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Building, Books and Blackboards: Intersecting Narratives
Melbourne, Australia 28 November – 1 December 2012

‘The banquet was prepared for guests who did not come’: A study of the Yorkshire Union of Mechanics’ Institutes and its contribution to 19th century adult working-class education, 1838–1900



Dr Martyn Walker
The University of Huddersfield
m.a.walker@hud.ac.uk



Early Developments in Britain

The Glasgow Mechanics' Institute and
Dr George Birkbeck M.D.

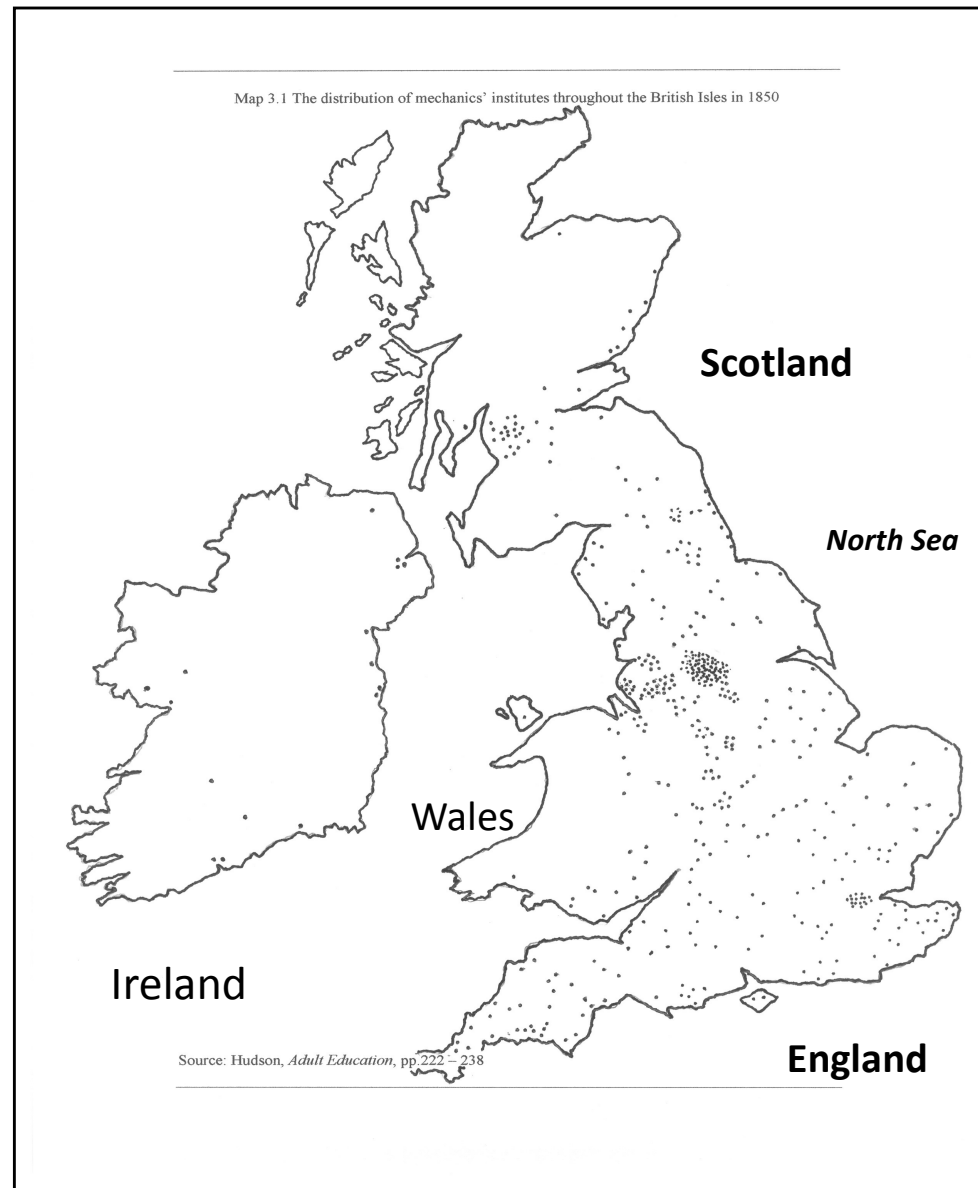


Overview

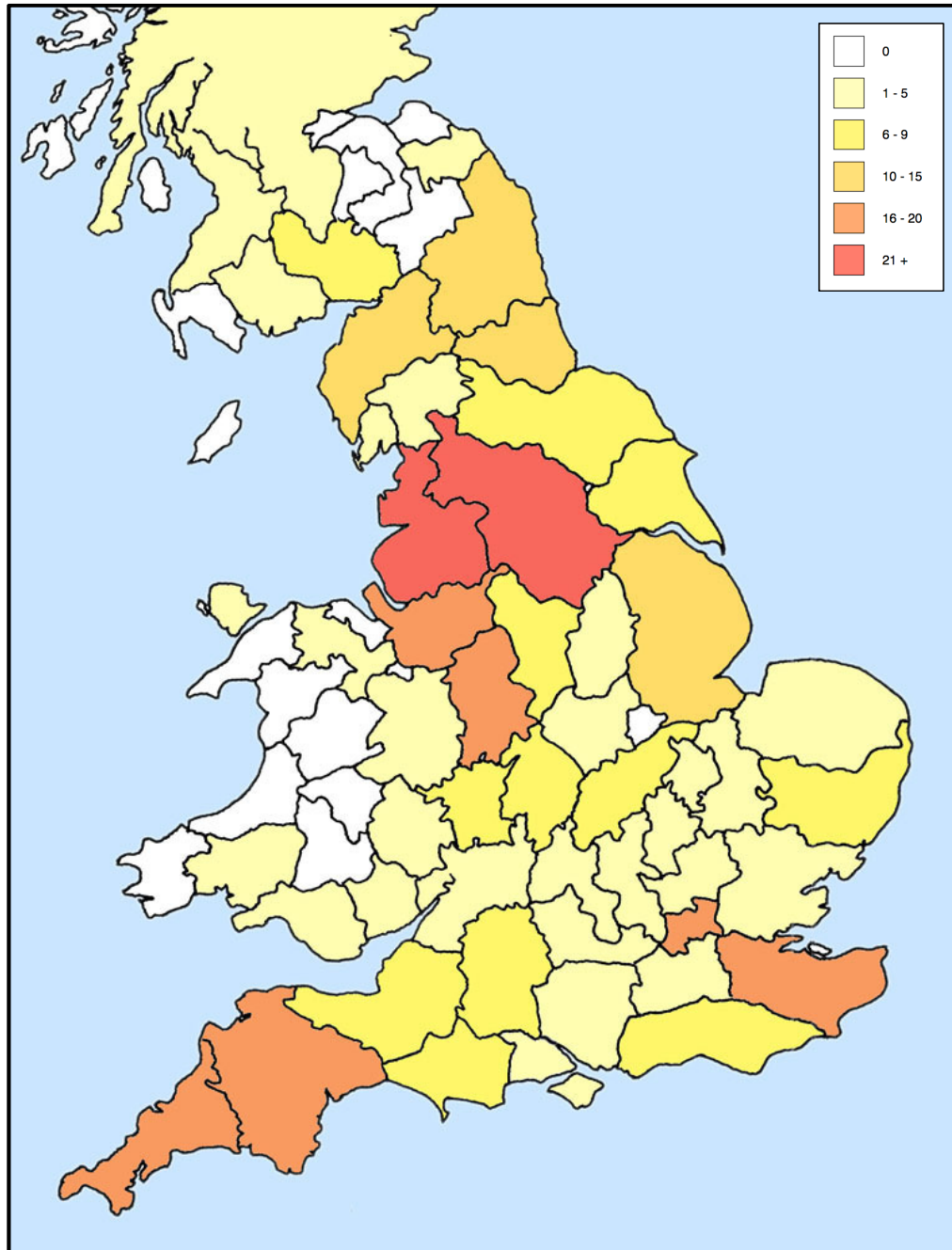
Historical debates

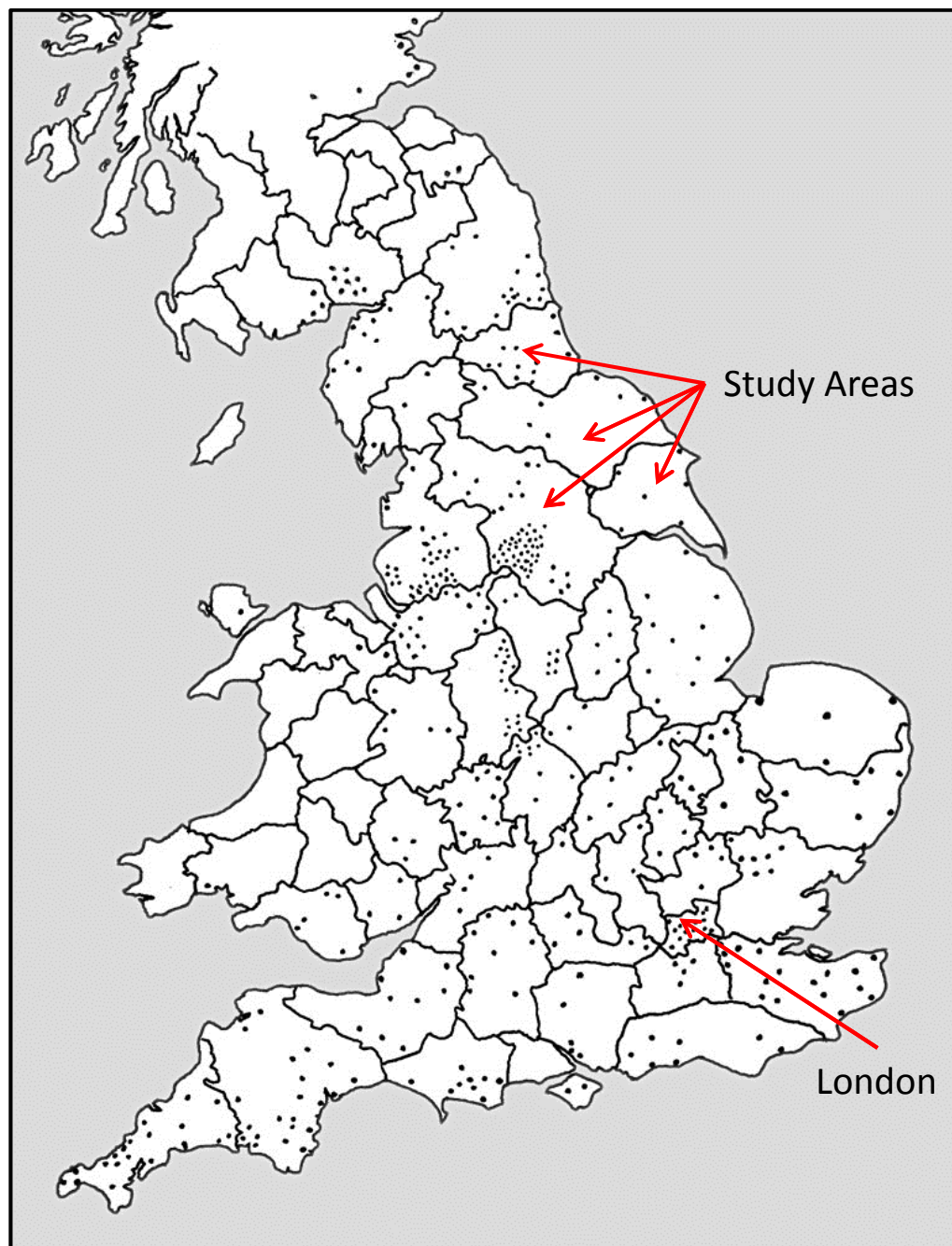
- Mechanics' Institutes were a failure
- Where they survived, Mechanics' Institutes offered high level scientific lectures which were patronised mainly by the upper classes
- By the 1850s, many Mechanics' Institutes had closed or were recreation centres.....

The Distribution of Mechanics' Institutes in across the British Isles : 1850



Source: J. W. Hudson, *History of Adult Education*

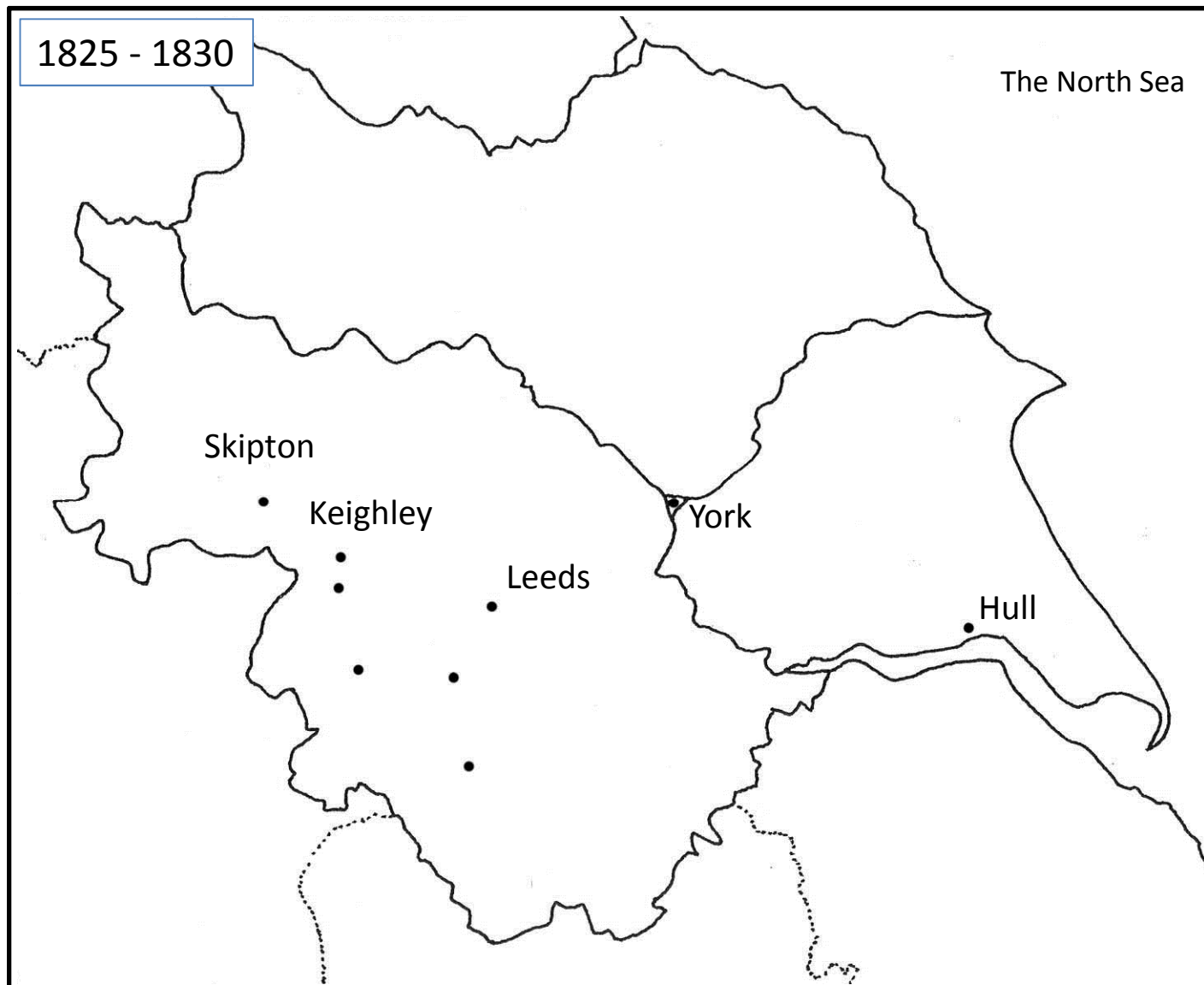




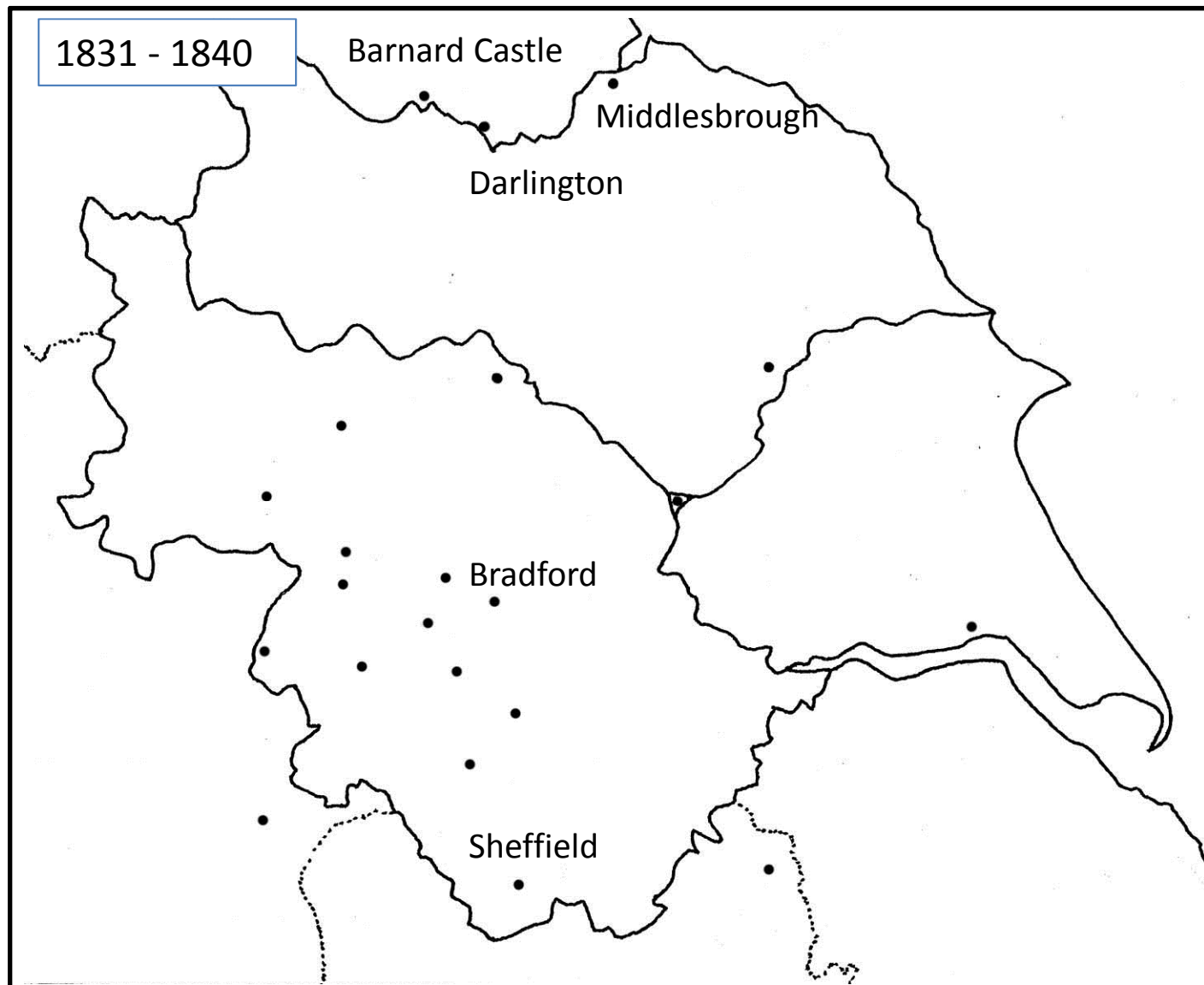
The Mechanics' Institute Unions

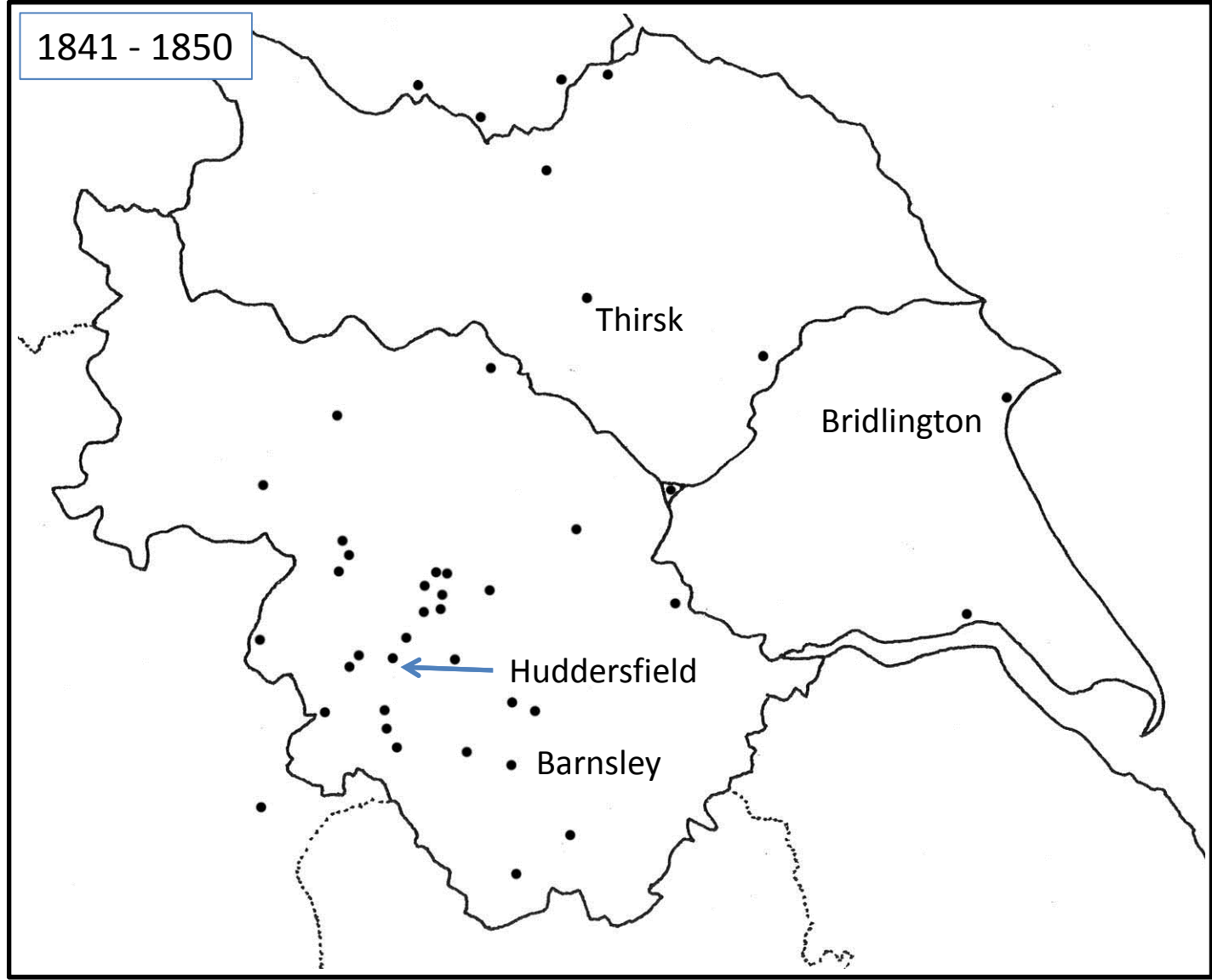
- 1850: 700 mechanics' institutes, 120,000 members, with 8 unions to support them
- First and largest was the Yorkshire Union, founded in 1838
- The Lancashire and Cheshire Union founded in 1839
- Institute unions in the Midlands, Kent, Northumberland and Durham (the Northern Union), Devon and Cornwall founded over the following 8 years, Leicestershire Union the last, in 1853
- They were well organised and efficient
 - Yorkshire Union, Leeds Institute had the most members, with 1,852
 - Huddersfield had 887 and was the second largest in the Union
 - Overall, Leeds was second in the country and Huddersfield tenth
- YUMI headquarters was the Leeds MI
 - Annual institute fees provided agents, itinerant lecturers, circulation libraries etc

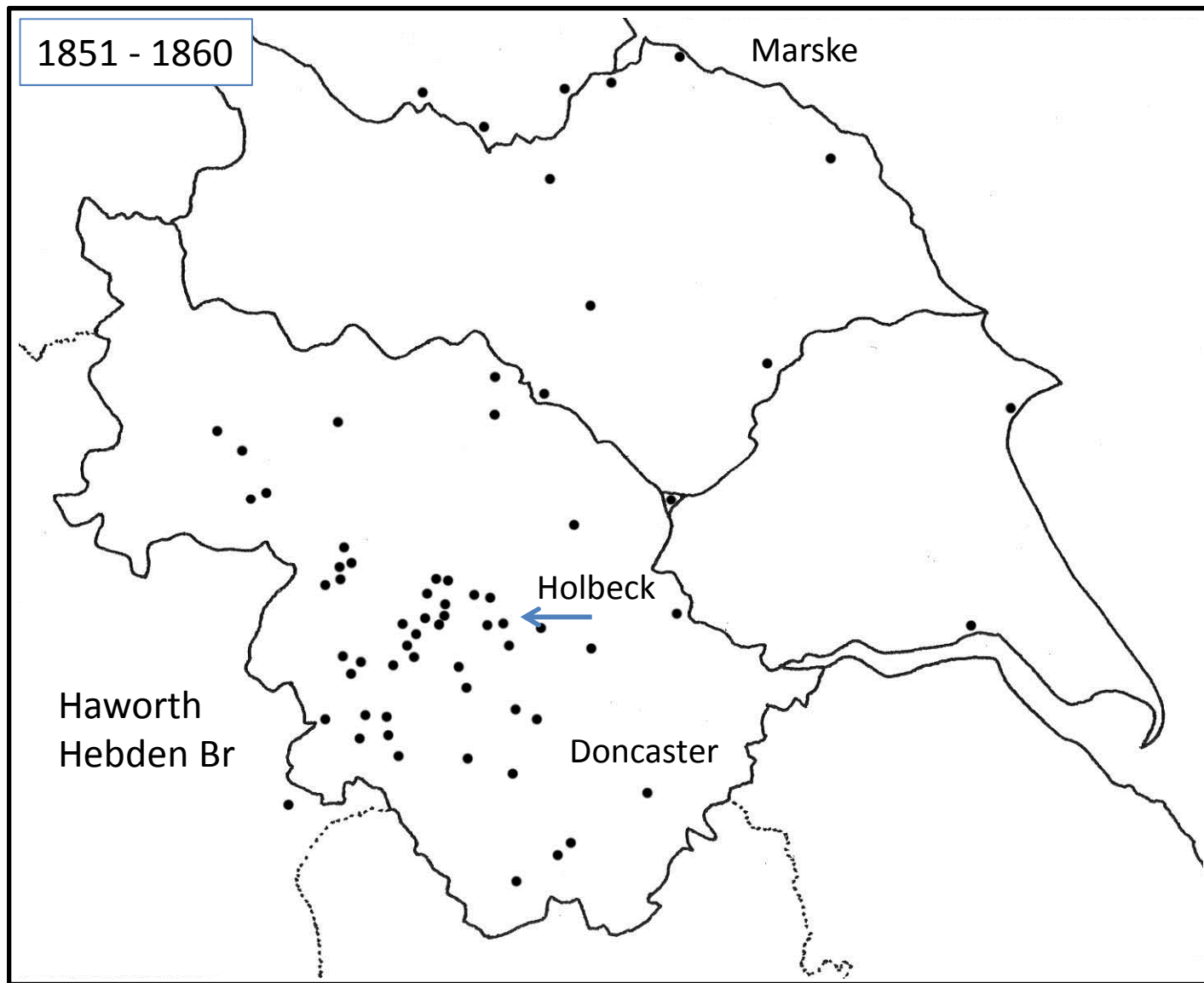
Distribution of Yorkshire Union Mechanics' Institutes

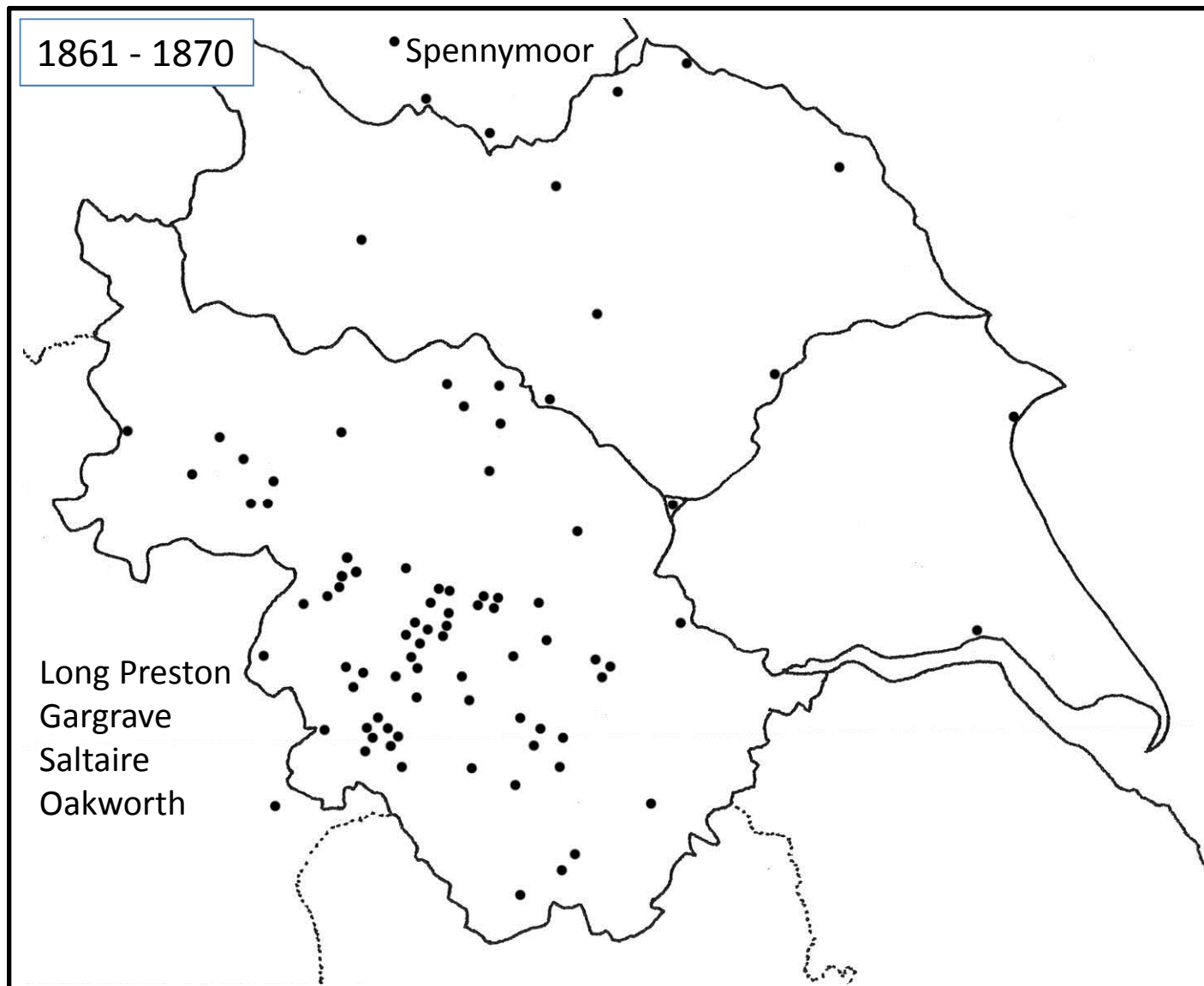


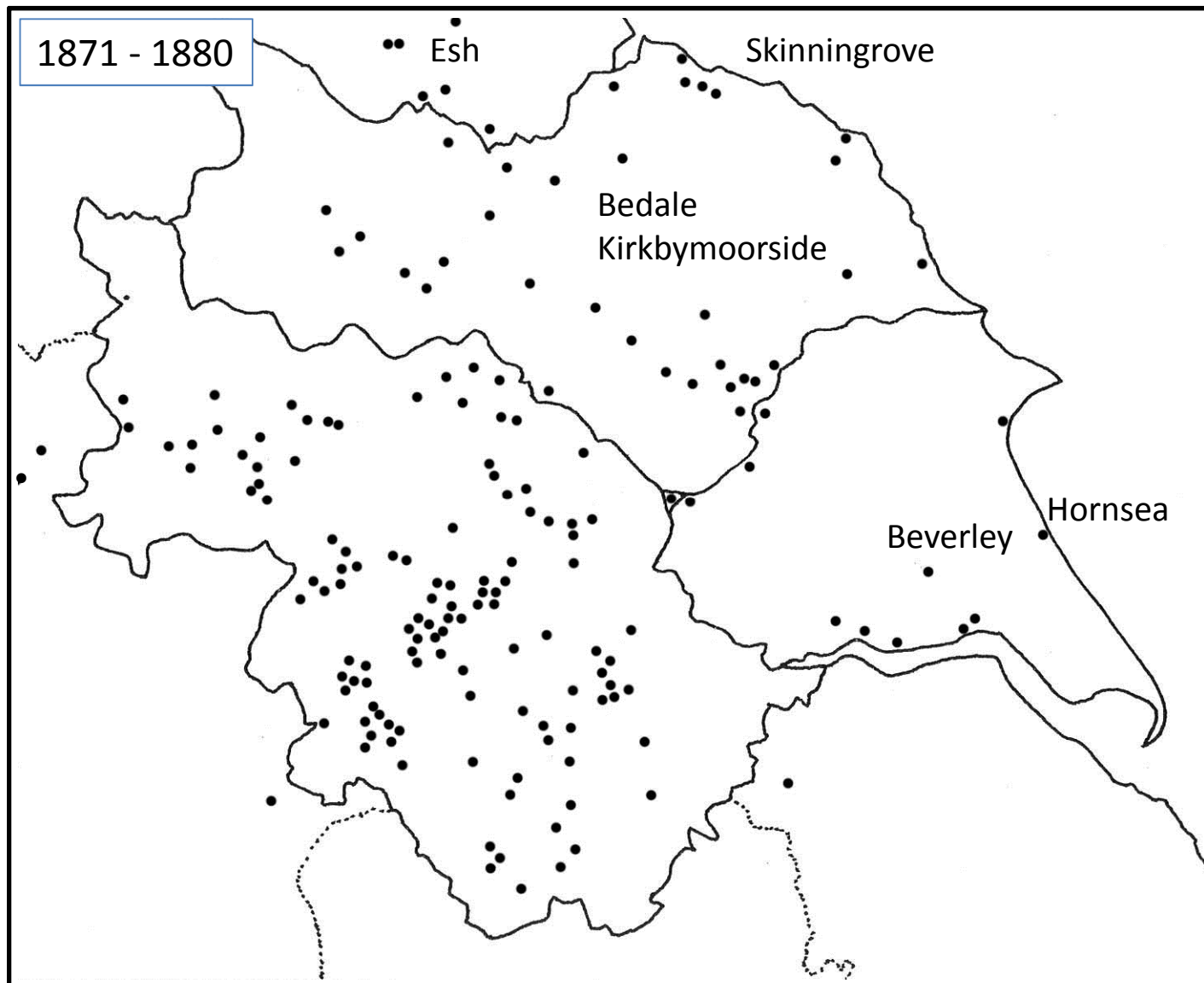
Source: The Annual Reports of the Yorkshire Union of Mechanics' Institutes

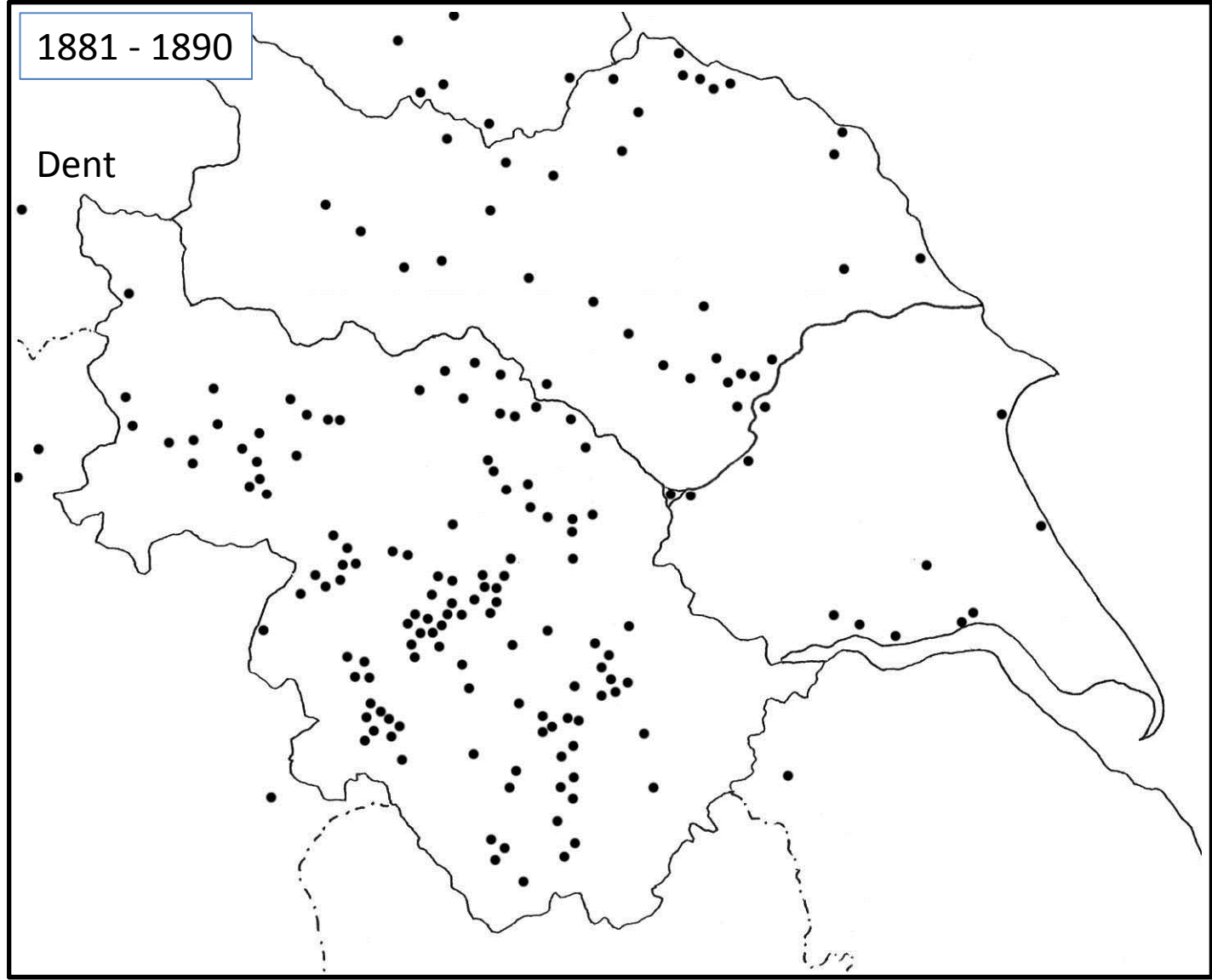


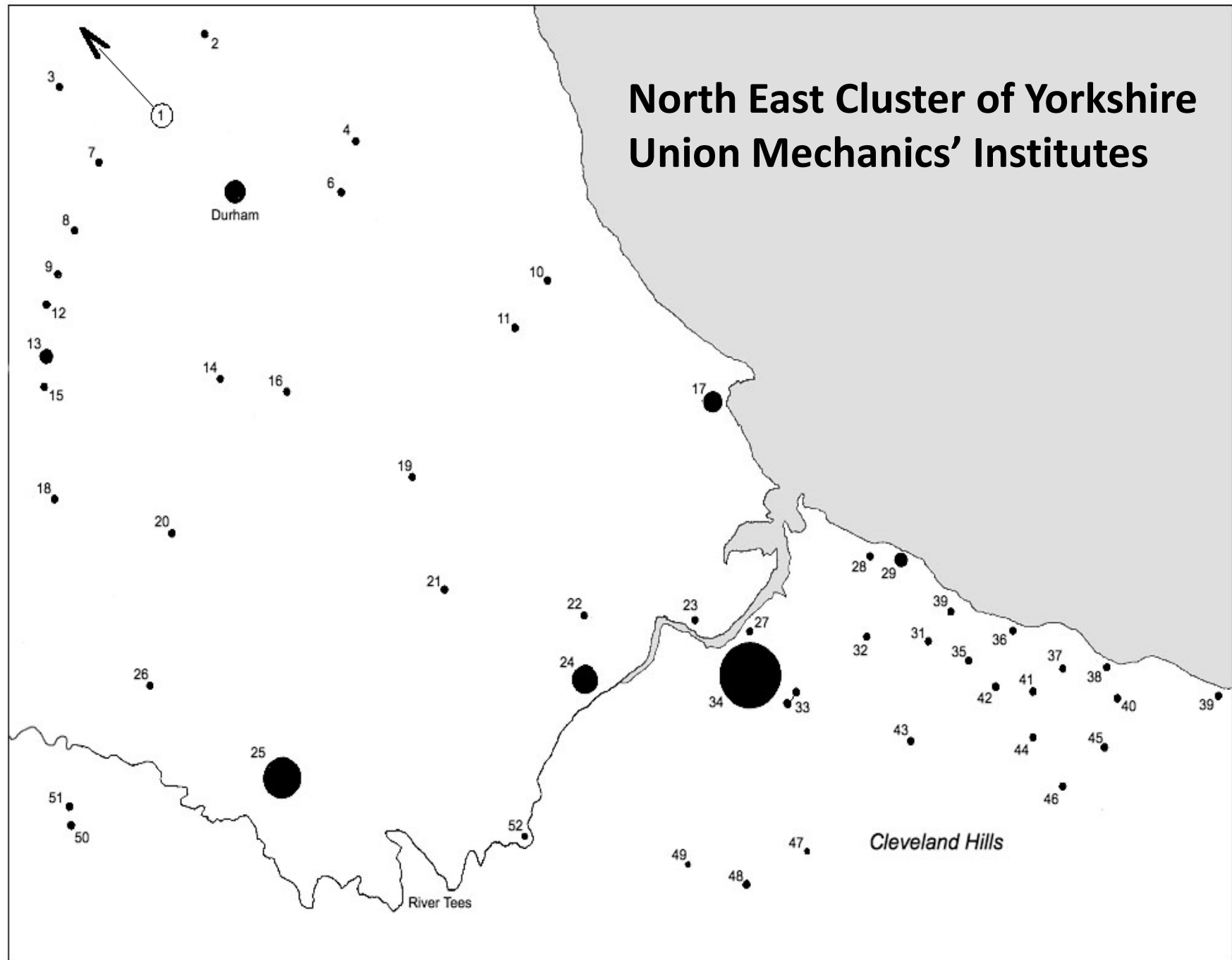




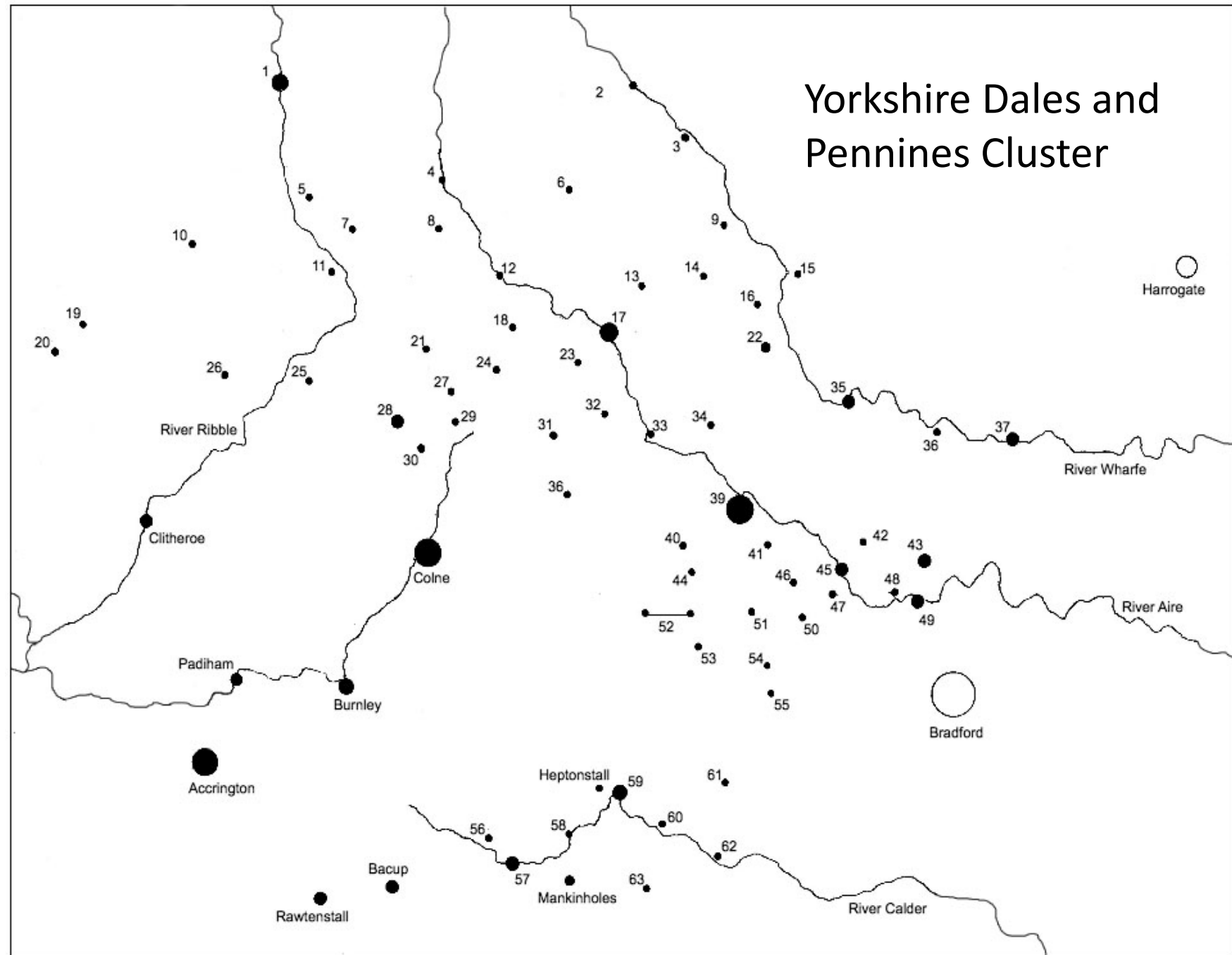


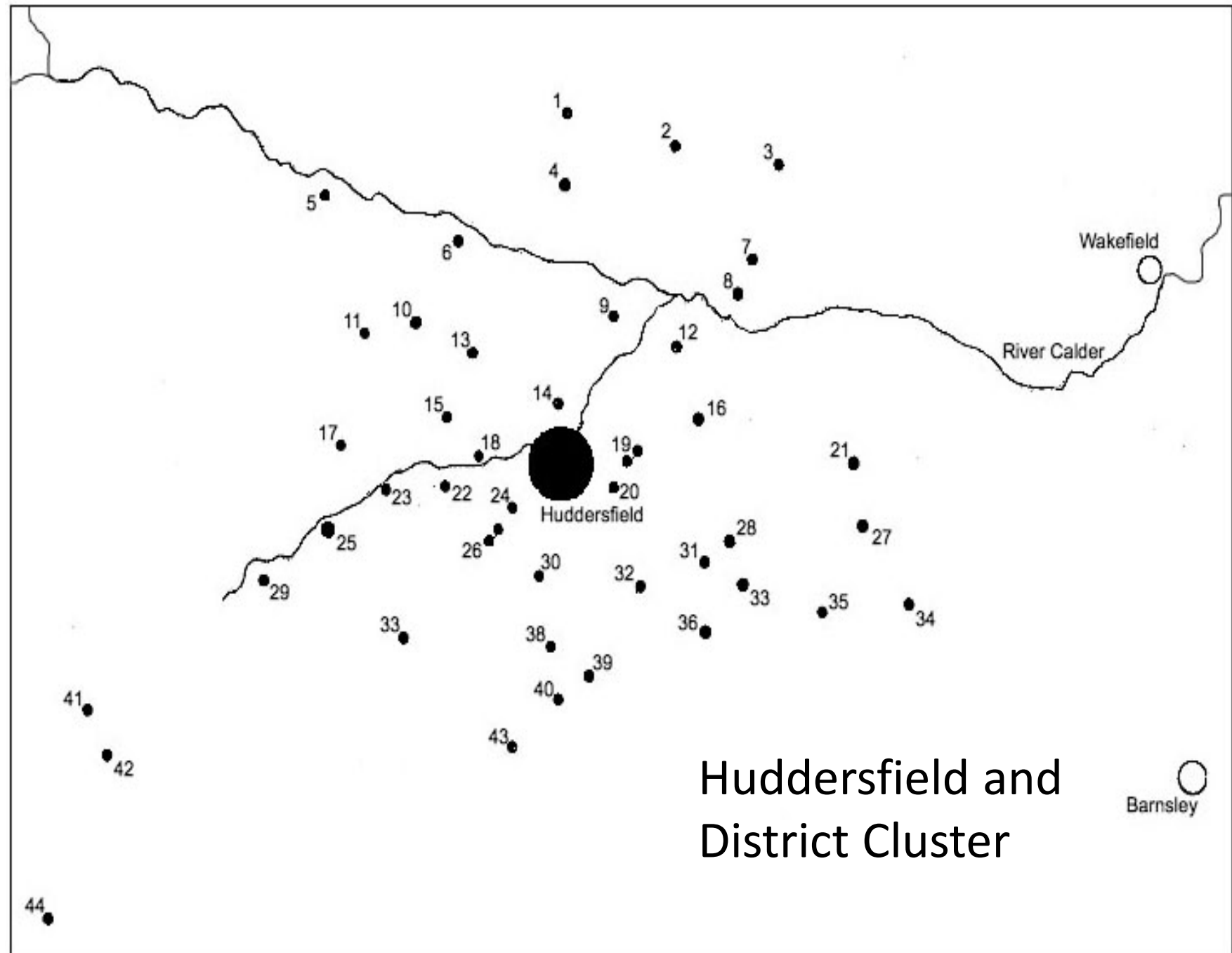






Yorkshire Dales and Pennines Cluster



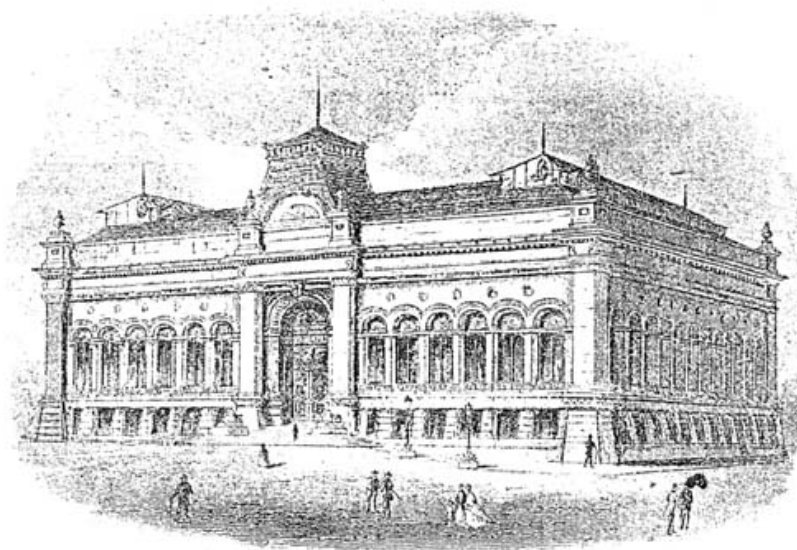




Wrough Village Institute.
EAST RIDING.

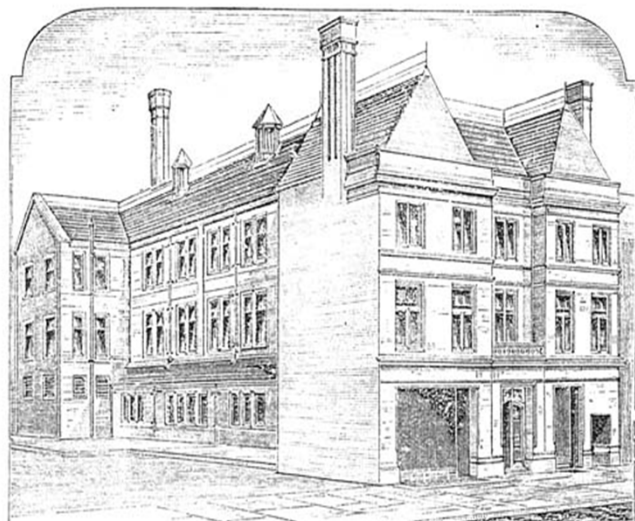


First purpose-built Mechanics' Institute, Keighley



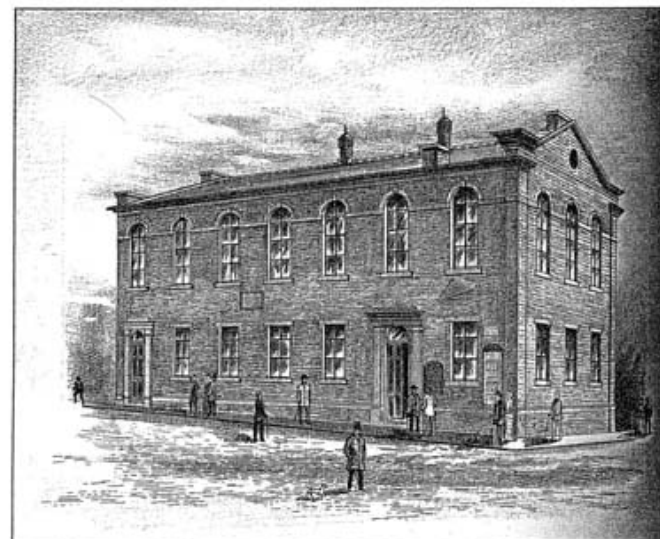
LEEDS MECHANICS INSTITUTION AND LITERARY SOCIETY.

Source: Annual Reports of the
Yorkshire Union of Mechanics'
Institutes

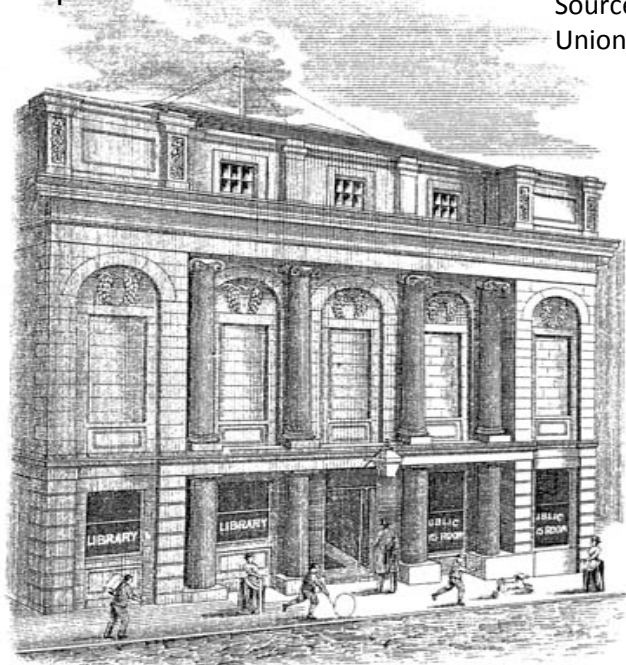


Skipton Mechanics' Institute

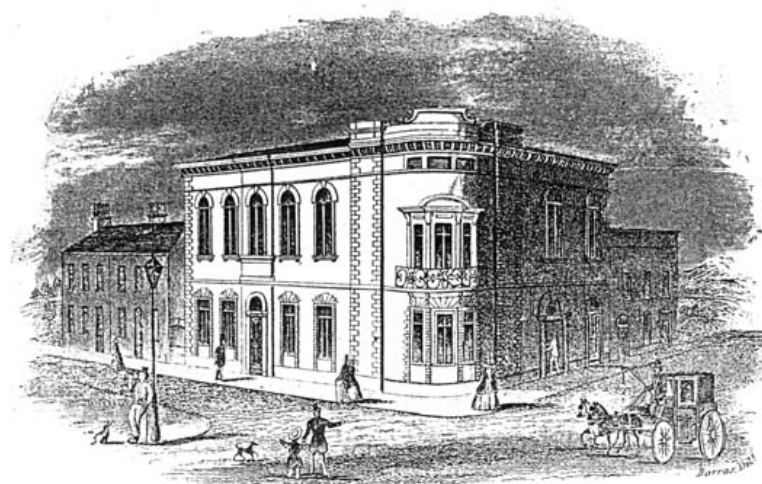
Source: Annual Reports of the Yorkshire
Union of Mechanics' Institutes



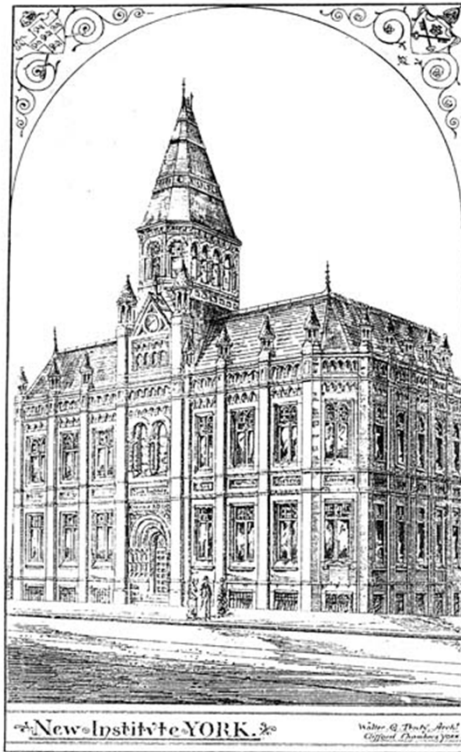
Cleckheaton Mechanics' Institute.
PRINCIPAL BUILDING.



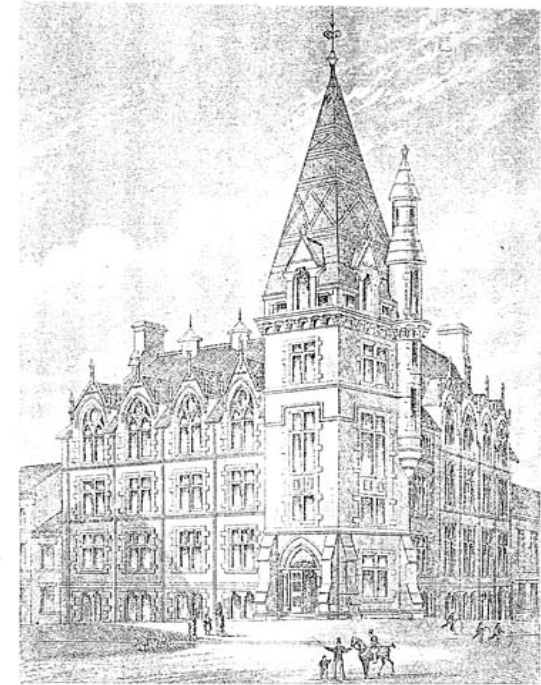
Scarborough Mechanics' Institute



THE ROTHERHAM AND MASBOROUGH LITERARY AND MECHANICS INSTITUTE.

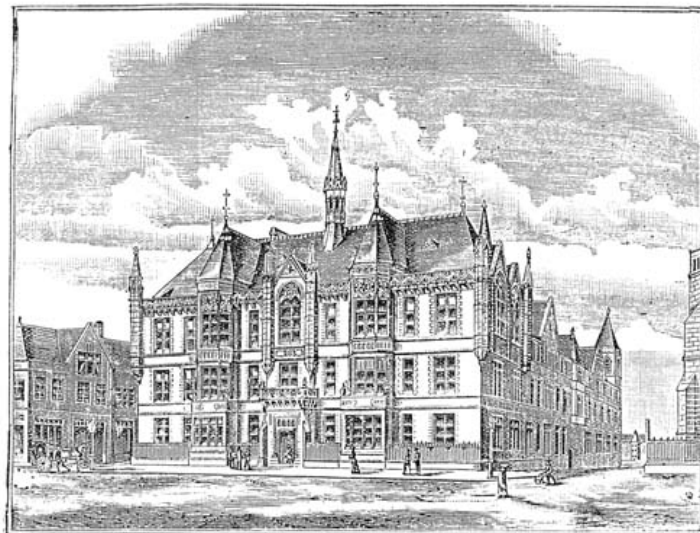


Yeadon Mechanics Institute
& Town Hall.



Pudsey Mechanics Institute.

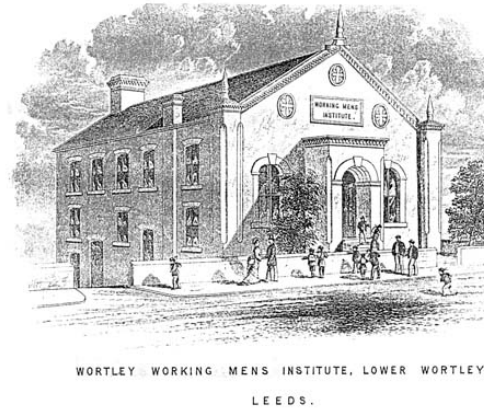
Source: Annual Reports of the Yorkshire Union of Mechanics' Institutes



HUDDERSFIELD TECHNICAL SCHOOL AND MECHANICS' INSTITUTE.



MECHANICS' INSTITUTION
AND
SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND ART.
KEIGHLEY.



Source: Annual Reports of the Yorkshire Union of Mechanics' Institutes



Huddersfield Mechanics' Institute buildings

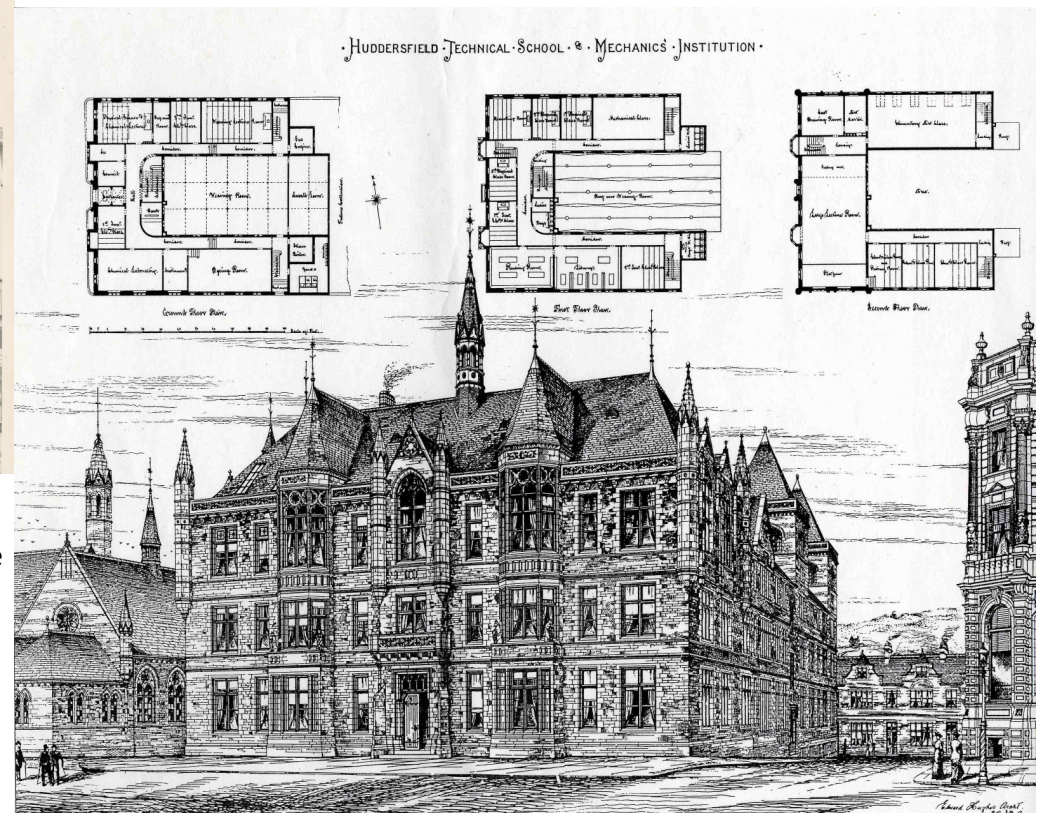
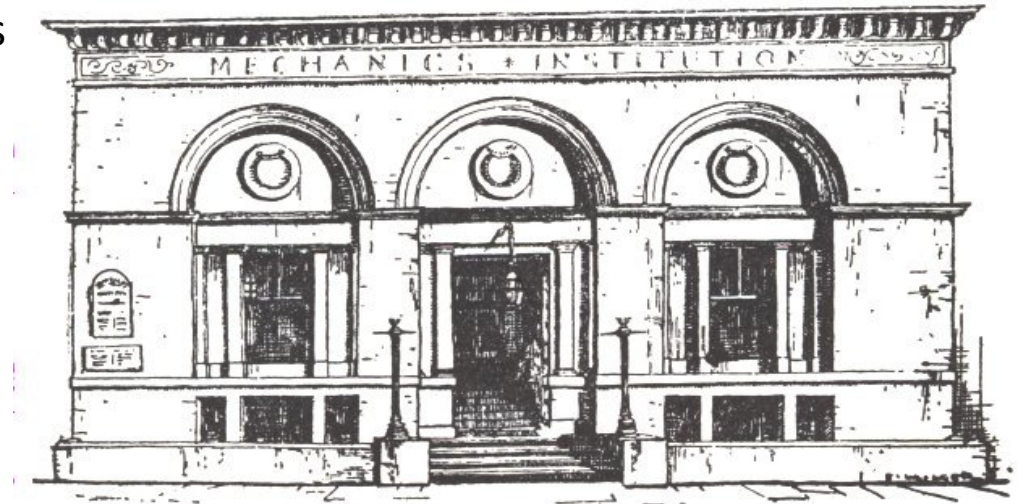
Right, the first-purpose built Mechanics' Institute



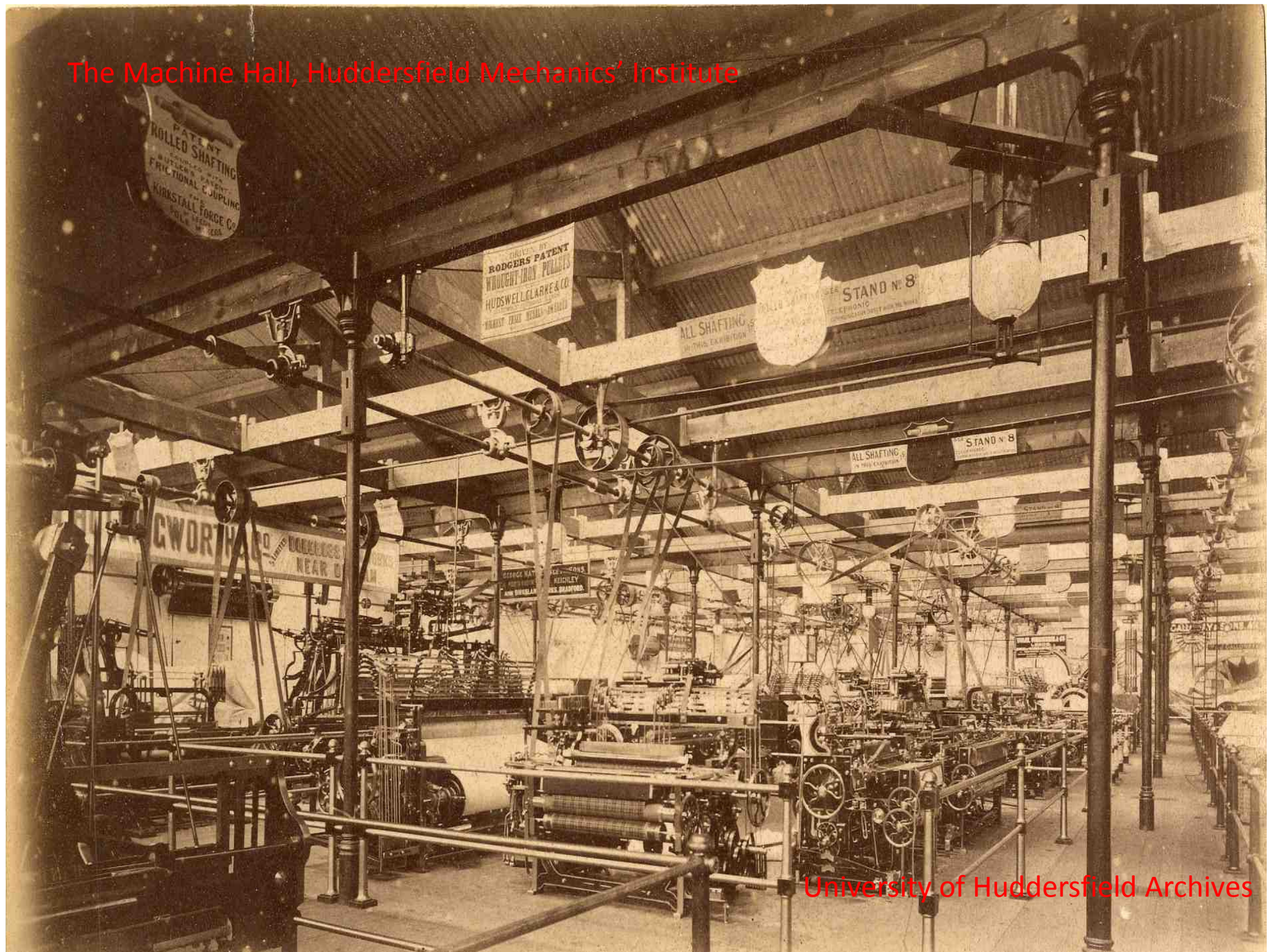
Above, one of the rented properties used by the Mechanics' Institute

Right, the Technical School and Mechanics' Institute. Now the School of Human and Health Sciences, University of Huddersfield

University of Huddersfield Archives



The Machine Hall, Huddersfield Mechanics' Institute



University of Huddersfield Archives

Left, the chemistry laboratory, Huddersfield

Below, the dye laboratory, Huddersfield



Summary

- The Movement was NOT a failure
National Developments: Science and Art Department, Society of Arts, Education Act 1870 and Technical Instructions Acts
- Some did offer high level scientific lectures which were patronised by the upper classes (Sheffield)
 - however, many were located in rural and semi-rural areas where the Gentry and professional classes were few and far between
- Several closed before 1850
 - Addingham, Huddersfield and Skipton, but re-opened and went on to be very successful, often stimulated by the success of the Great Exhibition of 1851
- Continual growth meant that, by 1900 and thereafter, many had become schools of art, technical colleges, with several becoming universities
 - Bradford
 - Huddersfield
 - Leeds
 - Manchester

The banquet was prepared for guests who did come and partake!