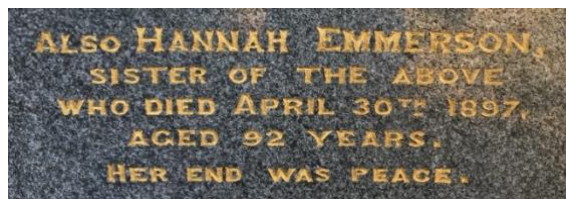


**TWO MINERS' FRIENDS AND A SISTER.**

*You wait ages for a Miners' Friend then three come along at the same time...*



**Fig.1. Grave of Stephen and Hannah Emmerson.**



**Figs. 2 and 3. Details.**

I retired eight years ago and followed the one-foot-in-the-grave pastime of tracing my family history. Like many adopted people I began exploring my biological family, intending – to use a tired cliché – to ‘find out who I am’. Reasoning that my adoptive family was a major player in shaping my identity, I created two family trees, one biological, one adoptive. As I researched, I made a discovery that amazed me. The two families, geographically very separate and knowing nothing of each other, were linked in a way I could never have imagined. This is the story.

I began my research by exploring my adoptive tree. My mother’s family was rooted in the villages around Northallerton<sup>1</sup> so it was a surprise to discover that a great-grandfather, John Emmerson, was from Skelton,<sup>2</sup> where I now live. I don’t think my mother knew anything about this– her grandfather had died many years before she was born. I found that the Emmerson family was extensive and had owned the now demolished Hollybush Farm, a large enterprise on the outskirts of Skelton.<sup>3</sup> The two Emmersons who are central to this story are Stephen and Hannah Emmerson, brother and sister. Stephen inherited Hollybush Farm after his father died in 1833,<sup>4</sup> and ran it with Hannah’s help until his own death in 1887.<sup>5</sup> Hannah continued as head for another ten years.<sup>6</sup> The siblings raised John Emmerson, who, as well as being my mother’s grandfather, was also their nephew, and they gave a home to three of his children after their mother died.<sup>7</sup> They were kind, generous people.

And so, from thinking I had no history in relation to Skelton, I am surrounded by the ancestors of the family who raised me – I look out onto the church where they were baptised, married and where their funerals were held. I walked my children to school across what was once their land.

One May evening I drove to the Industrial Estate at the edge of Skelton, the part built on Hollybush Farm land. It was still light and I could see down to Saltburn and out to sea; the German Ocean, it used to be called. A century and a half ago I would have heard drumming and the sound of

trumpets coming from every direction as, in an explosion of colour and noise, brass bands drew near, followed by bobbing bright banners held aloft, each representing a Trade Union lodge, each lodge an East Cleveland village. I would have seen cheering, clapping, shouting miners, some already drunk, marching behind the bands with their sweethearts, wives and children, to a field on Hollybush Farm, where an empty hay wagon platform awaited the speakers. Once on the field the bands would play popular songs of the day - *Little Brown Jug* and *Nellie Dean*. I might have seen excited children led up and down on the pit ponies that had been brought to the surface for the day, bets taken on foot races, demonstrations by local sword dancers, fortunes told and then, as now, I would smell the cooking wafting from the stalls of the street vendors.<sup>8</sup> I was standing on Demonstration Field where the Cleveland Ironstone Miners' Association held their annual Demonstration/Gala Days.<sup>9</sup>

The first Demonstration Day was in 1872. Some twenty years earlier, deep ironstone seams were discovered in the Cleveland Hills.<sup>10</sup> Extracting the ore required shaft mines that were labour intensive. A large work force was needed; miners and would-be miners from declining industries all over Britain arrived to man this new enterprise.<sup>11</sup> They came in their thousands, tin miners from Cornwall, coal miners from Scotland, Wales, Durham and the West Riding, and agricultural labourers from Lincolnshire and Norfolk.<sup>12</sup> Stephen and Hannah's bucolic existence on a quiet farm near a sleepy village changed dramatically. Industry came to their doorstep. Longacre Mine loomed nearby, the railway carrying the excavated iron ore to the Middlesbrough iron works passed yards away from the farmhouse,<sup>13</sup> and rows of new houses were built, some on land which the Emmersons sold to property developers, later buying some of the properties for rentals.<sup>14</sup>

The area was a melting pot, more like the American Frontier than Merrie England, dominated by testosterone-driven, wild, young men.<sup>15</sup>

East Cleveland boomed overnight. But life was brutish. Work conditions were poor; the mine owners callous, dictating the expansion or contraction of the work available to suit the economic cycle of the day. The villages were dirty, ramshackle and unhygienic. Local papers reported the casual violence, the crime, the poaching and the constant drunkenness of the new incomers.<sup>16</sup>

Change came slowly. In 1871 Gladstone's government legalised Trade Unions.<sup>17</sup> By 1872 a firebrand of a miner called Joseph Shepherd had brought together miners from the length and breadth of East Cleveland to form the North Yorkshire and Cleveland Ironstone Miners' Association (The CMA).<sup>18</sup>

In 1872 three new mines opened in Skelton<sup>19</sup> and the price of iron ore was high.<sup>20</sup> It was a good time to ask for improvements to working conditions and pay. The first meeting of the CMA was planned for May 1<sup>st</sup> 1872. Joseph Shepherd needed a large turnout to show the mine owners that this new organisation was a force to be reckoned with. Alexander MacDonald, leader of the National Mineworkers Association, and soon to become an MP, was to be the main speaker, but there was a problem - no sizeable venue could be found. Local landowners refused to allow a miners' meeting on their land, probably because they were mine owners themselves or hand-in-glove with them, and perhaps the thought of thousands of drunken miners trampling over their land held little appeal.

Stephen and Hannah Emmerson rescued the meeting by offering fields on Hollybush Farm. Why they did this, contrary to the actions of their peers is unknown but the miners were deeply grateful,

as we shall see. So, it was that on the morning of May 1st, six to seven thousand miners marched to the first CMA meeting at Hollybush Farm behind their banners and brass bands.<sup>21</sup> The day was beautifully fine and bright',<sup>22</sup> their venue, an 'exceedingly picturesque field.'<sup>23</sup> Alexander MacDonald arrived at one p.m. and spoke from the hay wagon that substituted for a platform. Up there with him amongst the union men were Joseph Shepherd, Stephen Emmerson and possibly Hannah. (There is bathos in knowing that the probable place where MacDonald spoke is now the site of Skelton's new Drive Thru' McDonald's). MacDonald called for a number of necessary changes, for example shorter working hours and improved ventilation, education for all and no young children to be sent down the mine.<sup>24</sup>

That first Demonstration day was populated by men and three brass bands.<sup>25</sup> The next Gala, held shortly after on July 4<sup>th</sup>, again on Hollybush Farm, produced eight bands; this time the miners brought girlfriends or their families, creating a carnival atmosphere:

The proceedings had been liberally advertised throughout the district and from early morning until noon the highways around Skelton were thick with miners, their wives, children and sweethearts on their way to the 'demonstration'... during the forenoon the village of Skelton presented the appearance of a country fair, stalls for nic nacs (sic) and refreshments being set out, and, apparently doing a roaring trade...<sup>26</sup>

We can never know how many heard the speeches. For most it would be a day out, a break from the harsh realities of life in a mining village, a chance to let one's hair down and have fun. But as the Wild West frontier villages of East Cleveland formed communities, and untamed young miners married and began families, the paradigm of the working-class male shifted from the wild and out of control youth to the hard-working family man. The Trade Unions encouraged this new model of sobriety and industry. Speakers from the various union lodges at the Gala days were more often than not adherents of the Temperance movement, and belonged to a nonconformist church or chapel, as did most of the invited politicians.<sup>27</sup> An open letter from George Spink of Huddersfield, which appeared in *The Daily Gazette* shortly after the May 1<sup>st</sup> Gala, was a template for the 'new man' of 1872:

...be sober men, be industrious men, be moral men: look to the comfort and happiness of your families and your own comfort and happiness will most naturally follow...look to the education of your children; see that they go regularly to school and see that they improve their minds with useful knowledge during the week, then send them to school on Sunday afternoon so they may have an opportunity of a moral and religious education.<sup>28</sup>

Although many miners continued in the old, hard-drinking mould, the changes in the CMA leadership in its early years reflected changing expectations. Joseph Shepherd was volatile, drank excessively and lived life on the edge,<sup>29</sup> but Joseph Toyn, elected in 1876 and leader of the CMA for thirty-five years, exemplified the new working class ideal. Toyn, a family man, was sober and moderate, a Primitive Methodist lay preacher, a magistrate, and President of the Skelton Co-operative Society which opened its first store in 1873.<sup>30</sup> He knew the Emmersons well through their mutual involvement in Demonstration Days and other meetings and events. Toyn is the glue that adheres my two family trees together - at one crucial point.

Between 1872 and 1888 many more of the annual Miners' Demonstration Days/Gala Days and other CMA meetings were held on Hollybush Farm, although other landowners and eventually even mine owners offered venues, for example Bolckow and Vaughan offered a field adjacent to their North Skelton mine in 1879.<sup>31</sup> The occasional year when the annual gala wasn't located on

Hollybush, a meeting of one sort or another was held there. And Stephen Emmerson was invariably present, 'not a spectator but a collaborator'.<sup>32</sup> *The Daily Gazette* reported on the CMA's Demonstration Day in 1883:

From the village, headed by various brass bands and banners, the various lodges marched in order to the field and to the platform. Mr Joseph Toyn ... occupied the chair... (also present was) Mr Stephen Emmerson 'The Miners' Friend', who was the first to oblige the miners with a field in which to hold their demonstrations, and who has attended almost all the demonstrations since the founding of the Miners' Union.<sup>33</sup>

Stephen would sit amongst the politicians such as Alexander MacDonald MP and Thomas Burt MP, the first two miners to become Members of the House of Commons, Joseph Arch MP, who fought for the agricultural workers, and Samuel Plimsoll MP 'The Sailors Friend'. Also on the platform were national and local miners' leaders and local counsellors, for example Elisha Beecham from Eston - these meetings always chaired by Toyn.

Outwardly Stephen was a pillar of the community. As a young man he had done a year's stint, expected of a man of his station, as Overseer of the Poor.<sup>34</sup> He would have seen grinding poverty first hand, coming into contact with the paupers of Skelton and seeing the hovels they lived in, and would have been involved in the planning of the Guisborough Workhouse, opened in 1838.<sup>35</sup>

In later life Stephen was a member of the Vestry (the Parish Church Committee)<sup>36</sup> and was involved with many local committees – the Skelton Local Board<sup>37</sup> and the Skelton Burial Board<sup>38</sup> for example; and he was affluent, owning Hollybush and Back Lane Farms,<sup>39</sup> and houses in Skelton and the surrounding area,<sup>40</sup> his income supplemented by the royalties from the mining tunnels that silently wended their way under his land.<sup>41</sup> But he swam against the tide, and it was noted. At a Vestry meeting in 1873 he was described as 'one of the rabble'<sup>42</sup> for daring to disagree with a point; his friend John Dixon, a fellow supporter of the CMA, was described as a 'demagogue',<sup>43</sup> an over-the-top remark, but indicative of the hostility towards two Vestry members who had broken the social code of the 'middling class'.

On the other hand, the miners loved Stephen and his sister, Hannah, and showered them with gifts and praise. Stephen was lauded repeatedly in meetings as well as being thanked for the use of his farm. The *Northern Echo* reported the following, from a speech by a Mr Casey of the Yorkshire Miners' Association at the June 1873 Demonstration Day at Normanby:

If there were more men like Mr Emmerson there would not be that clash of class against class, and those above the miners would not suspect them as they had done in the past...<sup>44</sup>

The audience were reminded:

Mr Emmerson had twice lent them (the miners) his field when no-one else would and had also offered that if turned out of their houses they could encamp there.<sup>45</sup>

Being turned out of a house was an ever-present concern. The previous month a pay dispute at Skelton Shaft mine resulted in the miners being threatened with eviction by the Bell Brothers who owned both the mine and their homes.<sup>46</sup> Part of Stephen's popularity could be ascribed to him being a good and fair landlord.

We see something of Stephen's character later in the report from the Normanby meeting:

Mr Emmerson...was thanked as a 'Miners Friend': and being a modest man was led to the front to reply ...smiling all over, and I should say there are not many who can smile as broadly as Mr Emmerson, he requested his leader to tell the audience that he them for the kind manner in which they drank his very good health. ...<sup>47</sup>

Four months later, a meeting was convened on Hollybush Farm in order to present Stephen with a tea and coffee service:

On Tuesday afternoon, a large number of miners assembled together in one of Mr Emmerson's fields ... for the purpose of presenting a testimonial to Mr Emmerson for his many acts of kindness to miners generally especially throwing open his fields for mass meetings. The testimonial consisted of a handsome silver-plated tea and coffee service. Over a thousand persons were present.<sup>48</sup>

When his father, also called Stephen Emmerson, was alive, Stephen was known as Stephen the Younger. At some point after 1872 this changed to 'The Miners' Friend', and by 1875 his popularity was such that it was possible to buy an image of Stephen Emmerson 'The Miners' Friend' for six stamps.<sup>49</sup> The photograph mentioned was probably of the portrait of Stephen which was also given to him by the miners. 'The Miners' Friend' was the soubriquet Stephen took to his grave (Fig.1).



Fig.4. Advertisement. *Northern Echo* 1875.

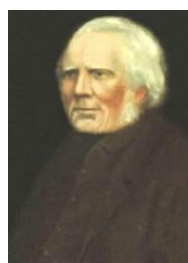


Fig.5. Portrait of Stephen Emmerson.

The praise and thanks continued. Stephen and Hannah were mentioned in a letter written by Joseph Shepherd in 1876, recommending to the CMA committee that Hannah should be given a testimonial in recognition of her contribution. He looked back to 1872:

'At that time all other fields were closed against you, but the good old squire and his beloved sister rushed to your rescue'<sup>50</sup>

Shepherd wrote of Hannah's kindness over the previous four years, as she gave milk and water to the miners' wives and children and took them into the farmhouse to escape the heat. At the May meeting in 1876, at the conclusion of the speeches, Toyn made the presentation:

'...the chairman (Toyn) stated that a very interesting part of the afternoon's proceedings consisted of a presentation to Miss Emmerson, the sister of Stephen Emmerson, their old and valued friend. It has been said that the Cleveland Miners were a hard-handed and hard-headed lot of men but they were often blamed for many things they were really not guilty of. But from the knowledge he had of them he would say that whenever they had kindness shown they were always ready to appreciate and return it. He then made the presentation which consisted of a handsome gold watch and guard accompanied by an illuminated address. The address set forth the feelings of gratitude entertained by the miners for the invariable kindness with which they had been treated by Mr Emmerson and Miss Emmerson.<sup>51</sup>

Hannah was never given the accolade 'Miners' Friend', perhaps because she was less visible, wielding a teapot rather than sitting on the stage and perhaps simply because she was a woman. But the miners gave her massive support after she was summoned to court for pulling down Squire Wharton's fence – twice!

JT Wharton owned Skelton Castle, and land in and around Skelton including some mining areas. In 1879 the Wharton Estate built a road to go from North Skelton, where many of the miners lived, to Longacre mine, where they worked. The Wharton's bailiff then blocked off the existing public road, which went as far as Saltburn, with a fence - which Hannah ordered her farm hand, plus horse, to remove.<sup>52</sup> When Hannah received her summons the miners took action.

After a series of hastily convened meetings, (that included either Stephen or Hannah), during which time they were threatened with the loss of their allotments and even their homes,<sup>53</sup> the miners decided to walk the route in order to both support Hannah and keep the path open. To some extent supporting Hannah could have been the acceptable face of an already-planned action, nevertheless after their Saturday morning shift, 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1880, 800 plus miners and their families walked that path. Squire Wharton, his bailiff and farm hands rode up on horseback demanding they stop but were no match for 800 miners who continued on their way to Saltburn.<sup>54</sup> To this day the path remains open. And what a public tribute to Hannah that eight hundred from the mining community came out in her support.



Stephen made his last appearance on the Gala Day platform in June 1887,<sup>55</sup> passing away on Boxing Day the same year, and joining 'the great majority'.<sup>56</sup> Two days after Stephen died the miners' council paid tribute to him, reiterating his willingness to let out his farm to them, and stating that he had attended every Gala Day since the founding of the CMA. Joseph Toyn headed the official CMA delegation at Stephen's funeral.<sup>57</sup>

**Fig.6. Hannah Emmerson with her great-niece, Alice. Hollybush Farm. Date unknown.**

Hannah let the field in 1888 for one more Gala Day<sup>58</sup> but she was 84 by this time and after that date there is no record of any more CMA meetings on the farm – although the next one, held at Saltburn in 1889, is crucial to this story.

With Stephen's death I'd reached the end of a significant moment in the story of the Emmersons, so it seemed a good time to turn my attention to my biological family. A major surprise lay in wait. I already knew a little about this family having traced my birth mother and grandmother, and met them a handful of times, but they died long before I began this search and I never asked them about their family history. My initial research located the family in Ireland during the famine years of the 1840s, then the tenements and poverty of Tower Hamlets and Bethnal Green. I remembered my grandmother saying she was born in Hull, although she lived in the East End of London most of her life. My searching revealed that her paternal grandfather was a Congregationalist Minister, the Reverend Thomas James Leslie, who had moved to Hull from South Eston,<sup>59</sup> where he'd ministered for five years. I was suddenly very interested. For a brief period in time, my two families, geographically distant, lived near to each other. Eston was a mere eight miles from Skelton, and, importantly for this narrative, was on the East Cleveland Ironstone seam, many of its mining population members of the CMA.



Fig.7. The Reverend T.J. Leslie



Fig.8. Eston Congregational Chapel. Jubilee Road. Eston.

Whether I'd been putting in the wrong information, or misspelling his name, I don't know, as initially I found very little on the Reverend. Then one happy morning I typed 'Rev. T.J. Leslie' into the 'search' of the British Newspaper Archive and 767 'hits' came up. Many of these, I discovered, were letters he'd written to the press.

This man was a dynamo. An Evangelical Congregationalist Minister, a lifelong member of the Temperance Society and a supporter of the Liberal Party, he was on the side of the underdog, and never afraid to express an opinion. In 1877 he was appointed Minister at Mexborough Congregationalist Church near Doncaster where he remained for eleven years before moving to Eston and where he, like Stephen Emmerson, became a Miners' Friend. I now had discovered two Miners' Friends. One from nature and one from nurture. I was glad I'd begun this quest.

The Reverend Leslie gained his label during the strike and lockout of 1885 at the pit known as Denaby Main. He was central in organising the collection and distribution of food to the starving and dispossessed miners and their families who had been evicted from their homes for taking strike action, the constant fear becoming reality.<sup>60</sup> He sent a stream of letters to the newspapers, describing the miners' plight and pleading for financial support, whilst apparently criticising both the right-wing press<sup>61</sup> and local Tory businessmen. He is reported to have written that the Tories had 'no sympathy with the unfortunate evicted miners and their families.'<sup>62</sup> The strike lasted over 30 weeks,<sup>63</sup> strike breakers coming by train from Staffordshire prolonging the dispute.<sup>64</sup> The Reverend Leslie continued helping throughout, fundraising, feeding, leading miners' meetings<sup>65</sup> and writing continually to the press.

Thomas Leslie arrived in Eston early in February 1889,<sup>66</sup> less than four years after the strike, having left Mexborough under a cloud. He had clearly upset more than the *Sheffield Telegraph's* editor and local Tories. Some of his own church elders turned against him.<sup>67</sup> His outspokenness and his political views, which he took to the pulpit, may well have made his peers somewhat uncomfortable.<sup>68</sup> It was argued by his enemies that his actions and advice prolonged the strike thus adding to the suffering of the workers.<sup>69</sup> He resigned in July 1888 and although asked by his church

elders to stay,<sup>70</sup> he knew this was not a unanimous decision,<sup>71</sup> and pride meant he had to leave. He was out of work for seven months. This must have been very difficult for him. Congregationalist Ministers are invited to become the pastor of a church by the members of that church and no invitation was forthcoming. He had absolutely no means of support. In an early version of crowdfunding his friends called for donations, praising him to the hilt in the press, and money was raised.<sup>72</sup> And crucially, the miners didn't forget him. In two separate collections the local colliers collected £75.<sup>73</sup> It must have brought tears to his eyes when, in some dingy, ill lit hall, no doubt painted brown and cream, he was presented with this money by the men he had rescued from starvation, men who still would scarcely have had any bread to give their families.

The letter from Eston dropped through his letterbox in January 1889, not a moment too soon, and he left Mexborough within the week.<sup>74</sup> Although the chapel he went to in Jubilee Road was modest in comparison to Mexborough's, he knew he was welcome there. But why Eston? Who had put a word in? Although Eston had had an influx of miners from all over the country, the census of 1891 shows few from West Yorkshire.<sup>75</sup> So if the miners hadn't brought him, who had? Was it Joseph Toyn? Their paths will have crossed. They were men of a similar age and outlook, both part of the triumvirate of chapel, trades union and temperance. If they hadn't actually met before 1889, each would have been aware of the other. Toyn was on the committee of The Miners' National Union and was a signatory of a circular sent by this organisation to raise funds for the homeless miners of Mexborough.<sup>76</sup> The Miners National Union had the Denaby lockout high on their agenda. Both men were in Hull in 1885, Toyn speaking at the Hull Trades Council on Trade Unionism,<sup>77</sup> Rev Leslie fundraising for the evicted Denaby miners and promoting the Liberal candidate in the upcoming election.<sup>78</sup> That same year Toyn was chairman at the initial meeting to set up a branch of the Liberal Party in South Eston, a branch that would soon welcome Reverend Leslie.<sup>79</sup> A devout Primitive Methodist and a lay preacher, it's likely Toyn was a teetotaler like Reverend Leslie, given that Primitive Methodists were supporters of Temperance.<sup>80</sup> The word would have spread amongst Nonconformists and Temperance members that the South Eston Congregational Chapel was in need of a new pastor.

When Reverend Leslie began in his new post at South Eston he 'hit the ground running'. One of his first acts was to chair the meetings that initiated the building of two new Congregationalist chapels in Saltburn<sup>81</sup> and Grangetown.<sup>82</sup> He became secretary of the local branch of The Independent Order of Good Templars (IOSG),<sup>83</sup> was elected onto the executive committee of the local branch of the Cleveland Liberal Association,<sup>84</sup> took on the editorship of a local Congregationalist newspaper,<sup>85</sup> and set up a fortnightly meeting of Eston miners, which he ran with County Councillor Elisha Beecham, a regular on the platform at Gala days.<sup>86</sup> The Eston Mine manager, J. Thompson, a member of The British and Foreign Bible Society,<sup>87</sup> will no doubt have been present or at least shown strong support. At the initial meeting Reverend Leslie stated that the four things he hoped to see in Eston were: a strong miners' union, a system of free education, a good literary institute and reading room and all miners wearing the blue ribbon (symbol of Temperance),<sup>88</sup> an echo of Alexander MacDonald's speech of 1872, and Spink's letter to the *Daily Gazette*. And, of course, he ensured there was a thriving Sunday School at his chapel.<sup>89</sup>

The Reverend Leslie was Pastor at Eston for five and a half years during which time he continued his involvement with the mining community. In 1892 the miners on the Durham coalfields went on strike.<sup>90</sup> Without coal, machinery could not operate, and industries all over the North East ground



to a halt. The Eston Mines stopped production and soon the soup kitchens started up, feeding the hungry miners and their families.<sup>91</sup>

This time Thomas Leslie stayed in the background. His pleading letters and arguments with mine owners, right wing editors and Tory businessmen had subsided: for the time being. He did not need to fight. Circumstances were different. The men were laid off due to the actions of the Durham coal miners, thus were viewed by the public as victims. The donations poured in from the wealthy and charity groups, and others wrote the letters asking for help. But the Reverend Leslie was still there, organising relief for the miners. A newspaper report on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1892 reveals that over three days 2557 people in South Eston were given soup and bread. The Reverend Leslie contributed 10s 6d to the fund for this, more than likely out of his own pocket.<sup>92</sup> On 7<sup>th</sup> May that year, 952 children were given breakfast by The British Women's Christian Temperance Union in the Temperance Hall, Eston. Harriet Leslie, the president, was helped by a group of worthy ladies and her husband, Reverend Leslie.<sup>93</sup>

Most references to Reverend Leslie over this period show his involvement with church, Temperance, Liberal party meetings and generally doing good works. For example, on the third of October the *Northern Echo* reported that the Reverend, together with Joseph Toyn, was at a fundraising event for the new Eston Hospital.<sup>94</sup> But before long his polemical voice was once again heard.

Another drop in coal prices, the mine owners' attempt to lower wages, and a subsequent strike and lockout in West Yorkshire made headline news in 1893.<sup>95</sup> Thomas Leslie's old self emerged when he chaired an open-air meeting in Grangetown's market square.<sup>96</sup> In an impassioned speech in support of the miners, he looked back to 1885:

(Rev. Leslie) described several cases of very great suffering which he had seen during the lockout at Denaby and said he thought that every means should be used to bring this shocking state of affairs to an end.<sup>97</sup>

The Reverend Leslie had no doubts that 'this shocking state of affairs', was caused by the intransigence of the mine owners.<sup>98</sup> Three members of the Yorkshire Miners' Association from Mexborough also spoke at this meeting, surely invited by their old friend Thomas Leslie.<sup>99</sup> Some weeks later the Reverend attacked the editor of *The Northern Echo* for what he perceived as the newspaper's bias:

Your leading article this morning is so pronounced in favour of the coal owners that it might have been written by someone who held a brief for them.<sup>100</sup>

The old Thomas Leslie was back.

I wanted to get a sense of my great, great grandfather's environment, so I visited South Eston. The Jubilee Road Chapel is virtually unchanged since The Reverend Leslie's day, apart from some efficient central heating and a discreet fitted carpet, (the colour of flagstones). The present pastor, Terry Smith, organised a recent refurbishment and tried to remain faithful to the chapel's original appearance, so the box pews are painted shiny brown, the walls cream. It's plain, simple and warm – and I don't just mean the central heating.

Terry showed me the back room of the chapel which originally had a door high up in the wall with steps leading up. This door opened on to the pulpit, and, on dark Sunday mornings, the Reverend

Leslie would have simply appeared in the pulpit as if from nowhere, ready to give his sermon. Human depravity seems to have been a favourite theme: In a pamphlet, written shortly before he left Eston for Hull, Thomas Leslie claimed:

(Evangelical preaching) has been in the past and is at the present time, a powerful engine for reforming, elevating and sanctifying the depraved masses of humanity.<sup>101</sup>

Terry let me stand in the pulpit; the place where my great, great- grandfather had preached. I imagined him looking down on the upturned faces of miners, now sober and relatively clean, and their wives, glad of an hour's rest.

It was shortly after this visit, when I was searching again through the old newspapers that something hit me like a bolt of lightning. I saw that Thomas Leslie had been on another platform. Of *course* he would be there. At the end of *Daily Gazette's* report on the CMA Demonstration Day in 1889 I read,

...the meeting was also addressed by the Rev. T.J. Leslie 'The Miners' Friend' from South Yorkshire.<sup>102</sup>

I realised that as soon as he arrived in Eston, Thomas Leslie, like Stephen Emmerson before him, sat on the platform of the Cleveland Miners Association on Gala Day. For a brief moment in time - *the two families, geographically separate and knowing nothing of each other, were linked in a way I could never have imagined* (p.1).

Although the Reverend Leslie never got to meet Stephen, who had died 18 months earlier, in 1889 he was on the stage where Stephen Emmerson made his last appearance in 1887. Like Stephen, he was up there with Joseph Toyn, Councillor Beecham, MPs and Trade Union leaders. In the hubbub and buzz of Demonstration Day, he looked down on thousands of the same faces, saw the same Trade Union banners flapping in the wind, heard brass bands, raucous laughter and speeches. He probably offered a silent prayer that those under the influence of alcohol would turn towards Temperance. I'd like to think that at some time during his five years at Eston he was taken by Joseph Toyn to meet Hannah, who was renowned for her hospitality: two preachers taking tea and cakes served on Miss Emmerson's best china plates.<sup>103</sup>

Many individuals want to find ancestors with money and titles, but, for me, to be descended from two Miners' Friends, and a sister deserving of that term, is far more worthwhile. Stephen and Hannah Emmerson and Thomas James Leslie became deeply involved with their two mining communities, as collaborators, not mere spectators. As I've researched I've watched my two families joining together at a moment in history that witnessed the gradual implementation of the workers' rights fought for by the CMA, and Trades Unions all over the country.

I am proud of my three ancestors - good people who tried to make a fairer society. The fact that one is from my birth family and two are from my adoptive family is beyond coincidence: it was created in the stars, matter thrown into space at the time of the Big Bang. Some fundamental particles in the left-hand sector of the sky produced Thomas James Leslie and Stephen and Hannah Emmerson, fell as a beam of starlight over the ironstone mines of East Cleveland, and came in through my window as I began to write this story.

## NOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> Osmotherly and Brompton.
- <sup>2</sup> John Emmerson. OPR. Baptisms. 19<sup>th</sup> January 1827. Skelton-in-Cleveland. Teesside Archives, Ref: PR/SK 1/7
- <sup>3</sup> 1871 England Census for Skelton-in-Cleveland. Stephen Emmerson. Head. Landowner of 65 acres. Class: RG 10; Piece: 4853; Folio:76; Page:3
- <sup>4</sup> Stephen Emmerson. Born 1736. Age at death 96. Burial date. 26 June 1833. Parish Records. Skelton. Teesside Archives UK Poll Books and Electoral Register 1834. 543: Hollybush Farm. Skelton-in-Cleveland. Emmerson Stephen. Freehold House and Land.
- <sup>5</sup> Stephen Emmerson. Born 1806. Age at death. 81. Registration Quarter 4. Death Year 1887. GUISBOROUGH. Yorkshire North Riding. Volume 9d. Page 323. England and Wales Deaths. 1837- 2001.
- <sup>6</sup> 1891 England Census for Skelton-in-Cleveland. Hannah Emmerson. Head. Farmer. Class RG 12. Piece 4000; Folio: 91 Page:8
- <sup>7</sup> Martha Emmerson. Born 1829. Age at death. 44. Registration Quarter 2. Death Year 1873. STOCKTON. Durham. Vol. 10a Page 26. England and Wales Deaths. 1837- 2001.  
1881 England Census for Skelton-in-Cleveland. Class RG11; Piece:4863; Folio:144; Page:3
- <sup>8</sup> GREAT MINERS DEMONSTRATION AT SKELTON. *Middlesbrough Exchange*. July 4<sup>th</sup> 1872
- <sup>9</sup> THE IRONSTONE MINERS OF CLEVELAND. MASS MEETING NEAR SALTBURN. *Middlesbrough Exchange*. Saturday May 4<sup>th</sup> 1872.
- <sup>10</sup> Craig Hornby (dir.). *A Century in Stone – The Eston and California Story*. DVD. 2005
- <sup>11</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>12</sup> *op.cit.* Census returns for the East Cleveland Villages 1871/1881/1891
- <sup>13</sup> THE CLEVELAND EXTENSION MINERAL RAILWAY. *Daily Gazette* November 18<sup>th</sup> 1874 (the start of the building of the railway and its route).
- <sup>14</sup> GREAT LAND SUBSIDENCE AT BOOSBECK. DESTRUCTION OF FOUR STREETS: EXCITING SCENES. *Northern Echo* Tuesday August 21<sup>st</sup> 1883. Stephen was on the list of house owners. He also owned homes in Skelton and North Skelton as evidenced by his Will. Stephen Emmerson. Skelton-in-Cleveland. 1888. National Archives IR/27/541.
- <sup>15</sup> Nicholson, T. *The Growth of Trade Unionism among the Cleveland Ironstone Miners: 1850-1876*. MA Thesis 1982
- <sup>16</sup> Walsh, D. THE SHEPHERD AND HIS FLOCK. *Republic of Teesside* blog. republic-of-teesside.blogspot.co.uk. The article first appeared written by 'Hollie Bush' aka Walsh, D. in *Coastal View and Moor News*. coastalviewandmoornews.co.uk. It was a review of Sheila Crossman's two books on CMA leader Joseph Shepherd. See note 17.
- <sup>17</sup> THE TRADES UNION BILL *Morning Advertiser*. Monday March 27<sup>th</sup> 1871.ġ
- <sup>18</sup> Sheila Crossman has written two in-depth accounts of the rise and fall of Joseph Shepherd during his years with the CMA. These books also chart the beginning and development of the CMA. *The Miners' Champion* Peter Tuffs 2013  
*The Forgotten Man*. Peter Tuffs 2014
- <sup>19</sup> North Skelton (Bolckow and Vaughan). South Skelton (Bell Bros.). Skelton Park (Vaughan and Co.)  
SKELTON-IN-CLEVELAND IN HISTORY. <http://skeltonincleveland.com/p.37>
- <sup>20</sup> In 1872 the price of ironstone rose by 1s 6d per tonne *Our Industrial Heritage* project funded by Redcar and Cleveland Council.
- <sup>21</sup> THE IRONSTONE MINERS OF CLEVELAND. MASS MEETING NEAR SALTBURN. *Middlesbrough Exchange* Saturday May 5<sup>th</sup> 1872.
- <sup>22</sup> THE IRONSTONE MINERS OF CLEVELAND. MASS MEETING NEAR SALTBURN. *Middlesbrough Exchange* Saturday May 5<sup>th</sup> 1872.
- <sup>23</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>24</sup> *ibid*.
- <sup>25</sup> *ibid*.
- <sup>26</sup> GREAT MINERS DEMONSTRATION AT SKELTON. *Middlesbrough Exchange*. July 4<sup>th</sup> 1872
- <sup>27</sup> Joseph Toyn. Primitive Methodist lay preacher. William Grieves Primitive Methodist lay preacher. Thomas Burt M.P. son of a Primitive Methodist teetotal lay preacher, Burt himself Secretary of a district Temperance Society. Crossman. Sheila. *The Miners' Champion*. Peter Tuffs. 2013 p.135
- <sup>28</sup> LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: THE CLEVELAND MINERS' *Daily Gazette* Tuesday May 22<sup>nd</sup> 1872. Spink was possibly related to one of the Brotton CMA officials.
- <sup>29</sup> Sheila Crossman. *op. cit.*
- <sup>30</sup> LOCAL LETTERS. CO-OPERATIVE STORE. *Guisborough Exchange* August 22<sup>nd</sup> 1873.
- <sup>31</sup> MASS MEETING AT NORTH SKELTON. *Northern Echo* Monday October 27<sup>th</sup> 1879.
- <sup>32</sup> Walter Benjamin put forward the idea in 1934 that theatre and other cultural forms should turn the passive spectator

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- into an active participant, or even a cultural producer. Walter Benjamin. 'The Author as Producer' (1934) in Harrison. C, Woods. P. *Art in Theory 1900- 1990* pp.493-9 Blackwell 1992.
- <sup>33</sup> CLEVELAND MINING ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING. *Daily Gazette*. Thursday June 7<sup>th</sup> 1883.
- <sup>34</sup> Stephen Emmerson was one of two Overseers of The Poor for Skelton in 1834. That year a new act removed the responsibility for the destitute from the Parish and Overseers became Poor Law Guardians, responsible for a wider area in East Cleveland. [www.skeltonincleveland](http://www.skeltonincleveland) p.28
- <sup>35</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>36</sup> MINERS' MEETING IN NORMANBY. *Northern Echo* Monday July. 21<sup>st</sup> 1873.
- <sup>37</sup> SKELTON LOCAL BOARD. *Daily Gazette* Wednesday February 11<sup>th</sup> 1876.
- <sup>38</sup> SKELTON CEMETERY. *Daily Gazette* Wednesday November 26<sup>th</sup> 1873.
- <sup>39</sup> Skelton Churchwarden Accounts.
- <sup>40</sup> *op. cit.* note 13.
- <sup>41</sup> Emmerson Royalties. Teesside Archives. U.SG/10
- <sup>42</sup> MINERS' MEETING AT NORMANBY *Northern Echo* Monday July 21<sup>st</sup> 1873.
- <sup>43</sup> MINERS' MEETING AT NORMANBY *Northern Echo* Monday July 21<sup>st</sup> 1873.*id*
- <sup>44</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>45</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>46</sup> [www.skeltonincleveland](http://www.skeltonincleveland) p.38
- <sup>47</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>48</sup> *Daily Gazette* Thursday October 9<sup>th</sup> 1873
- <sup>49</sup> Advertisement *Northern Echo* Wednesday September 29<sup>th</sup> 1873.*l*
- <sup>50</sup> Minutes of the Cleveland Miners' Association. Letter from Shepherd in Sheila Crossman *The Forgotten Man* pp. 43 and 166.
- <sup>51</sup> CLEVELAND MINERS' ANNUAL DEMONSTRATION *Northern Echo* Thursday May 6<sup>th</sup> 1876
- <sup>52</sup> OLD FOOTPATHS. *Daily Gazette* Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> December 1879.
- <sup>53</sup> THE IMPORTANT RIGHT OF WAY CASE AT SALTBURN. *Daily Gazette* Friday January 2<sup>nd</sup> 1880.
- <sup>54</sup> THE RIGHT OF WAY CASE AT NORTH SKELTON. THE INHABITANTS CLAIMING THE ROAD. *Daily Gazette*. Tuesday January 6<sup>th</sup> 1880.
- <sup>55</sup> MINERS' MEETING AT MARSKE. *Yorkshire Evening Press* Thursday June 9<sup>th</sup> 1887.
- <sup>56</sup> CLEVELAND MINERS' ASSOCIATION. ANNUAL DEMONSTRATION AT SKELTON. *York Herald* Thursday June 14<sup>th</sup> 1888.
- <sup>57</sup> NORTHERN NOTES. *Northern Echo* 28<sup>th</sup> December 1887. An account of the CMA's Annual Council Meeting.
- <sup>58</sup> CLEVELAND MINERS' ASSOCIATION ANNUAL DEMONSTRATION AT SKELTON. *York Herald* Thursday June 14<sup>th</sup> 1888.
- <sup>59</sup> NORTHERN NOTES. *Daily Gazette* Tuesday July 4<sup>th</sup> 1894.
- <sup>60</sup> THE LOCAL BOARD AND THE EVICTED. *Barnsley Chronicle* Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> May 1885.
- <sup>61</sup> EDITORIAL. *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* Wednesday June 17<sup>th</sup> 1885.
- <sup>62</sup> TORIES AND THE DENABY RELIEF FUND. *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* Monday June 15<sup>th</sup> 1885.
- <sup>63</sup> END OF THE DENABY MAIN DISPUTE. *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* Wednesday July 22<sup>nd</sup> 1885.
- <sup>64</sup> THE DENABY MAIN LOCK OUT: ARRIVAL OF STAFFORDSHIRE MEN. *Sheffield Independent* Tuesday 21 July 1885.
- <sup>65</sup> THE CRISIS AT DENABY MAIN. PIT TO BE 'SET DOWN'. *Sheffield Independent* Monday June 1<sup>st</sup> 1885.
- <sup>66</sup> THE REVEREND T.J. LESLIE, late pastor of the Mexbro' Congregational Church leaves today for his new sphere of
- <sup>67</sup> CONGREGATIONALISM AT MEXBRO'. *Sheffield Independent* December 8<sup>th</sup> 1888.
- <sup>68</sup> CONGREGATIONAL MINISTER ON SOCIALISM. *Morning Post* Friday 6<sup>th</sup> January 1888.
- <sup>69</sup> THE CHAIRMAN OF THE DENABY COLLIERY ON THE DISPUTE. *Sheffield Independent* May 9<sup>th</sup> 1885.
- <sup>70</sup> THE RESIGNATION OF THE REV. T.J. LESLIE OF MEXBRO. *Sheffield Independent* Saturday July 7<sup>th</sup> 1888.
- <sup>71</sup> MEXBORO' CONGREGATIONALIST CHURCH. *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* Thursday July 19 1888.
- <sup>72</sup> PRESENTATION TO A CONGREGATIONAL MINISTER AT MEXBOROUGH. *Leeds Mercury*. Friday October 8<sup>th</sup> 1888
- <sup>73</sup> PRESENTATION TO THE REV. T.J. LESLIE AT MEXBORO. *Sheffield Independent* Thursday October 4<sup>th</sup> 1888.
- <sup>74</sup> *Sheffield Independent* Saturday February 2<sup>nd</sup>. 1889
- <sup>75</sup> 1891. England Census for South Eston. RG12. Piece 4015.Folio O3 p29
- <sup>76</sup> THE MINERS' NATIONAL UNION AND THE LOCKOUT. *Sheffield Independent* Saturday May 9<sup>th</sup> 1885.
- <sup>77</sup> MR JOSEPH TOYN AT HULL. *Daily Gazette* Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> April 1885.
- <sup>78</sup> ELECTION COMMENTS. *Hull Daily Mail* Wednesday November 25<sup>th</sup> 1885.
- <sup>79</sup> LIBERAL MEETINGS. *Daily Gazette*. Friday 13<sup>th</sup> March 1885.
- <sup>80</sup> TEETOTALISM FAVOURABLE TO THE PRIMITIVE METHODIST CONNEXIONS. *Temperance Recorder* August 1843 p.215
- <sup>81</sup> CONGREGATIONALISM IN THE CLEVELAND DISTRICT. *The Northern Echo*. Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> May 1889.
- <sup>82</sup> CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH MISSION AT GRANGETOWN. OPENING SERVICES. *Northern Echo*. Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> June 1889
- <sup>83</sup> ESTON AND DISTRICT TEMPERANCE SOCIETY. *The Northern Echo*. Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> November 1889

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- <sup>84</sup> CLEVELAND LIBERALS. MR H. FELL PEASE, M.P., AT ESTON. TORY DODGES AND WHAT THEY MEAN. *The Northern Echo*. Friday 15<sup>th</sup> December 1893
- <sup>85</sup> NORTHERN NOTES. *Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough*. Friday 6<sup>th</sup> July 1894
- <sup>86</sup> Grocer, J.P. County Councillor Elisha Beecham was Thomas Leslie's partner in many of his enterprises at Eston. He too was a Liberal who supported Temperance and the CMA.
- <sup>87</sup> BRITISH AND FOREIGN BIBLE SOCIETY MEETING AT ESTON. *Northern Echo* Thursday March 10 1892.
- <sup>88</sup> MINERS' MEETING AT ESTON. *Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough*. Friday 6<sup>th</sup> September 1889.
- <sup>89</sup> CONGREGATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL, SOUTH ESTON. *The Northern Echo* Wednesday May 15<sup>th</sup> 1889.
- <sup>90</sup> THE DURHAM STRIKE. *Daily Gazette* Monday March 21<sup>st</sup> 1892.
- <sup>91</sup> THE DISTRESS: MIDDLESBROUGH AND CLEVELAND. *Daily Gazette* Friday April 22 1892.
- <sup>92</sup> THE DISTRESS. CLEVELAND. *The Northern Echo*. Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> April 1892.
- <sup>93</sup> THE DISTRESS. SOUTH ESTON. *The Northern Echo*. Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> May 1892.
- <sup>94</sup> ESTON HOSPITAL: FRIENDLY SOCIETIES DEMONSTRATION. *Northern Echo* Monday October 3<sup>rd</sup> 1892.
- <sup>95</sup> MINERS AND THEIR WAGES: THE IMPENDING STRIKE. *Yorkshire Post* Friday July 28<sup>th</sup> 1
- <sup>96</sup> 1893 MINERS' MEETING AT GRANGETOWN. *Daily Gazette*. Thursday October 19<sup>th</sup> 1893.
- <sup>97</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>98</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>99</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>100</sup> THE COAL WAGES QUESTION. *The Northern Echo*. Monday July 31<sup>st</sup> 1893.
- <sup>101</sup> NORTHERN NOTES. *Daily Gazette*. Thursday March 15<sup>th</sup>. 1894.
- <sup>102</sup> CLEVELAND MINERS' ASSOCIATION *Daily Gazette* Thursday June 20<sup>th</sup> 1889.
- <sup>103</sup> DEATH OF MISS EMMERSON *Whitby Gazette* Friday May 7<sup>th</sup> 1897.

## **FURTHER READING**

The overall context and background to this research can be found in Bill Danby's remarkable online History of Skelton.

[www.skeltonincleveland.com](http://www.skeltonincleveland.com)

An in-depth analysis of the growth of the CMA is provided by the MA Dissertation and PhD of Dr Tony Nicholson, retired Reader in Local History at the University of Teesside:

*The Growth of Trade Unionism Amongst the Cleveland Ironstone Miners: 1850-1876* (unpublished MA dissertation, Teesside Polytechnic 1982). *Common Ground: The Dynamics of Mutuality in the Cleveland Ironstone Field, 1850-1914* (unpublished PhD. Teesside Polytechnic 1988).

Two books on Joseph Shepherd, the first leader of the Cleveland Miners' Association and the person who singlehandedly brought Trade Unionism to East Cleveland, were written by Sheila Crossman and provide a meticulously researched account of the early years of the CMA. S. Crossman. *The Miners' Champion*. Peter Tuffs 2013. S. Crossman *The Forgotten Man*. Peter Tuffs 2014.

Most newspaper articles cited in this essay are to be found in *The British Newspaper Archive*.

britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk. Local newspapers, i.e. *The Middlesbrough Exchange* and *The Guisborough Exchange* are in Middlesbrough Reference Library. *The Mexborough and Swinton Times*, with a detailed obituary on Thomas James Leslie, is in Doncaster Reference Library.

## **LIST OF FIGURES.**

1. Grave of Stephen and Hannah Emmerson, recently re-erected and repainted through the fund-raising efforts of Skelton History Group. Funded by Skelton and Brotton Parish Council, and Redcar and Cleveland Council.
2. Detail of above.
3. Detail of above
4. Advertisement from the *Northern Echo* 29<sup>th</sup> September 1875.
5. Painting of Stephen Emmerson. Oil on canvas. 2'6" x 2'6". 1872. Owned by Anne Judson whose late husband was an Emmerson descendant.
6. Photograph of Hannah Emmerson with her great-niece, Alice, outside Foughfield House the Hollybush farmhouse, probably in the 1890s. Owned by Anne Judson.
7. Sketch of Reverend Thomas James Leslie. Obituary in the *Hull Daily Mail*. 21<sup>st</sup> September 1898.
8. Eston Congregational Chapel. 2018. Photograph by author.

