

Thomas Arthur Leonard  
and the Co-operative  
Holidays Association



# Thomas Arthur Leonard and the Co-operative Holidays Association:

*Joy in widest  
commonalty spread*

By  
Douglas George Hope

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## FOREWORDS

When Douglas approached me to ask if I could share my knowledge and family photos of TAL (the initials by which his family and friends always referred to him), I was delighted to help; the family had a sense of enormous pride in our forebear. I only had a sketchy picture of his life and he was virtually unheard of, even amongst the CHA and Holiday Fellowship members I had met, apart from a handful of researchers but I knew that there was a growing interest in looking back at his life following the CHA's centenary celebrations of 1993 and those of HF Holidays in 2013.

Thanks to Douglas's enthusiasm and extensive research, which has culminated in this book, TAL's life, achievements and influence have, for the first time, been brought together in a full and fascinating account that honours him and sets his interesting life in the context of the times. My sketchy picture of TAL has been transformed into a colourful portrait of a man of high ideals, integrity and social conscience, a portrait I shall have great pleasure in sharing with his great-great-grandchildren.

Nancy Green

Great-granddaughter of Thomas Arthur Leonard

This book is about the changing perception of leisure and recreation in the United Kingdom during the twentieth century. It is a fascinating account of the impact of changing social, economic and cultural conditions on holiday provision. The author has set out to describe the dedication and unique qualities of T. Arthur Leonard, the founder of the Co-operative, later Countrywide, Holidays Association (the CHA). The CHA pioneered reasonably priced holidays in the great outdoors for working people and became a national and international provider of outdoor holidays. The book records the genesis, successes, failures and eventual demise of an organisation that lasted for over a century, a century of great social, political and economic upheaval, during which many tens of thousands of guests of the CHA enjoyed the fellowship and camaraderie of a break away from working life.

Distilled from many sources and involving many hours of research and miles of travel, the result is an engaging read in which Douglas Hope has captured the essence, the highs and lows, of an organisation still missed by many. Reading the book has triggered cherished memories of holidays enjoyed and of people I still remember fondly. I should like to congratulate Douglas on getting under the skin of CHA. His book deserves the widest readership.

(Mrs) V.M.A. Harvey  
Chairman  
CHA

## PREFACE

Although I have spent almost sixty years hill-walking and mountaineering throughout the United Kingdom, I have never made use of Co-operative Holidays Association (CHA) guest houses. It was during my Master of Arts Course at the Centre for North West Regional Studies at the University of Lancaster in 2005-2008 that I really became aware of the CHA and its sister organisation, the Holiday Fellowship. In learning about the importance of a wide range of outdoor organisations to the development of tourism in the Lake District, I realised that relatively little was known amongst the academic fraternity about the role of the CHA and the Holiday Fellowship in the outdoor movement. Whilst the origin of these organisations has been explored in recent histories of leisure and tourism, their subsequent development has been largely ignored by cultural historians. I found that there had been little substantive research into how these organisations, pioneers of walking holidays for working people, dealt with the far-reaching social, economic and cultural changes that have affected Britain since the First World War. Furthermore, it was also abundantly clear that the founder of both these organisations, the chief architect of co-operative and communal outdoor holidays, Thomas Arthur Leonard, had been largely ignored in modern historical writing.

I, there and then, decided that here was an opportunity to fill a neglected area of research and I was fortunate to make the acquaintance, through the good offices of Dr. Jean Turnbull, then the Course Co-ordinator at the Centre for North West Regional Studies, of Mike Huggins, Emeritus Professor of Cultural History at the University of Cumbria, a leading expert on the history of British sport, leisure and popular culture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; he encouraged me to delve into the history of the CHA and Holiday Fellowship. My subsequent research at the University of Cumbria into the activities of the CHA and Holiday Fellowship during the twentieth century led to the award of a PhD in Cultural History in February 2015.<sup>1</sup>

This book is based on that research and additional material on Thomas Arthur Leonard himself, which was not central to my research on the CHA

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<sup>1</sup> See D.G. Hope, *Whatever happened to 'rational' holidays for working people, c.1919-2000?*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Cumbria, 2015.

and Holiday Fellowship. The book details the life and achievements of T.A. Leonard and then concentrates on the role of the CHA in the development of outdoor tourism during the twentieth century. The history of the Holiday Fellowship, known as HF Holidays since 1982, is admirably portrayed in its own publication, *The Story of HF Holidays* by Harry Wroe, and this book does not go beyond Leonard's involvement in the foundation and the early development of that organisation.

The writing of this book could not have been accomplished without the help and assistance of a wide range of organisations and individuals. First and foremost, I am most grateful to the University of Cumbria for providing me with the opportunity to research the Co-operative Holidays Association and Holiday Fellowship. I am particularly indebted to Professor Mike Huggins who, in his inimitable fashion, guided me unerringly through the labyrinth of doctoral research. Many thanks are also due to my other supervisors over a period of six years; Dr Cliff O'Neil, Dr Robert Poole, Dr Carol Osborne and Dr John Swift, for their valuable comments and advice; to Sonia Mason, Graduate School Administrator at the University of Cumbria, for her invaluable support; and to the University's library staff in Ambleside, Carlisle, Lancaster and Penrith.

I could not have undertaken the research necessary without the help of the staff of the Greater Manchester County Record Office (now Archives+), where the CHA archive resides, Colne Library and Liverpool Record Office. Special thanks are also due to Nancy Green, T.A. Leonard's great-granddaughter who has kindly allowed me access to the personal papers and other memorabilia held by the family. Others who have provided invaluable assistance include the late Colin Doyle, Chief Executive at Countrywide Holidays in its final years; Brian Padgett, former General Secretary of the CHA, Canon David Peacock, former President of Countrywide Holidays, Robert Speake, long-serving member of the CHA, Stephen Broughton, financial advisor to Countrywide Holidays; Harry Wroe, HF Holidays voluntary archivist; Steve Backhouse, Head of Holiday Operations at HF Holidays and Roz Hughes, PR Consultant to HF Holidays.

I am also indebted to members of the following CHA affiliated clubs: Bolton CHA Rambling Club, Bradford CHA Club, Crosby CHA Club, Manchester CHA Club, Newcastle & District CHA and HF Rambling Club and York CHA & HF Rambling Club, who allowed me to attend their meetings and gave me an insight into how the spirit and purpose of the CHA spread to a wider audience through the activities of the CHA's local groups. I would also like to thank the one hundred former CHA

members who responded to my membership survey, particularly Wendy Acres, John and Cathy Annetts, Roger Bell, Margaret Bevan, John and Janet Booth, John Crosby, Jeff Halden, Margaret Ives, Bridget Jones, Elizabeth Luedemann-Ravit, Johanna McLaren, and John and Chris Mounsey, who provided me with their reminiscences and anecdotes of CHA holidays. I ask any other former CHA members who I have met and feel that they should have been mentioned to accept my apologies.

A number of people also deserve a special mention for their assistance in providing information that has helped to shed light on the wide-ranging influence of T.A. Leonard on other organisations: Liz Brooking, the grand-daughter of Henry White, the founder of the Friendship Holidays Association; Neil Crowther, President of the Grey Court Fellowship; John Highfield, Custodian of documents at the Liverpool Meeting House of the Society of Friends and Josef Keith at the Library in the Friends Meeting House in London; John Martin, voluntary archivist with the Youth Hostels Association; David Oglethorpe, Director of Glaramara Outdoor Adventure Centre; and Eugene Suggett, Senior Policy Officer with the Ramblers.

I must also thank Dr Heather Prince, Associate Professor of Outdoor Studies at the University of Cumbria, Dr Robert Snape, Reader in Leisure and Sport at the University of Bolton and Dr Jean Turnbull for commenting on the final draft of the book for which I am extremely grateful. I am also delighted that Val Harvey, Chair of the Board of Countrywide Holidays felt able to endorse the book as an honest account of the history of the CHA.

Finally, I would have been unable to undertake the research and write this book without the encouragement and strong support of my wife, Brenda, and the help of my son, Andrew, and daughter-in-law, Trudy, who painstakingly checked the draft for spelling and grammatical errors. Any remaining faults are purely my own.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Archives+	Location of CHA archive, Central Library, Manchester
BHA	British Holidays Association
BYHA	British Youth Hostels Association (Merseyside Group)
CCC	Clarion Cycling Club
CCPR	Central Council for Physical Recreation
CPRE	Council for the Preservation of Rural England
CPRW	Council for the Preservation of Rural Wales
CTC	Cyclists' Touring Club
CHA	Co-operative Holidays Association (Countrywide Holidays Association after 1964)
FHA	Friendship Holidays Association
FoLD	Friends of the Lake District
HF	Holiday Fellowship
IGT	The CHA's Invited Guest Trust
ILP	Independent Labour Party
ITT	International Tramping Tours
NHRU	National Home Reading Union
NT	National Trust
PTA	Polytechnic Touring Association
RA	Ramblers' Association
WHA	Wayfarer's Hostels Association
WTA	Workers Travel Association
YHA	Youth Hostels Association (England and Wales)
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association



# INTRODUCTION

## The Subject of the Book

The focus of this book is on Thomas Arthur Leonard, a Congregational minister in Colne, Lancashire in the 1890s, and the Co-operative Holidays Association, which he founded in 1893. Re-named the Countrywide Holidays Association in 1964 but always affectionately known as the CHA, the Co-operative Holidays Association operated as an independent provider of outdoor holidays until 2002. It was established to provide “simple and strenuous recreative and educational holidays” which offered “reasonably priced accommodation” and promoted “friendship and fellowship amid the beauty of the natural world”.<sup>1</sup> Leonard left the CHA in 1913 to establish the Holiday Fellowship, an organisation with similar ideals to the CHA, which continues to trade as HF Holidays. Leonard was also instrumental in the establishment of the Youth Hostels Association (YHA) in 1930 and the formation of the Ramblers’ Association (RA) in 1935, of which he was the first President. He strongly supported the National Trust (NT), founded in 1895, and was a stalwart of the campaign for national parks during the 1930s. He was a founder member of the Friends of the Lake District (FoLD) in 1934 and was connected with a number of other outdoor holiday organisations.

Leonard was born in Finsbury, London in 1864 and died in Conwy, North Wales in 1948. On his death, he was hailed as the “Founder of co-operative and communal holidays and Father of the open-air movement in this country”.<sup>2</sup> This book details the life and achievements of this extraordinary man, who rebelled against the conventionality of the 1880s and 1890s and was appalled by the dull and grim lives of artisans and

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<sup>1</sup> T.A. Leonard, *Adventures in Holiday Making* (London: Holiday Fellowship, 1934), p.28.

<sup>2</sup> This epitaph appears on the memorial tablets placed, following his death in 1948, on the rock outcrop, Skelgill Bank, on the northern slopes of Catbells, overlooking Derwent Water in the Lake District; on Conwy Mountain, near Conwy in North Wales; and on Cadair Ifan Goch, a small hill overlooking Dolgarrog in the Conwy Valley in North Wales. The tablet originally placed on Conwy Mountain now resides in the HF Holidays Centre, Newfield Hall in Malhamdale, North Yorkshire.

textile workers in the industrial north of England. It also tells the story of the CHA, which pioneered walking holidays in the outdoors for working people, from its foundation in 1893 to its demise in 2004.

At its peak in the 1960s, the CHA had some 30 guest houses stretching from Totnes in Devon to Onich in the Scottish Highlands, catering for over 30,000 guests per annum. Although the main focus of the CHA was always on its adult guests, the organisation promoted holidays for youth groups and school parties long before the establishment of the YHA and the involvement of local authorities in outdoor education. In accordance with Leonard's Christian Socialist beliefs, the CHA provided free and subsidised holidays for those people who could not afford its modest charges many years before the coming of the Welfare State. The CHA was also in the vanguard of bringing foreign holidays within the orbit of ordinary working people. Local groups were an essential component of the CHA; they provided the opportunity for members to meet regularly outside the annual holiday. Local groups formed readily during the inter-war period and, by 1938, some 80 rambling clubs had been established across the length and breadth of the country. After the Second World War, the number of local groups exceeded 100, with an estimated 16,000 members. Reflecting the ideals of the parent organisation, they had two main purposes; recreational and social. They were the main vehicle for maintaining the spirit and purpose of the CHA and they also spread the influence of the CHA beyond the membership to a larger constituency of outdoor enthusiasts. They played an important part in promoting rambling as a weekend leisure activity.

Whilst the origin and early development of the CHA has been explored in recent histories of tourism and leisure, its subsequent development has been largely ignored by cultural historians.<sup>3</sup> There has been little substantive research into how this organisation, a pioneer of recreative and educational holidays for working people, dealt with the far-reaching social, economic and cultural changes after the First World War. This book describes how the CHA faced the challenges of increasing affluence

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<sup>3</sup> Harvey Taylor explores the ideals and philosophy of the CHA in his seminal work on the British outdoor movement, *A Claim on the Countryside* (Edinburgh: Keele University Press, 1997), pp.191-217; Susan Barton highlights the contribution of the CHA to the provision of 'alternative' holidays in her study of working-class organisations and popular tourism, *Working-class organisations and popular tourism, 1840-1970* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp.144-145. See also, R. Snape, "The Co-operative Holidays Association and the cultural formation of countryside leisure practice", *Leisure Studies*, Vol.23, Issue 2 (April, 2004), pp.143-158.

and consumer choice, changing cultural attitudes and expectations, the popularisation of outdoor recreation and the proliferation of outdoor holiday providers. It traces how the CHA dealt with the challenges encountered during the twentieth century, in terms of:

- The accommodation provided;
- The changing direction of holiday provision, including the provision of holidays for school and youth groups, family holidays and holidays abroad;
- The guests of the CHA and its culture of ‘friendship and fellowship’; and
- The changing role of local groups.

It shows how the CHA drifted away from its original ideal of “simple and strenuous, recreative and educational holidays” in an attempt to remain viable in a modern context but, nevertheless, continued to provide holidays for thousands of people based on healthy recreation and quiet enjoyment, and the principles of friendship and fellowship. In so doing, the CHA made a major contribution to the outdoor movement during the twentieth century.

The book is based on in-depth research at the University of Cumbria utilising the CHA’s historical records held in Manchester Central Library, together with the more recent papers of Countrywide Holidays, which now reside with the extensive CHA record. This substantial archive includes administrative, financial and legal records, publications such as annual brochures, centre programmes, song books and the monthly magazine *Comradeship/CHA Magazine/CHA News/Countrywide News*, and an extensive range of other material, including press cuttings, exhibition materials, postcards and photographs. It includes personal papers of T.A. Leonard, including private correspondence, obituaries and drafts of his book.<sup>4</sup> Nancy Green, Leonard’s great grand-daughter has also allowed me access to private papers, photographs and other memorabilia held by the family. Information has also been obtained from a selection of CHA rambling clubs and from a wide range of members and former members, who have provided detailed accounts of memories and recollections of their holiday experience.<sup>5</sup> A number of former office bearers of the CHA

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<sup>4</sup> Comprehensive CHA records for the period 1893-2000 are held in Archives+, Manchester Central Library, reference B/CHA/-.

<sup>5</sup> I am particularly indebted to the secretaries and members of Bolton CHA Rambling Club; Bradford CHA Club; Crosby CHA Club; Manchester CHA Club;

have offered views on the changes that have taken place in the organisation: Robert Speake, long-serving committee member; Brian Padgett, former General Secretary; David Peacock, former Chairman and President; and Colin Doyle, last Chief Executive of CHA.

Use has also been made of a variety of other sources, including the archive of HF Holidays, which resides at its centre, Newfield Hall in Malhamdale, North Yorkshire;<sup>6</sup> the archive of the YHA, previously located at its headquarters in Matlock, which now resides within the Cadbury Research Library at the University of Birmingham;<sup>7</sup> and the records of the Friendship Holidays Association, an organisation founded in 1922 by Henry White, which provided holidays on similar principles to the CHA.<sup>8</sup>

## Historiography

Until the mid-nineteenth century, the majority of England's population lived in rural areas and worked the land. The census of 1861 recorded, for the first time, an excess of urban over rural population. This concentration of population in cities and industrial towns without easy access to the open air and the countryside created the need to escape and, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, under the combined influences of an increase in leisure time and paid holidays, a rise in real wages and living standards, and an improved rail network, the pursuit of commercial enjoyment and trips to the seaside became more commonplace among working people.<sup>9</sup> In the north-west of England, there was a mass exodus from mill towns such

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Newcastle & District CHA and HF Rambling Club and York CHA & HF Rambling Club, and to the 100 members/former members of the CHA/HF who responded to a membership survey.

<sup>6</sup> Harry Wroe, HF Holidays voluntary archivist, has been most helpful in guiding me through the records of HF Holidays.

<sup>7</sup> John Martin, YHA voluntary archivist, has been most helpful in providing me with detailed information on YHA activities.

<sup>8</sup> Representative copies of annual reports, brochures and centre programmes of the FHA have been obtained from Henry White's grand-daughter, Liz Brooking, to whom I am very grateful.

<sup>9</sup> For a general account of these processes, see J.A.R. Pimlott, *The Englishman's Holiday: A Social History* (New York: Harvester Press, 1976) and J.K. Walton & J. Walvin (eds.), *Leisure in Britain 1780-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983). See also, J.K. Walton, *The English Seaside Resort: A Social History, 1750-1914* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1983).

as Colne during “Wakes” week to the popular seaside resorts of Blackpool and Morecambe.<sup>10</sup>

To keep people away from the temptations of vice, drink, gambling and betting, a range of religious, philanthropic and secular organisations sought to provide more fulfilling ways of spending the increased leisure time and offered alternative rational recreations. The Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA), founded in London in 1844 by George Williams, a draper’s assistant who became a devout Christian, aimed “to save young shop-workers and help them find friendship, form good habits, resist worldly temptations and become good citizens”.<sup>11</sup> Churches organised dances, tea parties, singing classes, socials, amateur dramatics and excursions. Toynbee Hall, in London’s East End, founded by a Church of England Curate, Samuel Barnett and his wife, aimed “to provide education and the means of recreation and enjoyment for the people of the poorer districts of London and other great cities”.<sup>12</sup> The Temperance movement provided a range of rational recreational activities; games, sports, instruction and education. Social campaigners encouraged self-improvement; for instance, Mechanics’ Institutes provided reading rooms and opportunities for adult education, and organised excursions for leisure and educational purposes.<sup>13</sup> Inspired by trips organised by the Mechanics’ Institutes of Leicester and Nottingham to each other’s exhibitions, Thomas Cook, a former Baptist minister, organised his first railway excursion in 1841 from Leicester to Loughborough for a Temperance meeting as a counter-attraction to a Leicester race meeting. Subsequent trips to Wales, Scotland and Ireland culminated in him taking over 150,000 people from the north of England to the Great Exhibition of 1851. This successful venture spearheaded trips to destinations at home and abroad.<sup>14</sup>

What historians have termed rational holidays, holidays that were intended to refresh the mind as well as the body, developed as a reaction against what was perceived as the trivial and commercial exploitation of

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<sup>10</sup> See R. Poole, “Oldham Wakes” in J.K. Walton & J. Walvin (eds.), *Leisure in Britain 1780-1939*, pp.71-98.

<sup>11</sup> See M Huggins, *Vice and the Victorians* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), pp.148-151

<sup>12</sup> See J.A.R. Pimlott, *Toynbee Hall: Fifty years of social progress* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1935).

<sup>13</sup> See P. Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England* (London: Methuen, 1978), pp.47-67; S. Barton, *Working-class organisations and popular tourism, 1840-1970*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp.29-38.

<sup>14</sup> See J. Pudney, *The Thomas Cook Story*, (London: Michael Joseph, 1953) p.53.

the increased leisure time.<sup>15</sup> The Toynbee Travellers' Club, founded by Samuel Barnett at Toynbee Hall in East London in 1889, provided opportunities for young people from the poorer districts of London to undertake educational travel in Europe, while the Polytechnic Touring Association (PTA), established at the Regent Street Polytechnic in London by philanthropist Quintin Hogg in the 1880s, organised foreign tours for students and members.<sup>16</sup>

In response to the increasing industrialisation and urbanisation of Britain, with its unhealthy living and working conditions, social reformers also felt it was the right of all to enjoy the clean air and spiritual refreshment of the countryside. From 1894, Unitarians in Halifax provided inexpensive rational holidays to the Lake District, based at a property in Windermere. A larger scheme was initiated in 1901 by the Bolton-based British Holidays Association (BHA), another Unitarian organisation. Its first holiday venue was Grange-over-Sands on the edge of the Lake District, with further centres at Ramsey on the Isle of Man, Llandudno in North Wales, Scarborough on the East Yorkshire coast and Chepstow in Monmouthshire, South Wales.<sup>17</sup> The Methodist Guild organised holidays to the Isle of Man, Peak District, Lake District, Wales and other destinations from 1900 onwards.<sup>18</sup>

The National Home Reading Union (NHRU), established in 1889 by the Congregationalist social reformer Dr. John Brown Paton, the principal of the Nottingham Congregational Institute where T.A. Leonard trained for the ministry, organised summer assemblies in various coastal resorts, including Blackpool, which included lectures, social gatherings and excursions for the purpose of encouraging "social intercourse and rational enjoyment" amongst the working population.<sup>19</sup> It was Paton who encouraged Leonard to expand his initial holiday scheme at Colne, which originated when he took 32 members of his Young Men's Social Guild on

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<sup>15</sup> See H. Taylor, *A Claim on the Countryside* (Edinburgh: Keele University Press, 1997), pp.191-225.

<sup>16</sup> See E. Wood, *A History of the Polytechnic*, (London: Macdonald & Co., 1965); J. D. Browne, "The Toynbee Travellers' Club", *History of Education*, Vol.15, No.1, (1986), pp.11-17.

<sup>17</sup> H. Taylor, *A Claim on the Countryside*, pp.207-209.

<sup>18</sup> See C.D. Field, "Fun, faith and fellowship: British Methodism and tourism in the twentieth century", *Journal of Tourism History*, Vol. 7, Nos. 1-2, August 2015, pp.75-99.

<sup>19</sup> R. Snape, "An English Chautauqua: the National Home Reading Union and the development of rational holidays in late Victorian Britain", *Journal of Tourism History*, Vol.2, No.3, November 2010, pp.213-234.

a four days holiday to Ambleside, in June 1891, walking the Lake District fells.<sup>20</sup>

The image of the countryside, with its clean air and lack of pollution, as providing a lung for urban dwellers was a significant factor in the late-nineteenth century campaigns for the preservation of the countryside and the 'freedom to roam' movement.<sup>21</sup> The Commons Preservation Society, whose early members included William Morris and Octavia Hill, was formed in 1865 in response to the rapid loss of common land. It merged with the National Footpaths Society in 1899 to form the Commons and Footpaths Preservation Society (later the Commons, Open Spaces and Footpaths Preservation Society) to fight against the loss of open space and the removal of footpaths. Octavia Hill, together with Robert Hunter and Canon Hardwicke Rawnsley, a close friend of T.A. Leonard, were the driving forces behind the establishment of the NT in 1895.<sup>22</sup> Whilst much attention has been focussed on the Kinder Scout Trespass of 1932, there were earlier, much less publicised but arguably equally important, instances of direct action to preserve access to the countryside: on Darwen Moors in 1879; on Lattrigg outside Keswick in 1887; and on Winter Hill above Bolton in 1896.<sup>23</sup>

The desire to escape the miserable conditions experienced in the rapidly growing towns and cities also manifested itself in the establishment of the early rambling clubs. Nevertheless, until the late-nineteenth century, the pastime of rambling through open countryside was largely restricted to the upper echelons of Victorian society. The earliest rambling clubs were also male-oriented; they have been called "Gentlemen's Clubs". The London-based Sunday Tramps, formed in 1879 by Leslie Stephen, philosopher, agnostic and father of Virginia Woolf, drew its members from the legal, literary and political circles of Victorian London. In similar vein, the Forest Ramblers' Club, formed in 1884 by a group of London businessmen with the objective of walking through

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<sup>20</sup> See T.A. Leonard, *Adventures in Holiday Making*, pp.20-22.

<sup>21</sup> For a comprehensive list of early footpath preservation and access organisations, see W. Darby, *Landscape and Identity* (Oxford: Berg, 2000) pp.108-111.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.153-154.

<sup>23</sup> H. Hill in *Freedom to Roam*, (Ashbourne: Moorland Publishing, 1980), provides a comprehensive history of the battles for access. See also, H. Taylor, *A Claim on the Countryside*, pp.119-150; T. Marsh, 'A towering achievement', *Lancashire Life*, October 2008; R. Ellis, *The Keswick Trespasses: working class protest or gentlemen's agreement*, unpublished MA dissertation, (University of Lancaster, 2008); P. Salvesson, *The Winter Hill Mass Trespass of 1896*, (Bradford: Little Northern Books, 1982).

Epping Forest “and reporting obstructions”, scorned the company of ladies on their walks. The exclusiveness of these largely male, southern rambling clubs persisted until 1905 when the London Federation of Rambling Clubs was formed.<sup>24</sup>

Similar, male-dominated clubs were formed in the north of England, such as the Sheffield-based Derbyshire Pennine Club, originally called the “Kyndwr” Club, whose members were drawn from the ranks of leading industrialists. Not all clubs were a male preserve; the student teachers of the Birmingham and Midland Institute of Adult Education formed the Midland Institute of Ramblers in 1894 with male and female members. There was a more proletarian rambling movement emerging in the industrial towns of the north of England. The rambling clubs of Lancashire and Yorkshire, such as the Liverpool YMCA Rambling Club, formed in 1874, and the Manchester YMCA Rambling Club, formed in 1880, were largely characterised by a membership drawn from the middle classes with no overt allegiance to any political party.<sup>25</sup> In contrast, Robert Blatchford, founder of the *Clarion* newspaper in 1891, and the redoubtable G.H.B. Ward, a former Sunday school teacher, “believed strongly in the socially transforming power of open-air fellowship in the countryside”. The *Clarion* newspaper had a mass circulation within the working class and its influence spread into their leisure time, leading to the formation of *Clarion* choirs, cycling and rambling clubs. The Clarion Cycling Club (CCC) gave many young people, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the chance to experience a holiday in the open air on cycling and camping trips in a comradely atmosphere.<sup>26</sup> The Sheffield Clarion Ramblers, founded in 1900 under the *Clarion* banner by G.H.B. Ward, combined in a way that no other club appears to have done at the time the need to “re-establish the sense of fellowship between men amid the objects of nature”. As with other groups, there was an emphasis on men, although three women went on the club’s first walk. According to Ward it was the “first Sunday workers’ rambling club in the north of England” and became the chief organisation campaigning for public access to the moorland areas of the Dark Peak in Derbyshire.<sup>27</sup>

By the late nineteenth century, therefore, rambling was firmly established as a popular recreation amongst the working class, particularly in the north of England where rambling clubs commonly formed part of the leisure activities of non-conformist churches. It is no surprise,

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<sup>24</sup> See A. Holt, *Making Tracks* (London: Ramblers’ Association, 1985), pp.10-11.

<sup>25</sup> H. Hill, *Freedom to Roam*, pp.24-25.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p.31.

<sup>27</sup> There is a history of the origins of the club in the *Clarion Handbook, 1921-22*.

therefore, that T.A. Leonard included rambling in the range of activities provided by his church's social guild, where he introduced members to the wilds of Pendle Hill, Ribblesdale and the Bronte country around Haworth. However, Leonard's approach to holiday making had wider objectives than the simple pleasures of tramping over the hills and moors of the Pennines. In Colne, Leonard saw an opportunity to fulfil his desire to enrich the lives of young folk "who did not know how to get the best out of their holidays".<sup>28</sup> The purpose of the rambling club he formed, therefore, was to open up the countryside for both the physical and the spiritual renewal of his flock. His main objective was the social improvement of working people, particularly young workers. John Lewis Paton, son of J.B. Paton, in his "Introit" to Leonard's book, describes Leonard's holiday movement as "a great piece of social engineering".<sup>29</sup>

Leonard's approach to holiday making was grounded in Congregationalism but was also influenced by contemporary social, philosophical and political thought. Leonard quoted Matthew Arnold and John Ruskin in his sermons. He also gained inspiration from William Morris, Edward Carpenter and Charles Kingsley. The idealised pastoral vision of Ruskin and Morris and the rural imagery of Wordsworth and the Lake Poets were the foundations of the CHA's guiding principles of "friendship and fellowship", and the model for its holidays.<sup>30</sup> It was from the poetry of Wordsworth that Leonard took the motto for the CHA: "Joy in widest commonalty spread".<sup>31</sup> The ideals and philosophy of the CHA also drew on the Victorian concepts of respectability, collectivism and co-operation.<sup>32</sup> The concept of respectability was reflected in the well-structured and highly regimented holiday regime that continued with little change well into the twentieth century. Co-operation, communal activities and collective discipline were also key themes in the development of the CHA. The founders of the CHA took a firm stand on the behaviour expected from guests. The emphasis of CHA holidays was on communal walking and social activities, religious observance and the prohibition of

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<sup>28</sup> T.A. Leonard, *Adventures in Holiday Making*, p.19.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16.

<sup>30</sup> See K. Hanley and J.K. Walton, (eds.), *Constructing Cultural Tourism: John Ruskin and the Tourist Gaze* (Bristol: Channel View Publications, 2010), pp.160-169.

<sup>31</sup> Taken from the poem 'The Prelude' in E. de Sélincourt (ed.), *Poetical Works of William Wordsworth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969).

<sup>32</sup> See F.M.L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society* (London: Fontana, 1988); C.W. Masters, *The Respectability of Late Victorian Workers: A Case Study of York, 1867-1914* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), pp.4-5.

alcohol. It would be the 1960s before the CHA adopted a more relaxed attitude towards discipline, religious observance, the availability of alcoholic drinks and excursion arrangements.

The story of the CHA, therefore, is one of continuity and change as the social, economic and cultural life of Britain was transformed during the twentieth century. This book explores how the CHA evolved from a philanthropic organisation providing Spartan and simple holidays to a multi-faceted business with a wide-ranging holiday programme. It examines the changing culture of CHA holidays, which evolved through the twentieth century from one of compulsory communal walking and social activities, reflecting the ideals and philosophy of its founder, to more diverse, informal and voluntary arrangements.

## The Book's Structure

*Part one* of this book concentrates on T.A. Leonard himself; his life and his extensive involvement in the outdoor movement. *Chapter one* focuses on the early years of Leonard's life and the influences on his approach to holiday making. It then explores the emergence of the CHA, to its incorporation as a limited company in 1897, and discusses its ideals and philosophy. *Chapter two* traces the development of the CHA, under Leonard's direction as General Secretary, in the years leading up to the First World War. In so doing, it details the expansion of the CHA through the acquisition of its own centres and describes the nature of the holiday provision. It also examines Leonard's attempts to pursue "International Friendships" across Europe in the years leading up to the First World War. *Chapter three* commences with Leonard's decision to leave the CHA and form the Holiday Fellowship in 1913. It discusses the circumstances behind this decision and then traces the development of the Holiday Fellowship until he relinquished his post as General Secretary in 1926. Leonard's involvement with the Holiday Fellowship continued after 1926, through his appointment as International Secretary, a post he held until 1931 when he was co-opted onto the General Committee. This chapter records his continuing involvement in the Holiday Fellowship until 1947, when failing health intervened. *Chapter four* explores his involvement in the wider outdoor movement, most particularly in relation to the foundation of the YHA in 1931, and the RA in 1935, but also in relation to the establishment of a number of other organisations that can be said to owe their inspiration to the pioneering efforts of Leonard. It also details his influence on the campaign for national parks, particularly the Lake District National Park, and his other interests in the final years of his life.

*Part two* of the book concentrates on the activities of the CHA after the First World War and describes how it dealt with the far-reaching social, economic and cultural changes of the twentieth century. *Chapter five* concentrates on the changing nature of the accommodation provided. After the First World War, the CHA made use of some 45 centres, spread throughout Britain and Ireland. The type of accommodation ranged from very basic Spartan centres to college premises and university halls of residence. The majority were converted country houses. *Chapter six* examines the changing directions in holiday provision, originally based on walking holidays, to include a wide range of other special activities. It charts the changing provision for youth and school groups, and families, and the involvement of the CHA in holidays abroad. *Chapter seven* considers the changing nature of the clientele of the CHA, in terms of class, age and gender, and the culture of “Friendship and Fellowship”, including social mixing through the provision of free and subsidised holidays for the less well-off. Based on the memories and reminiscences of former guests, this chapter explores the attitude of guests to the changing nature of CHA holidays. *Chapter eight* focuses on the influence of the CHA on the wider outdoor community. It examines the role of local groups (rambling and social clubs) in maintaining the spirit and purpose of the CHA. At its peak, the CHA had over 100 registered local groups and many continue to this day, some retaining “CHA” in their title. They spread the influence of the CHA to a larger constituency of outdoor enthusiasts. This chapter also records the CHA’s support for a wide range of outdoor recreational and environmental organisations.

The book ends with a short *Epilogue*, which provides a concluding assessment of the legacy of T.A. Leonard and the contribution of the CHA to the outdoor movement. In so doing, it offers an opinion on his epitaph that he was the “Founder of co-operative and communal holidays and Father of the open-air movement in this country”.

## **Finally**

T.A. Leonard has been largely ignored in modern historical writing and I hope, through this book, to widen our knowledge and appreciation of the significant contribution this remarkable man made to the outdoor movement. I also hope to broaden our understanding of the part the CHA played in the development of twentieth-century leisure and countryside recreation. I hope you find the book, in keeping with the philosophy of T.A. Leonard, both illuminating and enjoyable.



**PART I:**

**THOMAS ARTHUR LEONARD  
(1864-1948)**

# CHAPTER ONE

## FOUNDATION OF THE CO-OPERATIVE HOLIDAYS ASSOCIATION

### Introduction

This chapter focuses on the early years of Leonard's life and the influences on his approach to holiday making. It charts the emergence of the CHA from the first trip of the Dockray Square Congregational Church Social Guild to the Lake District in June 1891 to its incorporation as a limited company in 1897, and discusses its ideals and philosophy.

### Thomas Arthur Leonard: The Early Years

In most references to the origins of the CHA and the Holiday Fellowship, Leonard is described as the Reverend T. A. Leonard, congregational minister from Colne, Lancashire. The photographs of him, usually copied from David Hardman's, *History of the Holiday Fellowship: Part One*, published in 1981, or Robert Speake's, *A Hundred Years of Holidays*, published by the CHA in 1993, present the image of an elderly Victorian gentleman (see Figure 1-1).<sup>1</sup> In fact, Leonard practiced as a minister for less than 8 years and was resident in Colne for little more than 4 years. He was only 29 years old when the CHA was established in 1893.

Leonard was born in London on 12 March 1864, at 50 Tabernacle Walk near John Wesley's first chapel on City Road, Finsbury.<sup>2</sup> His father, Thomas, was a master clock and watchmaker; Finsbury and neighbouring Clerkenwell being centres of clock and watchmaking in the nineteenth

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<sup>1</sup> See photograph, dated 1905, facing page 19 in T.A. Leonard, *Adventures in Holiday Making*; and photograph, probably taken in 1914, on the front cover of D. Hardman, *The History of the Holiday Fellowship, Part One (1913-1940)*, (London: Holiday Fellowship, 1981).

<sup>2</sup> For full biographical details of T.A. Leonard, see entry in Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB): Leonard, Thomas Arthur (1864-1948), Ref. No. 104775.