

Thomas Cooper in Leicester, 1840-1843

by Stephen Roberts

Mention the name of Thomas Cooper to a nineteenth century historian and he or she will invariably identify him as 'the Chartist'. Though Cooper was an autodidact *par excellence*, a poet and a novelist and, for over twenty years, an itinerant preacher, he is remembered, first and foremost, as 'General' of the Leicester Chartists. In truth this is hardly surprising. No less than one quarter of Cooper's widely read autobiography, published in 1872, is devoted to an account of the two and a half years which preceded his imprisonment.¹ These years were undeniably the most important of Cooper's life. In 1840 he was a radical local journalist. Three years later he was a state prisoner. Leicester became a Chartist stronghold in the early 1840s, and membership of the N.C.A. eclipsed other centres of support. Cooper became the fiery champion of the Chartists. Charismatic, energetic and confident, he inspired the loyalty of thousands of working men and women. In the market place on a Sunday evening he came to symbolize their defiance, and their hopes for the future.

Not surprisingly Leicester Chartism has been written about by several historians. Robert Conklin, an American academic who published a biography of Cooper in 1935, was the first of these.² Though Conklin possessed a genuine affection for his subject, his account of Cooper's Leicester years, like much of the rest of his book, is long winded, disconnected and unconvincing in some of its judgements. It was in the 1950s that A. Temple Patterson and J.F.C. Harrison produced their accounts of Leicester Chartism.³ Patterson's narrative, commendably based on an extensive use of local newspaper sources, is unfortunately marred by his conviction that Cooper, from an early stage, decided to seek control of the Chartist movement, and, eventually, intended supplanting Feargus O'Connor.⁴ According to Patterson, Cooper became leader of the Chartists in Leicester, and afterwards in the county, as he strove to fulfill his ambition. Such an interpretation attempts to rationalize to too great a degree Cooper's two and a half years in Leicester. At one point Patterson almost certainly misread the evidence.⁵ The standard account of Leicester Chartism is usually regarded as Harrison's. His portrayal of Cooper's activities, however, is brief, and adds only a few facts and figures, mainly derived from the *Northern Star*, to the account in the autobiography. Thirty or so years have elapsed since both Patterson and Harrison wrote about Cooper, and new primary evidence has since emerged. For several reasons therefore a re-examination of Cooper's Leicester career seems justified.

Cooper was already thirty-five when he arrived in Leicester at the end of November 1840 to become a reporter for the *Leicestershire Mercury*. Behind him lay important experiences in Lincolnshire and London as an autodidact, Methodist preacher and radical journalist. Cooper's earlier life should not be ignored by those interested specifically in his Chartist years. In many ways it points to what was to happen in Leicester. Cooper spent the first thirty years of his life in Gainsborough, though it was in Leicester on 20 March 1805 that he was born. He was illegitimate and had a half sister, Ann, personal detail omitted from the autobiography.⁶ Ann, who became a domestic servant in Gainsborough, remained fond of her brother, reading his Chartist journals and, when he failed to answer her letters,

confessing to having 'such queer dreams about him'.⁷ Cooper's astonishing feats of self education in Gainsborough are vividly re-created in the autobiography.⁸ Proof of what he achieved can be found in his extraordinary prison-poem, the *Purgatory of Suicides*, published in 1845. Though at times tedious and difficult to understand, the poem was an undeniable achievement on Cooper's part and deserves better than the unqualified disregard it has received from academics.⁹ Cooper's youthful self education should not be seen just as a quest in itself, largely unrelated to his later radical career. It in fact ensured that his radicalism bore a very special stamp. Shakespeare, Milton, Hampden and Sydney all featured prominently in his radical vocabulary. The Leicester Chartists became known as the Shakespearians.¹⁰ Cooper came to see himself and the Chartists as nothing less than latter day Commonwealthmen.

The seven years before Cooper arrived in Leicester were spent in Lincoln and, for a short period, in London. In Gainsborough Cooper had become a Methodist preacher, but a quarrel with the local superintendent had ended with his departure for Lincoln in November 1833. Very energetic and utterly sincere in his religious opinions, Cooper had come to believe that the superintendent was neglecting his duties and had attempted to fill the role himself.¹¹ It was as a Methodist preacher that Cooper first learned to command his audiences. Before his arrival in Leicester he was already adept at delivering emotional, highly charged speeches based on passages from the Bible.

Lincoln was a different world to the young and inexperienced Cooper. He became involved in the Mechanics Institute and the Choral Society. His prodigious energy and his desire to assert his own leadership are evident in his activities in these years. At the Mechanics Institute he became a member of the committee and soon afterwards established classes in Latin and French. When the curator resigned in December 1835, Cooper put himself forward as successor. His offer, however, was not taken up, and, characteristically, he soon lost interest and eventually had to be removed from the committee for non-attendance. For a few years Cooper was the wilful secretary of the Choral Society. He ran the society singlehandedly. Inevitably there were protests, and, in January 1837, he finally resigned as secretary of what his opponents derided as 'Cooper's Society'.¹² Already, though, Cooper had new preoccupations. In summer 1836 he had become full time Lincoln correspondent for the *Lincoln, Rutland and Stamford Mercury*. The staid old business newspaper, formerly enlivened by occasional references to the weight of pigs, became for two years the scourge of the cathedral clergy and the local Tories. In his self assumed role as public defender, Cooper scrutinised the activities of the cathedral clergy.¹³ At the same time, like two other men who later became Chartists, Thomas Sidaway in Gloucester and Richard Spurr, in Truro, he led a successful campaign against church rates.¹⁴

Reading Cooper's contributions to the *Mercury*, it becomes clear that when he arrived in Leicester, far from being ignorant of politics as Harrison asserted, he was already a radical.¹⁵ In Lincoln he eulogistically supported the cause of the novelist-politician, Edward Bulwer, often poking fun at his Tory opponent, Colonel Sibthorp.¹⁶ In the *Mercury* Cooper canvassed support for household suffrage, though he was not critical when C.H. Churchill, who contested Lincoln with Bulwer in 1837, subsequently announced his conversion to manhood suffrage.¹⁷ Shorter parliaments and the ballot were also urged on the Lincoln electorate by Cooper.¹⁸ These opinions were also put forward by Cooper in the *Kentish Mercury*, *Gravesend Journal* and *Greenwich Gazette* which he edited, after his arrival in London and unsuccessful bid for literary notoriety, between March and September 1840.¹⁹ In 1840 Cooper regarded himself as a Liberal. He had written in favour of an extension of the franchise (and praised Chartist leaders, William Lovett and John Collins), the ballot, partial redistribution of the constituencies, shorter parliaments

and corn law repeal.²⁰ He was critical of the 1834 Poor Law and the 1839 Rural Police Act.²¹ Though Cooper's path to Chartism was certainly very different to that of the majority of others who subsequently also emerged as the movement's leaders, it cannot be doubted that he was a man of radical opinions when he arrived in Leicester. This said, Cooper's conversion to the Chartist cause was still a very significant break with his own past. His radical stance before 1840 was acceptable to early Victorian provincial society. In Leicester he became the full time leader of an ultra radical movement.

When Cooper was arrested in Leicester on 26 August 1842, just over one week after the outbreak in the Potteries, the omnibus which took him to the railway station was forced to stop on a number of occasions because of the large crowd which had gathered — many of whom thrust their hands through the open windows for a final handshake.²² In Leicester that summer there were well over two and a half thousand Chartists. Bonds of affection between Cooper and his followers were strong. Like young Tom Goadby, many 'worshipped me mightily...'²³ Truly enough, Cooper wrote that he 'wield[ed]...a more powerful influence than any Chartist leader in England, except our chief'.²⁴ In 1842 he was the Feargus O'Connor of Leicester, determined to 'bear like the Turk no brother near the throne'. How did he become leader of the Leicester Chartists?

Cooper's employment as a reporter for the *Leicestershire Mercury* in fact proved to be short lived. At first the editor, H.A. Collier, himself a supporter of manhood suffrage, had raised no objections to Cooper assisting the local Chartist journal, the *Midland Counties Illuminator*, which had first appeared, under the editorship of George Bown, on 1 January 1841. Soon afterwards, however, probably early in February 1841, Collier gave Cooper notice to leave. As Patterson has indicated, Cooper was dismissed because of the hostility manifest in his articles in the *Illuminator* to the Leicester employers, whom he charged with responsibility for the sufferings of the stockingers.²⁵ These articles, though they only gave voice to feelings long prevalent in Leicester among working men, ran in direct contradiction to Collier's own deeply held belief in the need to seek class conciliation. Consequently on 6 March 1841, after just fifteen weeks, Cooper's employment as a reporter for the *Leicestershire Mercury* came to an end.

By this time, however, Cooper had already established himself as editor of the *Illuminator*, and was able to dismiss any thoughts of returning to London. Six issues of the journal had been produced by Bown, but these had not sold well and substantial debts had been accumulated for paper and printing. Cooper, however, was determined to make the *Illuminator* succeed. 'I don't care for myself', he told the committee of shareholders on being appointed editor, 'I will live on a crust to make this paper answer. I have been cramped in my sentiments wherever I have been, but now I hope to have full scope'.²⁶ The shareholders agreed to pay him a salary of two pounds each week, and the first (enlarged) issue under Cooper's editorship appeared on 13 February 1841.²⁷ The precise period which elapsed between Cooper being appointed editor and assuming total control of the journal, including responsibility for its debts, after the shareholders could no longer pay his salary, cannot be established with complete certainty. Undoubtedly there are contradictions in the evidence. The recollections of both John Seal and John Markham suggest that Cooper became owner of the *Illuminator* about one month after taking over the editorship from Bown.²⁸ The non-insertion in the journal of a notice requesting business letters to be sent to Henry Green, secretary of the committee of shareholders, after the issue of 13 March 1841, the fifth week of Cooper's editorship, seems to confirm this. One historian, however, has suggested that it was not until a later date that Cooper took over complete control of the *Illuminator*. According to the corrective of Robert Barnes, he did not become owner until the end of May 1841, just before the journal ceased to exist. Barnes'

assertions, however, should be treated with circumspection: he offers no conclusive evidence to back up his claims, and throughout the article his dislike of Cooper is barely disguised.²⁹

In truth none of this is of great consequence. What is important is that there was to be no major revival for the *Illuminator* under Cooper, either as editor or owner. The journal was advertised in the *Star* and despatched to London, Derby, Nottingham, Loughborough and Kettering, but large numbers still remained unsold. Cooper, after a discussion with Markham, wrote to Perronet Thompson, a veteran radical who contributed a weekly letter to the *Illuminator*, asking for money to continue the journal. He was rebuffed, and only received a loan of ten pounds after he invited Thompson to stand in Leicester at the next election. John Walter, the proprietor of *The Times*, who contested Nottingham in a by election in April 1841, gave another five pounds after Cooper printed his election address in the *Illuminator*.³⁰ This Cooper used to help pay off some of the journal's long standing debt to its printer, Albert Cockshaw.

The *Illuminator* was a fine Chartist journal. Written for the most part by Cooper, it also contained interesting contributions from James Sweet and Henry Vincent.³¹ Its four pages each week were devoted largely to Chartist politics. 'It would be easy to throw into our pages an infusion of nonsense', Cooper wrote in the second issue under his editorship, 'but we have a serious object in view'.³² The *Illuminator* finally came to an end in May 1841. Cooper had been responsible for keeping the journal alive for so long, and twice he had saved it from closure — first when Bown gave up the editorship and subsequently when he took over the ownership from the shareholders. But there was little he could do when Cockshaw refused to print any further editions. Cooper, discounting the *Illuminator's* debts, sought out an explanation for its demise, and found it in the Whigs, often the victims of bitter censure in the pages of his journal, whom he now claimed had brought pressure to bear on Cockshaw. Working class hatred of the Whigs, responsible for the 1834 Poor Law, the transportation of John Frost, Zephaniah Williams and William Jones, and the imprisonment of many Chartists, was intense in summer 1841, and, in the weeks following the final issue of the *Illuminator*, Cooper's biting attacks continued in full spate.³³ The *Illuminator*, however, was gone: Cooper was left with an impressive collection of back copies, a large debt, and an immensely strengthened position as a leader of Leicester Chartism.

For the rest of 1841 Cooper continued to press ahead with his efforts to establish a successful Chartist journal in Leicester. The *Illuminator* was succeeded by the ephemeral *Chartist Rushlight*, a halfpenny journal whose sharp anti-Whig tone ensured that it sold well amongst local Tories during the election excitement of summer 1841, and then, from July to November 1841, by the *Extinguisher*, which, like the *Illuminator*, made a financial loss.³⁴ On the very first issue Cooper lost ten shillings, a debt which increased every week until, after twenty-two numbers, he was compelled to call a halt. Cooper had tried hard to make the *Extinguisher* pay: the price had been reduced from three halfpence to one halfpenny, and collections had been made to support the journal. Thomas Duncombe, the radical MP for Hertfordshire, also donated ten pounds, but most of this was used to pay off some of the *Illuminator's* debts.³⁵ Sales of the *Extinguisher*, however, remained inadequate. In Melton Mowbray, Gideon Cooke sadly reported to Cooper in October 1841, there was 'a very slack sale' (sic).³⁶

In his autobiography Cooper refused to discuss his bitter arguments with John Markham in winter 1841-2.³⁷ This should not surprise us. His escape from the Potteries in August 1842 made far more exciting reading. Besides there seemed little point in recollecting old quarrels. The Chartists, he believed, deserved better than to be remembered for their

arguments. Though Cooper could set aside his rupture with Markham, an historian cannot. The immediate background to the dispute lay in Cooper's growing ascendancy in the local movement. Since early 1841 he had been in effect a full time Chartist organiser, unlike Markham who remained a shoemaker. He began to preach and to lecture, and also devised a plan to reorganise the local Chartist body.³⁸ At first the old leaders welcomed the new vigour which Cooper brought to Chartism. 'I was the greatest man he ever saw', Cooper recalled of Markham's attitude, 'He thought it quite providential that such a man should have come among the Chartists'.³⁹ There were only two dissenters, John Seal and William Burden, active Chartists from the beginning, who objected to Cooper's enthusiastic endorsement of O'Connor's Chartist-Tory alliance, a tactic advanced by Cooper on the grounds that the Whigs would be 'driven to the Charter...by the Tories being placed in office'.⁴⁰ Doubtless Seal and Burden also caught wind of Cooper's financial dealings with the Tories: 'a considerable sum'⁴¹ of Tory money, probably about one hundred pounds, passed through his hands in order that he could secure Chartist (and other) support for the Tory candidates in the borough and county elections. None of this money Cooper retained for himself, though he had no hesitation in accepting a number of unspecified personal payments from individual Tories.⁴² To Seal these arrangements only 'prostituted their principles at the shrine of Toryism...'⁴³ The upshot was that on nomination day in Leicester in June 1841 he publicly denounced Cooper, an act which earned him a vehement reply, and severed all connexions with the local Chartists.⁴⁴ Ironically, nearly two years later, in March 1843, Cooper himself was to identify the Tory alliance as a chief cause of Chartism's failure.⁴⁵

It was evident that by autumn 1841 that all was not well between Cooper and Markham. By this time Cooper had taken effective control of the local movement, though Markham had, to some extent, conceded this to him, and had not been just shouldered aside. Markham had stood 'aloof from active exertion',⁴⁶ declining, for example, Cooper's invitation to assist him in his Sunday preaching, an activity which contributed substantially to Cooper's growing popularity with the Leicester Chartists. It was clear that such lack of assistance irritated Cooper, and helped prepare the ground for his confrontation with Markham. There was, however, another factor: Cooper's devotion to O'Connor. Hero worship came easily to him, and, even if he was not alone in Leicester in his admiration for O'Connor, he certainly led the way. To Cooper, O'Connor 'possessed...greater political foresight than all the other leaders of Chartism put together',⁴⁷ though such an assertion, he declared, 'is not the language of personal idolatry. It is simply a candid confession of proper and deserved attachment...'⁴⁸ As early as March 1841 Cooper had demonstrated the strength of his attachment to O'Connor by organising a Leicester petition, which Duncombe had agreed to present to the House of Commons, to secure the Chartist leader's release from York Castle. Two months later he conceived a plan for O'Connor to stand in Leicester at the next election, together with Perronet Thompson. Feargus' candidature was enthusiastically proclaimed in the *Illuminator*.⁴⁹ Markham, however, did not share Cooper's excitement, and kept his 'hands...at his awl and would not budge one inch to help me'.⁵⁰ 'I'll raise such a hell of a row about your ears',⁵¹ Cooper threatened, but to no avail. O'Connor was not destined to stand in Leicester, and neither was Thompson, who instead took himself off to be defeated elsewhere. Cooper, however, was by no means discouraged by this setback. When O'Connor was released from York Castle in August 1841, after eighteen months, Leicester rejoiced in no uncertain terms: Cooper decorated his shop in High Street with flowers, flags and a portrait of Feargus, and organised a jamboree of eating, dancing and singing which went on until early morning. Markham joined in the celebrations, even if he did not share Cooper's intense admiration for

O'Connor. Markham in fact held Lovett in great esteem, and, earlier in the year, had even considered writing him a letter of consolation after O'Connor had secured his ejection from mainstream Chartism. It was Markham's sympathies for Lovett, his lukewarm support for O'Connor's proposed candidature and his refusal to assist with Sunday preaching that finally led Cooper to fix on him the public appellation of 'Judas', though Cooper subsequently claimed that this sobriquet pre-dated his own arrival in Leicester. 'I am willing to work with you as before', Cooper declared, '[though] it is but little that you have worked with me'.⁵² Markham responded in a series of aggrieved private letters. 'Your attempts to injure me in the estimation of friends', he wrote to Cooper early in December 1841, 'are still continued by representing me as an unreasonable man, determined to perpetuate strife in the society'.⁵³ Cooper, however, had no doubts that justice was on his side. 'Can you divine no reason', he asked Markham, 'why I used the epithet "Judas" with regard to you?'⁵⁴

By January 1842 bitter public recrimination had broken out between Cooper and Markham. Cooper continued to assert what he saw as Markham's disloyalty to the Chartist cause. For his part, Markham accused Cooper of dictatorial behaviour. Cooper, he claimed, had flouted the constitution that he himself had written, and had often threatened to divide the local Chartists. George Wray, who was to remain a prominent Leicester Chartist into the 1850s, supported Markham in a public letter to Cooper:

'You cannot but remember when Scotton voted for Markham being secretary, how you lifted up your hands, with eyes turned up, and cried out, "Now I must leave you. I cannot act for you. Mr Scotton has voted against me. I must leave you"; which raised a general cry among the women and boys as usual, "No, Mr Cooper, you must not leave us"; and then you repeated the old feeler, "Will you support me?", and that has been your constant cry since you came among us'.⁵⁵

Markham also accused Cooper of financial irregularity, a sensitive issue amongst Chartists. Cooper was quick to deny these charges. He had 'never received a farthing from O'Connor ... Let Judas ask him',⁵⁶ and, as for approaching the Tories for money for the *Illuminator*, it was 'a lie... gratuitous and unqualified'.⁵⁷ There could be no disavowal, however, of Markham's charge that Cooper had sought to impose his own leadership on the Leicester Chartists. Cooper's reply in fact was remarkable both for its honesty and its degree of self knowledge:

'I am a despot in nature, that is perfectly true; and every strong willed man is a natural despot; but a despot is not always a tyrant, nor am I one. I cannot help feeling strongly: my constitution was given to me by my Maker. I cannot help my tendency to prefer my own views to other people's. I have acquired all I know amidst suffering and privation, and in the face of opposition and scorn. A self educated man is always strongly opinionated — for he feels he owes his mental superiority to no other man's teaching. Such a man is ever jealous of other people's control — and is never likely to seek fetters for his opinions'.⁵⁸

There can be no doubt that, convinced of his own 'mental superiority', Cooper did seek directing control of Leicester Chartism, and experienced great difficulty in working in unison with others. It should also be recognised, however, that, in spite of any earlier threats he may have made, he did not wish to cause division. Cooper was anxious to maintain unity around his own leadership in Leicester, and that of O'Connor nationally, and envisaged Markham and the other old leaders serving as loyal lieutenants. He made several attempts to seek reconciliation with Markham at the end of 1841, but on each occasion was met by 'refusals... to take my hand when I offered it to him'.⁵⁹ A permanent breach had now become inevitable, and, in mid-January 1842, Cooper himself advocated

just such a step. One week later O'Connor visited Leicester, and Markham and his supporters were excluded from the platform.⁶⁰ The N.C.A. made an attempt to end the quarrel by sending John Campbell to Leicester, but without success. Leicester Chartism was now divided into two unequal groups. Significantly, it was Cooper's Shakespearean Association which retained the loyalty of most Chartists.

In the months which followed Cooper tried to reunite the local movement. A deputation was sent to Markham's All Saints Chartists in April 1842, but the olive branch was rejected.⁶¹ Even when Cooper stood up in the middle of a lecture by William Dean Taylor, organised by the All Saints Chartists, the following month to urge unity and to accept some of the blame for the division himself, he was spurned. The action also cost him the support of J.G. Brooks, secretary of the Hinckley Chartists:

I do not approve of...your conduct in disturbing the lecture of Mr Taylor & branding him as a man hired by the Whiggs [sic] to sow discord amongst us and destroy Chartism. Your general conduct is too arbitrary & tyrannical, & on these accounts I must discontinue my contributions to your paper. I cannot approve of tyranny in any shape'.⁶²

To the All Saints Chartists, content with the connexions with such O'Connorite dissidents as Bronterre O'Brien and Henry Vincent and their membership of 168,⁶³ Cooper became known as 'King Tom, the tyrant'. Not until Cooper's arrest was there a thaw in relations between the two groups.

Cooper's radicalism was of a very emotional nature. He had been spurred into advocacy of Chartism by exposure to the plight of the Leicester stockingers:

'... 'twas gnawing hunger's pain
I saw your lank and fainting forms reveal,
Poor trampled stockingers! — that made me feel
'Twas time to be in earnest, nor regard
Man's freedom merely as a theme for zeal
In hour's of emulous converse, or for bard
Weaving rapt fancies in pursuit of Fame's reward'.⁶⁴

In Lincoln Cooper 'never knew what poverty was...I could not have believed that such squalid degradation, such intense misery, existed...'⁶⁵ But now, in 1842, he received letters which told the full story of the stockingers' misery:

'Friend, think what must have been my feelings on last Sunday morning to lay in bed and here my wife sighing and lispings, well Sunday's here & nothing to eat. And then the poor little infant crying for suck and there was none, no the little nourishment was dried up & gone & had it not been for a friend who brought a little not one morsel should we have had with the Exception of a mouthful of Bread, & that friend was next neighbour for we had neither meat, flower, Potatoes, milk, Tea, Sugar, Coffee nor nothing else & no money not even one halfpenny to come to school with' (sic).⁶⁶

Such hideous poverty greatly distressed Cooper, and he became increasingly angry. His speeches grew fiercer. At the head of his Shakespeareans he began to march through the streets of Leicester in early evening, defiantly singing Chartist hymns and striking genuine fear into the hearts of local shopkeepers. Those who, in Cooper's eyes, sought to divide and weaken Chartism at a time of such great suffering did not escape his wrath. Both O'Brien, in June 1842, and Vincent, the following month, had their meetings in Leicester, organised by the All Saints Chartists, broken up by Cooper's Shakespeareans, much to the delight of George Julian Harney: 'How nobly you tackled O'Brien. What a treacherous humbug he is...'⁶⁷

Though not himself a stockinger, Cooper was able to convey to his followers a very real

sense of identification. At the same time he gave an impression of superiority, probably most obvious in the way he spoke and which the stockingers encountered only in their employers. Cooper's frequent references to the Bible and the struggles of the past served to strongly legitimize the Chartist cause. His radical sermons and the hymns of William Jones and John Henry Bramwich gave Leicester Chartism strong religious overtones, one of its most distinctive features. To Cooper the struggles of the Commonwealths and the Chartists were almost interchangeable. 'Our cause is one with that for which "Hampden bled in the field and Sydney died on the scaffold"', he wrote in July 1842, 'We think too meanly of it by far'.⁶⁸ He saw himself (in an early draft of the *Purgatory* written in autumn 1842) as a latter day Commonwealthsman:

'Hampden and Pym and Eliot — product rare...
I burned to reinstate that lofty time —
Those lofty deeds — within my fatherland
Once more...'⁶⁹

The Leicester Chartists became very familiar with the struggles of the Commonwealths-men. Within little over a month of becoming editor of the *Illuminator* Cooper had begun a lengthy series of romanticised front page portraits of Hampden, Eliot and Pym.⁷⁰ His most ambitious (and best) Chartist journal, which included letters from Feargus, an abundance of verse and an account of the untimely demise of Charles I, was even named after his heroes. This harmonizing with the past, however, did not guarantee the *Commonwealthsman* success.⁷¹ In all twenty issues were published, intermittently, between December 1841 and June 1842. At first the journal sold well enough, but, after the early issues had appeared, sales began to fall off. The circulation in Melton Mowbray, for example, which in December 1841 had stood at twenty one a week, had declined by April 1842 to just four a week.⁷² The *Commonwealthsman* was not the only means Cooper used to remind his fellow Chartists of those who had gone before them. He lectured on the lives of his heroes, and Hampden, Sydney, Pym and Milton all had classes named after them in his adult school. The point was certainly not lost on some Leicester Chartists who, after Cooper's departure from the town, organised a Hampden section amongst their own numbers.⁷³

From the Commonwealths-men Cooper derived his belief in the ultimate triumph of the Chartist cause, and his support for republicanism and a defensive use of force.⁷⁴ Like most Chartists, Cooper believed that it was legitimate to fight in self defence against violent repression by the ruling class. The Commonwealths-men, he asserted in the *Illuminator*, had believed in the right of resistance.⁷⁵ He asked in one Chartist hymn in 1842:

'God of power! — is it true,
"We are many, they are few"?'
Why, then, drag we still the chain?
Better to be with the slain...

Better like brave Hampden die,
With the sword upon our thigh;
Better like brave Sydney fall,
Bold and blithe, at freedom's call...'⁷⁶

There is no evidence, however, that Cooper's rhetoric of fighting and martyrdom ever served as an impetus for arming amongst the Leicester Chartists; possibly, it may actually have held that in check. Certainly Cooper himself never handled a weapon during his period of leadership there. Moreover, he spoke of the insurrection at Newport in November 1839

in disapproving terms, though, very likely, his attitude would have been different had it not ended so disastrously.⁷⁷

In the localities the Chartist struggle was sustained on a week-to-week basis by a variety of cultural activities. Schools, lectures, readings from the *Star* and tea parties were widespread, ensuring that, for many, their commitment to the Chartist cause became a part of their everyday lives. Leicester, under Cooper's leadership, provides one of the most interesting examples of this cultural side of the Chartist movement. Typical of the leisure activities organised by the Leicester Chartists were the lectures, recitations, tea parties, dancing and singing which celebrated Christmas 1841 and Whitsuntide 1842. Cooper was especially concerned to foster feelings of intellectual self-respect amongst his followers. The back page of the *Illuminator* was filled each week with extracts from the works of William Hazlitt, Mary Wollstonecroft, Thomas Paine and many others. From March 1841 he began to deliver regular lectures. History, literature, geography and geology were the main subjects for these discourses. He did, however, make some forays into more unusual areas, including astronomy and phrenology, the latter of which was subsequently developed to include demonstrations of mesmerism. Cooper's lectures were well received: the Chartists 'wedged the room'⁷⁸ where they met to hear him, and one anonymous correspondent felt sure that the lectures would 'elevate the minds of the working classes and fit them for the exercise of every right and privilage man is heir to' (sic).⁷⁹ Even Markham, it seems, was moved to 'ecstatic delight'.⁸⁰

On 16 January 1842 Cooper opened his adult school, funded in part by a weekly subscription of one halfpenny, but mainly by donations obtained from local shopkeepers and householders after personal visits by Cooper: of the £10 4s. ½d. raised in the school's first six weeks only £3 2s. 0d. came from the Chartists themselves. From the figures provided by Cooper for subscriptions collected in the school it is possible to calculate the numbers who attended the first six meetings:⁸¹

	<i>Subscriptions</i>		<i>Attendance</i>
16 January	7s.	1d.	170
21 January	10s.	9d.	258
6 February	11s.	1d.	266
13 February	11s.	5d.	274
20 February	11s.	8d.	280
27 February	10s.	0d.	240

The classes were named after Cooper's heroes from the past and leading Chartists, including James Leach, Peter McDouall, and Frost, Williams and Jones. Cooper himself taught a teachers' class, named, predictably enough, after O'Connor. Some books were donated to the school, but the bulk had to be bought. The first books purchased were fifteen copies of Cobbett's *Legacy to Labour*, together with six dozen copies of his spelling book, twenty six copies of Channing's *Self Culture*, thirteen copies of his *Elevation of the Labouring Class*, twenty six copies of Paine's *Common Sense*, and twenty copies of Campbell's *Corn Laws*. This expenditure, totalling £7 11s. 3½d., together with payments for rent, repairs and fires, ensured that, by the end of February, the school was 17s. 3d. in debt. Soon after, probably in May 1842, as the hardship confronting the stockingers grew worse and they lost all interest in learning, the whole enterprise had to be abandoned.⁸²

A fuller and more lasting expression of the intellectual self-awareness Cooper sought to inspire amongst his Shakespearean came perhaps in his creation of a small cell of Chartist poets. The *Shakespearean Chartist Hymn Book*, which first appeared in summer 1842, collected together thirty or so Leicester hymns, mainly written by Bramwich and Jones.⁸³ Bramwich, a soldier-turned-stockinger, died of consumption at the age of forty-two in

1846, 'a system-murdered man'⁸⁴ in his own words. He wrote a genuinely poignant hymn which was sung at the graveside of Samuel Holberry, who died incarcerated in York Castle in June 1842, but unfortunately little else of his verse has survived.⁸⁵ Jones, a glove-hand in his early thirties in 1841-2, was an abundantly productive working class poet.⁸⁶ He continued to produce verse long after Cooper's departure from Leicester, culminating in the publication in 1849 of his extended poem, *The Spirit; or A Dream in the Woodlands*, and, four years later, of his non-combative *Poems*.⁸⁷ He died in January 1855, aged forty seven.⁸⁸

Cooper himself appears to have written little verse during his time in Leicester. Although widely credited with the introduction of Chartist hymn signing, he published just three hymns⁸⁹. The Chartists believed, however, that he was also the author of probably the most famous Chartist song, the paean to O'Connor, the 'Lion of Freedom'. The song first appeared in the *Star*, without any identification of author, in September 1841, at the time of O'Connor's release from York Castle.⁹⁰ If Cooper was responsible, it was unlike him not to append his name. He subsequently denied authorship in fact, attributing the song to an unknown Welsh female Chartist.⁹¹ It is possible, however, that Cooper may well have written the song, though there can be no certain proof of this. The choice of words seems to suggest him. He also did an immense amount to popularize the song, giving every impression that it was one of his own. He concluded nearly all his Leicester meetings with a rousing chorus, included the song in his *Shakespearean Chartist Hymn Book*, and sang it wherever he went in 1842. By 1848 the 'Lion of Freedom' was sufficiently the property of the Leicester Chartists for Jones to re-write it.⁹²

On 9 August 1842 Cooper left Leicester at the beginning of his ill-fated journey to the Chartist conference in Manchester.⁹³ He was already in a state of great excitement. His tour of the north in mid-July had been greeted with great enthusiasm and, at the beginning of August, together with O'Connor and the Chartists, he had supported Joseph Sturge in the second Nottingham by-election.⁹⁴ In the Potteries, which he travelled through on his way to Manchester, Cooper reached a fever pitch of emotional excitement. At last he could sense Chartism coming to a head, and was determined to play a decisive role in that climax. 'Now do not be alarmed, my dear love, if they take me a prisoner', he wrote to Susanna, his wife, 'Run away, I cannot. Latimer would not — Christ would not. My sweet love will not expect me to act cowardly'.⁹⁵ Passionately he called, on the Crown Bank in Hanley on the morning of 15 August, for a dramatic show of numbers in support of the Charter, though he genuinely did not expect the turnout to lead to the destruction of property.⁹⁶ 'The Queen thinks everything shd. be done to apprehend this *Cooper...*',⁹⁷ Victoria wrote to Sir Robert Peel the day after the outbreak ended. Cooper was duly arrested, and, on 11-12 October, stood trial for arson. He was acquitted. 'This trial has been one of great interest for they panted for his blood', Thomas Winters, leader of the Leicester stockingers, wrote to Susanna, 'As soon as the verdict was given, I went and had a glass of Brandy... Excuse writing more for I am up to the neck in joy and so we all are'.⁹⁸ As if to demonstrate his resilience, Cooper returned to Leicester immediately after his release from Stafford Gaol in November 1842. Here he spent the remaining four months of his freedom.

In Leicester Cooper resumed his lectures, informing the stockingers, on one occasion, about Chinese history.⁹⁹ The Shakespeareans also performed several plays, including John Home's *Douglas* and, with Cooper in the title role, *Hamlet*.¹⁰⁰ It was during these months that Cooper and Markham took the first steps towards renewing their former friendship, undoubtedly brought about by the fate which had befallen Cooper. When a fund was set up for Cooper in Leicester in November 1844, Markham made a generous contribution.¹⁰¹ There was, however, discord in the ranks of the Shakespeareans in winter 1842-3, which

Cooper found difficult to quell. The dissension of Robert Jackson, one of Cooper's main lieutenants, and James Duffy, an Irish Chartist imprisoned after the abortive Sheffield rising in January 1840, was perhaps an early indication of how attitudes amongst some Shakespeareans to Cooper were to change during his long imprisonment.¹⁰²

The arrest and first trial of Cooper had finally confirmed him as a national leader of Chartism, and, during the months before his second trial, he turned his mind increasingly to the future of the movement. He was determined, he wrote in one of a number of letters published in the *Star*, to see Chartism grow in strength.¹⁰³ For a time he believed that this might be accomplished by an alliance with Joseph Sturge's Complete Suffrage Union.¹⁰⁴ Cooper had in fact initially been hostile to the C.S.U., denouncing in the *Commonwealthsman* those Chartists who supported the new group.¹⁰⁵ During his first imprisonment, however, he experienced a change of mind. The strikes of the summer had been defeated, and, after conversations with Arthur O'Neill and William Prowting Roberts, both of whom had signed a declaration supporting Sturge's initiative, he became convinced, for a short period, of the value of an alliance between middle class and working class radicals. O'Connor remained opposed to any alliance with the C.S.U., and Cooper's flirtation was soon over. His attempts to establish cordial relations with the C.S.U. in Leicester ended in complete failure. He was denounced for his support for O'Connor, and for his involvement in the outbreak in the Potteries. 'His reckless violence will doubtless not be forgotten at his trial', the Revd. J.P. Mursell, the local C.S.U. leader, declared, 'Nor, we trust, in his sentence'.¹⁰⁶ The Leicester supporters of the C.S.U. refused to join with the Chartists in sending delegates to a C.S.U. conference in Birmingham in December 1842. 'I will not sit in a conference where Cooper is', Mursell pronounced, 'I will have no share in a deputation with such a fellow, and I know he will be elected'.¹⁰⁷ The Birmingham conference, which Cooper attended as a delegate, was also to end in failure. 'My old and severe policy of opposing the hollow Sturgites root and branch', Cooper was ruefully concluding by the end of the year, 'was founded on the strictest propriety'.¹⁰⁸

Found guilty of seditious conspiracy at this second trial in March 1843, Cooper was imprisoned in Stafford Gaol for two years. His period of Chartist leadership had ended not, as he had expected in summer 1842, in victory for the Chartists, but in his own imprisonment. 'My conscience tells me I have acted for the best', he was still able to write, 'If I erred, I cannot blame myself'.¹⁰⁹ Cooper was never again to return to Leicester as a resident. In his final few months in prison he fell out over money with the Chartist lecturer and journalist, Jonathan Bairstow, who also managed to turn some of the Leicester Chartists against him.¹¹⁰ There was also the need to find a publisher for the *Purgatory*. It was therefore to London that Cooper went on his release from prison in May 1845. The links with Leicester, however, could never be broken. He spent the weeks before his expulsion from the Chartist conference in Leeds in August 1846 in his old stronghold. Terrible indigence persisted amongst the stockings. For Cooper the six points seemed as vital and relevant as they had five years earlier.¹¹¹ In June 1849 he put himself forward as a parliamentary candidate for Leicester. He intended to stand in support of the Charter. Markham offered support, but, lacking wealth, Cooper was forced to withdraw his name.¹¹² Several months later he agreed to speak at a radical meeting in the town. Ill health, however, prevented his attendance. There were, Markham declared, 'great numbers who were disappointed in consequence of the non-appearance of Thomas Cooper'.¹¹³

Notes

1. See Thomas Cooper, *Life of Thomas Cooper, Written by Himself*, (1872), pp.133-231 (hereafter, Cooper, *Life*)
2. Robert Conklin, *Thomas Cooper, the Chartist 1805-1892*, (Manila, 1935)
3. A. Temple-Patterson, *Radical Leicester: A History of Leicester, 1780-1850*, (Leicester, 1954), pp.315-31 (hereafter, Patterson, *Radical Leicester*); J.F.C. Harrison, 'Chartism in Leicester', in Asa Briggs, ed. *Chartist Studies* (1959), pp.99-146 (hereafter, Harrison, 'Chartism in Leicester'). Jack Simmons, *Leicester Past and Present*, (1974), I, pp.162-6 offers a brief (and unfair) account of Cooper's Leicester years
4. See Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, p.320
5. *Ibid.*, See *Lincolnshire Chronicle*, 11 May 1929 (hereafter *L.C.*) for the letter which Patterson mentions. The sentence about 'a future struggle' in London refers to Cooper's literary ambitions
6. See Bishopsgate Institute (hereafter B.I.), Thomas Cooper to Thomas Chambers, 1 June, 2 June 1868 for references to Cooper's illegitimacy
7. Public Record Office (hereafter PRO), T.S. 11/600, John Yeats to Cooper, 7 July 1842. Also see T.S. 11/601, Ann Anderson to Cooper, 8 March, 8 April, 25 April 1842
8. See Cooper, *Life*, pp.22, 33-5, 42-66
9. See, for example, Harrison, 'Chartism in Leicester', p.145. For a full discussion of the *Purgatory* see Stephen Roberts, 'Thomas Cooper: Radical and Poet, c.1830-1860' (unpublished M.Litt. thesis, University of Birmingham, 1986), pp.298-329
10. See Cooper to R.G. Gammage, 26 February 1855, in Gammage's *History of the Chartist Movement* (1969 edn.), p.405 (hereafter Gammage, *History*). For Shakespeare's importance to Cooper see Roberts, thesis, pp.31-3
11. See Roberts, thesis, pp.49-54
12. See *ibid.*, pp.55-7
13. See *ibid.*, pp.58-60
14. See *ibid.*, pp.60-1
15. See Harrison, 'Chartism in Leicester', p.141
16. See Roberts, thesis, pp. 61-2
17. See *Lincoln, Rutland and Stamford Mercury*, 28 December 1838
18. See *ibid.*, 30 June, 7 July, 3 November 1837
19. For Cooper's endeavours to get a novel published in 1839 see Roberts, thesis, pp.63-4. The novel — eventually published in 1850 — is discussed in *ibid.*, pp.284-9
20. See *Kentish Mercury, Gravesend Journal and Greenwich Gazette*, 30 May, 11 July, 8 August, 15 August 1840
21. See Roberts, thesis, p.66
22. See *Northern Star*, 3 September 1842 (hereafter *N.S.*); *The Times*, 27 August 1842
23. B.I., Cooper to Chambers, 8 February 1867
24. Cooper to T.J.N. Brogden, 7 December 1842, reprinted in *L.C.*, 11 May 1929
25. See Patterson, *Radical Leicester*, p.317. Also see letter from John Bowman in *Leicestershire Mercury*, 5 March 1842 (hereafter *L.M.*)
26. *L.M.*, 5 March 1842. Shares in the *Illuminator* cost one shilling, and local Chartists had been free to buy as many as they wished
27. Cooper states in *ibid.*, 19 February 1842, that his salary as editor of the *Illuminator* was two pounds a week, though in the autobiography (Cooper, *Life*, p.146) this is reduced to thirty shillings. No copies of the *Illuminator* under Bown's editorship have survived. The file at Colindale begins with the issue dated 13 February 1841, almost certainly the first Cooper edited: it is labelled a new series, and contains extracts from *Gideon Giles, the Roper*, a novel just published by Cooper's childhood friend, Thomas Miller
28. See British Library (hereafter B.L.), Add.MS 27,835, fos.165-8, John Seal to Francis Place, 15 July 1841; *Leicester Chronicle*, 26 February 1842
29. Robert Barnes, 'The Midland Counties Illuminator. A Leicester Chartist Journal', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, XXXV, (1959), pp.68-77. Barnes bases his claims on the fact that John Seal, and not Cooper, is identified on the back page of the *Illuminator* as its publisher until the issue of 22 May 1841, though he neglects to consider that this may have been in recognition of Seal's position as a small bookseller and Chartist newsagent or simply an oversight
30. See *Midland Counties Illuminator*, 24 April 1841 (hereafter, *M.C.I.*)
31. See *ibid.*, 20 February, 13 March, 20 March, 3 April, 17 April, 1 May 1841
32. *Ibid.*, 20 February 1841
33. See, for example, *L.M.*, 17 July 1841; *Leicester Journal*, 4 June 1841
34. Unfortunately no copies of these two journals have survived. Both were printed by Thomas Warwick, a small Tory printer

35. See PRO, T.S. 11/601, Thomas Duncombe to Cooper, 31 December 1841; Thomas H. Duncombe, ed. *The Life and Correspondence of Thomas Slingsby Duncombe* (1868), I, p.303. Also see T.S. 11/601, Duncombe to Cooper, 8 January 1842 for a further sum sent to Cooper for his own use
36. PRO, T.S. 11/600, Gideon Cooke to Cooper, 21 October 1841. Cooke was agent for Cooper's Chartist journals in Melton Mowbray
37. See Cooper, *Life*, p.163
38. See *M.C.I.*, 24 April 1841. The plan included the creation of a teetotal section amongst the Leicester Chartists. For Cooper's conversion to teetotalism see *L.M.*, 3 April 1841
39. *L.M.*, 5 March 1842
40. *Ibid.*, 19 February 1842
41. *Ibid.*
42. See *ibid.* Cooper claimed the Tories gave him this money to prevent the Whigs succeeding in their plan to drive him from Leicester
43. *Ibid.*, 25 September 1841
44. See *ibid.*, 3 July 1841. Seal was agent for the *Star* in Leicester, and his break with the local Chartists deprived him of the revenue from the sale of the newspaper, a major loss. Cooper took over this role
45. See *ibid.*, 11 March 1843
46. *Ibid.*, 19 February 1842
47. *M.C.I.* 17 April 1841
48. *Ibid.*
49. See *ibid.*, 8 May 1841. Also see *N.S.*, 8 May, 15 May 1841
50. *L.M.*, 5 March 1842
51. *Ibid.*, 12 February 1842
52. *Ibid.*
53. PRO, T.S. 11/600, John Markham to Cooper, 3 December 1841. Also see T.S. 11/600, Markham to Cooper, 6 December 1841, 19 January 1842
54. *L.M.*, 12 February 1842
55. *Ibid.*, 5 March 1842
56. *Ibid.*
57. *Ibid.*, 19 February 1842. Markham subsequently changed his mind, claiming that it was the *Extinguisher* which Cooper had sought Tory money for. Cooper also denied this
58. *Ibid.*
59. *Ibid.*
60. See *ibid.*, 29 January 1842. Also see PRO, T.S. 11/601, Jonathan Bairstow to Cooper, 3 May 1842: 'Feargus says, after the refusal of the Markham party to unite with you, that he shall not come to lecture for them. Pretty Chartists — to refuse union with their fellows...'
61. See PRO, T.S. 11/601, Markham to Shakespearean Association, 25 April 1842; *L.M.*, 23 April, 7 May 1842
62. PRO, T.S. 11/600, J.G. Brooks to Cooper, 22 May 1842. See *L.M.*, 7 May 1842 for a report of events at Taylor's lecture. Cooper, it seems, as well as seeking reconciliation with Markham, had 'found considerable fault with the lecturer'
63. See PRO, T.S. 11/601, William Hill to Cooper, 22 June 1842. The All Saints Chartists had claimed a membership of 168, but Hill doubted the figure and wrote to Cooper for confirmation. There is an All Saints Chartists' report in *N.S.*, 30 April 1842
64. Thomas Cooper, *The Purgatory of Suicides. A Prison Rhyme* (1851 edn.), X, v.22 (hereafter, Cooper, *Purgatory*)
65. Cooper to Brogden, 7 December 1842, reprinted in *L.C.*, 11 May 1929
66. PRO, T.S. 11/600, Anonymous to Cooper, n.d. The name has been removed. See Cooper, *Life*, p.172, for the delivery of the letter. Also see T.S. 11/600, Nathias Norton to Cooper, 12 May 1842, explaining why poverty had forced the writer to spend the few pence he had collected for the Chartists; *Douglas Ferrol's Weekly Newspaper*, 15 August 1846, for an account by Cooper of conditions in Leicester in 1841-2 (hereafter *D.J.W.N.*); Thomas Cooper, *Wise Saws and Modern Instances* (1845), I, pp.201-34, for the two stories about the suffering stockingers
67. PRO, T.S. 11/600, George Julian Harney to Cooper, 17 June 1842. For disapproval of Cooper's conduct at O'Brien's lectures see T.S. 11/600, J.B. Smith to Cooper, 15 August 1842. Full details of the disruption of both O'Brien's and Vincent's lectures can be found in *L.M.*, 4 June, 11 June, 30 July 1842; and *N.S.*, 11 June, 18 June, 30 July 1842
68. *English Chartist Circular*, no.76 (hereafter *E.C.C.*)
69. Lincoln Reference Library, unpublished draft MS of the *Purgatory*. Also see Cooper, *Purgatory*, II, vs.12-13
70. See *M.C.I.*, 20 March-17 April, 1 May, 15 May, 29 May 1841

71. See PRO, H.O. 45/260, fos., 422-5, 449-52 for two copies of the *Commonwealthsman*, 2 April, 18 June 1842. The point of the name was lost on one Chartist, at least: see PRO, T.S. 11/601, E. Chaloner to Cooper, 16 January 1842
72. See PRO, T.S. 11/600, Cooke to Cooper, 17 December 1841, 30 April 1842. The *Commonwealthsman* was succeeded very briefly by the *Chartist Pioneer*, Cooper's last Leicester journal
73. See *N.S.*, 16 November 1844, 18 January, 25 January 1845. There had been a Hampden Club in Leicester after the Napoleonic Wars
74. For Cooper's support for republicanism see Roberts, thesis, pp.39-40
75. See *M.C.I.*, 6 March, 8 May 1841
76. *E.C.C.*, no.75. The second line is taken from Shelley's 'Mask of Anarchy'
77. See *M.C.I.*, 6 March, 3 April 1841
78. *N.S.*, 21 August 1841
79. PRO, T.S. 11/601, Anonymous to Cooper, 29 November 1841
80. *L.M.*, 5 March 1842
81. The receipts and disbursements of the school from 16 January to 28 February 1842 were published in *ibid.* Figures for attendance at the first two meetings of the school can also be found in *N.S.*, 22 January, 29 January 1842. These record that 128 attended on the first afternoon, 148 on the first afternoon, and 226 attended the second meeting. It will be seen that there is some discrepancy between these figures, and those extrapolated from subscriptions published in *L.M.*
82. The All Saints Chartists also opened a school. See *L.M.*, 5 March 1842. There is a reference to an adult school in Leicester in *N.S.*, 30 November 1844
83. Unfortunately this little volume seems to have now completely disappeared
84. *N.S.*, 4 April 1846. The obituary, written by Cooper, is continued in *ibid.*, 18 April 1846
85. See Gammage, *History*, pp.214-15; PRO, T.S. 11/601, Bairstow to Cooper, 22 June 1842, inviting the Leicester poets to write hymns for Holberry's funeral. Other examples of Bramwich's verse can be found in *Commonwealthsman*, 2 April, 18 June 1842; *E.C.C.*, no.115; *N.S.*, 5 January 1850
86. For examples of Jones' verse see *E.C.C.*, nos.75, 77, 81, 91, 92, 97, 103, 104, 113, 122, 130; *Chartist Pilot* (in Cambridge University Library), 9 December, 16 December, 30 December 1843, 6 January, 20 January 1844; *N.S.*, 21 August 1841, 28 June 1845, 15 June 1850; *Leicestershire Movement*, 9 February, 16 February, 2 March 1850; *Cooper's Journal*, 17 January, 9 February, 16 March, 8 June 1850
87. A copy of Jones' now rare anthology can be found in Cambridge University Library. Verse written in the early 1840s is not included
88. See *L.M.*, 3 February 1855 for Jones' obituary
89. See PRO, T.S. 11/600, Smith to Cooper, 15 August 1842; *E.C.C.*, nos.74, 77
90. See *N.S.*, 11 September 1841
91. See Gammage, *History*, pp.203, 407; Cooper, *Life*, p.160
92. See *N.S.*, 13 May 1848
93. For an account of Cooper's role in the outbreak in the Potteries and his subsequent trials see Roberts, thesis, pp.109-25
94. See *N.S.*, 23 July 1842; PRO, T.S. 11/602, Cooper to Susanna Cooper, 3 August 1842
95. PRO, T.S. 11/602, Cooper to Susanna Cooper, 12 August 1842
96. Cooper did not see the rejection of the second petition in May 1842 as the end of the constitutional process. See *N.S.*, 9 July 1842 for his call for mass demonstrations in support of the Charter
97. B.L., Add. MS 40, 434, Peel Papers, CCLIV, fos.318-19, Queen Victoria to Sir Robert Peel, 17 August 1842
98. B.I., Thomas Winters to Susanna Cooper, 12 October 1842
99. See *N.S.*, 3 December, 10 December, 17 December, 24 December 1842, 14 January 1843; *L.M.*, 18 February 1843
100. See *N.S.*, 10 December, 24 December 1842, 14 January 1843, *L.M.*, 17 December 1842
101. See *N.S.*, 16 November 1844, 3 May 1845
102. See *L.M.*, 7 January 1843. Duffy does not seem to have stayed in Leicester very long
103. See *N.S.*, 17 December 1842
104. For a plan Cooper also conceived at this time to reorganize the N.C.A. see Roberts, thesis, pp.127-8
105. See *Commonwealthsman*, 2 April 1842
106. *N.S.*, 17 December 1842. Mursell had indicated his support for the Leicester Chartists earlier in 1842. See Cooper, *Life*, p.181
107. *N.S.*, 17 December 1842
108. *Ibid.*
109. Cooper to Brogden, 7 December 1842, reprinted in *L.C.*, 11 May 1929
110. See Roberts, thesis, pp.144-6

111. See *D.f.W.N.*, 1 August, 22 August 1846
112. See Roberts, thesis, pp.236-8
113. *Leicestershire Movement*, 16 February 1850

Acknowledgements

Crown-copyright material in the Public Record Office is reproduced by permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office. I am also grateful to the Bishopsgate Institute, the British Library and Lincoln Reference Library for permission to quote from material in their possession. Thanks to Dorothy Thompson, who supervised the thesis-research on which this article is based.