



My Favourite History Place

Lord Street, Southport – **Trevor James** introduces an international dimension to local history, revealing how a future French Emperor interpreted his affection for Southport's Lord Street into the extensive redesign of Parisian streets.

The elegance of present-day Lord Street in Southport to a degree belies its international importance and associations. Writing in the *Guardian* (21 August 2004), Charles Nevin described Lord Street's 'arrestingly unexpected elegance', emphasising how its parades of shops with their glass and wrought-iron canopies were faced by 'a line of fine barbered and arbour'd gardens' on the other side of an extraordinarily wide street.

In 1846 Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, the future French Emperor Napoleon III, had taken lodgings adjoining Southport's Lord Street. He was most captivated by the atmosphere of natural sophistication exhibited in its tree-lined environment. Later on when, between 1852 and 1870, he employed Georges-Eugene Haussmann to redesign the centre of Paris, Southport's Lord Street was, in part, the image that they sought to imitate or replicate, albeit on a much grander scale.

In 2000 the late Professor Quentin Hughes, an architectural historian, drew

national and international attention to the links between Southport, Paris and Louis-Napoleon, leading to the two media comments which follow, but, in reality, it was a matter of local popular understanding that Napoleon III had resided in Southport and that the design of Lord Street had had a strong influence on his plans for developing Paris.

In 2000 *The Scotsman* (25 April) made the observation that 'Edinburgh may fairly claim to be the Athens of the North. But is Paris the Southport of the South?' Of course there is much more to that assertion. In carrying out his massive programme of public works in Paris, which created the network of boulevards with which we are familiar, Napoleon III was, in reality, extending the programme of re-alignment that had begun under his uncle Napoleon I. Equally Napoleon III and Haussmann also had a sense of the benefits that had been achieved in London by the development of its squares and parks, so close to the centre of the metropolis. That said, it remains the case that

Louis-Napoleon had been inspired, in particular, by his observation and enjoyment of Lancashire's elegant seaside resort at Southport.

The *Guardian* (25 April 2000), in commenting on the possible comparison between Southport and Paris, also provided another interesting insight. The sense of width evident in the design of Lord Street, if anything, was extended in Haussmann's design and the ambition for width in the Paris boulevards famously enabled the massive student demonstrations against President De Gaulle in 1968 to out-manoeuvre the police. The comment offered was that they had the 'enterprising and big-thinking landlords of 1830s Lancashire' to thank for this opportunity.

The systematic study and interpretation of the landscape can be traced to the innovative thinking of Professor W. G. Hoskins and Professor M. W. Beresford. What this momentary consideration of the link between Southport's Lord Street and the boulevards of Paris can reveal to us is that a broader possibility of exploring aspects of local history, especially in respect of topography, with a transnational dimension is emerging as a realistic possibility.













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Rosa Luxemburg in ten tweets

There are so many key characters, icons, idols and rogues from the history of revolution and revolutionary movements that to focus on one may seem dismissive and childish. A broad sweeping exploration of revolution in ten tweets may also, however, take away the serious consequences revolutions have had and may continue to have (I toyed with ten songs with the word revolution in it but decided that anything after Gill Scott Heron and the Beatles were just not good enough) and so I have returned to explore the life of one person – whose own revolution failed but who continues to hold the interest of political thinkers even today, and it's not Marx!



Rosa Luxemburg, 1915.

-  Rosa Luxemburg was born in Zamosc, in Russian Poland, in March 1871 but later became a naturalised German citizen.
-  A childhood illness left her with a limp, that and being Jewish at a time of high anti-Semitism made her feel apart from many around her.
-  She was fascinated by the French Revolution and started her political activism from the age of 15 in the Proletariat Party in Warsaw.
-  In 1897 she obtained a Doctorate from Zurich Uni and moved to Germany to continue her radical politics with the SDP
-  The Accumulation of Capital published in 1913 is her most famous work and explores the failures of capitalism
-  Other revolutionaries were impressed and influenced by her, even when she criticised them – including Lenin, though not Stalin.
-  She helped to establish the Spartacus League in 1916 and vociferously opposed the SDP support for Germany's involvement in WWI
-  She was murdered Jan 1919 with Karl Liebknecht, by Freikorps soldiers as leaders of the Communist Party of Germany that attempted revolution
-  Without general elections, without unrestricted freedom of press and assembly, without a free struggle of opinion...
-  ..life dies out in every public institution and becomes a mere semblance of life, in which only bureaucracy remains as the active element

Summarising an event or person using ten statements of only 140 characters (including spaces!). Compiled by Paula Kitching

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