

Principle FIVE

P5

October 2023

The concept of Co-operation can be understood as collective self-help – people co-operating with each other in order to improve the conditions of their lives – not in competition with each other, but for the benefit of the whole community.

This concept was put into practice in the 19th Century with the development of the Co-operative Movement.

Principle 5 was started ten years ago in order to keep alive this concept of co-operation in the 21st century.

Principle 5 provides the resources to keep this possibility alive. But we need members to make use of it, otherwise it will not achieve its potential and purpose.

Principle 5: Education, Training and Information

Co-operatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives.

They inform the general public – particularly young people and opinion leaders – about the nature and benefits of co-operation.

<https://www.ica.coop/en/cooperatives/cooperative-identity/>

Members are always welcome to visit the resource centre.

For appointment contact steve@sheffield.coop

Tel: 0114 282 3132

The resource centre has books which help in the understanding of social and co-operative history as well as books which deal with present day issues. Of course there are two prongs to the movement for a humane society, Co-operative and Political.

New Books in the Principle 5 Library

Seditious Things

*The songs of Joseph Mather – Sheffield's Georgian Punk Poet
Cobbled together by Steven Kay and Jack Windle.*

This is reproduced from the back page of Seditious Things:

Joseph Mather was one of the greatest Sheffields in history. His was the voice of the common person in the turbulent, revolutionary times of the late 18th century. He composed his songs to the rhythm of his hammer as he worked as a file-cutter – then he hollered them out in the streets and pubs of Sheffield on a Saturday night. This was the 18th century jukebox, karaoke and alternative comedy.

This edition adds to the last published version of 1862, with previously unpublished songs and historical background.

*The Songs of Joseph Mather ... seared across
my mindscape like a lightning flash...*

- Ray Hearne

Tim Cooper in his excellent book **The Sheffield Story** writes:
(page 88)

“Sheffield's working-class culture found its most powerful expression in the work of Joseph Mather, widely known by both his devotees and detractors as 'The Alehouse Poet'. A passionate advocate of Thomas Paine's '*The Rights of Man*', Mather risked his freedom in promoting the cause of working people, particularly in response to the government's response to the French revolution, and specifically through its ban on 'seditious' writings in 1791.

Born around 1737 in Chelmorton near Buxton in Derbyshire, Morton was a file cutter by trade and came to Sheffield at the age of about 10 or 11 to take up an apprenticeship at a works near West Bar Green.

It was undoubtedly his Methodist upbringing that gave him a familiarity with the Bible that comes across in much of his work. Mather first started writing satirical verse and songs while employed at the small works of Nicholas Jackson at Shemeld Croft in the Ponds area of town, and fellow workers soon persuaded him to perform his material in pubs to bring his attacks on employers and 'other persons deemed obnoxious' to a wider audience.

Up until the 1820s, cheaply printed ballads and political broadsides were the most popular reading among the urban poor, helping to educate people about the impact of government policies on their communities.

Pamphlets would be read aloud in groups by literate individuals in the home, in designated 'reading rooms', and, most commonly, during 'Saint Mondays' spent in the pub away from work. Such readings, in which dramatic performance was highly valued, provided a significant impetus toward literacy among working people in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and helped inform growing political radicalism in Sheffield.

Mather himself was able to read but never learned to write, so his poems and songs were transcribed for publication by friends who attended his performances. In this context, Mather

is significant not just for his evocation of working-class culture, but as an important expression of the oral tradition among the urban poor.

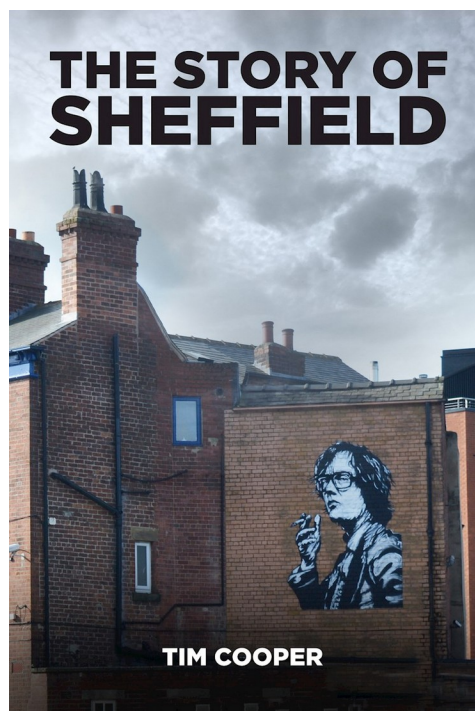
The first of Mather's songs, in a volume published after his death, gives a flavour of his work with its themes of the pain of hard physical labour, poverty, hunger and debt (leading often to a comparison of working-class lives with slavery) and a call to revolution. The opening verse of 'The File-Hewers Lamentation' runs:

*Ordained I was a beggar
I have no cause to swagger
It pierces like a dagger
To think I'm thus forlorn
My trade or occupation
Was ground for lamentation
Which makes me curse my station
And wish I'd ne'er been born*

His work used chain rhyme, echoing the rhythm of hammer on metal, which would literally have resonated with his working audience, and which made it easy to commit to memory.

Joseph Mather died in 1804, at the end of Sheffield's first phase of working-class revolutionary expression to which his work gave a voice, most powerfully in 'The battle of Norfolk Street'".

We have a copy of 'The Sheffield Story' in the library and now a copy of 'Seditious Things'.



**Co-operative Ideology
by Rita Rhodes**



Author, historian and co-operative educator Rita Rhodes has kindly donated two copies of her new book 'Co-operative Ideologies' to the library.

In what she describes as her last book, she offers quotations from co-operative leaders "powerful in vision and rhetoric" in the hope that they will inspire today's debates.

Saving Portland Works

The story of a community working together to rescue one of the UK's most important historical buildings and keep alive independent craft-working.

Portland Works is often referred to as the birthplace of stainless steel cutlery manufacturing. It was built in Sheffield in 1879 and is now one of the last remaining working examples of a purpose built metal trades factory. It is a Grade II* listed building.

The journey to save Sheffield's historic Portland Works from commercial development has been nothing short of astonishing.

By 2013, despite there being over 20 tenants who worked in the building and relying upon it for their livelihoods, the owner had allowed it to deteriorate and planned to evict the tenants and convert the building to student flats. There was a strong feeling in the community that this should not be allowed to happen. And after much organising, a Community Benefit Society was formed and more than 500 community shareholders raised the money to buy Portland Works.

It was saved from residential conversion and the people working there kept their livelihoods.

The founding committee were determined to save Portland Works and they succeeded.

The grade II* listed building has been reborn as a centre for small manufacturing, independent artists and craftspeople, with more than thirty small businesses located within the 2,600 square metre floor space. These include knife makers, an engraver and several engineers; cabinetmakers and joiners; jewellers and silver platers; artists; rug and guitar makers; photographers and a Yorkshire based gin distillery. Even high-tech CNC manufacturing is happening at Portland Works.

A wonderful film has been made, telling the Portland Works story, with excellent views of the building and the cityscape. The film is now available for anyone to watch, it lasts just over half an hour and is well recommended.

The link to the film is:

<https://www.portlandworks.co.uk/what-we-do/#savingpw>



Aizlewood's Mill



Yorkshire Co-operative Resource Centre

Other co-operative success stories include:

[Union Street co working community](#)

[Footprint Workers Co-op](#)

[Webarchitects](#)

[Sheffield Renewables](#)

[Regather](#)

To find out about Co-operatives in Sheffield see:

[Sheffield Co-ops](#)

for co-operatives in Yorkshire and further afield see:

[Co-operatives UK co-op directory](#)

Suggestions for newsletter content are always
welcome,

contact: steve@sheffield.coop

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www.principle5.coop

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