

= Jarrow March =

The Jarrow March , also known as the Jarrow Crusade , was a protest march in England in October 1936 against the unemployment and poverty suffered in the northeast Tyneside town of Jarrow during the 1930s . Around 200 men marched from Jarrow to London over 26 days , carrying a petition to the British government requesting the re @-@ establishment of industry in the town following the closure in 1934 of its main employer , Palmer 's shipyard . The petition was received by the House of Commons but not debated , and the march produced few immediate results . The Jarrovians went home believing that they had failed .

Jarrow 's earliest claim to fame was as the home of the 8th @-@ century saint Bede . In the early 19th century a coal industry developed , before the establishment of the shipyard in 1851 . Over the following 80 years more than 1 @,@ 000 ships were launched in Jarrow . In the 1920s , a combination of mismanagement and changed world trade conditions following the Great War brought a decline which led to the yard 's closure . Plans for its replacement by a modern steelworks plant were frustrated by opposition from the British Iron and Steel Federation , an employers ' organisation with its own plans for the industry . The loss of the steelworks , and the lack of any prospect of large @-@ scale employment in the town , was the final factor that led to residents ' organising the march .

Marches of the unemployed to London , termed " hunger marches " , had taken place since the early 1920s , mainly organised by the National Unemployed Workers ' Movement ( NUWM ) , a communist @-@ led body . For fear of being associated with communist agitation , the Labour Party and Trade Union Congress ( TUC ) leadership stood aloof from these marches . They exercised the same policy of detachment towards the Jarrow March , which was organised by the borough council with the support of all sections of the town and without any connection with the NUWM . The Jarrow marchers received sustenance and hospitality from local branches of all the main political parties on their way , and on their reception in London .

Despite the initial sense of failure among the marchers , in subsequent years the Jarrow March became recognised by historians as a defining event of the 1930s . It helped to foster the change in attitudes which prepared the way to social reform after the Second World War . The town holds numerous memorials to the march . Re @-@ enactments celebrated the 50th and 75th anniversaries , in both cases invoking the " spirit of Jarrow " in their campaigns against unemployment . In contrast to the Labour leadership 's coldness in 1936 , the postwar party adopted the march as a metaphor for governmental callousness and working @-@ class fortitude .

= = National background = =

= = = UK unemployment between the wars = = =

In the period immediately after the end of the First World War , Britain 's economy enjoyed a brief boom . Businesses rushed to replenish stocks and re @-@ establish peacetime conditions of trade , and while prices rose rapidly , wages rose faster and unemployment was negligible . By April 1920 this boom had given way to Britain 's first post @-@ war slump , which ushered in an era of high unemployment . Britain 's adoption of generally deflationary economic policies , including a return to the gold standard in 1925 , helped to ensure that the percentage of the workforce without jobs remained at around 10 % for the rest of the 1920s and beyond , well above the normal pre @-@ war levels . During the world recession that began in 1929 and lasted until 1932 , the percentage of unemployed peaked at 22 % , representing more than 3 million workers .

Unemployment was particularly heavy in Britain 's traditional staple export industries ? coal mining , shipbuilding , iron and steel and textiles ? all of which were in a slow decline from their Victorian heyday . Because of the concentration of these industries in the north of England , in Scotland and in Wales , the numbers of persons out of work in these regions were significantly higher , sometimes more than double the percentage , than in the south throughout the interwar period . The decline of

these industries helped to create an additional problem , that of long @-@ term unemployment outside the normal cyclical variations ; some workers had no work for years .

= = = Hunger marches = = =

In 1921 , in reaction to the rising levels of unemployment , the newly formed British Communist Party set up the National Unemployed Workers ' Movement ( NUWM ) . From 1922 until the late 1930s , under its charismatic leader Wal Hannington , the NUWM organised regular marches in which unemployed workers converged on London to confront Parliament . These became known as " hunger marches " , reviving a name coined by the press in 1908 , when a group of London 's unemployed marched to Hyde Park .

The 1922 marchers sought a meeting with the new prime minister , Andrew Bonar Law , who refused to see them . The march leaders were denounced in The Times as " avowed Communists ... who have been identified with disturbances in their own localities " . The Labour Party and the TUC kept aloof , fearful of being tainted by association with the communist organisers . The same pattern was followed with subsequent NUWM marches ; successive prime ministers ? Stanley Baldwin in 1929 , Ramsay Macdonald in 1930 and 1934 ? declined to meet the marchers ' representatives , and the Labour Party and the TUC continued to keep their distance . In 1931 Macdonald became head of a Conservative @-@ dominated National Government that imposed a means test on unemployment benefits . Anger at the means test was the rationale for the 1932 hunger march , in which a series of rallies and demonstrations across London broke out into considerable violence ; clashes with opponents and police in Hyde Park , Trafalgar Square and Westminster led to the arrest and imprisonment of the march 's leaders .

Two additional national marches were held in 1934 and 1936 . By this time the country had made a substantial recovery from the worst depression years of 1929 ? 32 . Unemployment was significantly down , annual growth was averaging 4 % , and many parts of the country were enjoying a substantial boom in housing and consumer goods . The increasing prosperity was not , however , uniformly spread , and there were sharp contrasts between economic conditions in the south and those in the north @-@ east , South Wales , Scotland and elsewhere , where the rate of recovery was much slower . At the same time , the national mood was changing ; external factors such as the rise of fascism in Europe helped to unify the British left , and there were more supportive voices in parliament on behalf of the unemployed . The idea of marching as a means of expressing political or social grievances had by now become an accepted and well @-@ established tactic . The historian A.J.P. Taylor considered that the hunger marchers had " displayed the failure of capitalism in a way that mere figures or literary description could not . Middle @-@ class people felt the call of conscience " .

= = Local background : Jarrow = =

= = = Town history = = =

Jarrow , situated on the River Tyne in County Durham , northern England , entered British history in the 8th century , as the home of Bede , the early Christian monk and scholar . After Bede , little changed in the remote rural community for a thousand years , although his monastery was dissolved under Henry VIII in the 16th century . The discovery of coal in the 17th century led to major changes . It was not mined on an industrial scale until the early 1800s , resulting in the population of Jarrow more than doubling between 1801 and 1821 to around 3 @, @ 500 , largely from the influx of mineworkers .

The town 's years as a coalfield were unhappy . Living conditions in many of the hastily erected cottages were insanitary , lacking water and drainage . There was a serious outbreak of cholera in Jarrow and northeast England in the winter of 1831 ? 32 as part of a pandemic that had originated in Bengal five years before . In England cholera arrived at Sunderland , carried by passengers on a

ship from the Baltic . It spread throughout the country .

Relations in Jarrow between employer and employee were poor ; workers were held by the " bond " system whereby they were tied to a particular employer for a year , whether or not that employer could provide work . Working conditions in the mines were dangerous : there were explosions in 1826 , 1828 and 1845 , each with large loss of life . Attempts by workers to organise into a trade union were fiercely opposed by the employers . Nevertheless , workers conducted lengthy strikes in 1832 and 1844 , each ending when hunger forced the miners back to work . After the easier seams of coal were exhausted , the Jarrow pits became less profitable , and in 1851 the owners abandoned them altogether .

= = = Shipbuilding = = =

Jarrow began its development as a shipbuilding town with the establishment in 1851 of Palmer 's shipyard on the banks of the River Tyne . The first ship from the yard was launched in 1852 , an iron @-@ built and steam @-@ powered collier ; many more such carriers followed . In 1856 the yard began building warships , and was soon supplying many of the world 's navies . With its associated iron and steel works , it became the largest shipbuilding centre in the country , employing thousands of men . Jarrow 's population , at around 3 @,@ 800 in 1850 , had increased nearly tenfold to 35 @,@ 000 by 1891 . Palmer 's was central to Jarrow 's economy , both for the numbers employed there and for the ancillary businesses that served the needs of both the yard and town .

The shipyard generated high employment to Jarrow , but the industrial works created a harsh environment . Ellen Wilkinson , the town 's historian and member of parliament from 1935 to 1947 , quotes a newspaper source from 1858 : " There is a prevailing blackness about the neighbourhood . The houses are black , the ships are black , the sky is black , and if you go there for an hour or two , reader , you will be black " . According to Wilkinson , the yard 's founder , Sir Charles Palmer , " regarded it as no part of his duty to see that the conditions under which his workers had to live were either sanitary or tolerable " .

In the 1890s , Britain held a near monopoly of the world 's shipbuilding , with a share of around 80 % . This proportion fell during the early years of the 20th century to about 60 % , as other countries increased their production . Palmer 's remained busy , and during the years of the First World War built many of Britain 's warships : the battleship HMS Resolution , the light cruiser HMS Dauntless ( D45 ) , and numerous smaller vessels were all built in Jarrow . During the brief postwar boom of 1919 ? 20 , orders remained plentiful and Palmer 's prospered . However , the firm 's management had not anticipated the conditions that developed in the 1920s when , as Wilkinson says , " every industrial country that had bought ships from Britain was now building for itself " . The firm made over @-@ optimistic assessments of future demand , and invested accordingly . The anticipated demand did not materialise ; by the mid @-@ 1920s , Palmer 's was incurring heavy losses , and was close to bankruptcy . It was temporarily reprieved by a short @-@ lived boom in 1929 , when orders rose and the town briefly enjoyed the prospect of an economic recovery .

= = = Closure of Palmer 's = = =

On 24 July 1930 Palmer 's launched its thousandth ship , the tanker Peter Hurl , but by this time the brief shipbuilding boom had been ended by the Great Depression , and there were no new orders on the firm 's books . Rumours of impending reorganisation and rationalisation in the industry gave the workforce cause for anxiety , which deepened with the formation in 1930 of National Shipbuilders Security Ltd ( NSS ) . This was a company created by the government to assist shipbuilders by acquiring failing yards and dismantling them , so that production was concentrated within a smaller number of profitable yards . To ensure this rationalisation was sustained , the closed yards were banned from any shipbuilding activity for at least 40 years .

During 1931 NSS was busy closing shipyards elsewhere in the country , while an order from the Admiralty for two destroyers kept Palmer 's working until mid @-@ 1932 . The second of these ships , HMS Duchess , was the last ship launched from the yard , on 19 July 1932 . By this time , Palmer

's was insolvent , but retained a faint hope of further naval contracts . These failed to materialise , and in June 1933 the firm 's creditors appointed a receiver . By December 1933 rumours of NSS interest in the yard were appearing in the press , and in the House of Commons Walter Runciman , the President of the Board of Trade , told members :

" There is nothing to be gained by giving Jarrow the impression that Palmer 's can be revived " . He continued : " Would it not be very much better to make a clean sweep of that as a shipyard , and throw open to the world for sale what is one of the finest and most convenient sites anywhere in Europe ? "

Despite efforts by management and workers to find an alternative solution , in the early summer of 1934 NSS acquired the yard , closed it , and began to dismantle its plant . Blythe wrote : " The only sound to compete with the unfamiliar noise of the marsh birds ... was the ring of the breakers ' hammers . "

Following the Palmer 's closure , a small hope of relief and some industrial resurrection was offered by the industrialist Sir John Jarvis , who held the ceremonial office of High Sheriff of Surrey . He was the prospective Conservative candidate for Guildford . On 4 October 1934 , Jarvis announced the " adoption " of Jarrow by the county of Surrey , and promised to bring new industries to the town ; he mentioned ship @-@ breaking , bottle manufacture and furniture @-@ making . While acknowledging the generous principle behind Jarvis 's scheme , Betty Vernon ( biographer of Jarrow politician Ellen Wilkinson ) describes it as ultimately superficial , offering little more than patchwork assistance . Blythe observes : " This excellent man failed , as anyone must fail who tries to play the good squire to a town of nearly forty thousand people " .

= = = Ellen Wilkinson = = =

In the 1931 general election , in the nationwide rout of Labour , the Jarrow constituency was won by the National Government 's candidate , William Pearson , a Conservative borough councillor and former mayor . In 1932 , when the mood in Jarrow was desperate ? " a workhouse without walls " according to one commentator ? the local Labour Party selected Ellen Wilkinson as its parliamentary candidate for the next general election . Wilkinson had helped to found the British Communist Party in 1920 , and had a firebrand reputation . She had been associated with Hannington and the NUWM in the early 1920s , but had left the Communist Party in 1923 and had served as Labour MP for Middlesbrough East between 1924 and 1931 .

Wilkinson felt a deep bond of sympathy with the people of Jarrow and the loss of the shipyard which was the life @-@ source of the town . Early in 1934 she led a deputation of Jarrow 's unemployed to meet the prime minister , MacDonald , in his nearby Seaham constituency . She records that at the end of the meeting MacDonald said to her : " Ellen , why don 't you go out and preach socialism , which is the only remedy for all this ? " This " priceless remark " , she says , brought home the " reality and sham ... of that warm but so easy sympathy " . She became Jarrow 's MP in the general election of November 1935 , when she won the seat with a majority of 2 @, @ 360 . In the opening debate of the new parliamentary session , on 9 December 1935 , she pleaded on behalf of her new constituents : " These are skilled fitters , men who have built destroyers and battleships and the finest passenger ships ... The years go on and nothing is done ... this is a desperately urgent matter and something should be done to get work to these areas which , Heaven knows , want work . "

= = = Proposed steelworks = = =

While Jarvis 's palliative measures were being developed , a more substantial project to bring industry back to Jarrow was under consideration . An American entrepreneur , T. Vosper Salt , became aware of the impending sale and break @-@ up of Palmer 's yard . He was convinced that the world demand for steel was about to rise , and thought that the site , with its ready @-@ made docking and rail facilities , would be ideal for a new , modern steelworks . In January 1934 , when an initial feasibility study report had proved favourable , Salt began discussions with the British Iron and

Steel Federation ( BISF ) , a steel producers ' organisation formed that year as part of the National Government 's rationalisation of the iron and steel industry .

The British steel industry was protected from more efficient foreign competition by the government 's high tariff wall . The BISF , through its control of pricing , could also present a united front against new competition at home . When the feasibility report was received by the BISF in March 1935 the Federation 's chairman , Sir Andrew Duncan , at first reacted positively ; his members from the north @-@ east were rather less enthusiastic . Only one of the large steel firms in the region , the Consett Iron Company , offered support for a Jarrow steelworks , while other BISF members put pressure on London 's financial institutions to withhold capital from the new scheme . Reports of such tactics caused great anxiety in the Jarrow area , where the people were desperate for the new works to come about . In a reassuring speech shortly before the November 1935 general election , Baldwin , now leading the National Government , informed his listeners in Newcastle : " There is no truth in any of the reports that either the banks or any other authorities ... are making a dead set to prevent anything of the kind being done in the area " .

After the election and the return of the National Government , little happened to support Baldwin 's optimistic words . In the House of Commons on 2 March 1936 , Wilkinson spoke of the " atmosphere of mystery " that surrounded the Jarrow scheme : " Publicly one sees tremendous optimism ... but when you see people privately there is a great deal of humming and ha 'ing , and they are not quite sure " . Meanwhile , the BISF argued that increased steel production should be achieved by expanding capacity in existing facilities , rather than by building new plant . Duncan , in a reversal of his earlier attitude , now opposed the provision of finance for Jarrow which , he felt , might create a precedent that other distressed areas could exploit . The BISF finally succeeded in watering down the scheme to the extent that it became unviable ; Salt and his syndicate withdrew , and the scheme was dead , " strangled at birth " according to Wilkinson .

In a series of exchanges in the Commons with Runciman on 30 June , Wilkinson requested in vain that the matter be reconsidered by an independent body , rather than being decided by the BISF . One of the government 's own negotiators , who had been involved in the project since its early stages , wrote in The Times : " A system which permits the adjudication on a proposal of national importance ... to be left in the hands of parties whose financial interests may run counter to that project , is not conducive to the enterprising development of the steel industry " .

When , later in the summer , Runciman met workers from Jarrow the deputation encountered , in Wilkinson 's words , " a figure of ice . Icily correct , icily polite , apparently completely indifferent to the woes of others . " His insistence that " Jarrow must work out its own salvation " , was described by Blythe as " the last straw in official cruelty " ; to Wilkinson , the phrase " kindled the town " , and inspired it to action .

= = March = =

= = = Preparation = = =

After the loss of the steelworks , David Riley , the chairman of Jarrow Borough Council , told a rally of the town 's unemployed in July 1936 : " If I had my way I would organise the unemployed of the whole country ... and march them on London so they would all arrive at the same time . The government would then be forced to listen , or turn the military on us " . The idea of a march was taken up with enthusiasm by the mayor Billy Thompson , by Wilkinson , and by political , commercial and religious groups . It was decided that the march would be a local affair , representing the town , with no political connotations . It would be limited to 200 fit men who would arrive in London at the start of the new parliamentary session on 3 November 1936 , when a petition from the town would be presented to the House of Common .

Riley was appointed chief marshal , with four subcommittees to deal with organisational detail . All the local political parties ? Labour , Conservative and Liberal ? gave their support , as did the town 's churches and the business community . Relays of medical students from the Inter @-@ Hospital

Socialist Society agreed to accompany the march as medical attendants . A fund was begun , with an initial target of £ 800 , to meet the costs of the march ; ultimately , nearly double that amount was raised , locally and on the route . Public meetings were planned for the overnight stops , to publicise the plight of Jarrow and of other areas like it . One marcher explained : " We were more or less missionaries of the distressed areas , [ not just ] Jarrow " .

On Monday 5 October the marchers , selected from over 1 @, @ 200 volunteers , attended an ecumenical dedication service in Christ Church , Jarrow , where the blessing was given by James Gordon , the Bishop of Jarrow . This apparent endorsement by a senior cleric gained considerable press attention , but earned a sharp response from Hensley Henson , the Bishop of Durham . Henson , a severe critic of socialism and trade unionism , described the march as " revolutionary mob pressure " , and regretted his colleague 's association with " these fatuous demonstrations , which are mainly designed in the interest , not of the Unemployed , but of the Labour party " .

As Jarrow 's representatives prepared to leave , six regional contingents of the sixth National Hunger March were taking the road to London , where they were due to arrive a week after the Jarrow marchers . A group of blind veterans , organised by the National League of the Blind and Disabled , was also on the march , demanding better allowances for the country 's 67 @, @ 000 blind persons .

= = = On the road = = =

= = = = Jarrow to Ripon = = = =

After the service of dedication , the marchers left Jarrow , cheered on by most of the town and bearing banners announcing themselves as the " Jarrow Crusade " . By the following weekend they had travelled 69 miles ( 111 km ) to the cathedral city of Ripon , where they were welcomed by the Bishop of Ripon and a delegation representing local churches . Receptions at the intervening stops had been mixed : lukewarm at Chester @- @ le @- @ Street , warm and friendly from the people in Ferryhill and also from the Conservative @- @ controlled council in Darlington .

Wilkinson had left the march at Chester @- @ le @- @ Street to attend the Labour Party 's annual conference , taking place in Edinburgh . The conference was not supportive of the march ? one delegate criticised Wilkinson for " sending hungry and ill @- @ clad men on a march to London " . The Labour conference 's negative stance brought angry responses from the marchers ; Riley considered that they had been " stabbed in the back " . The marchers were further dismayed to learn that the Ministry of Labour 's Unemployment Assistance Board had ruled that their benefits would be reduced , since they were unavailable for work should jobs arise .

= = = = Ripon to Chesterfield = = = =

After a weekend 's rest , the marchers proceeded to Harrogate . In this solidly Conservative , prosperous town the marchers were greeted warmly by the civic authorities and were fed by the Rotary Club . They were given sleeping quarters by the Territorial Army , a change from the school and church halls , and occasional workhouse accommodation , that was provided at most overnight stops . It was becoming evident that local Conservatives were often as likely to provide practical assistance as Labour , whose local parties were constrained by the attitude of the party 's national leadership . The marchers ' claim that theirs was a unique situation , arising from specific actions ( the closing of the shipyard and the blocking of the proposed steelworks ) that could be remedied by immediate government action , may also have alienated local working @- @ class communities . Cross @- @ party support was important in maintaining the march 's non @- @ partisan ethos , a factor that led Riley to refuse a donation of £ 20 from a communist group , stating : " We are determined at all costs to preserve the non @- @ political character of this Crusade " .

At Harrogate Wilkinson rejoined the march , as it proceeded through southern Yorkshire towards Chesterfield in Derbyshire . The march was attracting wide publicity ; in London the government

worried that King Edward might exceed his constitutional limits and receive the marchers . The cabinet issued a statement that emphasised the constitutional means for expressing grievances , and condemned marches for causing " unnecessary hardship for those taking part in them " ? " crocodile tears " , according to Wilkinson . In reaching Chesterfield on 17 October , the marchers had travelled 70 miles ( 110 km ) during the week , and were at the approximate half @-@ way point in their journey . That day , the Bishop of Durham was gratified and the marchers correspondingly disappointed , when in a letter to The Times the Bishop of Jarrow denied that his blessing on the march had indicated his support for the venture . The blessing was , he said an act of Christian duty ; in general he believed that such marches should be discouraged . Wilkinson was forgiving of the bishop 's volte @-@ face , knowing , she later said , " the difficulties he had to face " .

= = = = Chesterfield to Northampton = = = =

The third week of the march covered the greatest distance of the four weeks ? 83 miles ( 134 km ) . At Mansfield , the Labour @-@ controlled council defied the national leadership to give the marchers a warm welcome . This was matched by the reception from Nottingham 's Conservative mayor and councillors , and supplemented by gifts of clothing and underwear from the city 's manufacturers . At Leicester , the Co @-@ operative Society 's bootmakers worked through the night without pay , repairing the marchers ' boots . According to some accounts , the marchers presented the vicar of the Church of St Mark , Leicester , with a wooden cross , although Matt Perry , in his history of the Jarrow March , indicates that this cross was donated in 1934 by the national hunger march .

From Leicester the march moved to Market Harborough . This was one of the least welcoming of all the overnight stops . No member of the local council greeted or visited the marchers , and they were forced to spend the night on the stone floor of an unfinished building ( the local press later denied that this was so ) . On Saturday 24 October the marchers reached Northampton , arriving at the same time as the blind group . Wilkinson left to supervise arrangements in London , and would thereafter only participate intermittently until the final day , a week hence .

= = = = Northampton to London = = = =

The leg on Monday 26 October , from Northampton to Bedford , was the longest daily march ? 21 miles ( 34 km ) . Of the original contingent , 185 were still on the road , together with 10 replacements . To maintain the timetable for arrival at Marble Arch , the marchers took an extra rest day on Tuesday before marching , in teeming rain , the 19 miles ( 31 km ) to Luton .

On 29 October , as the marchers walked from Luton to St Albans , the plight of Jarrow was the subject of exchanges in the House of Commons between Wilkinson and Baldwin . The prime minister drew attention to the recent decrease in Jarrow 's unemployed , and said : " There is every reason to hope that the revival of industry now in progress in the Tyneside area will result in further opportunities for employment for those still unemployed at Jarrow . " Wilkinson replied that the apparent decrease in Jarrow 's unemployment figures arose from the amalgamation of the figures of Jarrow with those of a neighbouring town , and did not represent an increase in employment . She asked Baldwin whether he would break with tradition and meet a deputation of the marchers ; the prime minister declined .

On the penultimate stage , from St Albans to Edgware , as the march neared its end , marchers began to contemplate the return home , and the prospect of " looking out of the window ... knowing that there 's nothing , nothing at all to do " . On the final day , for the short 8 @-@ mile ( 13 km ) stretch , large crowds watched the column proceed through the London suburbs towards Marble Arch , marching to the accompaniment of their own mouth @-@ organ band despite relentless rain . On arrival , as their leaders talked to the press , the marchers retired to their overnight accommodation in London 's East End .

= = = = London = = = =

On Sunday 1 November the marchers proceeded to Hyde Park for a hastily organised public meeting . The Communist Party was holding a general rally in the park against unemployment ; Wilkinson records that they " generously gave way for an hour and asked their great audience to swell our Crusade meeting " . The police made a low estimate of 3 @,@ 000 for the crowd , but the journalist Ritchie Calder , who was present , put the figure at 50 @,@ 000 .

After a day 's rest , the marchers ' main event on Tuesday was a public meeting in the Memorial Hall , Farringdon Street . Among the guest speakers was the Rev. Canon Dick Sheppard , founder of the Peace Pledge Union . He told the marchers : " You have so aroused the conscience of the country that things are bound to happen " . Sir John Jarvis , without prior warning , then revealed plans for a steel tubes mill on the Palmers site . The impression that Jarrow 's problems could be solved thus , without government action , disconcerted the listening marchers . Wilkinson commented that such plans were in the future , and were no substitute for the town 's requirement for immediate government intervention .

On Wednesday 4 November Wilkinson presented the Jarrow petition to the House of Commons . With over 11 @,@ 000 signatures , it asked that " His Majesty 's Government and this honourable House should realise the urgent need that work should be provided for the town without further delay . " In the brief discussion that followed , Runciman said that " the unemployment position at Jarrow , while still far from satisfactory , has improved during recent months " , to which a Labour backbencher replied that " the Government 's complacency is regarded throughout the country as an affront to the national conscience " .

Blythe summarises the marchers ' anger and disillusionment : " And that was that . The result of three months ' excited preparation and one month 's march has led to a few minutes of flaccid argument during which the Government speakers had hardly mustered enough energy to roll to their feet " . A " stay @-@ in " strike was briefly proposed , before Wilkinson arranged a meeting with a cross @-@ party group of MPs . The marchers ' case was heard sympathetically ; the meeting was warned that , given international uncertainties , they might come to regret the dismantling of an important shipbuilding facility for reasons of private profit . Such statements , according to Wilkinson , made members " distinctly uncomfortable " . The next day the marchers returned by train to Jarrow , where they received an ecstatic welcome from the town .

= = Appraisal and legacy = =

Before the start of the Second World War , and the establishment of war @-@ based industries , Jarvis 's initiatives brought modest relief to Jarrow . By 1939 , about 100 men were employed in a small furniture factory and up to a further 500 in various metal @-@ based industries set up on the Palmer 's site . Jarvis had acquired the obsolete liners Olympic and Berengaria , to be broken up at the yard . However , after their triumphant homecoming many of the marchers felt that their endeavour had failed . Con Whalen , who at his death in 2003 was the last survivor of those who marched the full distance , said that the march was " a waste of time " , but added that he had enjoyed every step . His fellow marcher Guy Waller , on the 40th anniversary of the march in 1976 , said that " [ t ] he march produced no immediate startling upsurge in employment in the town . It took the war to do that " . These views are shared by most commentators and historians . The Daily Mirror columnist Kevin Maguire calls the march " a heroic failure " , while Matt Dobson , in The Socialist , writes that " out of all the hunger marches its aims were the most diluted and it made the most modest gains " . The historians Malcolm Pearce and Geoffrey Stewart provide a positive perspective , arguing that the Jarrow March " helped to shape [ post @-@ Second World War ] perceptions of the 1930s " , and thus paved the way to social reform .

Perry observes that " the passage of time has transformed the Jarrow Crusade ... into a potent talisman with which many apparently seek association " . Thus the Labour Party , which in 1936 shunned the march , later adopted it as " a badge of credibility " . In 1950 the party featured the Jarrow banners on its election posters ; the march then disappeared from view in an era of high employment , only to be invoked again when unemployment again became a political issue in the



1980s . In the late 20th century and beyond , Labour leaders ? Michael Foot , Neil Kinnock , Tony Blair ? have all associated themselves with the march . In October 1986 , on the 50th anniversary , a group from Jarrow and other towns along the way retraced the route to London . At that time of industrial recession , Jarrow once again had the highest level of unemployment in the country . The 75th anniversary in 2011 was marked by a " March for Jobs " , that drew the ire of a Conservative MP , Robert Goodwill , who noted the high level of withdrawals in its early stages and dismissed it as " an insult to the memory of the Jarrow marchers ... They are not fit to walk in [ their ] footsteps " .

Shortly after the return home in November 1936 Riley , together with three other Jarrow councillors who had led the march ? James Hanlon , Paddy Scullion and Joseph Symonds ? left Labour to form a breakaway group committed to a more direct fight for employment . All four later rejoined the party ; Scullion and Symonds both served as the town 's mayor , and Symonds was Labour MP for Whitehaven from 1959 to 1970 . In 1939 Wilkinson published her history of Jarrow , *The Town that Was Murdered* . A reviewer for *The Economic Journal* found the book " not quite as polemical as one might have expected " , but felt that in her denunciation of the BISF Wilkinson had not taken full account of the state of the iron and steel industry in the 1930s . Wilkinson continued her parliamentary career , and from 1940 to 1945 held junior ministerial office in Churchill 's wartime coalition government . In the 1945 Labour government she was appointed Minister of Education , with a seat in the cabinet , a post in which she served until her death , aged 55 , in February 1947 .

Among dramatisations based on the Jarrow March is a play , *Whistling at the Milestones* ( 1977 ) by Alex Glasgow , and an opera , *Burning Road* ( 1996 ) , by Will Todd and Ben Dunwell . In what Perry describes as one of the ironies surrounding the march , the opera was performed in Durham Cathedral in May 1997 , in retrospective defiance of the bishop who had condemned the march . The town of Jarrow contains several commemorations , including a steel relief sculpture by Vince Rea at the new railway station , a tile mural designed by local schoolchildren , and a bronze sculpture ? " *The Spirit of the Crusade* " by Graham Ibbeson ? in the town centre . Buildings and street names bear the names of Wilkinson and Riley . Perry writes that " In Jarrow , Landscape and memory have fused together , just as the red hot rivets once fastened great sheets of steel in Palmer 's Yard " .