

Bill Jordan Archive

Bill Jordan was a Sheffield Labour Councillor; 1984 – 1999, (Lord Mayor 1992 - 1993), educator and co-operator. He was Vice Principal of Shirecliffe College and a central figure in Sheffield Co-operative Party.

I never knew him personally, having only become involved with the Co-op Party in 2000. This was about the time that Bill retired and went to live on the South Coast. He continued to be a prolific writer of letters and articles in Co-op News, and of course these can be located by using the Principle 5 Co-op News Index.

Bill was actively involved in both Sheffield Co-operative Societies - Brightside & Carbrook and Sheffield and Ecclesall (he was a director of Sheffield and Ecclesall). He was an active player in co-operative development and went on to be the organiser of Sheffield Co-operative Development Group from its very beginning, he became its first Chair and Secretary. Bill saw SCDG through to its incorporation and was its first stalwart.

Chris Olewicz in view of the work that Principle 5 will be doing with Sheffield University Students to produce the 2026 edition of the Sheffield Co-operator and engaging these students, put me in touch with the fact that Bill Jordan's papers are in the Sheffield City Archives (two boxes).

I have been through these and photographed most of them.

The first box contains the complete minutes and associated papers of Sheffield Co-operative Development Group right from its very beginning around 1980.

The second box contains papers and documents covering the failed plan for the merger of Brightside & Carbrook with Sheffield & Ecclesall Co-operative Societies.

Over all, these papers cover the activities of Sheffield Co-op Party and co-operatives, both worker and retail, in Sheffield. And especially from a political perspective.

Sheffield Co-operative History

For the early years of Sheffield Co-operative history, I would direct you to:

[Co-operative Ideas, Experiments, and Schemes in Sheffield 1790 – 1875](#)

by John Baxter. This has been published in:

CO-OPERATORS, RADICALS, WORKERS
Principle 5 Pamphlet: No 6

People in Sheffield remember the Co-operative Movement through the retail societies, (Sheffield & Ecclesall), (Brightside & Carbrook).

- Sheffield Improved Industrial & Provident Society. Est. 1865 its central stores were on Snig Hill and Trippett Lane.
- Ecclesall Society. Est. 1874.
These two societies amalgamated in 1907 to form the Sheffield & Ecclesall Co-operative Society. And in 1968, S&E absorbed Bakewell Society. S&E merged with Yorkshire Co-operatives, United Co-operatives and the Co-operative Group.
- Brightside & Carbrook Co-operative Society. Est. 1868
Changed name to Sheffield Co-operative Society in 1985.
Transferred engagements to United Co-operatives in 2006.
United Co-operatives transferred engagements to the Co-operative Group in 2007.
In the 1960's B&C absorbed the following Co-operative Societies; Woodhouse, Oughtibridge, Stocksbridge, Killamarsh, and in 1976, Tideswell.

From The Sheffield Yearbook of 1925.

Brightside and Carbrook Co-operative Society Limited
Registered office; Kirkbridge Road, Attercliffe
37 Branches. Membership 35,676. Share capital £418,823.
Annual turnover £990,245.

OBJECTS OF THE SOCIETY

- To produce and distribute goods that are made under proper and duly recognised Trade Union conditions of labour.
- To promote organisation for the Social Advancement and better Economic Conditions of its Members by the medium of Conferences, Classes, Lantern Lectures and other propaganda means of social intercourse.
- To oppose and renounce the evils of Competitive Trading, by securing for the workers immunity against the tyranny of sweated labour, and thus imparting thereto healthier and happier surroundings.
- To divide Half-Yearly the surplus left, after due observance of the foregoing conditions amongst the members in proportion to their purchases and to encourage a policy of thrift and Self-help by the usual employment of members accumulated Dividends and Home-saving Deposits in the Societies operations.

EVERY MEMBER ASSURED FREE

NO MEDICAL EXAMINATION. NO PREMIUMS.

Remember that your HUSBAND or your WIFE is assured under this Scheme.

From The Sheffield Yearbook of 1925.

Brightside & Carbrook Co-operative Society

Collective self help was alive and well in the 1860's in Sheffield. Workers in the industrial East End were becoming more literate and were becoming actively involved in the Mechanics Institute and Library and the Working Men's Clubs. These clubs were a meeting place for enquiring minds to listen to and debate the subjects of the day. Such were the men of the blacksmiths shop of Wm Jessop & Sons Ltd., who one night met in the School Room, Dean Street, Brightside and the subject of the working men's co-operative at Rochdale cropped up. No one could explain until one member said that he noticed the word 'Co-operative' on a clock over a shop at Kilnhurst. A deputation went over and the secretary of Kilnhurst Co-operative, Mr Charles Holroyd, not only explained the principles behind this form of trading, but came over to Brightside and gave a talk to the club members on how to start a similar co-operative in Brightside and Attercliffe. The result was that a collection was taken and the proceeds started what became Brightside & Carbrook Co-operative Society.

This story illustrates three important features of the Co-operative Movement.

First, collective self help and education, which led to seeking out knowledge of the co-operative principles.

Second, the willingness of one co-operative society to help others to start a co-operative. You will remember that the success of the Movement was dependent on mutual support and help between co-operatives. The Rochdale Pioneers gave that lead. Isolation will always be the downfall of working class movements, solidarity, the strength. The support given by the Kilnhurst Society was exemplary.

Third, that by people pooling resources for a common objective, a great commonwealth can be built up for the benefit of all if it is based on co-operative principles.

Sheffield Castle

Just after the First World War, Brightside & Carbrook Co-operative Society bought the site of Sheffield Castle on Exchange Street / Waingate.



From the roof of Davy's restaurant on Haymarket, looking towards the Royal Victoria Hotel before the area was redeveloped in 1914-20. The view is of historical interest as it shows the site of the medieval castle, subsequently covered by a jumble of property including the cone of an early steel cementation furnace.

Before building work took place they commissioned an archaeological survey of the site, led by Leslie Armstrong*. The design of the building was modified to accommodate the remains of the castle. In 1929 the magnificent City Stores was opened on the castle site. A souvenir booklet was produced to

celebrate the opening of this department store.



The City Stores, Exchange Street, c. 1929. The B & C went from strength to strength, opening grocery and drapery branches in Wincobank, Grimsthorpe and other suburbs. In 1914, a year after the Sheffield and Ecclesall Co-op opened their city centre shop near The Moor (see page 93), a site on Exchange Street was bought for a new Central Stores. These opened in 1929, in a modern department store rivalling the city's established family drapers.

The City Stores only lasted for eleven years before being destroyed by enemy action on the night of the 12th December 1940.

For B&C Co-op in 1929 see:

[Souvenir; The Sheffield Castle and Brightside & Carbrook Co-operative Society Limited 1100 – 1929. Reference copy in P5 Library](#)

B&C and the Sheffield City Council came to an agreement to swap the site of the castle and a site on Angel Street across the road. In due course a temporary single storey department store was built on Angel Street, followed by the building of Castle

House which was opened in 1964.

The board of the B&C Co-operative Society commissioned a painting of Sheffield Castle as it might have looked and the painter was Kenneth Steel. This magnificent oil painting was hung in the boardroom in Castle House until the Co-operative Group sold Castle House in 2009. The painting was taken to Manchester to be looked after safely by the Co-operative.

The Co-operative has loaned the picture to Green Estate and is on display at the Sheffield Manor Lodge which like the Castle was part of the estate of the Earls of Shrewsbury. Part of Sheffield heritage has been returned to the City.

What then is the Co-operative legacy in the City of Sheffield?

Present day examples of this in Sheffield is the community initiative which brought Portland Works into co-operative ownership. People contributed collectively to save a valued place of small industry and craft from being closed down by a developer.

Sheffield Renewables, is another example of how a share offer has led to a project which will help the community to produce renewable energy, another innovative co-operative.

See www.sheffield.coop to get to know the latest in the Co-operative Movement in Sheffield.

* Sheffield Castle by John Moreland and Dawn Hadley

A brief history of the Sheffield & Ecclesall Co-operative Society from 1874 to 1913; Souvenir to commemorate the completion of the new central premises. A reference copy is available at the P5 Library.

decorated with jazzy low-relief patterns and stylised baskets of brightly coloured flowers. Known as The Arcade because of the high internal hall running through the building, it was demolished after closing in 1982, and replaced by a supermarket.



The Arcade, S&E Co-op Society later known as Sunwin House

The Bill Jordan papers

From the foundations of the consumer co-op societies in Sheffield in the 1860s until the 1970s the scope of the co-op movement in the City remained centred upon the two co-op societies, S&E + B&C. The co-op movement auxiliaries eg, the Women's Guild, the Co-op Party, Woodcraft Folk, Federation of Young Co-operators, Co-op Drama Groups, Co-op Walking Groups, Wortley Hall, Education Councils etc. had their purpose within the auspices of the Societies, and indeed, were supported by the Societies. It might be said that the Sheffield Co-op Movement was the B&C, the S&E and their auxiliaries. But from the 1970s, it was becoming clear that retail co-op societies throughout the country were running into financial difficulties. S&E finances were looking increasingly unsustainable. Co-op Boards of Directors were invariably ageing men, fixed in their ways, unable to respond to changing demographics, and fiercely loyal to their own sense of self-worth, to which they attached greater importance than to the co-op movement as a whole.

At the same time, after a period of relatively full employment, changes in the job market resulted in high levels of unemployment. As the retail co-op movement was going into decline, the idea of worker or producer co-operation was gaining support. The Industrial Common Ownership Act 1976 followed by the National Co-operative Development Agency created by the Labour Government in 1978 drew attention to the possibility of workers taking collective control of their industry. It was about this time that the establishment of a Sheffield Co-operative Development Group started to be seen as a distinct way forward.

Bill Jordan, Labour Councillor for the Manor Ward, played a central role in both the efforts to rescue S&E Co-op and integrate the Movement through a merger with B&C, and also to establish a Sheffield Co-operative Development Group to help to foster social inclusion and financial security amongst the working people of Sheffield. He also played a significant role in education, a vital part in any co-operative initiative. Bill was Vice Principal of Shirecliffe College. He stood for, and was elected, as Board member of the Sheffield & Ecclesall Co-operative Society. He was Chair of Sheffield Co-op Party. And the organiser for the nascent Sheffield Co-operative Development Group in the late 1970s early 1980s. He was later to be Chair of SCDG.

Bill Jordan's papers, which he left to Sheffield City Archives, are available to Principle 5 for further study.

This source material will support the study of events which led to the unsuccessful attempt to merge the S&E and B&C co-operative societies. And the minutes and supporting papers and publications which cover the early days of SCDG are also amongst this material.

Further reference

Producer Co-operatives, notes. Steve Thompson. 2021
<https://www.principle5.coop/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Producer-Co-operatives.pdf>

Co-operative Development Agency
<https://www.principle5.coop/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Co-operative-Development-Agency.pdf>

SCDG Leaflet

<https://www.principle5.coop/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/SCDG-Leaflet.pdf>

SCDG Co-operative News 1990

<https://www.principle5.coop/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/SCDG-Co-operative-News-1990.pdf>

Castle House (B&C - later Sheffield Co-operative Society)

Steve Thompson. 2018.

<https://www.principle5.coop/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Castle-House.pdf>

Sheffield (some historical notes). Steve Thompson.

<https://www.principle5.coop/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Sheffieldsome-historical-notes.pdf>