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Warwick, Tosh

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## Middlesbrough's Steel Magnates 1880-1934: A Philanthropic Elite?

Tosh Warwick (University of Huddersfield)

[tosh.warwick@hud.ac.uk](mailto:tosh.warwick@hud.ac.uk)

In 1963, Asa Briggs, in his seminal *Victorian Cities*, declared that Middlesbrough's late nineteenth century industrialists' influence on the town shifted markedly from its mid nineteenth century strong point to a significantly reduced role as the century drew to a close. The end decades of the century witnessed 'signs that the will to control of the ironmasters was being blunted as they followed the pattern of other English businessmen and chose to live in the country rather than in the town'.<sup>1</sup> The offspring of the first generation and the managers that succeeded them did not necessarily share 'the feelings of the older generation about the links which bound them to the town', argued Briggs.

In identifying this 'withdrawal' from involvement in the life of the town by the second generation of the industrial elite, the chapter in *Victorian Cities* can be seen to have placed the town at the forefront of debates surrounding this notion of withdrawal and the perceived decline in their participation in the business, economic, social, cultural and philanthropic arenas. It is therefore somewhat curious that the foundations laid by this work have not been explored in more depth than has been the case to date, although lambasting of the town's industrial elite during the period of this study is to be found in much of the work on Middlesbrough that has followed.<sup>2</sup> Hadfield has noted that in spite of the wealth the town's works generated, 'the ironmasters appear to have been unable or unwilling to channel much of it into philanthropic works'.<sup>3</sup> Stubley too notes the early twentieth century industrialists' 'exaggerated respect for the laws of economics'.<sup>4</sup> Garrard, Gunn, Rubinstein and Wiener too have at different points stressed the decreased practical and visible participation in the urban environment by the elites (and subsequent generations) in other cities,<sup>5</sup> their ideologies having shifted from an (apparent) concern for and commitment to the locale to a national facing lifestyle as the second and third generations became incorporated into a 'national elite', a link reinforced during the interwar period through education and cultural interaction.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the stranglehold of 'men of wealth and influence' on the 'symbolic and visual register of civic life' loosened with increased challenge from below and the centre.

Conversely, Trainor has moved to play down the extent of 'decline' stemming from 'withdrawal'. Instead, altered rather than severed civic and business ties are observed,<sup>7</sup> the focus turning to 'governance' rather than just activities centred on the town council

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<sup>1</sup> A. Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (London: 1963), pp256-258

<sup>2</sup> D. Hadfield, 'Political and Social Attitudes', Teesside Polytechnic (1981)

<sup>3</sup> D. Hadfield, 'Political and Social Attitudes', p358

<sup>4</sup> P. Stubley, 'The Churches and the Iron and Steel Industry in Middlesbrough, 1890-1914', unpublished M.A. Thesis, Durham University, 1979, p42 cited in J.J. Turner, 'The People's Winter Gardens, Middlesbrough', *Cleveland History*, No. 46, p31

<sup>5</sup> J. Garrard, 'Urban Elites, 1850-1914: The Rule and Decline of a New Squirearchy?', *Albion*, Vol. 27, No 4, Winter 1995; S. Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and Authority in the English Industrial City, 1840-1914* (Manchester: 2007); W.B. Rubinstein, 'Britain's Elites in the Interwar Period, 1918-39', in A. Kidd and D. Nicholls, *The Making of the British Middle Class? Studies of Regional and Cultural Diversity Since the Eighteenth Century* (Stroud: 1998), p186-202; M.J. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit* (London: 1981). B. Doyle, 'The structure of elite power in the early twentieth-century city' in M. Daunton, *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain Volume 3* (Cambridge: 2000)

<sup>6</sup> W.B. Rubinstein, 'Britain's Elites in the Interwar Period, 1918-1939', A. Kidd and D. Nicholls, *The Making of the British Middle Class?*, p188; p194

<sup>7</sup> R. Trainor 'The "Decline" of British Urban Governance: A Reassessment' in *Urban Governance* (Ashgate: 2000)

and parliament, an important notion reinforced in the recent works edited by Morris and Trainor, Daunton, Doyle and Kidd and Nicholls.<sup>8</sup>

Within this framework, it is the intention of this paper to argue ‘withdrawal’ by Middlesbrough’s elite has been overemphasised and that rather than representing a decline in engagement, the period saw a reconfiguration of involvement in the town. By means of heightened involvement in philanthropic activities in the ‘ironopolis’ during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, it will be argued the industrial elite maintained an active role amidst other groups emerging in positions of power in the urban arena. Under particular focus will be the Dorman and Bell families, the two main families at the centre of my collaborative PhD study and owners of the firm that evolved into one of the major steel manufacturers in the world, *Dorman Long*.<sup>9</sup>

Starting with an outline of the social and economic environment of the north east town during this period, I will then briefly discuss the contributions made by the iron and steel companies by means of subscriptions and donations to voluntary and charitable bodies. Finally, I will then turn attention to amore in depth analysis of the role played by the key industrial families in the town’s Guild of Help, Juvenile Organisation Committee and two individual-led initiatives which had the families at the heart of the major iron and steel companies – namely the Bells and Dormans– as figureheads of their operations.

### The Wider Context

The nineteenth century witnessed rapid growth in Middlesbrough. At the beginning of the century, the agrarian settlement on the site of Middlesbrough was extremely small, the 1801 census recording it only 4 houses and 25 people, a figure that only increased to only 150 inhabitants by 1831. The population reached 5,463 by 1841 owing to the development of the coal export industry in Middlesbrough. However, it was the development of iron works by Henry Bolckow and John Vaughan in the form of Bolckow Vaughan in 1850 that was to prompt a dramatic increase in population, reaching 18,892 a decade later and nearly 40,000 by 1871 and exceeding 55,000 by 1881 as more and more iron producers flooded into the area including Sir Bernhard Samuelson’s, Cochranes, Bell Brothers and Dorman Long.

<b>Middlesbrough's Population Growth<sup>10</sup></b>	
1801	25
1811	35
1821	40
1831	150
1841	5,463
1851	7,631
1861	18,892
1871	39,284
1881	55,934
1891	75,532
1901	91,302
1911	104,767
1921	131,170
1931	138,960

<sup>8</sup> R. Trainor and R.J Morris (eds.), *Urban Governance* ; M. Daunton, *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, Volume III 1840-1950* (Cambridge: 2000); B. M Doyle (ed.), *Politics in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Regional Perspectives* (Newcastle: 2007); A. Kidd and D. Nicholls, *The Making of the British Middle Class?* See also R. Colls and R. Rodger(eds.), *Cities of Ideas: Civil Society and Urban Governance in Britain 1800-2000* (Aldershot: 2004).

<sup>9</sup> In the first thirty years of the twentieth century Dorman Long had come to own Bolckow Vaughan and Bell Brothers, to the two forerunners in the iron industry in the town.

<sup>10</sup> W. Lillie, *The History of Middlesbrough* (Middlesbrough: 1968), pp473-474

It is unsurprising that an initial grid plan town centred on a market place and church and consisting of 125 plots north of the railway line quickly proved inadequate. The town quickly became densely populated with cottages crammed in between houses, in between yards, privies and in close proximity to an increasing number of beer houses. In turn, numerous social and alcohol fuelled difficulties ensued amongst a migrant, male population who had flocked seeking work in the town's heavy industries.

Amongst the catalogue of problems and challenges posed by this congested urban centre were overcrowding, poor quality, haphazard housing development with structural flaws, poor sanitary and hygiene standards, social disorder and a lack of regulated social and leisure facilities.

Add to these fluctuating employment levels owing to peaks and troughs in the iron, and later steel industry and the picture is bleak. In fact, unemployment on occasion exceeded twice the national average, reaching 40% in 1926 and again exceeding 40% in the early 1930s following a brief period of recovery in the late 1920s<sup>11</sup>

However, it is important to gain a sense of perspective and it should be noted that many of these problems were not unique to Middlesbrough. All new industrialised areas faced at least some of if not all of the above challenges (*as shown in Johnson's work on Clydeside, Trainor's investigation of the Black Country and McCord's work on the north east*) Responses to the issues varied from town to town and came from a number of sources, including the Town Council, Board of Guardians, Medical Officer of Health, School Boards and voluntary bodies. It is on the latter, and chiefly the extent the town's iron and steel companies supported such ventures, that I will now turn attention towards.

## **Company Support**

Throughout the later nineteenth and early twentieth century the various iron and steel companies contributed significantly to funding hospitals, schools, chapels, voluntary organisations and relief funds in the town. The town's early major firms – Bolckow Vaughan, Bell Brothers, Cochranes and Sir Bernhard Samuelson's, later to be joined by Dorman Long, were consistently the biggest financial supporters of appeals from hospitals (Cochranes contributing the cost of entire new wing), distress relief funds and, along with Carnegie, the major benefactors of the town's library. More importantly for this study, the companies' minute books help give an indication of the individuals involved in decision making, provide information on causes not supported as well as occasionally providing the mechanics of the giving process.

Moreover, by cross-referencing subscriptions, we can also learn of differences in subscription to certain appeals and draw conclusions on motives for philanthropic support. For instance, whilst Lady Bell's Winter Gardens received support from her husband's company Bell Brothers, a financial commitment from the rival firm Bolckow Vaughan was not initially forthcoming, the Minutes of August 1906 recording a reluctance to donate to Bell's initiative, the 'appeal of Lady Bell for aid in the promotion of a Winter Garden for the use of the Working men of Middlesbrough was considered but the Board deemed it unnecessary to make a grant for this purpose'.<sup>12</sup> It would be over a

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<sup>11</sup> K. Nicholas, *The Social Effects of Unemployment on Teesside, 1919-1939* (Manchester: 1986), p25

<sup>12</sup> Minute Book, Directors No.13 1904-1908', Bolckow Vaughan Co Ltd, 13/3/13 TA, p224

year, in October 1907, that the issue would be raised again, it been 'resolved to contribute the sum of Twenty pounds per annum over a period of three years'.<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, we are also able to gauge, to an extent, the role played by given individuals operating within the iron and steel companies' philanthropic framework, admittedly limited by fellow directors and owners. Amongst the several examples to be found amidst the newly accessible British Steel Collection at Teesside Archives, one example highlights how the final decision as to whether donate was in fact left to two second and third generation industrialists, the minutes recording 'the question of contributing to certain charitable Institutions was considered and it was resolved that Mr Maurice Bell and Mr Arthur Dorman should settle as to future subscriptions'<sup>14</sup> The two men in question were the sons of the two figures at the head of the company, the first generation industrialist Sir Arthur Dorman and the second generation Sir Hugh Bell.

The contribution of the companies owned by, or presenting an economic interest to, the industrial elite is without question an important factor in gauging the philanthropic zeal of Middlesbrough's elite and is worthy of a more detailed study which due to limitations of space I do not intend to pursue here. Instead, I will now turn attention to elite engagement beyond the operational framework of their companies in an effort to gauge a sense of truly individual and family involvement that represented investment of their OWN money, resources and time (as well as, in each instance discussed below, their companies' money). In common with the other papers presented in this session, I will also attempt to try and identify the motives for involvement, starting with a detailed discussion of the town's Guild of Help, before moving on to the Middlesbrough Juvenile Organisation Committee and then two enterprises fronted by Lady Dorman and Lillian Dorman.

## The Guild of Help

### Middlesbrough Guild of Help<sup>15</sup>

The Guild of Help movement was inaugurated in Bradford in 1904 in an attempt to address the problem of poverty in Edwardian Britain. Central to the Guild's ideology was 'personal service to individuals and families in need'<sup>16</sup> through the 'development of responsible and professional social work...[based upon] cooperation between agencies'.<sup>17</sup> The Guild of Help movement quickly expanded, from 7 Guilds in 1905 to 61 at the beginning of 1910 (one of which was the Middlesbrough Guild of Help), reaching 70 the following year consisting of some 8,000 members.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> 'Minute Book, Directors No.13 1904-1908', Bolckow Vaughan Co Ltd, 13/3/13 TA, p324

<sup>14</sup> 'Minute Book, Directors No.2 1913-1923', Bell Brothers Ltd, 16/2/3, TA, p90

<sup>15</sup> This work does not intend to be an exhaustive study of the Guild of Help movement nor one of Middlesbrough's Guild of Help. Instead, this case study of the Middlesbrough Guild of Help seeks to illustrate its importance as a body that illustrates the various means by which Middlesbrough's industrialists continued participate in the life of the town, influence policy and access power. For a more complete discussion of the Guild of Help see K. Laybourn, 'The Guild of Help and the changing face of Edwardian philanthropy', *Urban History*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (April 1993); K. Laybourn, *The Guild of Help and the Changing Face of Edwardian Philanthropy: The Guild of Help, Voluntary Work and the State, 1904-1919* (Lampeter: 1994); K. Laybourn (ed.) *Social Conditions, Status and Community, 1860-c.1920* (Stroud: 1997) esp. chapters 1-3.

<sup>16</sup> K. Laybourn, 'The Guild of Help and the changing face of Edwardian philanthropy', *Urban History*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (April 1993), p44

<sup>17</sup> M.J. Moore, 'Social Work and Social Welfare: The Organization of Philanthropic Resources in Britain, 1900-1914', *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 6, No.2 (Spring 1977), p86

<sup>18</sup> K. Laybourn, 'Introduction', K. Laybourn (ed.), 'Social Conditions', p12

The first meeting of the Middlesbrough Guild of Help was held on March 8, 1909 at the town's Council Chamber. Set up 'in response to a joint request from the Middlesbrough Church Council and certain leading townspeople',<sup>19</sup> the people of the town felt the need for such an organisation 'adapted to the special local conditions of Middlesbrough'.<sup>20</sup>

## Composition

It is difficult to gauge the full social and occupational composition of the Guild, with the helpers and some donors mostly anonymous in the records.<sup>21</sup> However, we are able to identify affiliation of a number of the town's chief iron and steel producers through scrutiny of the minutes and subscriptions lists.

The financial support of the industrialists made up a considerable percentage of the individual contributions made up to the Guild. The individual financial support of the Bell family was a consistent source of income for the Guild. Sir Hugh Bell and Lady Bell donated £20 per annum to the Administration Fund from the very outset,<sup>22</sup> whilst Mrs Charles Lowthian Bell, wife of their son, later joined the ranks of Bell subscribers in 1913.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, the Dorman family, albeit at a much later date than the Bell's, too provided a smaller but never the less reliable a reliable source of income.<sup>24</sup> Further individual industrialists followed suit, with Francis Samuelson making a £10 subscription to the Benevolent Fund, whilst Mr Erasmus Darwin, Secretary for Bolckow Vaughan and grandson of Charles Darwin, also made an individual donation of £5 to each fund.

Indeed, in addition they lent their recognisable names to the hierarchy of the Guild of Help, the iron and steel companies been represented in numerous positions. As well as the Dorman and Bell involvement that I will discuss below, Frank (Francis) Samuelson, successor to Sir Bernhard Samuelson and a prominent figure in numerous local philanthropic agencies, was elected to the Guild's Executive Council in February 1911, whilst Darwin served on the Finance Committee and was appointed Honorary Treasurer in February 1911 until his death during the First World War.<sup>25</sup>

From the outset members of the town's industrial elite were active in the Guild in various capacities, with the Bell and Dorman families having at least some form of representation during the entire duration of this study. As with other Guilds of Help across the country, the position of Guild President was occupied by the Mayor, whilst Vice-Presidents, District Heads and Officers of the Guild included key figures and former heads of other bodies in the town. Similarly the officers and members of the Guild's Executive Council consisted of local leaders and 'prominent citizens of the community',<sup>26</sup> including the Mayoress, Ex-Mayor and Mayoress, Chairman of the Board of Guardians, Chairman of the Local Education Authority, the Lord Lieutenant of the North Riding of

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<sup>19</sup> 'Annual Report 1909-10, Middlesbrough Guild of Help', p7

<sup>20</sup> 'Annual Report 1909-10, Middlesbrough Guild of Help', p7

<sup>21</sup> K. Laybourn, *Guild of Help*, p50

<sup>22</sup> 'Annual Report 1909-10, Middlesbrough Guild of Help', p18-20,

<sup>23</sup> 'Annual Report 1912-13, Middlesbrough Guild of Help', p16-17,

<sup>24</sup> Miss Dorman was the first individual Dorman subscriber, in 1917 donating £2.2.0, a familial involvement that expanded the following year by Mr Charles Dorman's £5 subscription to the Administration Fund.

<sup>25</sup> MGOH M.B 1910-1937, p23 (1911)

<sup>26</sup> K. Laybourn, 'The Guild of Help', *UH*, p54

Yorkshire – Sir Hugh Bell and his wife Lady Bell<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, as with other Guilds, the Middlesbrough Guild membership featured the wives and daughters of key figures in the community,<sup>28</sup> in addition to Lady Bell this included Lady Dorman and her daughter Lillian Dorman. However, the ways in which members of the two families engaged with the Guild was somewhat varied.

Turning attention to the Bells, founders of the town's Bell Brothers works, Lady Bell and Sir Hugh Bell were constantly represented in the Guild (at least on paper) by their positions as Vice-Presidents (and in the case of Sir Hugh Bell, President owing to his brief spell as Mayor of Middlesbrough). However, surviving annual reports and minute books indicate their direct involvement in the personal, day-to-day running of the Middlesbrough Guild of Help was virtually non-existent. The surviving minute books of the Middlesbrough Guild of Help, covering the period 1910-1919, reveal that Sir Hugh or Lady Bell hardly attended meetings of the Guild, Sir Hugh Bell attending only one meeting during this period, a Special (Public) Meeting organised in order for the Archbishop of York to address the Guild during his visit to the town. Nevertheless, the significance of Hugh Bell's involvement is beyond question, the Guild expressing their thanks in writing for his attendance.<sup>29</sup> The honorific importance of Sir Hugh Bell's role is further reinforced in the newspaper coverage that charted the event in the local press; the speeches of Sir Hugh Bell and Archbishop of York receiving considerable coverage in the *North Eastern Daily Gazette*.<sup>30</sup>

In stark contrast, the Dorman families representation on the Guild was much more direct, the involvement of Lillian Dorman especially more personal, hands on, frequent and diverse than that of Sir Hugh and Lady Bell combined. The daughter of Sir Arthur J. Dorman, Lillian Dorman very much fitted in with the typical characteristics of women involved in philanthropic activity elsewhere; she was a daughter of one of the town's leading lights, unmarried and her involvement with the Guild can be seen to stem from family involvement in its activities.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, she would go on to pursue her own philanthropic enterprise.<sup>32</sup> In terms of her involvement with the Guild, Lillian Dorman was a member of the Executive Committee within a year of the Guild commencing activity in the town, having been nominated in May 1910 to replace her outgoing brother.<sup>33</sup> During her association with the Guild Miss Dorman was also a member of the Ladies' Committee and served the Guild at regional level as the Guild's nominated representative at the Northern Federation of Guilds Conference (covering the Jarrow, Newcastle, Sunderland and Middlesbrough Guild of Help). Unlike the Bell's, she was also in regular attendance at the meetings of the Executive Council.<sup>34</sup> In addition, as already touched upon, Lillian Dorman, along with several members of the Dorman family, contributed financially to the running of the Guild, Sir Arthur Dorman, Lady Dorman, Charles Dorman (who like his sister was on the Executive Committee prior to been replaced by her) all regularly appearing on Subscription Lists, not forgetting the

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<sup>27</sup> MGOH M.B 1910-1937, p2 (1910), p31 (1911). This is consistent with Guilds of help elsewhere such as those at Bolton, Bradford and Halifax.

<sup>28</sup> K. Laybourn, *Guild of Help*, p51

<sup>29</sup> MGOH M.B 1910-1937, p37 (1911)

<sup>30</sup> MGOH M.B 1910-1937, p45 (1912)

<sup>31</sup> K. Laybourn, *Guild of Help*, p61 makes reference to the women involved with the Bradford Guild of Help.

<sup>32</sup> For a contemporary discussion of the Lillian Dorman Club see W. Lillie, *Middlesbrough 1853-1953: A Century of Municipal, Social & Industrial Progress* (Middlesbrough: 1953)

<sup>33</sup> MGOH M.B 1910-1937, p5

<sup>34</sup> MGOH M.B 1910-1937

company subscriptions by their businesses as part of wider patterns of iron and steel company support.<sup>35</sup>

In order to gauge how significant this involvement was and potential motives for it, it is useful to here briefly outline some of the vast array of bodies and problems the Guild assisted with during this period. In its first ten years the Guild assisted the Medical Officer of Health by carrying out activities visits to the sick,<sup>36</sup> promoted 'the welfare of infants and children of school age in close co-operation with the Public Health Authority and the Education Committee',<sup>37</sup> assisted the Town Clerk with the Tuberculosis Exhibition in Middlesbrough<sup>38</sup> and hosted events such as the meeting of the Association for Permanent Care of the Feeble-minded,<sup>39</sup> National Health Week<sup>40</sup>. More tellingly, labour and employment featured prominently in the Guild's psyche, the Guild meeting to consider the relationship between chronic poverty and casual labour, holding meetings with the Mayor as to how to deal with the distress, and sending representatives on the Advisory Committee for Juvenile Employment.<sup>41</sup> Concern for the younger members of the town's populous did not stop there, the Guild also visiting families whose children received dinner tickets from the Education Committee.<sup>42</sup>

One of the most revealing undertakings of the Guild described above, in terms of the industrialists' participation, was the role played at times of distress in the iron, steel and related industries. The Guild's access to power and confidential information from figures of authority, for instance the Mayor's confiding in the Guild as to the approach the council would adopt in response to the 1912 Coal Strike, can be seen, perhaps over cynically, as a reason for elite philanthropic involvement.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, the very fact the head of the town's chief municipal body confided in the Guild suggests those supporting the Guild were involved in a relatively important body.

Put simply, the Guild of Help had a finger in almost every pie concerning distress in the town, and in providing financial and practical support to the Guild the industrial elite helped alleviate distress, shape responses to it and had access to a vast array of organisations and bodies which the Guild of Help assisted, dealing with issues as diverse as education, public health, industry, destitution, housing, law and order and mental health provision. In short, involvement with the Guild of Help was undoubtedly beneficial to its subscribers, presidents, vice-presidents, district heads.

One motive for Guild involvement, as with other voluntary organisations and contributions, might be the fact charitable gifts were well publicised in late nineteenth

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<sup>35</sup> As discussed elsewhere, the main iron and steel companies contributed to the Administration Fund of the Guild of Help – Bolckow Vaughan (£100 per annum in addition to earlier contributions to the Benevolent Fund), Dorman Long and Samuelson's (£25-£40 each per annum). Indeed, even when plans for the setting up of the Guild of Help were in their infancy, the Minute Books of Bolckow Vaughan record the commitment of the Shareholders to assist the project, noting their willingness to guarantee 'up to the limit of £200 per annum for three years towards the expenses of the Guild of Help', formed to 'deal with the destitutions and other evils resulting from unemployment'. (Bolckow Vaughan Directors Minute Book 13/3/14, p74)

<sup>36</sup> MGOH M.B 1910-1937, p15 (1910)

<sup>37</sup> MGOH M.B 1910-1937, p21 (1911)

<sup>38</sup> MGOH M.B 1910-1937, p20 (1911)

<sup>39</sup> MGOH M.B 1910-1937, p25 (1911)

<sup>40</sup> MGOH M.B 1910-1937, p32 (1911)

<sup>41</sup> MGOH M.B 1910-1937, p17 (1910)

<sup>42</sup> MGOH M.B 1910-1937, p17 (1910)

<sup>43</sup> MGOH M.B 1910-1937, p38 (1912)

and early twentieth century.<sup>44</sup> The sources used in this paper are testament to the range of ephemera documenting those who responded to calls for support and patronage of bodies such as the Guild of Help. Indeed, even posthumous donation to the Middlesbrough Guild of Help was covered in the national press,<sup>45</sup> whilst one historian has described the public meeting at which Sir Hugh Bell and Archbishop Cosmos Lang addressed the Guild as a 'public pat on the back',<sup>46</sup> the *North Eastern Daily Gazette* reporting 'Sir Hugh Bell's Tribute to the Guild of Help'.<sup>47</sup> We are only able to speculate as to the extent to which the subscribers and members participated to receive public recognition, to further their own careers, to reinforce their own social standing,<sup>48</sup> or for their contribution to be recorded in the documented history in the circulated subscriber lists, annual reports, obituaries or autobiographies.

As well as the aforementioned motives, scrutiny of individual fronted enterprises helps reveal further both continued philanthropic involvement in the life of the town of the main iron and steel families, as well as highlighting the increasingly visible role played by the women folk of Middlesbrough's steel magnates.

### **Lady Bell's Winter Garden**

Some two years prior to the Guild of Help arrival in Middlesbrough, Lady Bell herself set up the town's Winter Gardens in 1907. The Winter Gardens offered, at low cost, warmth, music, a library and games for the workmen and (theoretically his family) to escape both the trouble-fuelling public house and the squalid housing conditions, factors commonly associated with many of the town's problems.<sup>49</sup> Certainly the significance of the Winter Garden at times of unemployment was not lost upon those later interviewed by Nicholas' in her oral history work the 'Social Effects of Unemployment on Teesside, 1919-1939',<sup>50</sup> the Winter Gardens been amongst those organisations most frequently mentioned by the participants. With Lady Bell at the head of the organisation, assisted by Lady Dorman,<sup>51</sup> the Winter Gardens provide, at first glance, an example of the involvement of the industrial elite beyond the families' male figureheads. However, scrutiny of the financial foundations of the Winter Gardens reveals a more complex pattern of elite philanthropy, her husband paying for the land and construction of the building,<sup>52</sup> and contributing £100 a year – a contribution making up at least a quarter, and at one point a third, of Annual Subscriptions.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, it would be Sir Hugh Bell that would bail the Gardens out of financial trouble in the early 1930s with a £5000 trust fund left in his will.

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<sup>44</sup> N. Evans, 'Urbanisation', p306 has argued for the importance of the publication of the subscription list and coverage in the *Cardiff Times*, citing numerous examples of individuals been singled out for praise owing to their philanthropic contributions.

<sup>45</sup> 'Wills and Bequests', *The Times*, 19<sup>th</sup> August 1937, p13. In the same year an 'Appeal of the Middlesbrough Guild of Help' was also broadcast on the home station radio network (Newcastle), 'Home Broadcasts', *The Times*, 17/04/1937, p17.

<sup>46</sup> M. Lowe, 'Welfare', p83

<sup>47</sup> *North Eastern Daily Gazette*, 30/05/1912 cited in M. Lowe 'Welfare', pp93-96

<sup>48</sup> See R.J. Morris, 'Voluntary Societies and British Urban Elites, 1780-1950: An Analysis', *Historical Journal*, 26 (1983), pp95-118; H. Meller, *Leisure and the Changing City* (London: 1976), p75 on the role charitable effort helped reinforce the individual's place in society, citing the case of Mayor Symes in late nineteenth century Bristol. Similarly, R. Johnston, *Clydeside Capital*, pp96-98 has too identified involvement in charitable causes was both a 'stepping stone' and important to 'the network of capitalist influence'.

<sup>49</sup> J. Turner, 'The People's Winter Gardens in Middlesbrough', *Cleveland History* 46

<sup>50</sup> K. Nicholas, *The Social Effects of Unemployment*, p174

<sup>51</sup> K. Nicholas, *The Social Effects of Unemployment*, p174

<sup>52</sup> 'Plan 27c', Middlesbrough Planning Applications, Teesside Archives.

<sup>53</sup> Middlesbrough Winter Gardens, Annual Reports

Unlike her affiliation with the Guild (and perhaps explaining her limited involvement) Lady Bell had a direct, practical involvement with the Winter Garden, overseeing all the organisation's affairs from the outset.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, the activities of the Winter Garden's highlights how philanthropy helped narrow the spatial divide of the elites (living in the country and suburbs) from the masses. Grey Towers, the home of Sir Arthur Dorman and Lady Dorman, held events for the organisation in its grounds on several occasions, whilst Lady Bell and her daughters, Lady Richmond and Lady Trevelyan were regularly in attendance at the Gardens. In fact, it was to be her daughters who assumed the responsibility of running the Gardens following Lady Bell's death in 1930, again highlighting another strand of continued philanthropic involvement of the industrial elite during this period of supposed 'withdrawal'.

### **Lillian Dorman Girls' Club**

The continued vibrancy of the steel magnates' families in not only participating in, but taking a lead in philanthropic activities in Middlesbrough is further reinforced by Lillian Dorman's setting up of a Girls' Club in the town.<sup>55</sup> Although surviving reports from the Club are scarce, we are still able to identify the centrality of the iron and steel families at the heart of the organisation. Lillian Dorman was Club President, whilst Mrs Ennis (wife of Dorman Long Director Lawrence Ennis) and Mrs Gjers (of the Gjers family of Gjers and Mills that founded Ayresome Ironworks in 1870<sup>56</sup>) were both committee members.<sup>57</sup>

A hands on approach by Lillian Dorman within the organisation is also evident, the club 'extremely fortunate in having the close and constant attention of its President, whose help is given in so many ways', including paying the salary of the assistant worker out of her own pocket and gifts to sick members and useful domestic articles.<sup>58</sup>

As with the Winter Gardens, family patronage and the previously discussed 'patting on the back' is in evidence, the Club expressing its gratitude to Lillian Dorman's father Sir Arthur Dorman for the 'extra donation of £100 which has saved us [the club] from financial embarrassment', whilst also offering thanks to the 'managers, officials and workers of Dorman, Long, for their great interest and practical help'.<sup>59</sup> In fact, as with the Bells and the Winter Gardens, Dorman family subscriptions and donations made up a significant proportion of subscription and donations to the club during the year. Of the £221.6.0 received, Sir Arthur Dorman contributed £110 (the £100 special donation and £10 annual subscription), Miss Dorman £10, Lady Dorman £5, Charles Dorman £5 and Mrs C. Bolckow, daughter of Sir Arthur who married Carl Bolckow in 1900, £5, making the recorded financial contributions of the Dorman family £135, over 60% of the total received.<sup>60</sup> Further similarities between the two female fronted organisations emerge in the one surviving annual report, the club visiting Grey Towers, Lady Dorman offering a 'kind and gracious reception'.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> 'Middlesbrough Winter Garden (hereafter MWG), Report 1907-1908', p6

<sup>55</sup> The reports of the club for the duration of the club are scarce, the only surviving report being the Annual Report 1927-1928 from which many of the information and conclusions here presented are drawn from.

<sup>56</sup> U/S 1527, TA, 'Death of Miss H.L. Gjers' Newspaper Cutting 17 July 1963

<sup>57</sup> 'The Lillian Dorman Girls' Club, Annual Report 1927-1928' (hereafter LDGC), pii

<sup>58</sup> LDGC, p3-5

<sup>59</sup> LDGC, p3

<sup>60</sup> LDGC, p7. Other industrialist (or family) contributions included £5 from Francis Samuelson, £2.2.0 from Mrs Bolckow and £1.1.0 from Mrs Gjers O.B.E.

<sup>61</sup> LDGC, p5

## ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS &amp; DONATIONS.

	£	s.	d.
Sir A. J. Dorman, Bart., K.B.E.—Special Donation	100	0	0
Dorman, Long & Co., Ltd.	25	0	0
Sir A. J. Dorman, Bart., K.B.E.	10	0	0
Miss Dorman, J.P.	10	0	0
F. A. E. Samuelson, Esq., J.P.	10	0	0
Lady Dorman	5	0	0
Mrs. Charles Dorman	5	0	0
Mrs. Arthur Dorman	5	0	0
Mrs. C. Bolckow	5	0	0
Col. F. Byrne, C.M.G.	5	0	0
Coun. A. Weatherhead	3	3	0
Mrs. W. Mills	3	0	0
Mrs. Bolckow	2	2	0
Mrs. Hawdon	2	2	0
Mrs. Moody	2	2	0
Mrs. Hinton	2	2	0
Mrs. Adanson	2	2	0
Miss I. Dixon	2	2	0
Sir Joseph and the late Lady Calvert	2	2	0
Ald. T. Gibson Poole, J.P.	2	2	0
National Provincial Bank, Ltd.	2	0	0
Lady Zetland	2	0	0
Mrs. H. Jones	2	0	0
Mrs. Gjers, O.B.E.	1	1	0
Mrs. Irwin	1	1	0
Mrs. Shaw	1	1	0
Miss J. Thomson	1	1	0
Mrs. Hamilton	1	0	0
Mrs. Whitwell	1	0	0
Miss Wood	1	0	0
F. Jones, Esq.	1	0	0
Mrs. Dickie	0	10	6
J. Palling, Esq.	0	10	6
Mrs. Steel	0	10	0
Mrs. W. Dixon	0	10	0
S. Barker, Esq., J.P.	0	10	0
R. Russell, Esq.	0	10	0
Mrs. Longbotham	0	5	0
Miss Hanson	0	5	0
Miss Myra Swan	0	5	0
Coun. Carter	0	5	0
	£221	6	0

Source: Lillian Dorman Girls' Club Annual Report, 1927-1928

## Conclusion

Of course, the organisations and activities listed here and just a very brief sample of many philanthropic enterprises varying in size, longevity and aims in operation during this period, and it is my intention to explore these bodies in greater detail in future research. However, at this point I will now summarise what I feel are some of the key points to emerge from this brief study.

Firstly, it is hoped that this brief presentation has highlighted the individual support offered to philanthropic bodies by Middlesbrough's Steel Magnates and their families in addition to the support offered by the companies they has a financial interest in. In each of the cases cited above, company support does not occur without individual industrialist backing, and vice versa.

Secondly, longevity of philanthropic participation amongst the iron and steel elite is evident, the much maligned second and third generation not only joining their parents in supporting such bodies, but also continuing this work after their parents death (in addition to the examples given here Sir Maurice Lowthian Bell, son of Sir Hugh, was also chair of the Middlesbrough Juvenile Organisation Committee, with Arthur Dorman's son, too named Arthur, and Lady Richmond all subscribers.

Thirdly, some of the ways in which the industrial elite continued to be engaged in such activities has been highlighted; be it in heightening the profile of and legitimising such organisations by the very involvement of these captains of industry (and their families), financial support or hands on, practical involvement, most evident in the setting up of individual led enterprises such as the Winter Gardens and Girls Club.

Lastly, whilst not the main concern of this piece, it is hoped that some of the motives for involvement by the likes of the Bells and Dormans has been touched upon, be it in establishing their own organisations through which they could impose their ideals, such as tee-totalism, the prospect of public praise in the press, the potential to access information and contribute to decision making at times of strike and leaving a family legacy of helping the community.

Whatever their motives, it is without doubt that the withdrawal of Middlesbrough's steel magnates from involvement in the town has been over exaggerated.

Tosh Warwick

July 2010