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Sixty Years in Sixty Minutes: Changing Britain 1952-1992

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**‘Sixty years in Sixty minutes’ the changing face of Britain between the accession of Queen Elizabeth II to the throne in 1952 and the Diamond Jubilee of 2012: A personal view of change’**

by

**Keith Laybourn**

Only two British monarchs have enjoyed Diamond Jubilees – Victoria and Elizabeth II. In 1897 Victoria’s Jubilee was at the height of Empire whilst Elizabeth’s occurred in the context of a much more democratically-based Commonwealth of nations that was formed in 1952.

**[Slides 1 and 2 ] [Jubilee celebrations had occurred when Edward III had celebrated his fiftieth birthday on 13 November 1362 . and in January 1376 his golden jubilee, though that was quickly were aborted with the death of his son the Black Prince after which there were no more royal jubilees. They have been rare since]** Inevitably, much is

different between 1897 and 2012 but both monarchs saw enormous changes in their own reigns -Elizabeth’s reign seeing remarkable changes in social, economic and political relationships. There have been the **‘flirtatious fifties’, ‘the swinging sixties’, and the three-day week of the early‘70s’, a decade that one of my colleagues refers to as one of ‘punks, pigs and prawn cocktails’, and the bleak 80s.** Skirts have risen and fallen and fashion has reached extremes. Co-operatives, have declined to be replaced by supermarkets and out of town shopping centres. The tripartite system of secondary education has given way to high schools, and higher education has expanded enormously. Working-men’s clubs, a dominant cultural form in the 1950s, have all but expired as pubs, clubs and club-restaurants have proliferated. Gambling has changed from the illegal, innocent small-scale activity that it once was to super-dangerous casinos and TV gambling. Politics has become more diverse as

the two-party domination of the Conservatives and Labour has been replaced by a proliferation of political parties, some of them demanding political independence. Some parties, such as the CPGB have disappeared. Trade unions expanded rapidly after the Second World War, peaked in 1979, and now have been reduced to half their peak in the wake of the Thatcher legislation of the 1980s. Also class may, as Melvyn Bragg has recently suggested, given way to cultures and cultures of consumerism, which has emerged strongly since the 1970s. Yet the main constant (even though it has evolved) has been the **Monarchy**. In Andrew Marr's recent documentary (part 2) the famous actress **Helen Mirren** argued that the only two **constants** in her life were her sister and the Queen. Lord Professor Peter Hennessy, who lectured at the University in February 2012, expressed much the same opinion about the Queen and argued that she is the only person with an **historic political memory** of what has gone on in government over 60 years, as he salivated over the impossible prospect of getting the Queen's diary and an interview with her As **Head of the Commonwealth and the Head of State of the self-governing nations such as Australia and New Zealand, the Queen has imposed a type of stability in a constantly changing world. Indeed, in the Commonwealth she still really matters.**

This cannot be a normal professorial lecture because of the subject matter and the occasion. In normal circumstances I would lecture on the rise of Labour, the endemic and small scale nature of working-class gambling in the twentieth century, or the way in which policing in the 1920s and 1930s was largely transformed by the car – **as policeman moved from their feet to their seats.**[ **Elaborate**] Instead this lecture will focus upon four things. [Slide 3 ] **First**, I want to examine how some aspects of how life has changed in Britain in the sixty years of Elizabeth's reign. **Secondly**, I want to mention the continuing importance of the Monarchy. **Thirdly**, I want to look at those changes partly through my own life and

research interests. **Fourthly**, I want to examine some events and changes in Huddersfield, where education has been a particularly important development. If there is a theme, although this is more about **reflection, memories and comment, it is that the Monarchy has been the stabilising influence on British society - although it has modified and modernised itself in the immensely fluid landscape of the last sixty years.**

I suppose what I am doing is what Lord Peter Hennessey did in his lecture on 'Writing the History of Our Time' and '**distilling the Frenzy of History**'. [J. M. Keynes, 1936]. Enoch Powell once suggested that '**all history is myth**' and that historians use the '**nitcomb of history**' to construct their own accounts. **I doubt that I will be any better or any worse than most historians in this respect.** Like Lord Peter Hennessey, I probably have a formative period – **in the 1960s when I was in my early 20s** – from which I draw many of my ideas. This was a period of changing rights and opportunities– the **pill was available from 1961, and legislation changed the law on abortion, censorship, and homosexuality.** There was a confidence and pride of England winning the Football **World Cup in 1966.** David Frost challenged us to think through shows such as **TW3**

I was born in Barnsley, a Labour stronghold, but absorbed my politics through Bob Dylan protest for change and my culture through the Beatles. I was from Barnsley. Bob Dylan's – 'A Hard Rains Ago in to Fall' (Cuban missile crisis – when we were under the fear of a nuclear war), 'The Times They Are A Changing', and 'Positively Fourth Street' were influential songs. Indeed, I can **remember in about 1965 that if someone asked me how my day was, and it had not gone well, I might have said that it was 'Positively Fourth Street'.**

**As for the swinging sixties, I was probably influenced by the Beatles song. In some ways 'Norwegian Wood' on *Rubber Soul*, which summed up the 1960s to me – a tale**

frustrated sexual opportunities [about a young man hoping to get his way with a young girl but ends up sleeping in a bath and elaborate it. **I am afraid in the end, most teenagers went to bed with their hot-water bottles**] [Slide 4 ]as you can see captures that stage.]

The theme book of the age for me was **E. P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class***, the appearance of which was initially affected by the assassination of President Kennedy on the day it appeared in November 1963. [SLIDES 5 and 6]. It was a book that inspired **history from below, the history of the working class men and women**. It fitted well into a decade of energy, commitment, conflict, youth protest and socialism – which saw **Harold Wilson, a son of Huddersfield and a one time Bevanite socialist, form a Labour government in October 1964**. [He became the dominant political figure of the **1960s and 1970s showing the moderation and potential of British socialism and should be admired for his resistance to President Johnson's attempt to get him to send British troops into Vietnam**.

In the this decade of hope and challenge, *The Guardian* produced (in 1968) an article, cleverly entitled '**A Trot around the Left**' which revealed the existence of about 90 or more Communist and Trotskyist organisations in Britain. I also remember that **E. P. Thompson** summarised this division of extreme socialist views when he wrote a review in *The Guardian* on the *Dictionary of Labour Biography* about 100 dead labour heroes. '**Most, he said, 'could not have endured each other's company for more than five minutes. Yet all will be interred in the cemetery of print**'. In the 1960s, there **was excitement, involvement, debate, and a sense of making history**. There was protest against the **Vietnam war**. There was concern about the introduction of the Race Relations Act in 1965 .[**On that particular issue many pub , following the influx of 500,000 Commonwealth immigrants between 1948 and the late 1950s there had been much racial discrimination. [Pub landlords, for**

**instance, continued to discriminate against employing black workers and black customers eg Huddersfield landlady set up a different room (Brian Jackson) , and my own involvement at the University of Bradford.]**

I have met the **Queen** only once. My one direct encounter with her was at the University of Lancaster in about 1969 or 1970. I was doing my PhD and was spending the morning in a dark room reading microfiche off the Library foyer. No one had told me about the Queen's visit. At 12 noon the students were howling outside the Library, unbeknown to me, and I left my dark room and moved into the bright lights of the entrance hall where the Queen, the Lord Lieutenant of Lancaster, and other dignitaries were walking about. **Within seconds flat the bodyguards were on me and I was ejected totally unaware of the occasion. All I can remember is how bright everything was, the flash of colours, how small she was, and how big the bodyguards were.** Since then my contact has been remote and languished around issues of **continuity and constancy,**

**1. One of the constants of Monarchy** has been its sustaining power for **Britishness.** At Victoria's Jubilee **Britishness** was based upon **Empire and Monarchy.** This was still partly true in 1952, when Elizabeth ascended to the throne. Empire has now gone indeed the Commonwealth had been formed in 1952, and what maintains **Britishness** – and may continue to do so - is **Monarchy.** The Welsh and the Scots may not see themselves at one with the English but they can identify with being British. Immigrants from the Commonwealth may seem themselves as retaining their ethnic origins but many still see themselves as British in certain contexts, **despite supporting other cricket teams.** To **Professor Paul Ward, Britishness is constantly redefining itself often around the constant of Monarchy.** This contrasts with the views of David Marquand, David McCrone and Richard Weight who argue that Britishness has declines as Empire has declined from c.

1960s onwards. The move towards independence suggest the break-up of Britain to these latter historians **but Monarchy, however, prevails as the vital ligature of Britishness that might keep the United Kingdom together. It can be seen in the process of reinvention of the Monarchy that has gone on.** The ancient Knight of the Garter ceremony was re-established by King George VI in 1948, and the **investiture of Prince Charles as the Prince of Wales** in 1969 [Slide 7] has re-affirmed the links within the United Kingdom . In addition, **Queen Elizabeth; personal speech (not Government speech) to the nation on her 25<sup>th</sup> silver anniversary in 1977 emphasised that she had been Queen of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and, despite the independence movement of the time, wished to remain so.**

The *Sunday Telegraph* launched a campaign in December 2007 imploring its readers that **'You may be English, Scottish, Welsh or come from Northern Ireland but we want you to call yourself British.'** Gordon Brown also made Britishness part of his political platform. They are challenging the notion of the break-up of Britain caused by the rising concern about nationality in Britain. **Britishness is a vague and flexible concept but it suffices to keep the United Kingdom together unless Mr. Cameron gets its wrong in the next two years or so.]**

**2. Another aspect of the constancy of Monarchy** is that, in the final analysis, the ultimate power in Britain is Elizabeth II, the absolute and final arbiter and decider. The Queen's speech might be written by others but the monarch has the ultimate power to pick a Prime Minister, and did so independently of her advisors in 1963 when she chose Alec Douglas Home, rather than R. A. Butler) to be Prime Minister rather than to replace Harold Macmillan. [Slide 8 :**Reference being the only person ever to threaten to shoot me, Coldstream 1976.]**

3 Also there is one occasion each week when the Prime Minister has a personal audience with the Queen alone. Harold Wilson, who got on very well with the Queen, reflected, **humourously, that this was the only occasion in the week when he was not looking at someone who wanted his job.** Indeed, **In their first meeting Wilson wrote that ‘She asked me if I could form an administration ‘ and ‘was made Prime Minister’, Wilson enjoyed the ceremonies of pageantry ‘I have great respect for tradition. I like the real ceremonies of the Monarchy...the Opening of Parliament, the Coronation. He did not patronise the Queen and treated as though she was a member of the Cabinet. Indeed, a close relationship grew up between them. Indeed his meeting with her extended and one political aide noted that ‘His audience got longer and longer. Once he stayed for two hours and was asked to stay for drinks. Usually prime ministers only see her for twenty minutes, and it is not normal for them to be offered drinks by the monarch.’ Wilson was to brandish the Queen’s letter to Ian Smith in 1965, reminding him of his allegiance to the Crown, at a time when he was going to declare UDI and leave the Commonwealth.**

**The Queen was never as easy with Edward Heath, who** saw as a piece of necessary furniture. **Margaret Thatcher and the Queen were discreet in their relations and** neither dispelled the impression view that they did not like each other. The Palace seems to have seen Thatcher as vulgar and the Thatcherites considered the palace irrelevant and effete. Of subsequent prime ministers, Tony Blair seems to have had enjoyed good relations with the Queen.

4. The real strength of the Queen was that unlike the Thatcher government she enjoyed the Commonwealth connection, of which she was Head. She made **Commonwealth Day** speeches. She visited every Commonwealth. And **Vernon Bogdanor, the political scientist said that ‘it is difficult to imagine the Commonwealth continuing to exist in its present**



form without the King or Queen as the head. [BP. 463] Indeed, the high point of this relationship was probably the Commonwealth Head of Governments Meeting at Lusaka in Zambia in August 1979, which Mrs. Thatcher attended. The main topic was Rhodesia after 14 years of UDI which was still a White-dominated country after 14 years of independence. Thatcher did not want to go and meet Nkomo and Mugabe, who she saw as terrorists,. She also wanted to stop the Queen going as well – citing the safety of the Queen. **The Queen declared that she would be** going and it was felt that in doing so she brought a **healing touch**. Indeed, the Queen held the whole thing together. She made Lusaka happen.

There have, of course been challenges to the Monarchy and Australia has discussed removal of the Monarch as the Head of State. Tony Benn has called for the ending of the monarchy by Act of Parliament. However, this has not occurred and Tom Nairn (p.568) suggested that the Monarchy is not just an institution but a state of mind. It was not just ‘a golden bauble at the top of a stone pyramid’ it is ‘more like a golden thread running through the entire tapestry’ – hard to unstitch and perhaps not worth the attempt. Indeed, the idea that the British Constitution is **ceremonially a Monarchy but in practice a Republic is scarcely a new idea**. The Monarchy was challenged in the 1990s with the death of Diana and the feeling that the Queen was uncaring but little has really changed.

The Monarchy has, however, got rid of the redundant trappings in tune with the changing times. It ended the debutante’s coming out ball – so loved by **Pathe News** – in 1958 Doing the marriage circuit of debutante parties seemed outdated by then and Princes Margaret did reflect that ‘It was getting to a point where any tart could get on the circuit.’

**[Debutante ball on Pathe News about 1957/1958.]**

**The beginnings of the Elizabethan reign**

Yet let us start at the beginning, I was born in Barnsley in March 1946, the son of a miner, and was six-years of age at the time of the ascendancy and seven at the time of the Coronation. I had vague recollections that the new Queen received the news of her father's death (George VI) at Treetops in Kenya, where she was on a photo safari. Harold Nicolson wrote that **'She became Queen while perched in a tree in Africa watching the rhinoceros come down to the pool for a drink'.(Pimlott, 175) On the news coming, and the Duke of Edinburgh receiving it a commentator stated that it 'looked as though the world had fallen in on him'. When the Queen, subsequently decided upon the name Windsor, he was heard to say that 'he was the only man in Britain who could not use his own name.'**

The Coronation was held on 2 June 1953 and what I remember is that everyone was buying the **new nine-inch televisions, offering very fuzzy images, indeed, for the 'Stanley Matthews' cup final and then for the Coronation.**[The number of tv licences doubled from about 1.7 million to more than 3 millions in one year.] It was the first televised Coronation; that of her father George VI had been covered by radio. Now Britain and the world could peer into the glory of the occasion, be aware of the anointment and the crowning. On tv **Matthews won an FA cup-winners medal by feinting left and moving right** – he was so swift than no one could stop him - as much the same might be said for the Monarchy as well over the next sixty years **[Slide 9]** With the other events. Edmund Hillary and Sherpa Tensing conquered Everest on 29 May 1953 , the news being announced on Coronation Day, it truly looked as though the United Kingdom was on top of the world.

The Coronation was held in **splendour**. This was possibly the most magnificent British spectacle of the twentieth century. Princess Margaret referred to it phoenix like since **'Everything was being raised from the Ashes'**, and changes did occur such as the end of rationing in 1954 and the rapid emergence of the consumer society and Macmillan's **'You**

**have never had it so good'** quip. The Coronation allowed an opportunity to display a new kind of imperial greatness, reaffirming the Monarchy as a core tying the Empire and Commonwealth into a group of diplomatically, economically, and militarily associated nations. [The *Westminster Bank Review* (Pimlott, 2003)] It was written by one writer that **'Without the Crown there can obviously be no Britain and no Commonwealth. Without Britain and the Commonwealth, there can be no tolerable future.'** The Coronation was a powerful televised image of Commonwealth unity, represented in medieval pageantry and religion. It was an illusion that Britain and the Commonwealth were still powerful at a time when its political greatness in the world had been, and was being, greatly diminished. My abiding memory of the Coronation was of **Queen Salote** of Tonga, whose large and genial presence was evidence of the multi-cultural nature of the Commonwealth.

Apart from **the pomp and circumstance** in London, and the renewal of the Commonwealth tour at the end of 1953, there was the Queen's tour of Britain. I walked about two miles to **Worsborough Bridge** (a couple of miles out of Barnsley and a three or four mile walk) with my flag for a two second glance of the Queen flashing by in a car. However, more or less at the same time there was a miner's celebration in Monk Bretton Park for 'The Queen and King Coal'. It was attended by several thousand people and I received a **coronation mug, chocolates, and other things that were only just becoming available in post-war Britain gradually moving from rationing.** Lord Peter Hennessy was more **privileged, and received a dinky toy version of the royal coach!**

In the **Barnsley** of the 1950s there were five major features or institutions that shaped lives. There was **coal, politics, football, co-operative movement, and education.** I would like to use these as a metaphor or prism for the evolution of British society – although I want to develop additional themes.

**Coal** production was the lifeblood of the town – and I can remember that there were at least five pits in the town. Most of these were swept away in the late 1960s – although my father did work at Grimethorpe (made famous in the film *Brassed Off*) until the early 1980s. The problem was that many of these pits were closed by Roy Mason, Labour MP for Barnsley [**The symbolic pint.**] There are now no working pits in Barnsley. The mining dispute of 1984/5 put paid to coal – at a time when other heavy industries, such as steel, were being run down – and heavy industry has, as we know, all but disappeared in Britain. Though Corus has reopened at Redcar recently, Sheffield steelworking has been effectively closed down.

I saw part of the film **Kes last week, and it has a particular resonance for me because it was released at the time when Labour's MP for Barnsley (Roy Mason) was closing pits. In the film Billy Casper ends up having to go to the pit having failed to escape his bleak landscape.**[Comment re Brian Glover, the collapse of industry. David Bradley, location etc. and social realism.]

There were in the 1950 and 1960s built around these mines the **Miners' Welfare and Working-Men's Clubs and Institutes movement**, The Miners' Welfare had been formed in 1919, from 1d on each ton of coal mined, to provide pit-head baths, halls, parks (Monk Bretton Park) and even grants. **I should stress that I actually received £30 from the Miners' Welfare Fund on going to University. In connection with the University I should also remind you that the same fund provided £15,000 that went to become the building which is now the University's Barnsley Campus.** As for the **Working Men and Institutes Movement** it also held a major place in the cultural unity of a mining village. It paid for club trips out to poor unsuspecting holiday towns at Spring Bank Holiday. They were otherwise the centre of a male-dominated mining communities, and offered strippers and star-

turns on a Sunday. I remember my father once coming home on Sunday afternoon, with a bottle of Mackeson for my mother, and saying that as the stripper was taking her **G string off the lights went out. He assured me that the miners would sort that out on Sunday night by taking their lamps along and turning them on when the light went out!**

**The football club was also important. Barnsley** once won the FA Cup, in 1912, the year that the Titanic sank. They were then famed for the professional Barnsley tackle – **the original Barnsley chop -for which there are humorous cartoons of players from other teams – Arsenal players remember were advised to wear dustbin lids as protection for the professional Barnsley tackling. [Danny Blanchflower story.]** In the 1950s **Barnsley had a three-man defence called Short, Sharp and Swift. They were there in the early 1950s and again in 1957. I like to think that Short was the one at 6 foot 3 inches but have always thought that Short, Sharp and Swift was always the way in which to conduct lectures.**

**Broadening the metaphor of Barnsley sport to sport more generally, this was the age of amateur sport not the professional and highly commercial age of sports in athletics and tennis, etc., that we have today.** Amateur swimmer **Anita Lonsborough** won the Olympic 200 metre breaststroke in 1960. Although a Huddersfield girl she was actually trained at Bradford Swimming Club and had three coaches, one of whom was **Dr. David Wright** who taught History at Huddersfield in the 1970s and 1980s. [He himself had the distinction of being a University Light-Heavyweight champion in the 1950s and once fought **Floyd Patterson in an exhibition bout**, the alternative being Brian London.] **Derek Ibbotson** , who won a Bronze medal in the 5,000 metres in the Olympic Games at Melbourne, 1956 and then 1958 he broke John Landy's 1954 world record for the mile, reducing it from 3. 58 to 3.57.2. He was the first runner to do exactly four minutes for the

mile pm 3 September 1958. **At other levels of professional sport, because I am not going to return to sport again, I have to admit limited knowledge of Huddersfield Town‘** **‘There is only one Andy Booth’** (Actually I have seen them more than Barnsley in the last five years.). [ Contacted last week about the need to spend some time talking about Rugby League, someone who may be in the audience.] **I am aware that Rugby League was formed in Huddersfield at The George Hotel in 1893, have been to the museum, and did watch Bradford Northern, ‘the steam pigs’ in 1966/1967 when the game was transformed mid season by the introduction of the four-tackle rule. I have never seen the Huddersfield Giants, although I understand that certain august members of the University are Giants fans. The Rugby League records have been in the university.**

My nearest other idea interest in sport are horse racing and cricket. In National Hunt racing I have never seen a horse as impressive as Arkle, even though I do see the cream of NH when I go to the Cheltenham Gold Cup every year [with some members of the audience.]. I like cricket and occasionally get in matches at Pudsey St. Lawrence, near where I live, and apart from becoming a more professional game little seems to have changed and the old local league prevails [ Sid Robinson /**Discuss the Farsley v Yorkshire match of 1976** ] Since then more money has come into the game.

**National politics was important in Barnsley but** in some ways rather irrelevant. Labour had a majority of over 25,000 in most general elections and shovelled in the votes. In the local elections there was not much competition, although I do remember that an unpopular outgoing Mayor lose his seat to a Tory. **However, he did the descent thing and dropped dead on the spot. Because of Labour’s domination, I joined the Labour Party in October 1964 just as I had gone to University. I remember it well because at my first meeting – just after Harold Wilson’s Labour government had come to office- one old**

**member shouted up hoping that 'there would be no MacDonaldism here', no** betrayal of the type that MacDonald had been guilty of in the early 1930s. There were hopes that Wilson's new government, advocating the use of 'white heat of this revolution' that which would raise the living standards for all. The deflation of the pound soon put paid to such ambitions. **I will return to national politics and the state later** – but politics has changed and the domination of the two major political parties cannot now be sustained as they once were.

**It was the fourth factor, the Co-operative Movement that** dominated local politics. I was involved, in the 1950s, in distributing manifestoes and circulars for the candidates to be director. This was the most intense electioneering that I had ever seen. The Co-op was a centre of town life. It was a major retailer, offered a funeral service, provided education and sports sponsorship. It sponsored **Dorothy Hyman**, the Barnsley athlete, who won the 100 yards at the Empire Games in 1958 and won silver and bronze medals in the 100 metres and 200 metres, respectively, in the 1960 Rome Olympics. She followed home the famous Wilmer Rudolph. [ **I once ran against Hyman in 1958 – she giving me 30 yards start in a 100 yard race and still beating me. ]**

Barnsley Co-op paid 2s 6 in the £ divi, twice per year. In 1962 it celebrated its centenary of growth and success and offered **£5 of shares for anyone born on 13 March and being 16 and over. I had the double advantage of being 16 years old on the centenary year. The co--op had been formed on 13 March 1862. I was born on the 13 March 1946.**

The co-operative movement has declined and changed in competition with other forms of shopping. The cultural and consumer dominance it had in some communities has now gone. As an aside let me remind you that there was **a big co-op** building in the middle of

Huddersfield. When I first came one had to go through **the butchery department to find the stairs to go up to Oastler College, which** became part of the University. Shortly after Oastler College joined the university the Co-op more or else ceased to operate in that large building.

**Before moving on to education, let me remind you of other things that dominated my memory of the 1950s. and 1960s Barnsley.** There was the Barnsley Feast as Christmas and the Monk Bretton Feast in the autumn of each year. The Monk Bretton Feast was a favourite for me. [**Manor House, pear trees and knife-throwing act, shandy story**] . I also became a **bookie's runner in 1958.** In those days everyone gambled **in small amounts** on the horses, or participated in **'tossing schools'** The Sun Inn, across from my grandfather's rented Manor House at the top of Littleworth Lane had a tossing school outside it [**Explain**] As for horse racing- nearly everybody indulged in small ready-money activities. **Ready-money, off-course gambling was illegal whilst credit betting was legal.** Those arrested for going to the house of a bookie or street betting could be charged £10 whilst that magistrate could go to a phone and place a credit bet on the Queen's horse. I was employed to run on a Saturday by a chap who had been employed by Jordan, who had openly opened two illegal bookies shops in the town ( **one at 2 Huddersfield Road**). I would go to about 30 houses in a morning, gather the bets, and then hopefully return to fewer houses with winnings at the end of the day. Quite a few of those customers were policeman – such was the endemic nature of gambling in most working-class societies.

Continuing in the gambling vein bingo played for money became dominant in the years 1961 to 1968. It had been played extensively since the Great War 1914-1918 as tombola or housey-housey but if played for money or prizes above a certain value was illegal – because it was a lottery. Indeed, when there was an attempt to make small lotteries legal in



1956 but the legislation became even more confusing.. There was a comment by the Conservative MP Bob Boothby. He said that he had been to **Bognor Regis with the Lord Chancellor, the Attorney General and the Speaker of the House at the weekend. They had seen bingo and played it. Now they found out that it was illegal and that they might be before the bench within a week!** Playful it may have been but it reflected the restraints on gambling which, of course, do not exist in the same way today.

**Times have changed in gambling.** What I saw as an endemic part of working-class life, which was manageable and acceptable, is not longer the case. The constraints have gone. One can lose a fortune today through gambling on television, casinos, and perhaps even super casinos. **Having written a book on working-class gambling in 2007 I feel that the relative innocence and innocuousness of gambling in the past is contrasted with the real dangers of the present. The prospects of having supercasinos worries me enormously.**

## **Education**

I went to nursery school in 1950 and moved on to the junior school. All I can remember at the time is taking tin labels to school to pin on to a map of the world to denote where from the Empire the food came from. In 1957 I took my 11 plus and gained an IQ rating of 129 – I know because I was register monitor and IQs were placed in registers – but because Barnsley had only 8 per cent of places at Grammar School I was not successful. Nearby Sheffield with 40 per cent attendance at grammar schools required an IQ of 104 to go the grammar school. However, I passed the 12 plus – with an IQ of 131 – when a new grammar school was opened in Barnsley.

At this time, one of the great achievements of school education – begun at the beginning of the twentieth century – was the school health service. As a young child I had

cod-liver oil tablets and free milk – which I think went on until I was about 14.. At that stage – 11 I think - we had the big examination as one moved school levels– **you coughed and the nurse felt in what was known as ‘cough and drop’. If anything untoward happened the nurse had a ruler! What use it would have been, I have no idea!**

Education, of course, had changed remarkably over the last sixty years. In the 1950s there were **secondary modern schools, technical schools and grammar schools – institutionalised under the 1944 Act.** By the 1960s Labour, under Anthony Crosland, was challenging this tri-partite division for the second education and encouraging the development of comprehensives which are now our high schools. But the 1960s saw other dramatic development and I benefited from the 1950s commitment to the **expansion of higher education at Colleges of Advanced Technology, new provincial red-brick universities, the Open University, and Polytechnics.** There were also quite generous grants in those days in the attempts to increase the higher education sector from being **essentially 7 per cent of the age group** and being substantially male –except for the teacher training colleges for women. I went to **Bradford, Manchester and Lancaster** universities in the 1960s. I was originally going to take economics at Cardiff CAT but did not like the interview and wrote the shortest letter of rejection I have ever sent : **‘I am not coming. Yours sincerely Keith Laybourn’.** I went, without application, to what became Bradford University, with two As and a B. The Chancellor at the University of Bradford was **Harold Wilson,** and I shook his hand at the degree ceremony in 1967. [He keeps figuring in my life.]

I was probably born at the **high water mark of changes in social mobility.** I had a secondary modern and grammar school education, a free university place, and a maintenance grant. My education allowed me to get a job that I wanted at the University of Huddersfield, to purchase a house, and eventually to enjoy a good salary.

**Huddersfield**, is of course, closely connected with developments in higher education. **Brian Jackson**, whose centre overlooks Huddersfield railway station, promoted the idea of part-time higher education and **Harold Wilson**, whose statue graces the frontage of the railway station, saw the Open University as one of his great achievements. Jackson was occasionally employed at Huddersfield Polytechnic and did apply, unsuccessfully, for a senior management post. He died, at the age of 50, on a fun run raising money for educational purposes. He famously wrote, with Dennis Marsden, *Education and the Working Class* 1962 which looked at working-class society, particularly in Huddersfield looking at education.

Commonwealth immigration into Spring Bank/Grove School, the culture of dance, ballroom , sweet Saturday night. It was the inspiration behind many of his projects to give working-class children opportunities at school [ACE] and beyond up to university. One of my former PhD students studied his work [**Kit Hardwick** ] which was examined by Dennis Marsden and that other doyen of working-class education in the 1960s – Richard Hoggart.

When I came **to Huddersfield in 1971 I did** not expect to be here nearly forty-one years later. At that time the student population was around 2,000 to 2,500 and it was about to expand. Of course, it is now at ten times that level. In those days the emphasis was almost exclusively on teaching rather than research but over the last twenty years the move has been, I am glad to say, very much **more towards research**. I was made Professor in 1991 with the intention that the emphasis should change. **My early research was very much on the Independent Labour Party and the Labour Party**, although the emphasis has moved in recent years to philanthropy, women's history, gambling, and now policing.

My work was very much on the **Labour movement** in the West Riding of Yorkshire and the emergence of the Labour Party along lines of class and support from the **trade**

**unions.** I have also written on the trade unions movement, now **an organisation half the size it was 30 years ago.** Times have changed and Labour does not have the working-class base it once had, hence **Ed. Miliband's** appeal to middle England and eschewing of old working-class values which **Harold Wilson** relied upon. I have written on the history **of working-class gambling,** suggesting that by and large it was small-scale between 1900 and the 1960s but severely curtailed by the middle-class churches and National Anti-Gambling League who ensured that ready-money gambling would be illegal whilst credit gambling was legal. It was the middle classes who had greater access to legal credit gambling whilst the working classes had a little bit of a 'flutter'.

My time at **Huddersfield University** has involved teaching in schools, to Local History societies, and to the Historical Association. I have worked with some excellent colleagues – David Wright, Keith Dockray, Bill and Pauline Stafford, Philip Woodfine, Peter Wood, Bill Roberts, David Taylor, Tim Thornton, and Brendan Evans.[ Look to audience.] More recently I have been greatly influenced by Paul Ward, John Shepherd, Barry Doyle, Sarah Bastow and many others in History who have been complemented by Glenn Foard, Richard Morris and Paul Wilcock. There have been many enjoyable moments inside Huddersfield and outside, particularly in connection with outreach work. [ **Samurai warrior** moment with Oriental Studies students .**I remember teaching for the HA underneath a stuffed whale at a museum in Hull. I am invited to lecture this autumn on the history trade unionism in Bradford to the Bradford Trades Council, which is trying to revive its activities this autumn. I have talked on Radio and TV ( Who Do You Think You Are?, General Strike on World Service in a few days time. Talking to school children and the HA figures prominently in my life as well [Stories about Annual Dinner. Also invited to talk about sex and gambling. Opening. Promiscuous author /Hope it is soon then.]**

These are **challenging times, though, for all sections of education.** The guarantees that society would provide all those with ability to develop their educational provision more seems to have been challenged. Grants have been replaced by loans, poorer students are disadvantaged, the funding of universities is being fundamentally changed. However, I think that at **Huddersfield enormous efforts have been made to meet these challenges. The University has achieved high satisfaction returns for the teaching it offers; it has developed increasingly as a centre of research (Andrew Ball); it has excellent contacts with industry and the community; it has raised money to help students to pursue their courses; has always catered to the need of poorer students; and has provided some of the best facilities that I have ever seen in universities. I HAVE BEEN HAPPY AT HUDDERSFIELD.**

#### **Politics and the welfare state.**

The Queen came to the throne in the wake of a two **Attlee Labour** government which, between 1945 and 1951, had created a modern welfare state and NHS. The insurance part owed a great deal to the Liberal government of the pre-1914 years but the nationalised NHS owed everything, to Aneurin( Nye) Bevan. In the 1950s, insofar as I had political heroes, **Bevan** was that hero. Raised in the Welsh valleys as a miner, rising to becoming a mining official, and entering Parliament in 1929 he was considered to be one of the finest orators of his day – **ranking alongside Winston Churchill and David Lloyd George. Lord Professor Peter Hennessey, in his recent talk, clearly saw Bevan as the finest orator of his time.** He could capture the moment – **without re-written and doctored script.** Indeed in the NHS Bill debate at the end of April 1946 he famously suggested that the people of Britain were keenly concerned to have improved health provision and that **‘If a bedpan is dropped in Bedwelty it will resonate around Whitehall’** Of course, he forced through the legislation to create

an NHS as from July 1948. This was in the face of severe resistance from the Tories whom he once describes as '**being lower than vermin**'. They, of course, set up **vermin clubs** to mock his comments. The BMA committee were 'politically poisoned people' . [ Or, '**My one constant source of fiction are newspapers.**']

**Public ownership** was the big issue of the 1950s and Labour fought its own battle on this at the Blackpool Conference in 1959. Bevan's speech had **ethos** (an appeal based upon one character), **pathos** (and appeal based upon emotion), and **logos** (an appeal based upon argument). His speech at the 1959 Labour Party Conference (Blackpool) is often regarded as the amongst the best speech of his political career, is indicative of these skills [Foot 1973: 636-48, quoting the full Conference speech]. In response to Gaitskell's controversial suggestion of the need to bring the Labour Party Constitution up-to-date by removing public ownership since it seems to have lost Labour the 1959 general election, Bevan argued that the appeal to public ownership has been a success, not a failure. Using his stutter effectively, he claimed not to be a particularly religious man, **nor a Communist, but a Social Democrat prepared to recognise that in his childhood he was taught that Christ had driven the money-changers from the Temple. However, emotionally, he noted that the 'money changers had been elevated to the highest position in the land' and that capitalism, based upon inequality, would have to create mass unemployment to create the wealth it promised for some.** Twisting the logic of Gaitskell's position, that nationalisation was a political millstone for Labour. Bevan then noted that **12,250,000 had actually voted for public ownership**, the highest support ever achieved for public ownership, and that the Labour Party needed to support India and other countries in their moves towards public ownership and planned economies. He concluded on a positive note stating that '**I hope that we are going to send from this Conference a message of hope, a message of**

**encouragement, to the youth and to the rest of the world that is listening very carefully to what we are saying. We cannot ‘inject the principles of ethical Socialism into an economy based upon private greed’ and ‘the ideas of history are flowing in our direction’.** He won the day by a powerful combination of personal appeal, emotion and clear logic and public ownership (in the shape of Clause 4) remained in the Labour Party Constitution until 1994. Undoubtedly, the trade union would have ensured that result in 1959 but Bevan reassured the movement of the rightness of its position and the dangers of unfettered capitalism.

The great issue of the last sixty or seventy years has, indeed, been the **role of the state**. After 1945 and until the 1970s, Liberal reformers ‘forged strong, high-taxing and actively interventionist states which could encompass complex mass societies without resorting to violence and repression.’ They replaced the **‘erosion of society by the politics of fear of the 1930s’** with the ‘politics of social cohesion based around collective purposes.’ Are we now moving back to the 1930s – something I thought that no sane people would ever want.

Bevan, in his book *In Place of Fear* (1952) wrote that it was **the way it treated its individual citizens was the mark of a civilized society**. Indeed, in the 1950s until the mid 1970s the state seemed to treat its citizens well in what was essentially a welfare state if universal provision. Nevertheless, the emergence of the modern welfare seemed to be the high mark in decency in British society. **Harold Wilson** advocacy of ‘White Heat revolution ; of Technology’ to stimulate Britain to a new age of prosperity also had a resonance in the 1960s. However, when, in the 1990s, **I wrote a book on the welfare state I began to realise how much it had been stripped** away by *selective* benefits from the mid 1970s under Callaghan and then Thatcher. [Selectivity, Universality, Selectivity]. In the current climate of

Britain it would appear that these selective benefits are to be reduced or abandoned as the current government looks towards cuts.

**The certainties and hopes of the past seem to be being abandoned as I view them from my 1960s viewpoint.** There is a sense of an ending and the loss of old certainties. **God knows what the next generation will do. We seem to be in a generation when a government puts all its faith in the ‘money-changers’ who caused the world economy to crash. It seems to want to want to impose student fees that it never raised at the general election, to impose health reforms which it has no mandate for, and which just about everybody opposes. It seems to want to reduce the standard of living of the vast majority of the people whilst wafting gently, and ineffectually, at bonuses and vast tax avoidance. Capitalism in this form means exploitation and an inequality which I thought we were getting rid of in the 1960s.**

The late **Tony Judt** picked up on this in his last book, with **Timothy Snyder**, called *Thinking the Twentieth Century: Intellectuals and Politics in the Twentieth Century* (2011) and in his recent book *Ill Fares the Land*. Today all the post-war certainties about employment, health, culture, or comfortable retirement have been replaced by a new condition of fear. Judt wrote that **‘It seems to me that the resurgence of fear, and the political consequences it evokes, offers the strongest argument for social democracy that one could possibly make.’**

Perhaps the Labour Party will re-assert such policies instead of meekly accepting the Conservative-Liberal Democratic agenda and Thatcherite views. What we certainly need, is a bout of **Dennis Skinner,** ‘The Beast of Bolsover’ who in 1980 called Jim Prior ‘the minister of unemployment’. His irreverence of the system extended to his utterance of the word **‘resign’** as the Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer (Geoffrey Howe) approached



the despatch box for the first time in the 1979 government. The other day he asked Teresa May if she knew which day it was. To him Harold Wilson was ‘very sharp’ Gordon Brown ‘wouldn’t listen’ and Ed Miliband ‘there’s been an improvement.’ **What Labour needs to do at the present is to develop new policies.**

**[I am aware that the universal welfare state was not a panacea – and that unemployment and poverty persisted under it, Professor Pater Townsend, Sir Douglas Black, Joanna Mack, Stewart Lansley, and others have noted that the old welfare state did not eradicate poverty. Townsend’s *Poverty in the United Kingdom* survey of the 1960s still suggested that there was relative poverty of 25 to 30 per cent. Sir Douglas Black surveys showed the impact of deprivations and that men and women in unskilled households had 2.5 times the chances of dying before retirement as did those of skilled households. Being poor in Britain in 1980 was still very much a matter of life and death. In the 1980s The Thatcher government attempted to block the Black Report indicating these social inequalities/ and it is to the credit of Edward Heath that he fought for that report. Joanna Mack and Stewart Lansley book *Poor Britain* ( 1985) indicates how the Thatcher policies of the 1980s added to poverty and deprivation. Some effort has been made to reduce poverty and children in poverty, but it still remains a problem and I cannot see it declining under the policy being reduced under the present cuts – and it has been suggested that child poverty will increase not decrease. I still believe that poverty would be less under the fully-fledged welfare state that we once had. However, I will be told that this is not possible – even though the rich seem to be getting richer and avoiding taxes.]**

Labour politics and history has been a central theme of my life. As a Labour historian gathering around material on trade unions and the Labour Party, my own reflection and experience here is that in the 1970s **Marian Kozak** came to my house with two snotty-nosed

boys – to look at some document that I had. I never thought that they would make much of themselves. I later discovered that Marion was married to Ralph **Miliband!** **I wonder what happened to them?**

**At this time I joined the Society for the Study of Labour History, of which I am now Secretary .** It shaped my thinking and approach because I came into contact with people who shaped history and shaped thinking. [e.g. **1975 Conference with Robin Page Arnot story, Raymond Chaloner, Pierrpoint family, Guinness.**] It was a powerful force in the study of Labour History in the 1960s and 1970s but has been affected by the decline of trade unionism, the Soviet Union, etc, since the 1980s and the Thatcher era.]

To return to the Labour Party. Its agenda has, of course, been influenced by the loss of traditional areas of working-class control. Indeed, the old Labour support based upon trade unions in the old industrial heartlands has disappeared. Trade union strength of about 8 millions on the immediate post-war years rising to 13 millions in the late 1960s is now down to around six millions.

Indeed, there has been change and if class still survives then it does so in a **less defined and institutionalised** way that it used to. **Consumerism** might have made its contribution to change. Perhaps this is best reflected in Rory Bremner's (Bremner, Bird etc.) dubbing of a two-minute conference speech made by Nye Bevan in the 1950s .

Summary (Bevan tone)

**Comrades, sorry Consumers**

**Welfare state, who wants it? We don't need it**

**Bugger the Trade Union – who needs them?**

**More Bacardi Breezers?**

**More call centres**

**Remember what you want, what you want, what you really , really want**

**Are thousands ringtones on your mobiles -beep, beep, buzz, buzz**

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**IF TIME ALLOWS–REFER TO MY RESEARCH AND CHANGE**

**[Policing and Cars; Women's history]**

Whilst at University I have done research on the changes in the 1930s which were fundamental with the emergence of the car. However, after the Second World War they were also even more fundamental. The number of cars in London rose from 300,000 in London in the early 1950s to 800,000 by the late 1950s and to a couple of million by the late 1960s. As a result there were problems of congestion and this brought in parking metres in the early 1950s (from Oklahoma City and the USA), and the problem of creating parking meter attendants trained and controlled by the police. CCTV cameras first appeared in London in 1960 for the visit of the King of Thailand and were applied in Liverpool in 1964 – reducing car crime in some areas by 50 per cent. The Kirkby Police moved policemen firmly from **their feet to their seats** when Z Cars patrolled the streets of Kirkby – and was later reflected in the series Z cars. Eventually new roads emerged and in 1959 the first motorway emerged when Ernest Marples famously opened the M 1. **Many of us became absorbed by the M1!** Since then the motorway network has been extended, radar has been introduced, and the Buchanan Report suggested – though it has never really occurred – that we need to use smaller cars on the British roads.

I mentioned Germaine Greer earlier, and Sheila Rowbotham, *Hidden from History*. Despite the second-wave feminism of the 1960s and the third-generation feminism of the 1980s connected with Black feminism and different forms of feminist experience – there is still a lamentable lack of female representation in Parliament, and at the highest places in industry.

**RELIGION** has changed substantially in Britain – but there are experts here who can tell you more about than I can.

### **Changes in 60 years: Conclusion**

1. Perhaps the one constant of the last sixty years of change is the **Monarchy. Queen Elizabeth still has constitutional powers, and still keeps the Commonwealth together.** Like her father, George VI, she has attempted to establish close relations with her ‘subjects’. Recently, Peter Hennessy told the story of how George VI, her father, insisted on the Royal Family operating on the rations just as the rest of the British population did after the SWW and that they entertained the wife of one American president with spam for the meal. [The same President wife explained that she had come to Britain to have – and this is how the American and British languages differ – **intercourse with the American troops**’.] Where else but in Britain would you see royalty wearing the pacamacs? Where else but in Britain could we have a **Spitting Image** representation of the Queen and the royal family at breakfast? Indeed on one of those I seem to remember **Spitting Image** (1992) represented her singing at breakfast **‘I will survive’**. The royal link with the nations is re-established in the celebrations of the last sixty years. The Queen who has the sense of continuity and experience which no individual prime minister or government has ever had. Perhaps it might be used to temper policy.

2. **What then is the audit of the last sixty years? Politics has changed, the commitment to a welfare state and state control has expanded and then diminished, sport has changed from the amateur to the more professional and commercial, fashions have changed, and education has been completely transformed – and more people have access to higher education than ever before; the influence of women has expanded in society, etc. although equality of opportunity does not exist.** Yet the undoing of the state, the reduction in the power of local government, attacks on pensions, and the attempt to undermine National Health Service, etc, are dangers which need to be confronted. As Tony Judt stated – all the post-war certainties about employment, health , culture and a comfortable retirement are being replaced by a new condition of fear.’ and demand the revival of social democracy. My optimism still tempers any pessimism I hold for the future and the political and economic events of the last five week do offer me hope that rush towards unfettered capitalism might be halted and that the views of the majority of the nation might be heard and that the **nation might look after its individuals. I was amused by Simon Hoggart’s column in The Guardian, 26 March 2012**

‘We arrived at Westminster to hear that Jeremy Hunt had done the decent thing – he had gone away with a revolver and a bottle of whisky, and shot an underling.’