which was a dancing club in Nelson. And we used to have our sports days here every year and it's just a walk what we brought our children on and now I've got my grandchildren coming here as well. It's got a lot of fun memories with my parents, which aren't here anymore. They were just good days out really because we still have the photos and DVDs of it, so it's really good. The Newtonians was a social club, we used to go to the Civic in Nelson and it was called the Newtonians and it was a dance where people could take their children as well. There was no alcohol served it was just pop and crisps. And we learnt dances and then the children could have a few games to play, so it was just more family orientated, so it was really good.

(We played) welly wanging and had egg and spoon races, across there where you can see it's flattened a little bit, that's where we used to do all the racing and welly wanging was a bit further, then there'd be rounders and then there would be prize gives after. It was always after the July holidays so people used to bring rock back or things like that off their holidays and donate prizes for the children. And if it was wet we used to sit inside and do beetle drive, which I don't think a lot of people understand and I hate the game.

Dave Edmondson

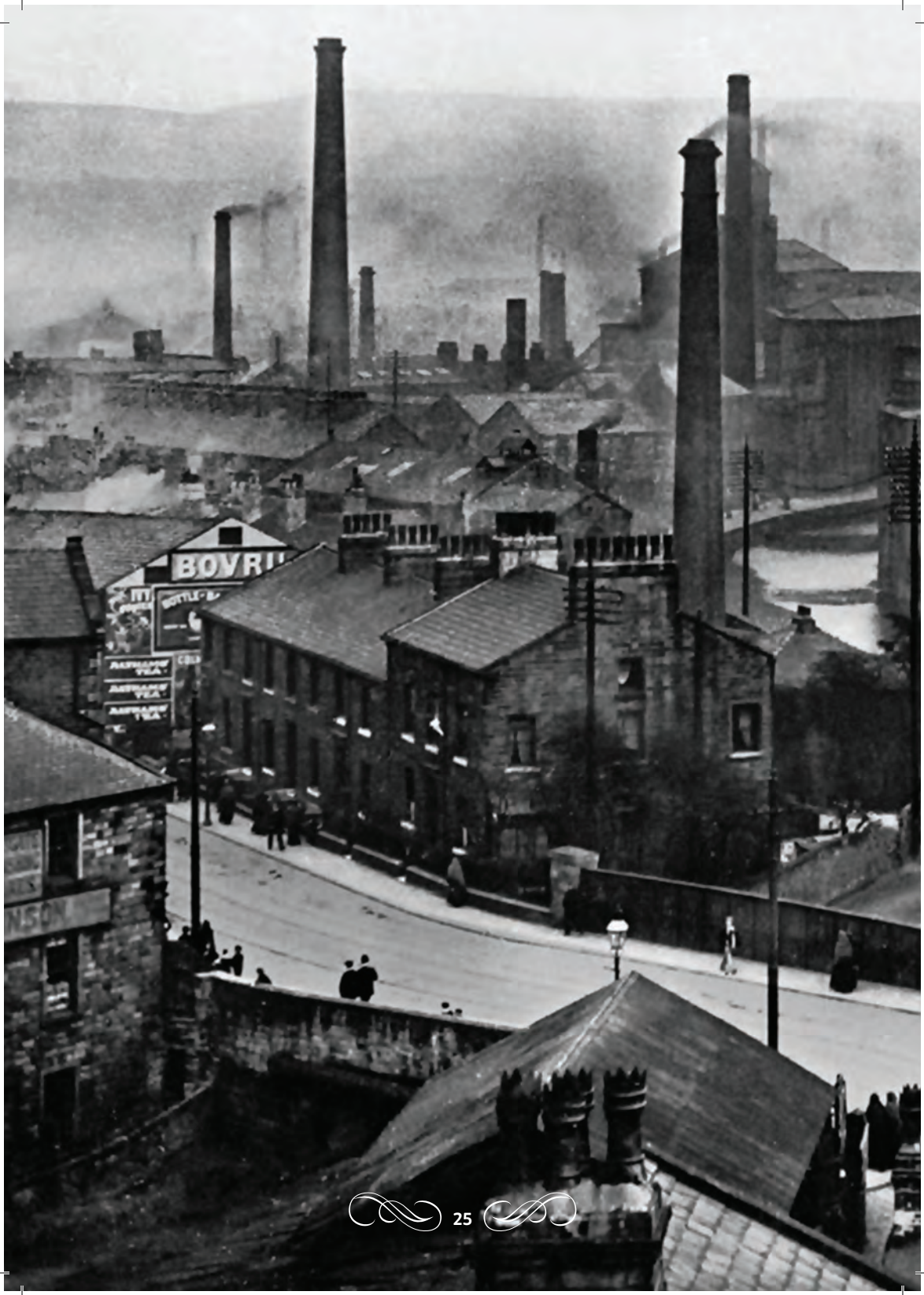
(born 1957)

I grew up on an area of Nelson the Reedyford area in Nelson and the street I was born on was Charles Street which was a council estate there, so Nelson was always, in my memory anywhere, solidly Labour town. So I think whether you wanted to or not it was part of your sort of heritage and I can remember being sent out canvassing and stuff and I'm probably about seven or eight but was sent out with these leaflets and stickers and things which I'd be putting on cars and windows and various other things. So the Labour party was always part and parcel of that. Ironically for my mum and dad that wasn't such a big deal, they were not very politicised really in that sense but I was. And by chance every Sunday what used to happen was that this disused white ambulance used to turn up on Charles Street with the ambulance signs whited out and the windows whited out and these kids would all be ferried off somewhere which I never really understood. On this one occasion it came, the doors swung open, these kids were saying, "Come on Dave. Come on, come on, come on this time." They always seemed pretty jolly when they got back. So I got on, of course I hadn't asked mum or dad or anything and they said, "Yeah, we're going to go to Vernon Street, we go to Vernon Street, it's Socialist Sunday school." No idea what the hell this was but it sounded all right. And anyway, on this particular Sunday they weren't going to Vernon Street which is not that far away in the town, they were going up to this mysterious place called Clarion House. There were no seats in the ambulance so we all had to lie down like sardines and feet to feet and brace yourself.

And so we trooped off on what seemed a very lengthy journey, we were picking other people up until the ambulance was crammed with people and we ended up at this place in the middle of the countryside, a place I'd never been before, which was Clarion House as it turned out. And again I hadn't really strong connection with what this place was other than all my friends were here and there were tea and cake

and somebody gave us a bit of cake and we had a run around in the field and played on the swings and it was wonderful, but a lot of this was preoccupied by my worry about how am I going to get home, what's going to happen to me

And so we had a really great day and we played in the field and the grass was sort of high, certainly probably up to my waist at that time. I'd have been seven or eight, and we had a really great time and eventually we did go home and of course I got out on the street and duly went home not a word was asked. So we were probably away two or three hours, not a question, not a muff other than, "Wipe your feet, don't come in with any mud on," and all that sort of carry on. And of course I couldn't tell that my mum and dad, in fact I never have and in fact they've passed away now so I never got the chance to tell them about this. I also knew when I went to secondary school the Palmers who had the farm next to Clarion House and I went to school particularly with Martin but I knew all the boys and we used to come up Friday night the townies, thinking the town being four miles away but you were distinctly divided and demarcated into things. And I used to come up when they were hay baling and stuff and we used to help out and we were duly useless as townies of course and didn't like it very much but the Clarion was always closed on these days so to escape Mr. Palmer we used to come up to the Clarion and pretend we're having a bit of a rest and a sit down. I have very positive memories of it. Yeah, I've very good memories about it.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Robert Sproule

(born 1951)

My parents were socialists, so I don't remember when I first came (to the Clarion) but it was a long time ago. I've come here on and off for a long time, and when you're working and you're busy, you just come and visit and enjoy it but coming up towards retirement, I saw it would be useful for people to put some energy in. One generation had more or less finished and so I suggested to people that we start Friends of the Clarion. There's an official structure that owns the building and the land, and has to do with the legalities, but a friend's organisation could involve more people on a looser basis and help put some energy back. I've got a lot of energy from this place 'cause I like the place and I think it's wonderful, I come up during the week when nobody's here and sometimes sit and just look, so I owe it.

At one time, I was a Woodcraft Folk leader and we came up sometime in the late '80s and planted those rows of sycamores. The sycamores came from a housing cooperative in Altham I was involved with and we were going to build, kilns for drying English hardwoods, oak in particular, and so we moved the sycamores from there up here. So they were on the site of a housing cooperative, we moved to establish a worker's cooperative and they woodcraft folks' a cooperative children's organisation, so it all works together.

I was brought up in a socialist family and I class myself as a socialist, and we used to talk about the holy trinity. You were a member of a political party. You were a member of a trade union and you were a member of a cooperative society. So it's the holy trinity, as I say.

We're putting games out, so children can play games. We've always got the swings here and then as an activity, I've always enjoyed working in sort of nature projects, like putting the trees and the Woodcraft Folks' very environmentally aware. Since the ILP's had this ground, there's quite a big area, I don't think there's ever been chemicals put on the ground. So it's, truly an organic place and even the toilet system is

self-contained. We're not connected to the sewers in any way, so the water comes from the building and flows underneath and these are the old long drop toilets and the solid matter will get flushed away by the water coming from the building. One thing I like to do, as I said earlier, is get children interested in the idea of the environment and how we can help and I want to build a mini-beast hotel with them and you can do this in even a small back garden. I've got some house bricks here. Masonry bees use those, use material off those, so it's a matter of providing things for a variety of creatures and then we've built all that up, I'm going to put a bee house on the top. So I think that will be great.

We are slowly but surely attracting a new generation and we want to get them as committed to it as we are and then we can pass it on. This is the last Clarion House. We must make sure that not only do we maintain the building--, in fact, the building's almost secondary because it's basically a wooden hut in a field, isn't it? It's its history, its traditions and the fact that, even today as in the past, it can provide an environment for people to get away from the stresses and strains of life, come up here, sit down, have a wonderful cup of tea at an incredibly cheap rate, and just let the cares of the world disappear. It needs preserving for that, if nothing else.

Chris Coates

(born 1957)

We were living just between Burnley and Accrington (in the 80s). (The Clarion) was this place that you heard of almost by rumour; people would say have you been to .....? And they didn't quite know what to call it, it had sort of various names, the tea house on Pendle Hill or the cycling club house, and you went 'Oh no, I don't do cycling'. (There was) no real mention of its historic significance or importance. And we will have just popped in for a cup of tea and found this sort of what felt like a slightly eccentric, blast from the past really, with these pictures of Keir Hardie on the wall and you just went oh, okay, this is all a bit quaint in some ways. And people were serving tea in pint mugs and it was just a place you went for a cup of tea.

We lived in a housing cooperative, that's why I went to Burnley, I'd been involved in squatting in London and the housing cooperative in Burnley had been set up by a group of squatters from London who'd ended up Burnley looking for cheap property that they could afford to buy. And so through my squatting contacts a friend had said oh, well if you're looking to move somewhere go and try this place called People in Common in Burnley. Burnley was what I would now call incredibly sort of retro, it was like going back early 1960s it reminded me of the area that my grandparents grew up in, cobbled streets, terraced houses and property was ridiculously cheap, which is why the housing co-op was there. And the group had just bought a derelict small industrial building just between Burnley and Accrington and we spent ten years renovating it and teaching ourselves building skills, a couple of people went on training courses. We were moving in left wing circles in Burnley, anarchist groups, fringes of the Labour Party, and coming across one or two people who it turns out (were) the people running the tea house. Mainly people who were old weavers' trade union members. The weaving industry by that time was in complete decline but there was still a sort of fairly active trades' council being largely run by the weavers' union reps who presumably had been the strongest unions in the town. The cooperative, the co-

op members was very strong in town; they ran a May Day festival in the local park. So we were moving in those circles, and through them I got to know a bit of the history about the tea house on the hill. Our son went to the local woodcraft group and the woodcraft had a summer camp, camping on the field at Clarion House. And we spent the weekend camping, using the field and using the hut and going out for walks and things with a group of young children. At the woodcraft camp I remember the kids were quite shocked by the toilet facilities, although in some ways some of the kids shouldn't have been, they weren't any worse than some of the facilities that you still got in terraced houses in Burnley. And I think the (tipper) toilets have been improved since then. When we first lived in Burnley we lived in a house with, tippler toilets, or long drops as they were known. Essentially they were a very early form of environment friendly toilet facilities. You had a little stone built cubicle in your back yard with a toilet in it which was basically just a long drop down to a sort of basin at the bottom. Underneath your kitchen window there was a large bowl on a pivot that your waste water from your kitchen went into and rainwater off the roof went into and when it was reached a certain level, it would tip and essentially flush the toilet. It was a very early sort of water recycling and an early version of a flush toilet. And they worked, they got a bit smelly in the summer when there wasn't much rain, but mostly in Burnley it rains.

We were invited as a little building cooperative to provide some play equipment (and) we spent a week up there building a little adventure playground for kids.it was a timber thing that we built, with a slide and a little house to play in. It almost became a Sunday afternoon destination, if you'd got visitors it became a sort of place to go and show people, because it is so unique. And people just go 'wow', and can't quite believe how it's lasted so long, and it's clearly because they bought the field, they owned it, an organisation owned it. After I moved to Lancaster I was asked to go and look at the building as by then I was doing small scale construction project management for the voluntary sector, sort of community groups. And I they wanted some advice on repairs and maintenance and they've done quite a lot since then.

We, me and my partner, Patrina, were invited back by Bob, who now is part of the management; we were doing a little review about radical history of land in this country starting with the 1649 diggers going right through to the sort of hippies in the 1970s who were going back to the land. It was called A Season Ticket to the Promise Land. And Bob saw it and said do you want to come and do it at Clarion House? So we did it one dark Wednesday evening in November and I thought no one's going to trek out here on a cold, wet November evening, but there were 20 or 30 people turned up, some of the people who lived just down the road, some of the people that--, friends of ours from when we lived there, some people who had just seen the poster in Clarion House.

We went to other sort of political type rally events there, CND back in the '80s, sort of CND open air or sort of gatherings. I think the best is the Sunday afternoons or bank holidays, when it's full of all sorts of people who are either just out for a cycle ride or they must have been old socialists who got the bus out from Nelson or Colne or somewhere like that, who'd just come out for a cup of tea on a Sunday afternoon. So it wasn't like just going to a café in a village for a cup of tea at all, and it was always being run by volunteers and very different than a café. And it's a wonderful location, just the spot. I mean if you were going to buy a field anywhere in that area you probably couldn't have picked a better one. It's preserved because the people who ran it wanted it to continue, the Working Class Library has continued like that, because it was a couple's life work, but Clarion House has been a number of people's dedicated work really, has kept it going. It would be terrible if it became some sort of corporate heritage centre. I quite like the fact that it's all a bit mysterious, there's no interpretation boards to explain it to you, if you want to ask why you ask somebody who's serving you a cup of tea and they either know or they won't, or they'll say 'You need to talk to Bob or Sue over there.'

Charles Jepson

(born 1946)

My connection with Clarion House really comes through politics, through cycling because I wanted to join a cycling club which had a political ethos and the National Clarion Club was political and had been founded on a political economy. So I joined the Nation Clarion Cycling Club and because of that I became aware of the Clarion club houses. I obviously became aware of the ILP club house at Nelson, which wasn't a true club house in the Clarion sense of the word because the Clarion club houses were founded by the Clarion Cycling Club whereas this (one) this ILP house at Roughlee was founded by Clarion leaders at Nelson who weren't necessarily cyclists but they had the same philosophy.

I joined the Clarion Cycling club in 1980. When I had worked at Mullards (in Blackburn) I was immediately recruited into the union and some of the older men I worked with were members of the Communist Party and I joined the young Communist league which was the natural thing to do and I became more and more interested in socialism and left wing politics. So the general ethos of the Clarion – that fellowship is life and lack of fellowship is death- that's what I still believe today. It was all about comradeship, not necessarily competition, it was about helping each other and having that philosophy that we were helping to create, a new society, a society whose law was based on love and whose foundations were based on justice. And the new society would be a socialist society where people would work for the benefit of all and not for the benefit of the few.

I am no longer a member of National Clarion Cycling Club because ten years ago we had a split, like all left wing organisations do, and I resigned as national Secretary and became Secretary of a group called National Clarion 1895 because we are loyal to the principles of the founder and we're still a political cycling club. And we have close links to the International Brigade Memorial Trust because a good number of our members fought in the Spanish Civil war and four of

our members died in Spain so we are unashamedly a political cycling club.

Ever since the Clarion cycling club began for some people it was too political and for other people the whole reason for being was political. And the split came about because one of the aims is to pursue the propaganda of socialism and that is still an aim of the club. But more and more people wanted it to just be a cycling club and did not feel that cycling and politics had anything in common, whereas our position is totally the opposite, we think cycling is a very political thing. It's not about trying to convert everyone into communism as you're cycling, it's about trying to get people to see the world in a different light and question what are deemed to be accepted norms.

I genuinely believe that (the Clarion) is a haven of socialism – you don't sell cups of tea and the Communist Manifesto but you do meet lots of interesting people.

It's a friendly place, the large tables mean everyone has to sit together, and it's a friendly welcoming place which has a good atmosphere. I think the future is very good indeed, it's survived over a hundred years and I can see no reason why it won't survive another hundred years.


OLD JOINERY
CLARION 666
HUMBER SPORTS MODEL

Kenneth Hartley

(born 1931)

Clarion House? Yeah, well I've been a member of the Blackburn and District Cyclist Touring Club, CTC, formed 1878, patron HM the Queen, not that I'm suited about that. I'm still engineering - I made this bike. Frame builders who know a bit about building frames at exhibitions they say 'Who made your jig?' I make it myself. My bikes are built from rubbish basically, second hand tubes or wrecks that people give me, and they are far better than so called professional frames because they're more accurate. The bikes were built initially for a liaison my cycling club had with a school. Manchester Velodrome had just opened but there were no small bikes so that was the demand. I put my old skills together to build these frames and then in fullness of time these kids took up boozing and whatever and the bikes were basically redundant. So sadly I had to drag them back, so I'd hardly room in my house for up to 50 odd little bikes so the first job was to take them to a jumble sale and flog them off. And then I put a little sticker on with my name and address on, Hartfield Cycles, and I'd get phone calls. And first one was from Dublin, "are you Mr. Hartfield?" I said no, my name's Hartley, but I assume you've got one of my bikes, and the guy said "Yeah, I have. Have you got the design of it, could you give me the specifications?" I said where did you get it from? He said "I got it from Brick Lane Bikes in London". I said, 'Because I flogged it off in a jumble in Oakhill College at Whalley in Lancashire. And he said 'what did you sell it for?' I said I sold it for about 30 quid. He said are you sitting down? I said 'Should I?' He said 'yeah, you should, because I bought it for about £180'. He said I'm a musician, I live in Dublin but I keep the bike in London, it's on fixed wheel bombing around London at the moment and it's absolutely terrific, so I were delighted at that.

And then the latest one was about 18 months ago, a young girl reading art at Manchester University and she was quite enamored with this bike and I said where did you get it? And she said oh, I got it from a dealer that's fairly well known, so he's on the internet obviously. She wanted it the transfers replacing. And so I said 'They're very, very


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difficult to put on so bring it to Blackburn and I'll put the transfers on for you.'

So that's the start of a lovely little relationship for an 86 year old man and a 22 year old girl, and she's been over to my house on numerous occasions and to Clarion House. She's a good leftie, she saw a picture of Jeremy Corbyn on my breakfast table and was quite enamored with that, and she said she'd voted for him. And I said you're a member? She said yeah, a three quid member. I said well I'm a bit sore about that because I think I pay 28 quid for my Labour Party membership, but there's nothing I can do about that.

Melissa Ingleton

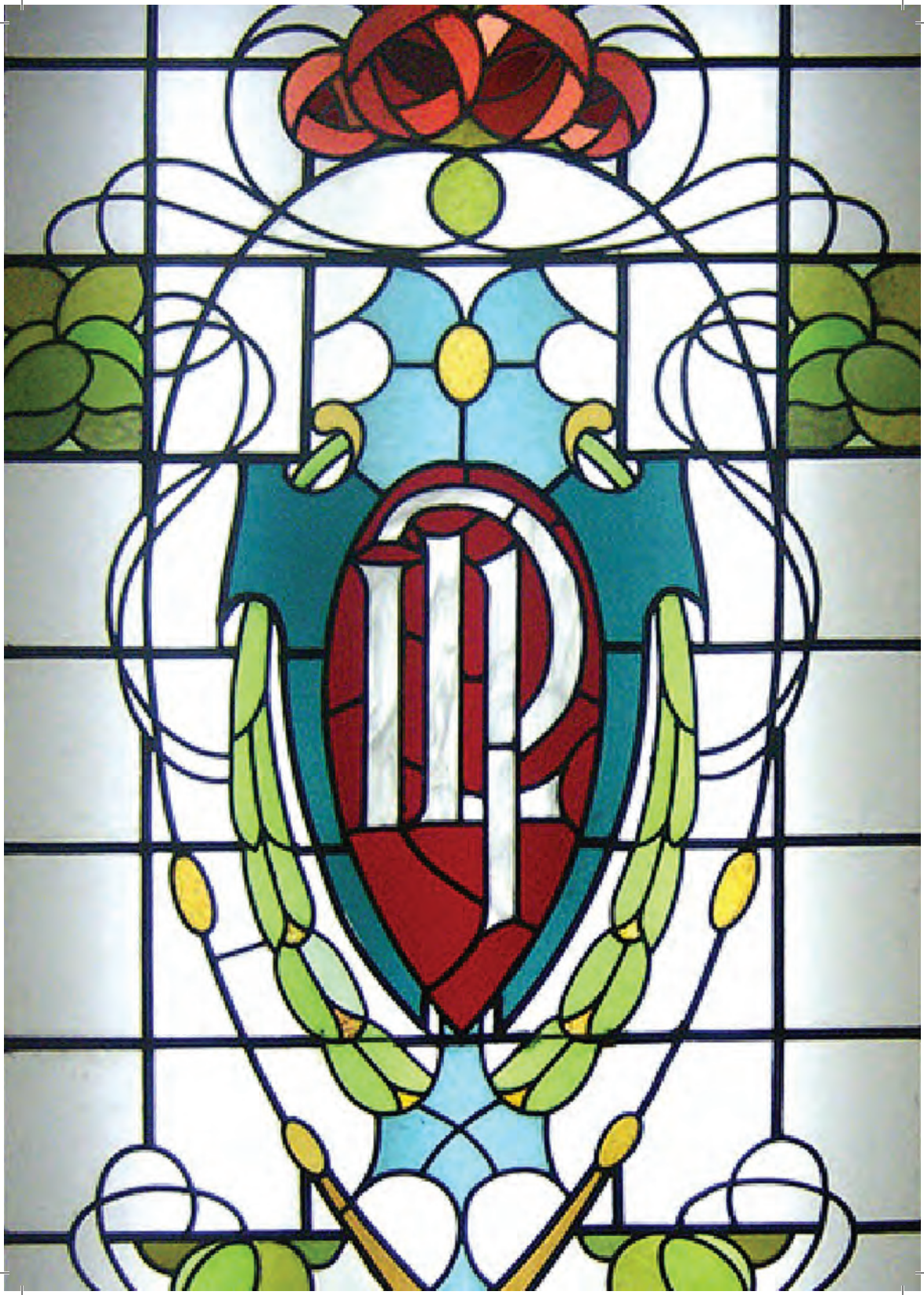
(born 1995)

I really wanted a bike to take to London – so I was not going to buy an off the peg bike. I'll build my own.

So I found a frame that was being sold second hand but it had been built by someone in the north and I thought that I would love to have a bike that is sentimental and from the north. So I get it – it was in really good nick but it was quite scratched. Fortunately there was a little sticker on the seat tube- no name but an address and phone number. So I rang the number and Ken picks up – Ken Hartley and we got talking. This was really exciting for me, really new to bikes and here's someone who knows loads about bikes. So I said 'How about next weekend? I'll come and visit you. I'll bring the bike and you can have a look at it?' so I took the weekend off work and I went to visit him - that was probably a year ago. We've been really good friends ever since and he would always talk about the Clarion. He's a big socialist and with big roots in socialism and I am a big Labour Party member, a big fan of Jeremy Corbyn. So he took me here (the Clarion) the first time after a cycle jumble. And I've been coming back ever since. I am nearly 22 so soon I'll be able to rent a car- I'll pile all my friends in and get them to bring their bikes and then we can start coming as well. Ken's built me a tourer now so through Ken I'll be cycling up here, maybe I'll get him on his bike as well.

I've come to see Ken today, got up at the crack of dawn to get here in time and we've arrived and we are one of the first people.

(The Clarion) is amazing. I think it's a real institution, I really do. It's like a little bubble of time.



Ivy Iveson

(born 1913)

The Clarion had a lot of visitors then (in the 20s) droves of them coming over the hill on Sunday, especially on a fine day. And there'd be about 16 members on that committee who would serve once a month. Nobody got a penny, serving tea, brewing tea, looking after the toffee bar like it is now and looking after the welfare of the people that came. We actually have seven teams at the moment (1998), most of the money that's taken there now goes to maintain the Clarion House rather than the ILP.

(Clarion House) was a place where anybody could go and we used to have May Day meetings and discussions, somebody said to me the other day, "I like to go to the Clarion because it isn't political, nobody pushes it down your throat," I said, "No, but it was built for that reason, to educate people and for people to go and have discussions," and we did. There used to be a lot of vegetarians and free thinkers, and hikers, the discussions could be anything.

My parents weren't political, well, maybe, my dad had a bit of it in him, he used to go to political meetings when they held them outside, open air meetings, and I used to go with him. But my mother was in service and she worked in all the big houses so she thought I was awful to call myself a socialist - she sided with them. When I was about 19, we came to Nelson and before that I'd been dabbling with the Communist party, going to meetings and things like that. I worked in the food kitchen on William Street. When people were unemployed, they opened food kitchens, and fed them free of charge. This is

what the ILP (Independent labour Party) functioned for, helping the downtrodden, the Communist party, all those political groups used to do these things, organise for free milk, nurseries. (The churches weren't involved) and I worked in one and there I met Stan, my husband, he lived near there, and I thought he was a bit of alright and he was in the ILP and he persuaded me to join, and I've been in it ever since. I've spoken at meetings. Always equal rights to vote. We held open air meetings all over in those days, and all us young people used to go to these meetings on street corners.

I was attracted to the ILP because it was an international body; it was anti-war, always on the side of the (downtrodden). In fact anything anti-war, or struggles, the workers' struggles, the ILP was always for them. I walked from Edinburgh and I'd a little child then, from Edinburgh to Holy Loch up Scotland with a party against Holy Loch having the submarines and Stan looked after the child, and then a party from Nelson all went up, but in cars, but I'd walked that distance and it were a heck of a long way for me because I weren't a hiker, but they was always in the struggles you see?

And our house was open door for all the speakers that came. When Stan were modernising our house in Railway Street, we had a shop, and he were modernising it, and he were making a dormer bedroom and we'd no roof on and if there were a conference people came. I'd four children and we gave our beds up, they were in sleeping bags in the shop, on the shop floor, different ones, me and Stan were up the attic, with no roof on, good job it didn't rain, and we could see the stars. People used to say 'you fed them?' They had a conference at Nelson and they were snowed up, so some of the delegates couldn't get home so a lot of them were in different homes. People have said to me over the years, "Hey, you were daft, giving your food up," at one time it were rationed, "giving your food up," I said, "No, that's part of our life," that were part of our life.

In Vernon Street the ILP rooms, that was, there were these two great big stained glass windows with ILP on them. When they were pulling something down, Stan knew all the councillors and he made sure that

those windows were boxed, taken out, and put away for when we needed them. Stan found them in a builder's yard, so between them, Gilbert, Stan and other volunteers cleaned them up and had them put up.

(During both wars) there was a great lot of sympathy in Nelson towards Conscientious Objectors and Nelson had the most COs in the country. Stan wouldn't take an alternative job you see (in WW2) he went back (to prison) every time, but when he did finally come out there was a plumber and he set Stan on willingly, everybody knew Stan in those days. Selina Cooper, she was in the ILP and she also was on the bench when he came up before the magistrates and it put her in a very awkward position because she'd always been in the ILP and knew Stan. But there were a lot of sympathy in Nelson and the firms weren't hostile, this fella or this plumber. And this plumber sympathised with the fellas that went to jail, I'll tell you a little story about Stan going to jail, well going in front of the magistrate. He were a good speaker were Stan and he could get his point across, and he was sincere and that were the main thing you see, that's the main thing. He went in front of this bench, the magistrate at Manchester, and he put his case and he told him exactly what he believed in, why he'd led up to this, his action, and when he'd finished he put a good case and when he'd finished the magistrate said to him, "Well," he said, "I've enjoyed listening to your case, and I've no doubt of your sincerity," he said, "but unfortunately I don't administer the laws of the land," he says, "so I've got to give you," three month, six month, or whatever it was, there, and that were a testimonial wasn't it? Yes, so he did his three month, came out and went back again and that were it, and I was a young woman with two little children then.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Additional Research

Alison Ronan,
Archive research volunteer coordinator

Volunteers were trained in archive research at Lancashire Archives and discovered supporting materials to go with the oral histories;

There are descriptions of the wider Clarion Movement and the other Clarion Clubhouses in the North West.

There are short biographies of the often forgotten, radical and pioneering women who were at the heart of the socialist movement in Nelson and at Clarion House.

Enjoy!

Pioneering ILP and Clarion House women: Suffrage and socialism.

Selina Cooper [1864-1946]

Selina Cooper's family moved north from Cornwall to find work. She was a trade unionist, suffragist and socialist in the north of England, who began her campaigning life fighting her bosses for better conditions for women in the workplace. Selina taught herself about history, politics and medicine; studying the latter in order to be able to advise fellow workers who could not afford to pay for a visit to the doctors and apparently was able to deliver 13 babies for local women unable to afford a midwife. Selina married Robert Cooper, a committed socialist and trade unionist who had been sacked from the Post Office for his union activities. They had three children, two of whom survived infancy. Juggling family life with work and political activity, she was active in many different campaigns, organisations

and groups including the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) and the Independent Labour Party (ILP). In 1900 Selina collected more than 800 signatures for the 29,000 strong petition of women workers in Lancashire calling for women's suffrage.

In 1901, supported by the SDF and the ILP, she was the first working-class woman ever to be elected as a Poor Law Guardian (local administrator of "relief" payments to the unemployed), despite local newspapers campaigning against her.

Selina now had a fast-growing reputation as a passionate speaker able to put the arguments across and carry people with her. She made her a home for herself in the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), which was the dominant campaign amongst women in the north of England and operated in stark contrast to the Women's Social and Political Union, led by Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst, the "celebrity suffragists". Selina and Robert opposed the First World War, swimming against the political tide. They campaigned in support of conscientious objectors and in 1917 Selina led a Women's Peace Crusade march through Nelson to be greeted by derision and jeers from many caught up in the nationalism and jingoism of the war. After the war Selina stood for election on the town's council in Nelson; she stood as Labour candidate but her opposition to the war and her outspoken views on birth control ensured her defeat. After this she concerned herself with campaigning against domestic violence and threw her energy into the movement for birth control. In 1934, when she was 68 years old, she joined the pro-communist Women's World Committee against War and Fascism. In 1940 she joined the People's Convention for which she was expelled from the Labour Party. At 76 she found herself outside of mainstream Labour politics for the first time in fifty years. She died in 1946 at the age of 82.

Selina Cooper was awarded a heritage blue plaque in 1996 which is sited at 59 St. Mary's Street Nelson

MRS HANKLE + MISS BEANLAND
MISS HANKLE

MISS SHINN
MRS MISS MR MISS MALDERSLEY MISS
MRS TODD MISS COOPER
J COOPER COOPER
MRS M
ALDERSE

'Carrie' [Caroline] Martyn [1867- 1896]

Clarion Van Number 1 was named after Caroline Martyn and made its first appearance outside St George's Hall in Liverpool on 1st June 1897 before a crowd estimated at over one thousand. She became nationally recognised and large crowds turned up to hear her speak as she travelled round the country. She did not marry, and commented, 'I count my escape from marriage as one of my greatest blessings, but for that I could never have done my work; probably could never have opened my eyes to see that it needed to be done.' Although she habitually dressed plainly, she cut a distinctive figure in the long black cloak which she wore while travelling, which was apt to draw 'many curious eyes'. On February 2, 1896, Caroline Martyn formed the Glasgow Socialist Sunday School, laying the pattern for a movement which grew rapidly and by 1921 there were 153 schools across Britain. In July 1896 Caroline had arrived in Dundee to encourage women workers to join the Dundee Textile Workers Union, but died suddenly on July 23 from overwork.

Photograph on left: Suffragists at Nelson Station on route to a demonstration in London

'Our Enid' Enid Stacy Socialist and suffragist [1868-1903]

Enid Stacy was an inspiring public speaker who won over tens of thousands of working class men and women to the cause of socialism in the late 19th century. Aged 25, she had been dismissed from her teaching post for her role in supporting local strikers. She toured the country – sometimes with the Clarion Van in Scotland and the north of England – to speak to large crowds. As a feminist, she also argued for women's suffrage as central to socialism. For the early ILP there was "no clearer [nor] more convincing exponent" of socialist principles, while the Fabians promoted her lecturing tours in America. She shared platforms with contemporaries such as Keir Hardie, Eleanor Marx and Tom Mann who said of Stacy, she "could speak to thousands in the open air as though she was talking with each one in their own home". After two exhausting tours of the USA, she came back to her little boy and husband Percy in Littleborough. They had little money. Indeed, her husband, a curate, was hoping she would earn more in lecture fees on another foreign tour, when she was taken ill with a bad leg. She was pregnant again and the doctor ordered rest, but she got up to make tea for visitors and dropped dead of an embolism.

The Enid Stacy
London Clarion Van

The Carolyn
Martyn Memorial
Clarion Van

Out and about
with Clarion Van
No 2

Deborah Smith

(1858-1935)

Deborah Smith was a Nelson weaver, married twice with 5 children – all boys who went into the cotton mills apart from Rennie who stayed at school, probably with a scholarship from the Nelson Weavers Association. Deborah was a member of the ILP and joined the Women's Co-operative Guild which 'opened up a new life for me. I got new ideas a wider view of life. It taught me to think for myself on all questions.' She taught herself to read and write, becoming secretary of the local WCG. She was a lifelong pacifist, supporting the Women's Peace Crusade in Nelson in 1917. She supported her son Rennie on his successful campaign to become Labour MP in Penistone in 1924. She wrote an autobiography My Revelation which charts her socialism, her life in the mills and her increasing involvement in local politics.

Nancy Shimbles

(1879-1917)

Nancy Shimbles was another Nelson weaver. She was a suffragist, am internationalist and a trade unionist. She was involved in the ILP, the Weavers' Union and she had just been appointed to the local Board of Guardians before she died suddenly of appendicitis in 1917. The Nelson Women's Peace Crusade in 1917 was held in her memory.

Gertrude Ingham

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Gertrude Ingham was a socialist, married to a cotton weaver and the mother of a conscientious objector Alex.

She was instrumental in organising the Women's Peace Crusade in 1917 and worked closely with Selina Cooper in the maternity campaigns, pacifist campaigns and she would have visited the Clarion.


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INDEPE
LAID BY
SELINA J. COOPER
IN MEMORY OF
CAROLINE MARTYN
AND
ENID STACY.

Jane Ward and Lizzie Gent write about Clarion Clubs

The Clarion paper inspired the Clarion socialist movement in England. Robert Blatchford, the founder had been a journalist on the Sunday Chronicle in Manchester who became a socialist and wrote passionately about the poverty, hunger, unemployment and awful labour conditions he saw in the Manchester slums. Clarion groups soon sprang up: choirs, rambling, cycling and craft, scouts and a Cinderella club which arranged activities for poor children. In Manchester a Clarion cafe opened in 1908 at 50A Market Street 'founded by and supporting the socialist and labour movement and employing staff 'under conditions far better than any other restaurant.' It quickly became a meeting place for Clarion members and other radicals and kept going until the 1930s.

The development of the modern safety bicycle which made cycling more accessible coincided with the founding of the Clarion. The cycling craze of the 1890s could be very liberating, especially for women, and both the paper and the Cycling Club were at the forefront of encouraging women to participate, although men still dominated the committees. Julia Dawson, an activist from Cheshire started the Clarion van movement in 1896. Women went out to towns and villages where they held meetings and distributed leaflets to promote socialism. Clarion Cycle Club members paused on their rides to support the meetings and distribute leaflets. It was not long before members wanted to stay away longer and the first Manchester Clarion Cyclists Club camp was organised in 1895. With a gipsy touring caravan and a horse that was 'quiet as a lamb but a devil to go' and with and equipment, crockery and furniture borrowed from a local ILP they set off to camp in Tabley Fields next to Tabley Mere in Cheshire with three bell tents, a marquee and caravan. It was a huge success and over 18 days 2200 people visited and 464 stayed in the camp. In 1896 there was even bigger 6 week camp with 15 bell tents and 2 marquees.

In 1897 the Manchester Clarion Cycling Clubs formed the Clarion Cyclists Club House Company Limited. They raised capital through transferable shares bought by Clarion members and sympathetic socialists. The first Clarion Cyclists Club House near Knutsford, opened on Diamond Jubilee day 1897 with a socialist alternative to Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee celebrations. Their landlord, Earl Egerton, was horrified to discover he had introduced a house of socialism into the local community. The lease expired in 1902, Egerton refused to renew and the club moved to an old farmhouse on Outwood Road in Handforth in 1903.The house was a perfect base for cycle rides in the Cheshire countryside and there were plenty of other activities on offer. Visitors could play cards, billiards and other games indoors and outside they could take part in activities that included open air theatre, gardening and tennis. The average weekend attendance was 200 and often 300 - 400 people went for tea on summer Sundays. The Club stayed at Handforth till 1936 when they moved to Valley House at Oversley Ford on the banks of the River Bollin. This was a beautiful site with large grounds for outdoor sports and activities. The Clubhouse was sold in 1951, too expensive to repair.

1 thorneyholme square - 1st Nelson ILP Clarion house - 1898

Images of Nabs Farm, the 2nd Nelson Clarion House

The oldest surviving image of the current Clarion House

With the porch glazed in the 1960s

Melvyn Hirst writes about the Colne Independent Labour Party [ILP] house with notes on the other Clarion Houses

The Colne Clarion House was established in 1911 when the Colne ILP purchased the former Farmers' Arms/Tavern at Shelfield. Since 1903 the term Clarion House has been used by the Nelson ILP for its property near Roughlee and Colne ILP may have followed its example. The landlord of the Farmers' Arms was a Benjamin Snowden, born in Cowling about 6 miles from Colne and a relative of Philip Snowden who became Labour MP for Blackburn and chair of the ILP from 1903-1906 and 1917-1920. His wife Ethel was a passionate supporter of the Women's Peace Crusade and a regular speaker at Nelson.

The Ribble Valley Clarion Club House was opened in 1913 by the North Lancashire Union of the national Clarion Cycling Club, located near Ribchester, and like the other Clubhouses in Bucklow Hill and Handforth in Cheshire offered accommodation with space for camping.

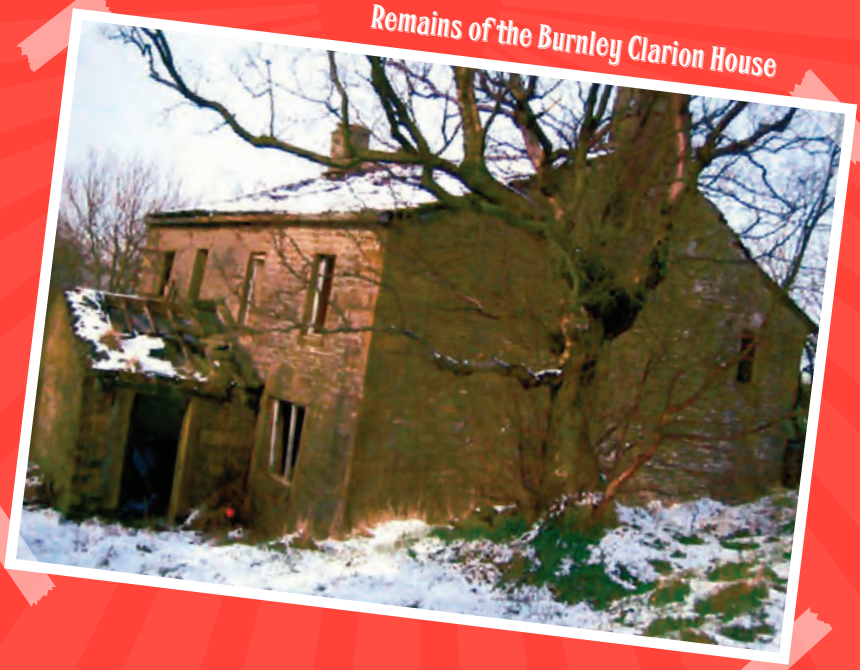
The Burnley ILP Clarion House at Clough Croft opened sometime before 1916. A report in the Burnley Express June 10, 1916 reported that a conscientious objector who was an absentee from the Army Reserve had been apprehended 'at Clough Croft Cottage, Roggerham which was owned by the ILP'. Philip Snowden spoke here in July 1917 at a Garden Party and Demonstration against the War. It seems that the ILP only fully owned this cottage after 1927 when it was often known as The Socialist Cottage, only known as the Clarion by ramblers and cyclists.

There was clearly a network of socialist clubhouses across the north of Lancashire in the early twentieth century but most were sold during the 1950s and 1960s and some are now derelict.

Nelson is now the Last Clarion House.

Colne Clarion House, now a private residence

Remains of the Burnley Clarion House



Clarion House offered striking miners and their families respite from the hardship they endured during the miners strike of...

Giving miners' sons a break

Tony and Ben get away from it all

THE 10-year-old sons of two striking miners are spending a week away from it all in Pendleside.

Tony Harrison and Ben Jefferies are guests of Pendle Labour Party who have "adopted" Clipstone Colliery in Nottinghamshire.

They have sent food and cash to help the families of the miners who have been on strike for more than 20 weeks, and they are also helping by offering holidays to the children.

Tony and Ben are staying with families in Brierfield.

One of the mums who is looking after Tony said: "Many children in the strike-hit areas are having to do without a holiday this year and we are very pleased to provide what little help we can."

She said she did not want her family to be named for fear of a hostile reaction from miners still at work.

She said: "The boys have had a good time so far, going out on trips almost every day and spending some time at the Thompson Centre in Burnley. We have taken them to the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway for a ride on a steam train and they seem to have enjoyed themselves.

•Stan Iveson, a well-known Labour supporter in Pendle, and his wife Ivy took the boys on a trip to Blackpool. Mr Iveson said: "In Pendle we are supporting the striking miners 100 per cent. The children are having a rough deal with the Government deliberately trying to starve the miners back to work.

"We are trying to give these kiddies a break and to show that other people care about the situation."

Mr Iveson, a former national leader of the Independent Labour Party and a member of Pendle Labour Party's executive committee said they hoped more children would be given a holiday in Pendle and that work would continue to send food and cash to the families of Nottinghamshire striking miners.

Off to Blackpool are Tony (left) and Ben with Ivy and Stan — and Max the dog.

A page from the guestbook at Clarion House during the strike is a lasting testement to the numbers of miners supported

Plans for the construction of ILP Vernon Street in 1907 & Clarion House (T. Nutter. Architect. Burnley)


CLARION HOUSE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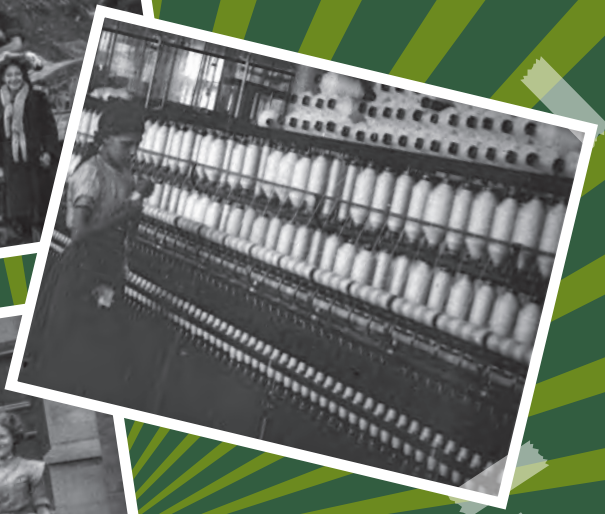
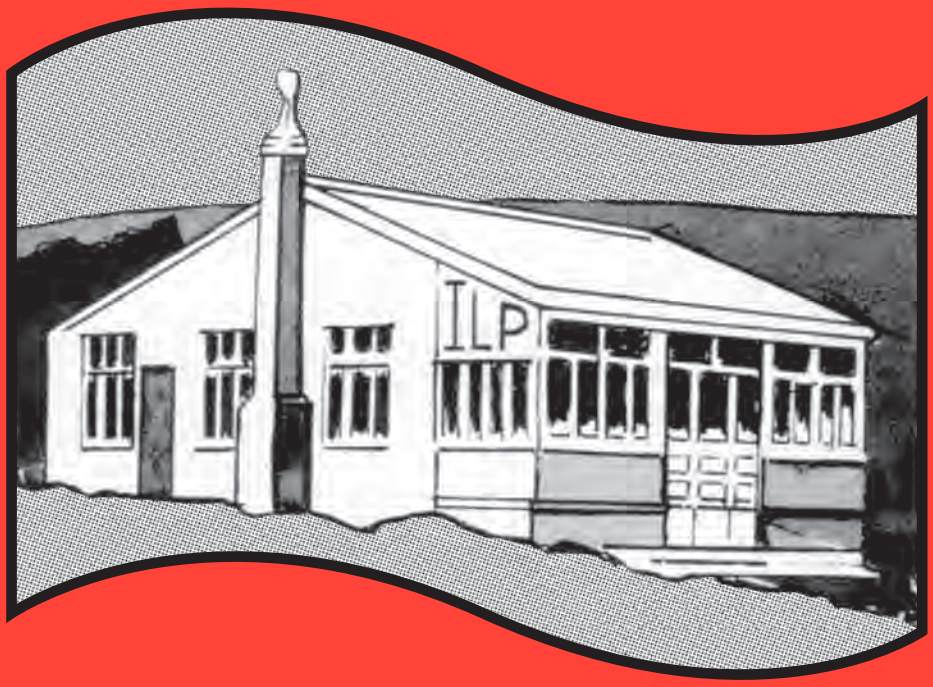
CLARION
HOUSE
SOCIALISM • OUR HOPE



ILP

CLARION HOUSE



A Monument to a Movement

by Stan Iveson and Roger Brown

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Contents

Acknowledgements i

The Authors ii

Dedication iii

Early Days 1

Hey Days 21

Latter Days 32

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The Authors

Stanley Iveson was born in Nelson in June 1912. He joined the Socialist Sunday School at the age of eight years, and the I.L.P. at the age of 14 years. He was Chairman of the I.L.P. for three years, a member of the I.L.P. National Council for 30 years and has been a member of Nelson branch for 60 years. Being a skilled plumber he joined the Plumbers Union and was Secretary of the Nelson Lodge and Chairman of the N.E.B.T.O. Nelson Lodge in the early 1930's. He is a member of Pendle Management Committee and Executive Committee of Pendle C.L.P., Secretary of Pendle Co-op Political Party and Secretary of Nelson Branch I.L.P.

Roger Brown was born in Colne in June 1949. He left school at the age of 15 years and became a skilled turner. He returned to education at the age of 26 years, won a place at the University of Hull and graduated with a B.Sc (Hons) in Psychology in 1981. He then undertook a research degree (M.Sc) in mental handicap at the University of Salford. He is now taking his Ph.D. at the University of Liverpool, researching into the history of Psychology and lecturing part-time at Nelson & Colne College of Further Education. He has been a member of the Nelson I.L.P. and the I.L.P. Land Society for five years and Assistant Secretary of Nelson Branch I.L.P.

Dedication

This booklet is dedicated to all those early socialist pioneers in Nelson who had the vision to build the Clarion House. The very title of the building indicates the far-sighted nature of their concept.

The word Clarion means to proclaim loudly, clearly and inspiringly some call. Their call was the call of freedom, the call of fellowship, the call for a socialist commonwealth. They envisaged the Clarion House as their instrument; ringing out, proclaiming their message in a literal, not an allegorical or metaphorical sense. They built it in a place of recognised natural beauty in the fervent hope that the rest of the world (for socialism knows no boundaries) would come to resemble it and become a place of beauty too. Not only physical beauty - but also a moral and social beauty.

The Clarion was to be run as a non-profit making co-operative with any excess money to be used in spreading the word of socialism. This was no accident, no coincidence. It was planned in the hope that others would take it as a model of how society as a whole ought to be organised.

Visitors could come and witness how people - lots of people - were prepared to devote their lives to the Clarion movement for no personal gain, other than the knowledge that they would leave the world a slightly better place than when they entered it.

The Clarion is a vision of the future, a vision of a socialist society, a commonwealth, based on co-operation and fellowship, not conflict and material greed. And the Clarion, as the name implies, was to be the instrument by which their message would be spread. The message by which the world would unite under one banner, abandon blinkered self-interest, and material gain, and thus live in peace and harmony.

These early socialist pioneers, of whom barely any had any recognised schooling, had a vision - they gave their vision substance, they gave their vision a name. This booklet is dedicated to them and to the Clarion House movement that their vision may continue a little longer.

15th October 1986.

I am delighted to have been asked to write a few lines and make a small contribution to this celebratory book.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading the manuscript and continue to be enthralled by the vision, dedication and the mental and physical courage of that group of pioneers who were the roots of both the I.L.P. and the Labour Party locally.

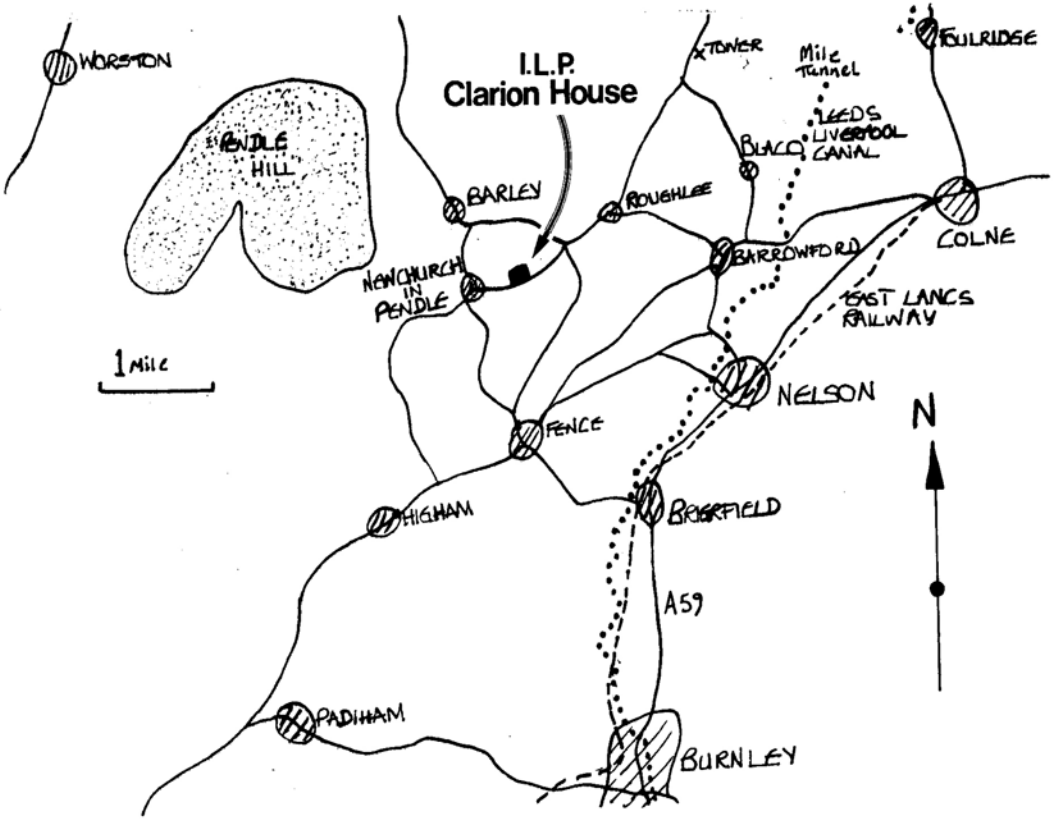
As one of the "younger" socialists who opted to join the Labour Party, rather than the I.L.P., it is clear to me that I missed a great deal of fun and a great deal of inspiration.

I wish the authors every success with this project and look forward to joining in with your 75th Anniversary celebrations.

Good Luck,

Ken Mc Clave

Former President,
Pendle C.L.P.


WORSTON
PENDLE HILL
I.L.P.
Clarion House
TOWER
Mile Tunnel
FOULRIDGE
LEEDS LIVERPOOL CANAL
BLACO
BARLEY
ROUGHLEE
COLNE
BARROWFORD
NEWCHURCH IN PENDLE
EAST LANCS RAILWAY
1 Mile
NELSON
N
FENCE
BRIERFIELD
HIGHAM
A59
PADIHAM
BURNLEY

from Lord Brockway

Home address: 31 Ashlyn Close, Bushey, Herts. WD2 2EJ

7 January 1987

Dear Stan Iveson,

I am very pleased to respond to your request. I remember the Clarion House very well and the enjoyable time we had there.

Message: "It is not often that a local meeting place becomes a national institution but that is true of the Clarion House of the ILP at Nelson. During its long existence, nearly all the best known figures in the British Labour Movement have visited it, and I think they will all share the warm feelings I have for its fellowship and fun. I congratulate those who are still running the Clarion House and thank them, not only for myself but I am sure on behalf of so many hundreds of others."

Yours, as ever,

Mr. Stan Iveson
90 Charles Street
Nelson
Lancs. BB9 8SW

Early Days

"Thought is subversive and revolutionary, destructive and terrible, thought is merciless to privilege, established institutions and comfortable habits. Thought looks into the pit of hell and is not afraid. Thought is great and swift and free."
Bertrand Russell,
Education and the Good Life.

The Clarion House is owned by the Nelson I.L.P. Land Society. It was registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act of 1893 on the 13th July 1910. This though, was by no means the beginning of the concept on which it was founded.

It was, therefore, thought necessary to take a small trip back in time to examine, at least in general terms, the recent industrial history of this corner of East Lancashire.

A good deal has been written on the development of the cotton industry. The general opinion would appear to point to a coming together in the early to mid-nineteenth century of various technological advances. Steam power was, at this time, continuing to replace the area's reliance on the water wheel as the main source of industrial power.

The previous automation and continuing refinement of the spinning process produced cotton thread in excess. Yet it was the introduction of the Lancashire Loom in the 1840's, which harnessed the abundance of efficient power and cheap thread to the manufacturing process of weaving cotton. These developments, coupled with the vast improvement of the transport system which the Leeds to Liverpool canal, and the East Lancs railway provided were the ideal conditions for the massive increase in woven cotton output. Raw materials could come in, be manufactured and distributed worldwide far more easily and on a grander scale than had hitherto been envisaged.

The population of North-East Lancashire began to increase

dramatically as the unemployed of other areas, such as Cornwall and Ireland, together with those from the closing lead mines of the Yorkshire Dales, came to seek work in the new mills. Cotton became King.

Nelson is a creation of this period. Its population in the 1850's and '60's was less than 4000, whereas it had increased to over 20000 by 1890. Nelson was the Milton Keynes or Welwyn Garden City of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

A glimpse at the architecture of Nelson gives us a clue to its late origin. One can easily pick out the regimented rows of weavers houses arranged geometrically around the mills. These were fine houses in their day (and many still are) when compared to the back-to-back tenements with communal toilets, to be found in Colne or Burnley.

Though the housing stock itself may have been sound enough, the working conditions in the mills themselves were atrocious. The weavers were treated little better than slaves. Children, from as young as five were working seventy-two hours a week. Stan Iveson remembers his mother recounting the fact that she was taken into the mill as a baby and deposited in a weft tin, whilst her mother had to earn her living. Well into this century, children worked into the mills from the age of twelve. The mills were not only dangerous, from the point of view of industrial accidents; they were also extremely unhealthy in a more general environmental sense. The atmosphere was polluted and putrid from both the loose cotton gauze which permeated the air in the mills, and from the soot and smog created by the mill chimneys. This was why during the late nineteenth century groups of independent minded Nelson socialists formed together into various societies dedicated to improving the overall health and well being of the weavers.

These societies took many forms; such as rambling, camping holidays and cycling clubs.

The philosophy of these movements was a simple and intelligent one, in that, it was not so much a lack of physical exercise which was

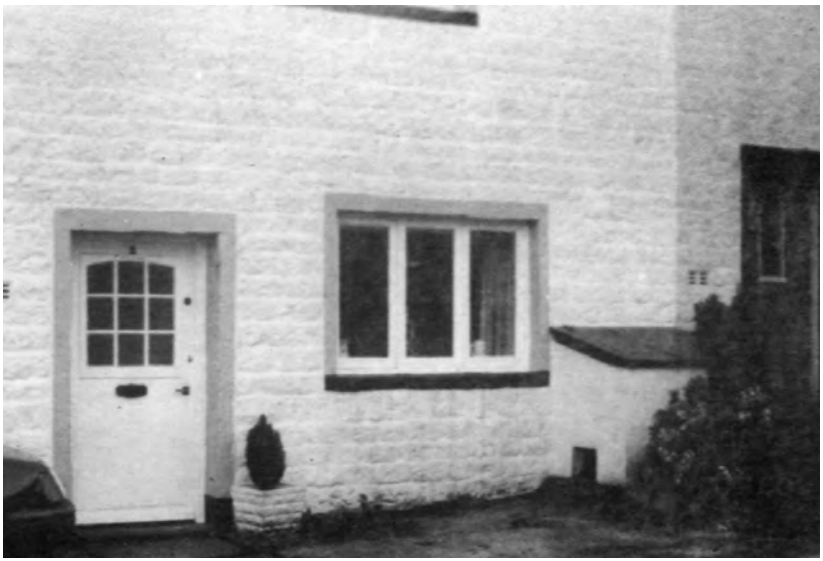
injuring peoples health, they had enough of this at work and at home; it was their exposure to the whole industrial environment. Even up to the mid 1960's, before the almost total demise of weaving and the introduction of the Clean Air Act, one could, from the vicinity of Pendle, look down onto Nelson, Brierfield and Burnley and not see anything of these towns. They were invisible under the mantle of great, grey cloud. Yet, this could be the only cloud visible, the sky would be crystal clear. In fact one could, looking the other way, see Blackpool Tower, over forty miles distant, but you could not see Nelson only four miles away.

One of these small groups was formed by the I.L.P.'er Andrew Smith, who later became Chairman of Lancashire County Council. Andrew Smith was himself concerned that people were unable to pursue physical health techniques in the oppressive environment of a weaving town. The idea he put forward was that people ought to be able to perform their physical training in the country where the air was unpolluted. Indeed many members were also of the opinion that the beuties of the countryside ought not to be the preserve of the rich, but open to all.

Andrew Smith first Secretary of Nelson ILP Land Society and founder of the first Clarion House.

In an attempt to rectify this unsatisfactory situation, Andrew Smith and a few I.L.P. comrades rented a tiny cottage in Thorneyholrne Square, which lies between Happy Valley and Barley (approximately four miles from Nelson). This first Clarion House was opened in 1899.

The rent of the cottage was ls.6d. per week. Andrew and his friends probably found this (not inconsiderable) sum out of their own pockets. For there is no record in the I.L.P. cashbook, which could accommodate this particular expenditure until 1901, when, a special account was opened entitled "Thorneyholme Account".



The cottage in Thorneyholme Square rented by the ILP from 1899.

It does not take much imagination to picture the scene. After a strenuous session of physical exercises in a clear, fresh, frosty evening, someone would light the fire and put the kettle to the boil. They would slouch in old, tatty chairs, with their tired limbs outstretched, clutching a pint mug of hot, steaming tea. The door might be open, letting in the country air, the smell of damp grass and the songs of birds; the fire roaring in the corner. Feeling like new men in both body and spirit, it would not be long before somebody would remark on what they were all probably thinking.

> *"Ya know lads, this is far too good to keep t'ow sens; ows abowt bring in wife n't kids wi yus next time?"*

Then someone might have replied:

> *"Aye, I wer just thinkin same me sel – and tha knows, this would be reyt up old so and so's street."*

Someone else might add:

> *"Aye, and we can bring ower some bread and cheese and mebey a cake an av a bit of a picnic like."*

And so the concept of the Clarion House was beginning to emerge in an almost accidental manner. Accidental or not, the Clarion was soon bristling and bustling with activity.

Young children playing games under the supervision of adults; men and women engaged in animated political discussion; men, women and older children organising the picnic.

This is, of course, pure speculation, the work of the imagination. What is fact is that the above "unofficial" events were such a success that at the beginning of 1901, a fundamental change to the structure and organisation of the activities at Thorneyholme was taking place.

On the 19th January 1901, the rent of the cottage at Thorneyholme was incorporated into the official expenditure programme of the I.L.P. At

the beginning of the New Year a separate account was created for the activities, which were taking place there. It is entitled "Shop Account (Thorneyholme)" and the first two entries read: "January 19th Rent 6s.Od." and "February 16th Rent 6s.Od." This, as far as the authors can tell, is the first instance of any financial support from the official I.L.P. organisation towards the upkeep of Thorneyholme. Before this time, all the money required to finance the cottage and its activities must have been donated on a voluntary basis.

Evidence from the I.L.P. cashbook suggests that it was at this period (early 1901) that the cottage in Thorneyholme started to adopt the role for which the future Clarion House is most remembered and proud: that of offering the local workers a place in the country, where they could relax and enjoy a picnic. It is from this time that entries began to appear which show that refreshments were being sold. For example, "April 14th Sweets £3 14s.6d.", "April 17th Mineral Waters 18s.6d.", "October 18th Biscuits, Sugar, Canned Goods £8 3s.9d."

I.L.P. members were also at this time in the process of decorating the cottage. There are entries, which read: "March 25th - Buy wallpaper 3s.0d." and "March 31st - Buy wood for shelves and brackets 5s.2d."

All entries for this period come under the heading "Thorneyholme Account", not Clarion House Account. It is possible that the cottage at Thorneyholme Square had not yet been named (officially at least) "The Clarion". This is not too surprising because initially, the I.L.P. comrades did not envisage the popular appeal that the idea of a place in the country would have to the local working population. Indeed, how could they possibly have predicted its undeniable success? Nevertheless, they were not slow to react when they did realise that they had created something unique in the socialist movement.

This particular period was very important in the development of the Clarion House, for not only did it acquire official recognition as an integral part of the I.L.P. movement, it was also becoming extremely popular with the members. So much so that the I.L.P. realised that these premises were too small. A larger site was necessary.

In late 1901 or very early in 1902, it must have been decided to find one. No official documentation is available for this period which could throw light on the nature of the discussions which must have occurred. And, unfortunately, faded memories cannot illuminate either. Andrew Smith himself, in a newspaper article in 1962, could only remember that a move took place around the beginning of the century.

The I.L.P. cashbook does make some indirect references as to the nature of events at this time. At the beginning of the accounting year 1902, there are several references which indicate that a different property had been acquired. There are a series of entries in the (still) Thorneyholme Account which run: "January 28th Buy Coal (New House) 9s.8d.", "Sundries (New House) 3s.8d." and "March 1st Coal and Carriage (Old House) 3s.6d." It seems from these entries that there were now two separate houses for which the Thorneyholme Account is responsible. That the cottage in Thorneyholme was now regarded as the "Old House" is evident from a further entry dated April 12th which reads: "Rent of Old House 6s.0d."; a sum identical to the rent of the original cottage in Thorneyholme.

The cash book also displays another interesting feature, which underlines the impression that some kind of change was occurring at this time. The main (1902) heading reads "Shop Account (Thorneyholme)" and underneath this in slightly different coloured ink, inserted before the final word "expenditure" is written "Clarion House". This particular colour of ink, and the hand that wrote it, are compatible with entries made during late March 1902.

This entry is the first mention of the name Clarion House. Then, on April 11th, there is an entry, which reads: "Caffry and Co. Clarion Pictures 8s.6d." These may have been either pictures of the Clarion or pictures for the Clarion. The important point though, is that this is the first dated mention to indicate that the Clarion House had come into existence.

Again, it is the cash book which hints at the type of activities being held at Thorneyholme. On the 18th February, 1902, there reads an

entry: "Tea Party Thorneyholme Account 4s.9d." More intriguing is the entry for July 27th, which runs: "Carriage of Music to Clarion House £1 Os.Od." This is the second mention of the title "Clarion House", and conjures up some fascinating images.

The "Carriage of Music" probably entailed the borrowing of a piano out of a member's parlour. Stan Iveson distinctly remembers during the 1920's, the I.L.P. comrades arriving on his doorstep and manhandling their piano out of the front door, on to a horse and cart, where, by courtesy of intricate fingerwork and an acute sense of balance, a pianist would thump out "The Red Flag" or various music hall tunes, whilst the whole kit and caboodle trundled noisily down the steep, bumpy, cobbled streets and up to the Clarion House; followed, of course, by a good hearted singing, dancing and cheering throng. It is likely that a similar train of events occurred some twenty-five years earlier.

At the end of 1902, there appears one further piece of information, which leads the authors to suspect that perhaps a couple of years elapsed before the cottage was officially called the Clarion House. This is again to be found in the I.L.P. cashbook. There is an entry dated 15th December, 1902, which reads: "Transferred to Clarion House Account £2 3s.6d." It would appear from this, that the Thorneyholrne Account had either' been closed or renamed Clarion House Account. No further mention of the Thorneyholme Account can be traced.

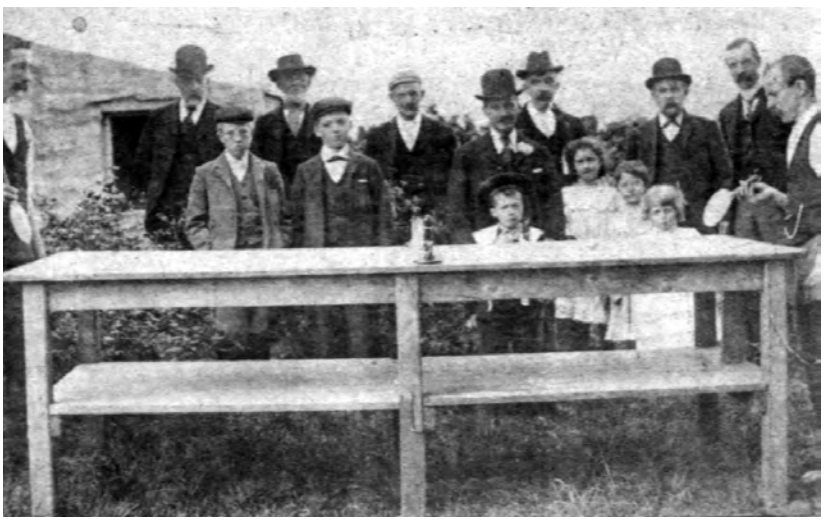
Although it is likely that the decision to move was taken late in 1901 and that suitable premises had been found by about April, 1902, it was not until some time later that the actual move took place. The exact date is unknown as there is neither accurate anecdotal or documentary evidence which would indicate the precise date.

It is highly probable though that this move took place in early 1903. There are a number of reasons for supposing this to be so. It is precisely at this point, which was also marked be the expansion of I.L.P. membership, that the party's accounts were divided into three separate heads, the first being party funds: subscriptions, speakers' expenses, stamps, etc; the second being an I.L.P. shop run on similar lines to the

Co-op; and lastly, a separate head entitled "Clarion House". Another reason for supposing that a move had just taken place is the nature of the first entries in the Clarion Account.

These entries read: "January 26th (1903) Repairs £1 2s.4d., cement ls.2d., and brass fire grate 4s.6d." There are also two entries for wallpaper in March. Somewhere was being renovated and repaired! In fact, there is a photograph still in existence (see below) which shows one of the voluntary working parties, which undertook all of this work.

There is also an entry for February 14th (1903) for "Carting 6s.Od." Something had been moved! Finally, perhaps the most convincing piece of evidence showing that some kind of change had taken place is due largely, to an expansion of activities shown by the nature of further entries. For example "Chocolate 4s.0d.";"cocoa 2s.6d.";"sweets £2 1s0d.";" Co-op 200 pies £1 5s.0d";"tea pots and jam 5s.6d";"pies and buns £2 0s.0d."



Working Party at Nabs House (the second Clarion House)

These entries, and many more of similar nature demonstrate the increasing role of catering was playing at the Clarion. The old cottage at

Thorneyholme just could not physically accommodate such a volume. It does not take a genius to realise that 200 pies equals approximately 200 people, not to mention that two pounds worth of pies and buns would take some eating. Particularly, when one considers that the average weaver had to keep himself and his family for a whole week on half that sum.

The Clarion was maturing into what it was later to become famous for: a political debating and recreational centre for the working classes.

There is an entry in the I.L.P. publication "Nelson Workers Guide" in the January 1903 edition, which goes by the rather grand title "The I.L.P. Clarion House and Country Mansion." The description runs as follows: "A delightful health resort and rustic mansion, suitably enclosed with a large garden, right out amidst the green fields and meadows and rustling, waving trees, with the life giving, fresh and breezy, pure and invigorating sweet country air." The perpetrator of this article must have been a full time travelogue writer for Cooks Tours. We will never again feel guilty for scribbling long and convoluted sentences! The article continues (at a more sedate pace), to state its intended purpose; "Come and be made welcome, the walk will do you good, bring your food with you, liquid refreshments such as tea etc, provided at reasonable charge."

A group of I.L.P'ers pose outside Nabs House, the second Clarion House

These new premises were again a rented building (rented from the Nutter family of Pendle witch fame), called "Nabs Farm". It is just off Jinney Lane, New church, further up the lane and on the left, not far from the present Clarion.

This then, was a larger house with more extensive grounds. These considerations were becoming more and more important, due to the founders' determination to spread the word of socialism to the community at large. The concept behind the Clarion had expanded from a few I.L.P. members doing their "physical jerks" in the country, to a much larger one which included educating people into the notions of fellowship and equality.

Not unlike today, "the powers that be", Andrew Smith remembered in 1962, "encouraged the people to regard socialists as fools or knaves." The I.L.P. took it upon itself to teach, by example, that these notions were wrong and merely a part of the capitalists' propaganda machine. In order to demonstrate socialism in action, the I.L.P. invited their friends and, in Andrew Smith's words, "Some, not so friendly", to

functions such as discussions, picnics and sports days. All the amenities were provided on a voluntary basis, thus making them affordable to the mill workers.

We would like to pause here for a moment, to digress a little from the central theme of this essay and take a closer look at these independent, intelligent and able weavers. What made them such a force to be reckoned with? These men and women were not afraid of anybody or anything. In terms of socialist principles and ideals, their radicalism was equal to anywhere else in the country. The I.L.P., from which the present Labour Party was a later development, was formed in Bradford on the 14th January 1893 by, amongst others Keir Hardie, Margaret McMillan and Fred Jowett. It was though, already in existence in Nelson before this date. There is, in the possession of Stan Iveson a cashbook (as referred to earlier) that starts, January 1st, 1893. Now it is highly unlikely that any movement would start up officially on January 1st. Nelson I.L.P. was, in all probability, in existence and fully active before this date, which by the way, still pre-dates Bradford.

The most likely explanation for the rise of a radical socialist movement is threefold. Firstly, many of the working people of Nelson were "off com-d-ans" or relative new comers to the area. Many of the Irish navies who built the canal and railway, stayed on to work in the mills. Unemployed tin miners came up from Cornwall, and there was an influx of ex-lead miners from Yorkshire. These people, coupled with the large incursion of more local labour, seeking employment, must have led to a pioneering spirit and a "move with the times" ethos. Nelson during this period, must have taken on the atmosphere, as one documentor of the period recounted, of a "frontier town".

The second reason could be related to the popularity of the various nonconformist sects which sprang up at this time, particularly the Independent Methodists. This particular brand of Christianity viewed Jesus Christ as a radical egalitarian concerned with questioning the establishment, particularly in the form of the Jewish temple hierarchy which was based on pomp, vanity and privilege. Christ was also challenging the might of a large imperialistic power - Rome!

He preached that all people are equal and that one should treat others as one would like to be treated. There were contemporary parallels. The Church of England was operating in the grand tradition of nepotism, even despotism and privilege. Its rituals and teaching were far removed from the everyday life of its congregation. Britain had become an Imperial power of far greater magnitude than Rome ever was.

The Independent Methodists re-introduced chapel democracy, promoted self-government and egalitarianism. Hand in hand with these views, went the need for education and an interest in politics. The Salem Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association was formed to satisfy this need, as was the National Home Reading Union.

Independence in another direction came in the form of Reverend Leonard of Colne's Cooperative Holiday Association.

The third force involved in creating a radical and able population was the particular employment system which developed in Nelson's mills. This was the "room" and "power" system. Nelson possessed few large mill owners as Colne did. Colne had the Walkers, Sagars, Shaws and Bannisters, Nelson only really had the Ecroyds. This family were Quakers - and they built a "model" village at Lomeshaye next to their mill.

A new phenomena was to develop; initially, in Nelson, then Colne. This system encompasses two novel elements. First, a whole factory built complete with power. This was then portioned off and rented to small business people who paid a rent for both the room that their looms took up, and the power they used. Hence: "room" and "power". What this meant in reality was that there was much more dialogue between weavers' unions and management. It meant that problems had to be worked out on the spot. No referring the matter to head office or calling in regional officials. The weaver had to undertake all the negotiations regarding working conditions. This led to an increase in worker advocacy. Their skills, ability and self confidence were all enhanced through necessity.

Nelson Socialist Sunday School, about 1945.

Consequently, what resulted, was due to a pioneering spirit, and a free thinking, radical, egalitarian church, which recognised politics as being relevant to religion; a church organisation which encouraged the participation of the whole congregation. A church, which encouraged and promoted education and oratorial skills due to the large amount of lay preaching undertaken by the congregation. This, coupled with increased workers participation in negotiation and bargaining under the "room" and "power" system, came together in creating a volatile, radical and educated people, well versed in the techniques of self-advocacy. These were the people who formed the back-bone of the I.L.P. These were the people who gave up their spare time to run the party machine. These were the people who flocked to the Clarion House.

I.L.P. membership had increased from 50 or 60 in 1899, when the first Clarion opened, to over 1000 by 1912. Nelson was the second largest branch in Britain. Nelson (or more precisely, the Clitheroe Division) returned the second Labour M.P. to Westminster in the person of David Shackleton - Secretary of Darwen Weavers Association in 1902. These achievements were facilitated by the I.L.P. and the Clarion House. Without its great popular appeal, the task of promoting socialism would have been that much more difficult.

I.L.P. members at Nabs Farm. (A)Mr William Henry Aughton, who was agent for Keir Hardie when he fought the Preston seat in 1900; (B)Mrs Fred de Luce; (C)Mrs Sophia Aughton; (D)Miss Clara Nowell; (E)Alf Robinson; (F)Jane Aughton; (G)Mrs Deborah Smith

It became obvious to the I.L.P. soon after acquiring Nabs Farm, that the facilities were (even be the standard of the day) both too primitive and ancient to cater for this growing socialist fraternity. This time though, the new Clarion House would be just that - new! No more renovating decrepit buildings, which belonged to somebody else. The I.L.P. decided to erect their own, purpose-built structure with its own adjoining land and water rights. The last is an important factor and warrants a chapter to itself!

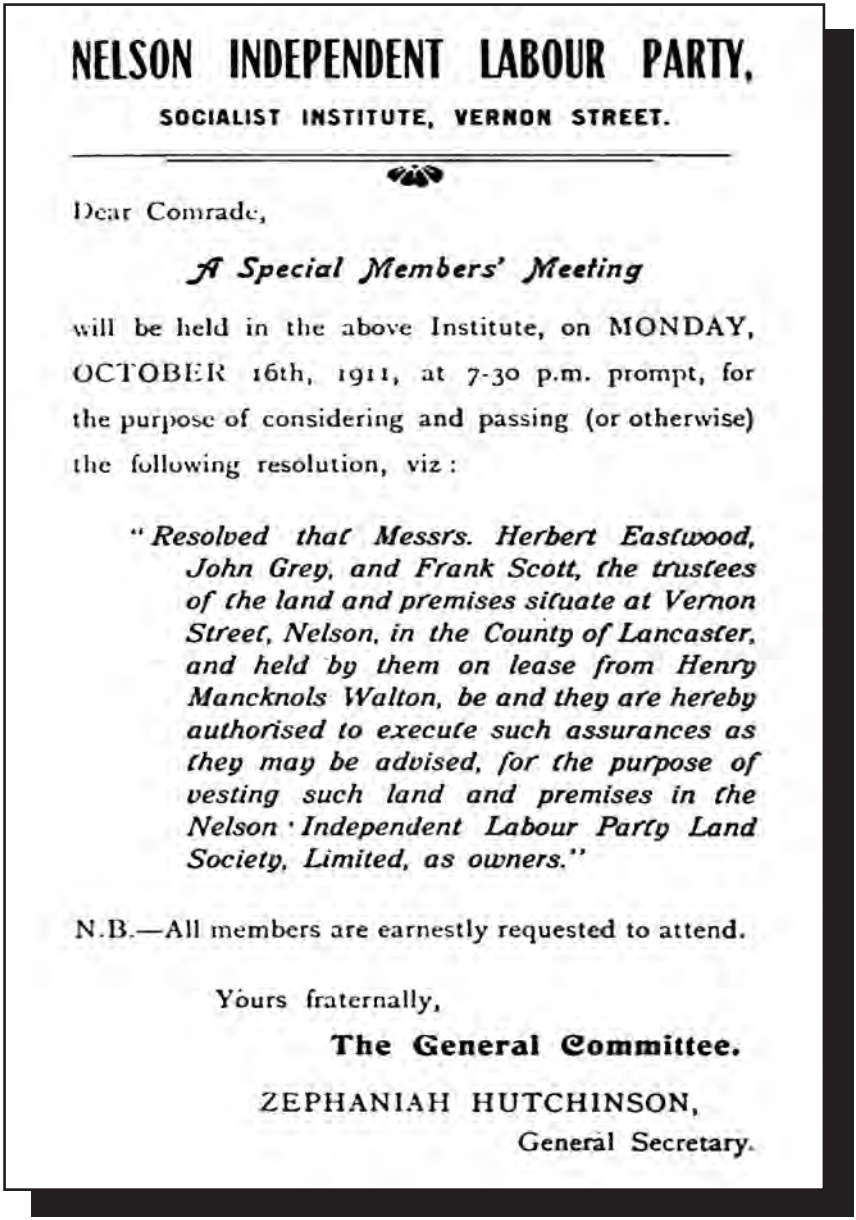
The Nelson I.L.P. Land Society Ltd was formed under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act of 1893, on the13th of July 1910. That the members of Nelson Branch had very clear ideas as to the nature of the activities and the philosophy behind the Clarion concept is evident from the content of a letter by one of them, which reads:

"The members of the Limited Society have first to be members of the Branch, and the Committee of the former have power to pay off the shares of any person ceasing to be a member of the Branch. The Limited Society does not aim at making any surplus over the amount necessary to pay expenses, mortgage interest, interest on shares, ground rent and depreciation, etc. and for this reason the amount of rent which is charged by the Society to the Branch for the letting of the Society's properties is computed as a sum equal or thereabouts to the amount the Society has to disperse, as above-mentioned."

The letter is signed "Abe Butterworth", who was Secretary of Nelson I.L.P. during the 1920's and it just about sums up the aims and aspirations for what the Clarion intended.

Nelson I.L.P. at this time was also acquiring its own building in Nelson itself. This also would come under the auspices of the I.L.P. Land Society. As an example of the professional and serious approach to their responsibilities we have enclosed an agenda for a special branch meeting regarding the formation of the Land Society and the appointment of its Trustees.

That the I.L.P. was endeavouring to acquire some property, which would be wholly owned by it, is evident from the fact that the Land Society had been in existence for some two years prior to any official negotiations taking place. The fact that these two years elapsed before any firm commitment was undertaken also demonstrates that a good deal of unofficial discussion was going on. It appears, from the Minute books, which cover this period that some members wanted to build a guesthouse, which would be residential. There were certain precedents for this course of action, which would, no doubt, have been in the member's minds. There were I.L.P. owned guesthouses in existence at this time. One was at Otley and there was another at Ribchester. People could stay overnight or for a weekend or longer if they could afford it. The Reverend Leonard of Colne had opened a non-profit making guest house in the Yorkshire Dales under the auspices of the Co-operative Holiday Association. It is not surprising then, that the Nelson I.L.P. members were considering a similar venture. In fact, the minute book for this period has an entry for January 14th, 1912,



NELSON INDEPENDENT LABOUR PARTY.

SOCIALIST INSTITUTE, VERNON STREET.

Dear Comrade,

A Special Members' Meeting

will be held in the above Institute, on MONDAY, OCTOBER 16th, 1911, at 7-30 p.m. prompt, for the purpose of considering and passing (or otherwise) the following resolution, viz:

> *"Resolved that Messrs. Herbert Eastwood, John Grey, and Frank Scott, the trustees of the land and premises situate at Vernon Street, Nelson, in the County of Lancaster, and held by them on lease from Henry Mancknols Walton, be and they are hereby authorised to execute such assurances as they may be advised, for the purpose of vesting such land and premises in the Nelson Independent Labour Party Land Society, Limited, as owners."*

N.B.—All members are earnestly requested to attend.

Yours fraternally,

The General Committee.

ZEPHANIAH HUTCHINSON,
General Secretary.

Nelson ILP Meeting notification.

instructing the "present Clarion Committee" to continue until they moved to "fresh premises when a new committee shall be appointed." Obviously a move of some kind was being planned for; otherwise the A.G.M. would not have felt bound to discuss such a matter. They would simply have elected a committee for the next twelve months.

Minute books are, by definition, brief and require a good deal of interpretation. Much reading between the lines is required in order to deduce the real nature of the debate. There is a slightly later entry from the same Annual General Meeting, which instructs the "I.L.P. Land Society Ltd. to purchase a suitable plot of land with a view to erecting a guest house or country house on same." From this, it does seem as if members were considering very seriously, the prospect of emulating Otley and Ribchester in providing residential facilities. That a property of some kind would soon be in existence, there is little doubt. This is reinforced by the next entry in the minute book, which discussed giving up the existing lease on the "present Clarion House." The A.G.M. decided to leave this tricky problem to the General Committee!

There must have been a good deal of behind the scenes activity and negotiation taking place; after all, the Land Society had already been in existence for two years. No organisation under takes such a serious and far reaching obligation without some pre-conceived idea of what the net result will be. Though it would appear that even as late as 1912, the precise nature of the building was still open to debate, and was far from settled.

By May 27th, some form of decision had been reached at last, regarding the site where the structure would be erected. The Minute book instructs the "Land Society to continue purchasing a plot of land for a country guest house." From this entry it would also appear that the nature of the venture had been decided in favour of a guesthouse. Yet less than one month later, a contract was placed with a local building firm to construct the existing Clarion House, which, as everybody is aware, is NOT a guest house. What happened during these three to four weeks is anybody's guess. There are no records of any discussions in either of the authors' possession. One can speculate, perhaps the

members thought it too ambitious a project from the organisational point of view. Perhaps they could not raise sufficient capital. Perhaps they were so impressed with the functions of the existing Clarion that they decided to make no fundamental changes to these, merely expand and modernise them.

Whatever the reason for the change of plan, events were now moving rapidly forward. According to Francis Johnson (former Secretary of the I.L.P. Land Society) writing on the occasion of the Clarion's Golden Jubilee in 1962, "It was June 1912 that some members of the Nelson I.L.P. - let me record their names: John Spencer, Albert Smith, Samuel Bunkun, Abraham Butterworth, John Clarke and Montague Singleton -were authorised to act as trustees for the purchase of a plot of land (bought fron the Nutter family) situated near New church in Pendle." A fortnight later, a contract for the erection of what was described as a "Bungalow and foundations complete" was signed.

That the I.L.P. must have decided against a guest house at the last moment and instructed the construction of the present Clarion House is evident 'also from an entry in the I.L.P. Minute book. The entry for August 12th, where the meeting decided to "name the building over at Dimpenly the: I.L.P. Clarion House," not, you notice, the I.L.P. Clarion Guest House.

There is no record of Russell's Builders of Nelson being awarded the contract for the construction of the Clarion House, but, this is what happened. It had been rumoured that the Clarion was built by voluntary I.L.P. labour. Unfortunately this romantic notion is false, although just about everything else pertaining to the day to day running and maintenance has been done by volunteers. It was, nevertheless, built by a professional, commercial firm at a cost of £350. The money was very generously lent to the Land Society by the Nelson Weavers Association at a very low rate of interest.

When the work was completed, the new Clarion House was opened on a warm, summer evening by T.D. Benson, who was a member of the I.L.P. National Council, and Andrew Smith, the I.L.P. Land Society's

first Secretary. It must have been an extremely proud moment for these early, socialist pioneers to see their ideals come to such wonderful and permanent fruition. The Clarion House is not merely a building perched at the foot of Pendle, it is a monument to these proud and independent weavers and to their vision of socialism, equality, fraternity and peace.

This was only the beginning. The next thirty years or so would see the Clarion House moving from strength to strength, as a centre for recreation, political activities and communication.

The second Clarion House at Nabs Farm Jinny Lane, near Newchurch in Pendle, prior to 1912

Hey Days

"Great men are they who see that spiritual is stronger than any material force, that thoughts rule the world."
Ralph Emerson,
Progress of Culture.

"When men refuse to think; they fight."
Sydney Silverman,

Initially, the Clarion owned four or five adjacent fields. This was not in an attempt to become a major, local landowner, but because of the complicated issue of water rights. Detailed negotiations were undertaken with local farmers, relating to this intricate topic. At this time all the water came from the local well on the hillside. The farmers were understandably jealous of this precious resource. The I.L.P. minute book reveals that at first the farmers would only allow a half-inch main to be drawn from the well; the I.L.P. argued for a one-inch pipe. The matter must have been resolved amicably because a further minute, which is obviously a compromise, records an instruction to purchase sufficient three-quarter inch galvanised piping from Nelson Co-op Plumbing.

The I.L.P. have always regarded water as a socialist issue, because it always seemed that the areas which supplied the major amounts, that is the rural areas (the Lake District and Wales), bore most difficulty in obtaining sufficient supplies for themselves because water is diverted to the cities and towns. The country people of Barley and Roughlee had to make do as best they could with wells and streams.

Now a good deal has been written and said pertaining to local weather, but good summers have been known and when they occurred the water supply to the Clarion would all but dry up. This would tend to happen when a good supply was most needed, on those long, hot summer days when families would take advantage of the weather and walk up to the Clarion. The problem of water (or rather lack of it) was not helped by

the fact that due to a peculiarity of the piping system, the farmers got first call on what little was available.

Before this and other points are pursued, however, we must pause and take account of the Great War. It was not long after the Clarion was completed and open for business that it was overtaken by monumental events far beyond its control, when one of the major tragedies of the twentieth century began to unfurl. In 1914 the people of the world divided and split to face each other across the mud and barbed wire of Flanders. This placed the I.L.P. in an invidious position. Its drive for freedom and equality thus far had been compatible, to greater or lesser degrees, with a policy of non-violence and, for want of a better word - patriotism. But now the country was at war with another imperialist power. Members were forced into a dilemma, they either fought to support a system they had no faith in, but somehow felt a loyalty to, or were branded cowards and traitors.

The I.L.P. has never been a pacifist organisation, although some of its members were of this persuasion. Consequently, the Clarion lost (in some cases for good) many of the voluntary helpers and customers it relied upon for support. Paradoxically, the strong patriotic and nationalistic fervour of some sections of society, particularly after conscription was introduced in early 1916, helped to maintain the Clarion in tip-top condition.

After 1916 it became a criminal offence to refuse to join the army, yet many local I.L.P.'ers still followed their consciences and refused to participate in what they regarded as a capitalist-inspired war. As a consequence of this rejection of enforced military service some of these conscientious objectors were discriminated against, particularly at work. They lost their livelihood as no-one would employ them. This resulted in them having a good deal of free time, much of which they put to use improving the Clarion's amenities. Fields were turned into sports grounds, footpaths were established and marked, fords over streams were constructed and steps cut and secured with wood into the steeper hills.

Indeed, the Clarion became so well known as a meeting place for conscientious objectors that one Sunday evening one of the returning working parties was arrested en-masse in Nelson's Victoria Park. Escape was futile of course, and they were recruited forcibly into the army where, because they refused to co-operate and conform to army regulations, they were tried by court martial and sentenced to a period of imprisonment with hard labour.

As a point of general interest the authors feel obliged to point out that the Nelson district had a higher percentage of conscientious objectors per capita of population than any other area in the country.

Due to food shortages caused by the U-Boat blockade, the Clarion attempted to play a role in alleviating its worst effects. Part of the Clarion grounds was turned over to agriculture. Sections of the playing fields were ploughed up and various crops were planted, including potatoes. Unfortunately, due to poor soil, bad drainage and far from ideal weather conditions, this agrarian adventure was slightly less than the success some predicted - in fact it was commonly bandied about that these cultivatory pursuits produced less when dug up than was planted in the first place!

1918 saw the surviving soldiers return to the "Land fit for Heroes" they had so valiantly defended. Things quickly returned to normal; dole queues, soup kitchens, and, for the more fortunate, subsistence wages. The Clarion also returned to normal, and again became a place where local people could get cheap refreshments on a Saturday and Sunday. It also took up its other role as a focal point for local and national political activity.

Many memorable political meetings took place at the Clarion during the inter-war years. These meetings, usually on a Saturday afternoon, drew speakers of the calibre of James Maxton, Fenner Brockway, Bob Edwards, John McNair, Annie Maxton and many other leading politicians of the

day. It was also opened on royal occasions, such as weddings and coronations as an alternative to the military pomp and vanity of more traditional celebrations. The I.L.P. has always stood out for a socialist commonwealth and against the mindless glorification of war.

These were the hey days of the Clarion as a meeting place - both political and in a more general, social sense. It was not unusual for between two and three hundred people to be served on a Saturday and between four and five hundred on a Sunday. The price of tea - as much as you could drink - was 3d (old pence) for adults, 1½ d for children, and bottles of pop at Id. There were only two main brewing up periods; one at lunch time and another at about four o'clock. There were two reasons for this. The first was water; it took a long time to refill the boilers after they had been emptied. The second was more domestic, in that the local cows which supplied the mialk for the Clarion didn't get milked until late afternoon. In winter it was possible to buy broth or sausage and mash or potato pie for a few pence.

It has always been the policy to allow other socialist organisations access to the Clarion facilities. Between the wars it was a regular venue for many of these groups; for example, the Co-op Women's Guild held their social outings on Tuesdays. This tradition is maintained today. The Clarion plays host to groups such as C.N.D., strike support groups and to the Woodcraft folk. On a more political note there has also been a continuation of use. During the Miners Strike of 1926, the Clarion was used as a meeting place and a centre and source of fund raising for the striking miners. In the Miners Strike of 1984/85 the Clarion also played its part in supporting the fight for jobs. Pendle Labour Party adopted the striking miners and their families from Clipstone Colliery. The miners visited the Clarion twice, once during the dispute, when a meal was provided and sporting activities organised for adults and children. On their second visit, which was after the strike had ended, a barbecue was held. They expressed their gratitude to the local Labour movement by bringing with them food and clothing for the sacked strikers of Silentnight in Barnoldswick who were suffering the same kind of deprivation and victimisation which they themselves had had to endure.

Around 1928 a new coal-fired boiler system was installed under the supervision of Leslie Graham who was a bricklayer by trade. At this time the kitchens were reorganised, including a high-tech (for the period) lead-lined sink to avoid breakages to the crockery. This work, including the plumbing was undertaken by Cyril Price and Stan Iveson. New tables were constructed and old ones refurbished by the skilled joiners, Malcolm Price and Fred Hartley. Extensive gardening work was also undertaken during this period; for example, lawns were laid to the front and side, a putting green was planned, but unfortunately never completed.

The problem of providing refreshments for all the people requiring them became acute at this time. The main problem was water. There never seemed to be enough water trickling through the main and various devices had to be utilised in order to provide enough water for all the tea. Firstly, ballcock valves were installed over the boilers so the tap could be left on permanently; thus the boiler could fill up at night when the supply of water was better. When the boilers were filled, they automatically turned off the water. This, however, did not solve the problem of refilling the boilers when they were empty. They had to resort to the more direct means of tramping down to Barley or Roughlee with milk kits and fill them from the stream there.

In order to increase the output of tea, it became necessary to supplement the coal fired boilers in the Clarion kitchen with an ex-military field kitchen. One had been bought by Nelson I.L.P. to help out in the strikes. This was pressed into service as an external auxiliary and very successful it was too.

The staffing arrangements were on a purely voluntary basis, whereby four "turns" of about four staff would operate the Clarion on a rota basis. The staff was easily distinguishable from the patrons because it had become standard practice, under the guidance of Fred Hartley, for them to wear spotless white aprons.

At this time the teams consisted of, amongst others, Freddie Lister, Nelson Cricket Club stumper during the days of Constantine,

McDonald and Blankenberg. In another team was one of the early Clarion pioneers (the son of a keen reader) one Euclyd Tesler Voltaire Thursby, former World War One conscientious objector, and Lottie, his wife. Other team members included Roger Shackleton, Alee Ingham, Burt Singleton, Gilbert and Elsie Kinder, Ivy Simpson (the future Mrs Iveson) and Jimmy Haydock who was also the main instigator of spring cleaning every year.

The catering supplies were obtained in the main from Newtown Co-op. The Co-op also took care of the laundry. The I.L.P. were long standing customers and supporters of the Co-operative movement as is evident from their very low share number which was No. 9. Other supplies such as mineral water were provided by Dyson's of Nelson. The I.L.P. were one of Dyson's earliest customers, being a regular client since before the turn of the century. In respect of this, Dyson's were later to help the Clarion out during a period of temporary financial difficulty. Hitchen & Smith supplied the sweets over many years and again extended credit at times.

In order to maintain and enhance the high standards of hygiene demanded by the Clarion House Steering Committee, they condemned the existing two toilets and obsolete septic tank as inadequate during the early 1930's. Due to the restricted water supply referred to earlier, it was proposed to construct a new brick toilet block and septic tank system worked by the tippler method. The septic tank was constructed by Malcolm Price, Fred Hartley, Stan Iveson and various "helpers". This was a large and complicated project to undertake and it is a tribute to their highly skilled workmanship that these facilities are still in use today.

Amongst these helpers, who were for the most part weavers, was George Sanders, who was later to have his forty years of service to the I.L.P. recognised by the presentation of an illuminated address. Another member was the vegetarian, Jim Crossley, who in between periods of mixing cement, would argue the merits of his meatless diet, which must have been substantial because he used to work in all weathers when his more carnivorous comrades were huddled around the stove.

Also there was Gilbert Kinder, the present I.L.P. Branch Chairman and Secretary of the Land Society, a recognised, self-taught expert in photography, calligraphy and botany, who was another comrade prepared to work during the most inclement weather conditions. Gilbert has recently been honoured by the LL.P. for his sixty years dedicated service to socialism.

The only repairs of any consequence which were necessary to be performed on the toilet system were done recently (1985) when the iron girder holding the concrete flags covering the filter tank corroded and had to be replaced. This, like many other repairs, was carried out by a voluntary work party. Whilst the new sanitary arrangements were being erected a free standing hut was purchased to store materials and tools. After the project was complete the hut was converted to cope with increased demand during busy days. Customers could also buy tea, sweets and ice cream from an out-shop extended from the kitchen just as they could in the main building.

This auxiliary seating hut however took up quite a lot of space and was not particularly pleasant to look at so it was decided to sell it and use the proceeds to extend the Clarion itself. It was agreed that the open pavilion should be covered over and incorporated into the main Clarion building, thus providing more seating space. This work was carried out by Stan Iveson and Gilbert Kinder in their spare time.

One of the local groups to use the Clarion as a regular meeting place was a rambling group dedicated to keeping open the country paths and public rights of ways in the countryside. They called themselves the Pennine Paths Association or "Pen Paths". When a member came to hear of a path being fenced off or a stile being bricked up they would organise a walk and remove the offending obstacle in an endeavour to maintain the legal right of ways throughout the Pennines. One such rambler and I.L.P. member was Alex Ingham who would debate the issue with another Clarion stalwart Harrison Carradice. Not that Harrison Carradice disagreed with what "Pen Paths" were trying to achieve, Harrison would say to Alex, "The only point on which we disagree Alex, is that thy se's the paths don't belong to any particular

landowner, but to the people - well I se's so does Land itself."

During this period, that is the mid 1930's, it became necessary to renew the children's swings. A playground set was purchased from Jimmy Nelson's Social Club which consisted of a set of three swings, a plank swing, a rocking horse and a sand pit.

Also, sports events were held at the Clarion. The I.L.P. could boast a very good cricket team and a resplendent, red-shirted football team with Jimmy Haydock who played for Barrowford United and who's father played for Blackburn Rovers and was offered a place to play for England.

The I.L.P., as mentioned earlier, was not a pacifist organisation, although many members, because of religious as well as political ideals, considered it wrong to resort to physical violence to resolve society's ills. That it was not a pacifist organisation is evident from the prominent role it played in the Spanish Civil War. John McNair was the first to go to Spain and enlist in the I.L.P. Battalion. Others included Fenner Brockway and Bob Edwards who became a captain in the I.L.P. Battalion. Nelson I.L.P. also was the first organisation to begin collections for Spain. This started as a "one off" event, but, due to the genuine enthusiasm of Nelsoners, it became a regular occurence, although there was some resistance from certain quarters.

Not long after these improvements had been completed and the Spanish problem had been unsatisfactorily resolved due to the domination of the fascist backed Franco; history began to repeat itself. That World War One had been the "War to end all Wars", proved to be just so much wishful thinking and the world was once again dragged into the raging tumult of total war. Again Nelson district provided more conscientious objectors than any other comparable area. The Clarion House staff therefore had to cope with the fact that staff kept changing due to the prison sentences of members.

The Clarion House again became a meeting place for the objectors in between prison sentences, a place where they could feel amongst

friends. They organised many anti-war meetings during normal opening times. These were public, not private meetings, yet though the debates often became heated, there was never any hostility. Special public meetings were also arranged by the Peace Pledge Union, whose local leader Dick Bland spent three years in prison during World War One. He later resigned as Mayor of Nelson because he refused to meet the Queen when she visited Nelson in the 1950's if she was accompanied by armed military guard. Whalley Sidwell spoke, as did Dan Carradice, leader of the World War One conscientious objectors and one of those arrested in Victoria Park. Dan Carradice was an interesting character, one of six radical brothers all committed I.L.P.'ers. He was the Yorkshire and Lancashire I.L.P. organiser and a trade union official who got into difficulties with his union because he refused to organise the munitions workers. Other local speakers included Stephen Shaw and Alee Campbell.

Due to imprisonment or military service it was not easy to staff the Clarion during these times. The burden of work fell more and more onto the women members, a task they did not shirk, and which was made infinitely more difficult because, unlike the men, they were also primarily responsible for running the house and looking after the children.

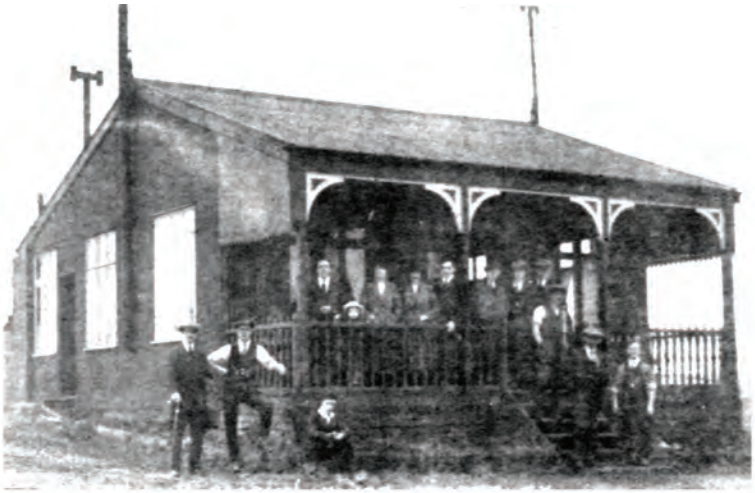
In this respect special tribute has to be paid to the selfless efforts of Elsie Kinder and Ivy Iveson who struggled over, children and all, to keep the Clarion open during these difficult times when both Gilbert Kinder and Stan Iveson were serving prison sentences.

As during the First World War, the conscientious objectors were ostracized from society - they lost their jobs, received white feathers and to greater or lesser degrees, their families were persecuted. Thus again, the Clarion House proved its worth in providing a meeting place for friends of like conscience. The Clarion also benefited from its members' enforced "idleness". Without work, or in between prison sentences, I.L.P.'ers undertook any repairs which were deemed necessary. The present wood plank floor stems from this period.

One improvement which can be put down directly to the war effort was an increase in water supply by the installation of a two inch water main as opposed to the three-quarter inch pipe already in existence, courtesy of War Ag., a ministerial department authorised to improve rural amenities, such as farms, so as to increase their overall efficiency. Somehow or other the Clarion House managed to become eligible for this improvement. This though only went part way to solving the water problem, for as anybody knows it doesn't matter whether you have a three-quarter inch main or a two inch main if there is no water in the well to run through it. The problem was only successfully resolved when mains water (as in modern, domestic houses) was piped in. This occurred in 1965.

Lighting had been provided at the Clarion House since it was erected by a variety of paraffin lamps until electricity became a feasible proposition. This labour saving convenience was installed in 1935, the Clarion being connected up to the National Grid as soon as the power lines were extended up to Newchurch. The Co-op installed four light fittings and a plug socket at a cost of five pounds.

During the Second World War the Clarion House played host to a group of Sudetan German refugees. These unfortunate victims of Nazi violence and oppression - forced to quit their homeland and in many cases to leave other members of their families to the merciless consequences of fascism - had been sponsored by the I.L.P, and were given new homes and hope in Hebden Bridge. They came over with John McNair, veteran of Spain, de Gaulle's interpreter, biographer of James Max ton M.P. and a very popular speaker at the Clarion. McNair must have rejected the old adage "you can't teach an old dog new tricks" because he went on to take his B.A. at seventy years of age, his M.A. at seventy-five years and was taking his Ph.D. when he died as the result of an accident.



Two photographs showing the structural changes made to the Clarion House over the years. (Top) in the early 1920's; (Bottom) in the early 1960's.

Latter Days

"Here in this country the worst Fascists are those who, disowning Fascism, preach enslavement to capitalism under the cloak of liberty and the constitution. They steal not only wages but honour."
John Lewis.

The truth, no matter how painful, needs to be faced. It is true that after the dog days of the 1920's and 1930's the popularity of the Clarion House as a meeting place, both social and political, began to decline. The initial pointer, the writing on the wall, was, with the benefit of hindsight, there for all to see long before any actual downturn was discernible. The causes of this down-trend, like the reasons for its popularity are both social and political.

Politically, the I.L.P. never recovered in terms of membership and direct political influence, at both a local and national level after the split or disaffiliation from the Labour Party in 1932. This point may need a little clarification. The Labour Party was initially an overall federal body - not a political party as such with individual membership. It was originally created by Keir Hardie as a unified socialist association. It brought together the trade unions, the Fabian Society, Co-op and the I.L.P. members of Parliament as one affiliated group.

In 1918 it was decided to open up membership of the Labour Party to individuals. Individual membership meant that young socialists now had a choice, they could be a member of either the I.L.P. or the Labour Party or both; thus some socialists had as their primary allegiance the Labour Party, not the I.L.P.

The I.L.P. wasn't particularly satisfied with the way the Labour Government of 1924 conducted itself. Furthermore the I.L.P. was even less impressed by the Labour Government of 1929. It felt that many M.P.'s were not following their electoral mandate, but, were grovelling in the face of the establishment and bureaucracy. The final crisis came in 1931 when McDonald and Snowden, cowering before

the bankers of Zurich, scuttled the Labour administration in favour of a, so called. National Government, based on the Tory and Liberal Parties. Consequently, in the face of this betrayal, the I.L.P., led by Maxton and Brockway, disaffiliated from the Labour Party.

In retrospect this was a mistake, as Brockway now readily concedes, but, at the time, as the I.L.P. was the grass roots party, the original socialist organisation without which the Labour Party would never have existed, it appeared the best way of returning to genuine, left-wing socialism. Yet, disaffiliation was to prove to be the crack in the dam which was later to burst and reduce the I.L.P. to an insignificant rump when compared to its former size and the other major political organisations.

Many of the existing I.L.P.'ers never joined the Labour Party (some still haven't) but this was not the problem. The problem was encouraging new members to join. This, unfortunately, never happened in sufficient numbers to replace the old pioneers who were becoming victims of Anno Domini. The Labour Party drew off many potential members. The intensity of the problem did not become manifest until after the Second World War - indeed the mid to late thirties were the high water mark of activity at the Clarion House.

The second reason for the Clarion's loss of support is a much more general one, in that, as we are all aware, the recreational habits of the people began to change. This was due to the post war boom, the general accessibility of both public and private transport and television. People, if they went out at all, could now venture further than the Clarion. Blackpool, the Dales and the Lake District now became a Sunday "run" rather than a major expedition as they tended to be pre-war. Thus the Clarion lost its other vital source of custom.

The Clarion though never lost its popularity amongst the diehard socialists nor with the many rambling and cycling clubs. In fact it must be acknowledged that without their help - both in terms of custom and revenue and in helping in running the Clarion - it would in all probability have been defunct by now. There is in fact a minute to

this effect in the I.L.P. minute book. It was passed in the 1950's and proposes that the Clarion be sold. This minute was later rescinded at a special meeting.

The Clarion managed to negotiate these hard times though with the help of people not primarily involved with the I.L.P., people who value the Clarion and the countryside of which it is part, largely because it is a place where they can take their own food, yet purchase tea and coffee, etc. - and they don't have to feel self-conscious about their rucksacks and muddy boots. Cyclists are also regular customers. The Clarion is a place where they can enjoy their pints of tea in a warm and friendly atmosphere. One group of veteran cyclists, The Autumn Tints, (some are too infirm to cycle and now come by car) still visit the Clarion about twice a year.

In 1962, the Clarion celebrated its Golden Jubilee. Many messages of goodwill were received and many old members and prominent politicians attended the festivities. When the National Chairman of the I.L.P., Emrys Thomas, spoke, he extended his warmest good wishes and paid tribute to the vision, courage, loyalty and hard work of all the good comrades who made it possible. They were, he said, inspired by the belief in human brotherhood; because of this belief they had endured two world conflagrations and weathered industrial slump with its attendant poverty. He hoped the Clarion would continue because of the contribution it makes is an essential basis for the new socialist order we all hope to realise.

Sydney Silverman attended and put forward his own tribute to the Clarion movement stating that in 1912 he was not yet seventeen years of age and still at school. By the time he went up to Liverpool University, war had broken out. He recollected that although he did not realise it at the time - the end of an epoch had arrived. Silverman described these "good old days" as being full of unnecessary human suffering. The Kaiser reigned in Berlin, Czar Nicholas reigned in St Petersburg. There was unemployment, slums, destitution in old age, endless poverty, social welfare was in its infancy and social justice a wild, Utopian dream.

He warned against the tendency to sentimentalise the past and pointed out what a terrible half-century the Clarion had witnessed. Moreover, who thought in 1912 that twenty million lives would be uselessly throw away in a mere four years, or that half a generation later there would be yet another, vaster, world-wide massacre of the innocents; or that a bare dozen years after that catastrophe the world would be on the brink of another, this time truly a "War to end all Wars" because it would be a war to end everything.

It has been the tragedy of socialism to have witnessed all this, to have known how it came about and yet been powerless to prevent it. But it has been its glory, Silverman pointed out, to have left the "Clarion Call" sounding out throughout the world and the light burning and to have sustained its passionate sanity. In the fight for social justice many cowards have flinched, many traitors have sneered. Some still flinch, some still sneer, but the Red Flag still flies!

There was a message from Andrew Smith, one of the early socialist pioneers. He remembered that in the early days, one of their slogans was "Workers of the World Unite"! The Nelson I.L.P. thought it would be a good idea to start the process with our own workers here. A bit old-fashioned, perhaps some would say, but they still believed that there was something in it!

Frances Johnson, a past I.L.P. Land Society Secretary and General Secretary of the I.L.P. in 1906 when Keir Hardie was Chairman, and also through the time of McDonald and Philip Snowden, sent a message of goodwill remarking that although there have been many changes over the intervening years, the Clarion is still established as a place to visit and is still officered by members of Nelson I.L.P. and he hoped that it would continue to serve its useful purpose.

There was a message from the Mayor of Nelson, Harold Ingham. He wrote saying that 1962 gave the world the opportunity of saving it self from self-destruction, that he did not want the youth of tomorrow, when history is written, to say that his generation let them down. The governments of the world must be in the hands of the people who

follow the Clarion ideal and not the beast with the "biggest stick". He ended, "East is East and West is West.....and now is the time when they must meet as a common brotherhood, with a common cause - Peace Everlasting." Another visitor was Wilfred Ingham, an I.L.P. stalwart from the twenties and thirties. He recalled what the Clarion meant to him. His recollections of the I.L.P.'s early days were of national propaganda activities, closely linked with those of the Clarion and the Clarion Fellowship. There was walking and cycling, weekends of meetings and literature selling which formed an arduous and inspiring part of their lives.

Today the I.L.P. is trying, amid the changed conditions of the modern world, to be true to the ideas of those pioneers. Wilfred Ingham recalled the early Socialist ideals of the I.L.P., which were aimed, fundamentally, at changing the basis of society, from production for profit, to production for use. The socialism to which they dedicated their lives meant bringing into being a classless society in which all the wealth and means of production are owned and controlled by the community and where profit and privilege and the inequalities inseparable from them shall become part of mankind's unhappy history. In such a society there would be no motive for war and no cause to waste the country's resources in armament production. Their objective would be to bring about a world in which brotherhood and co-operation replace international rivalry and war.

Messages of congratulations were sent from Bob Edwards, M.P., who often spoke in the interwar years from the steps of the Clarion. He said that both he and his wife spent many happy days during those years when they were all dedicated to peace through socialism. He still saw a role for the Clarion in serving to bring socialists together for friendly discussion in a healthy and comradely atmosphere.

Fenner Brockway, M.P., a mere seventy-four years of age, in 1962 wrote to apologise for his absence at the celebration, saying that he had many happy memories of the Clarion House, including a picture of his daughters playing on the swings. He ended by saying that he hoped that the Clarion House would remain a centre of socialist fellowship right until socialism is attained.

Unfortunately, John McNair was in Paris at the time of the celebrations and could not come to the Jubilee, but sent a message of congratulations. Annie Maxton sent a telegram from Barrhead, Glasgow, which read: "Greetings stop congratulations for the past and good wishes for the future."

The Golden Jubilee was a great success. More than two hundred and fifty people from five countries attended the celebrations. It was a fine summer day when comrades greeted old friends and made new ones. Tea was provided by Nelson I.L.P. and it was during tea that Sydney Silverman, M.P. spoke of the early days of the I.L.P. Dan Jones, M.P. for Burnley, also expressed his admiration for the loyalty of the members who had kept the Clarion going for fifty years.

Later in the evening, two old I.L.P.'ers - George Sanders and Jim Hay dock, were presented with illuminated addresses for forty years of dedicated service to the Clarion and socialism by Emrys Thomas. The recipients, like many others, never seeking the limelight, were but content to serve. The festivities ended with a piano supplying the music and dancing on the lawn.

There were also representatives of the I.L.P. from all over the country. From the London Division came Fred Morell who was prominent in the dockers' struggles; and his wife Jenny who later became General Secretary of the I.L.P. Ellen Johnson, Gladys Thomas, and Kathleen Wigham were there. The Scottish Division was represented by Bessie Murray; from Yorkshire came N. Richardson, M. Allison, Cissie Smith, A. Moulding, A. Brearley and Annie and Walter Mallorie.

Tom Reed came from the Midlands. Also present, amongst many others, were Fred Barton, an ex-I.L.P. Chairman and the ex-suffragette, Mrs Derbyshire.

This event was all the more remarkable because it brought together the early pioneers, the ones with the original vision such as Euclyd Thursby and Andrew Smith, and the first generation of the Clarion movement who had dedicated their lives to the Clarion and could look back over

sixty years of struggle and fifty years of the Clarion movement which was still intact and therefore holding a promise for future generations. The Clarion is a lasting testament to their unstinting self-sacrifice and the embodiment of their vision and hope for a better future and eternal peace.

The Red Flag flew again in 1982 when the Clarion celebrated its seventieth birthday. The celebrations were organised by Stan Iveson and his wife, Ivy, and by Gilbert and Elsie Kinder. A barbecue was laid on for the guests. The main guest speaker was Bob Edwards M.P., veteran of the Spanish Civil War and an old I.L.P. stalwart. The former Nelson and Colne M.P. Doug Hoyle and his wife Pauline were present. Another guest was Louise Ellman, leader of Lancashire County Council. There were also leading representatives from the Co-op Party, local trades unions such as Burnley, Nelson, Rossendale and District Textile Workers' Union, leading members of the local Labour Party and members of the I.L.P. from all over the country. The event aroused interest at the BBC at Manchester who sent a crew over to film it for Look North West.

Celebrations of the Clarion's 70th birthday 1982

Messages of congratulations were sent in from many quarters. Dennis Skinner, M.P. wrote extending his socialist greetings to everyone participating in the event, saying that the entire Socialist Movement can be proud that the spirit and comradeship which inspired the original purchase of land and construction of the building in 1912 still flourishes in Nelson Clarion House. He continued: "It not only carries on the tradition of providing working class families with a place in the country but serves to enhance the knowledge of the socialist struggle in Britain. It is worth noting that in 1912, extra-parliamentary activity was valued and widely recognised and even today it still reaches those parts of the body politic, other activities do not reach." Skinner concluded by sending his very best wishes for an enjoyable and memorable day.

Bob Edwards MP, Main Guest Speaker at the 70th birthday celebrations.

The ninety-three year old Fenner (now Lord) Brockway sent his greetings and said he was proud to be associated with the Clarion and those involved in the celebrations. In his greetings he said he was astonished that the Clarion House was still in existence and carrying on to do such splendid service in bringing socialists together. He recalled visiting the House before the First World War, where he paid many enjoyable visits and revelled in the comradeship. "You are", he wrote, "still doing so much to maintain the fellowship of socialism which is the soul of our movement."

Another link with the past is represented by the following greetings from Ruby Sellars. As an old member of the I.L.P. and Clarion, Ruby sent her congratulations and finished by saying that she had just returned from visiting Ada Maxton in Scotland.

These celebrations also marked one of the best kept secrets in I.L.P. history when Stan Iveson was (for one of the few times in his life) temporarily speechless when he was presented, completely unexpectedly by another old comrade, Gilbert Kinder, with a propagater, an inscribed pen and gift vouchers for his long and distinguished service on the I.L.P. National Administrative Council and to the I.L.P. newspaper "Labour Leader" and not least, to the Clarion House.

Amongst the letters of congratulations there was one from the Burnley Holiday Group, which is a working class association affiliated to rambling associations and various preservation societies, on behalf of themselves, but really in recognition of what the Clarion has been to them over the years. The letter was written by Charlie Schofield who is also an I.L.P. member and along with his wife Doris, are on the rota for serving at the Clarion.

Any history of the Clarion cannot be complete without drawing the reader's attention to the work put in by The Ramblers, and people not directly involved with the political element of the Clarion. Without their help and support it would have been impossible to continue. The Clarion would like at this juncture to pay tribute to the many ramblers who have been instrumental in seeing the Clarion House over many

difficult years. They unselfishly began to take over the running of the Clarion when many of the founders and second generation I.L.P.'ers became to old and infirm to carry on. They have indeed extended their help to include general repairs as there are some skilled tradesmen amongst their number. Some of these ramblers, after many years of diligently turning out Sunday after Sunday, are, purely because of health reasons, having to pass the reins to younger people. Fortunately, there has been an upturn in the fortunes of Nelson I.L.P. for it has attracted many new members over the last few years, who are more than willing to carry on the Clarion tradition.

On behalf of the Clarion House we would like to express our deep thanks to all the people mentioned in these lines who have put in their own time to further the Clarion cause. There are numerous names we have omitted who ought to receive some recognition for their efforts and their exclusion is not intentional, nor is it meant to offend; it is merely the inadequacy of the authors. There will always be unsung heroes and heroines and a movement such as Clarion will, by its very nature, produce more than most. We would also like to extend our thanks and gratitude to the people who have supported the Clarion by providing it with the custom it requires to enable it to continue.

As a postscript to this booklet, the authors would like to express their confidence in the future. The Clarion, after several years of inactivity is beginning to revert to its primary role and is starting to take on its political function once more: it is again returning to a political meeting place, a place where discussion and debate can take place amid beautiful and inspiring surroundings. Recent speakers have included Peter Pike, M.P. for Burnley, who spoke authoritatively on Bus Deregulation, and Mike Hindley, M.E.P., who discussed the merits of arms conversion. There are further events planned.

ILP Institute, Vernon Street, Nelson.

A group photograph taken outside the Clarion House during the 50th birthday celebrations in 1962

Gilbert Kinder presenting an illuminated address to Stan Iveson for 50 years service in the ILP during the 70th Anniversary in 1982

One such event is a celebration planned for 1987 to mark three-quarters of a century of the Clarion House at Newchurch in Pendle. Redecoration and renovation are in progress as we write. New swings for the playground are planned, as is re-wiring and roof repairs. There is another very exciting project being planned, hopefully to be completed for the seventy-fifth anniversary celebrations. This is, and the reader will have to excuse a certain amount of vagueness because it is still in the embryonic stage, some kind of commemorative garden in the Clarion grounds, which, as a centre-piece, will incorporate some memorial stonework and window supports and lintel taken from the old I.L.P. building in Vernon Street, Nelson, built by the Land Society in 1911.

These memorial stones are of great local historical and sentimental value to the I.L.P. One was laid by the suffragette, Selina Cooper, in memory of Carolyn Martyn and Enid Stacey, all pioneers of women's rights and suffrage. Another was laid by Jack Bruce Glasier, a contemporary of Hardie with a burning idealism, in memory of William Morris and Edward F. Fay. There is also a stained-glass window depicting the I.L.P. logo and a window lintel carved with the words "Socialism our Hope". We cannot think of a more fitting way to end this booklet.