The Dawson Turner Collection of Printed Ephemera and Great Yarmouth

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Preface

The Dawson Turner collection of printed ephemera held at the British Library (shelfmark N.Tab.2012/6(1-10)) is a voluminous selection of printed and manuscript material which provides significant information about the history of Great Yarmouth and its surrounding area between 1732 and 1862. It consists of ten volumes of handbills, playbills, broadsides, posters and reports of benevolent societies, the majority of which were acquired by the Yarmouth banker and collector Dawson Turner (1775-1858)1 and have been ordered chronologically. The ephemera contained in these volumes complement two other collections created by Turner which are held at the British Library. His ‘Prospectuses of Books, Engravings, Lithographs, &c. collected, with the view, not only of showing the state of the literature, arts, & sciences of the passing day, but as too often illustrative of the vanity of human wishes, etc.’ (shelfmark 1879.b.1) consists of four bound volumes numbered 1, 3, 4 and 8 in manuscript. This collection was sold at auction on 16 May 1859,2 but bears a British Museum stamp dated 1892. Turner’s ‘A collection of handbills, newspaper cuttings, etc., relating to lotteries between 1802 and 1826’ (shelfmark 8225.bb.78) is a small volume of lottery handbills which was purchased by the British Museum on 1 October 1859.

Dawson Turner’s collection of printed ephemera relating to Great Yarmouth appears to have been acquired by the British Museum in two stages. In May 1859 six volumes entitled ‘Yarmouth Miscellanies’ were purchased from J. & W. Boone at a sale of Turner’s books,3 and two of these were subsequently rebound in four British Museum guard volumes.4 A further two volumes of ephemera were purchased in October 1873 from a collection of material owned by David Abraham Gourlay, another Yarmouth collector and sometime mayor of the town.5 One of these volumes (now volume three of the Dawson Turner collection) is in the same binding as the other Turner volumes purchased in 1859 and an extract from an auction catalogue pasted inside the front board makes it clear that the volume, which complements the 1859 collection in terms of its chronology, was created by Dawson Turner. The other volume (now volume ten in the collection) is bound in a different style compared with the other volumes and appears to be the work of a different collector. This item spans a greater period of time than the Turner volumes (1812-1862) and, although it is much less comprehensive than the other material, it includes almost no duplication of their contents. The fact that the volume contains much

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4 The first two volumes are now numbered 1i and 1ii and were originally a single volume.
5 British Museum Invoices 9 January 1837 – 8 October 1873, v. 31; Frederick Dunby Palmer, Yarmouth Notes 1830-1872. Collated from the File of the Norwich Mercury (Great Yarmouth, 1889), p. 345; William Finch-Crisp, Chronological Retrospect of the History of Yarmouth and Neighbourhood from A.D. 46 to 1884 (Great Yarmouth, [1885]), p. 6.
material relating to Wesleyan Methodism at Yarmouth suggests that it may well have been the work of Gourlay himself who made a significant donation towards Wesleyan Schools during his lifetime.*

Two aspects of the volumes of ephemera collected by Dawson Turner that are particularly striking are the precision with which items have been ordered chronologically (with many manuscript dates supplied by Turner) and the eclectic nature of the material, which ranges from politics, religion, transport, law and order to the theatre, music and entertainment. This reflects something of the personality of Dawson Turner whose collecting demonstrates enthusiasm for gathering knowledge about all areas of life as well as a desire to order that information in a meaningful way. The nineteenth-century painter Benjamin Robert Haydon, who visited the Turners’ home in 1817, claimed that Dawson Turner’s life was ‘one incessant scene of fact collecting’ and described him as ‘an immense, living index’.† The following words, written by Dawson Turner about his collections of ephemera, reflect his high view of the value of such material, pointing out that,

... it is principally composed of Miscellanies of various kinds, – advertisements, handbills, lottery-puffs, cuttings from newspapers and prospectuses, etc . . . articles which are generally thrown away, but which acquire an interest, and sometimes a remarkable one, from juxtaposition ...  

The recent recognition of the important role which such ephemeral material can play in historical research suggests that Turner’s words have proved prophetic. In his collection a variety of documents which cover a range of subjects provides a lens through which to view the history of Great Yarmouth and can also contribute to our understanding of nineteenth-century culture in general. This article will attempt to provide an overview of four important themes which are dealt with in the Dawson Turner collection, namely politics, religion, science and transport.

Politics

An integral aspect of the Dawson Turner collection is its emphasis on politics and on the debate surrounding parliamentary reform in particular. The passing of the 1832 Reform Bill was a major development in the British electoral system which sought to make the system of representation more equitable,* but the issue had been a highly contentious one since the late eighteenth century, reactions to it inevitably being coloured by the impact of the French revolution in 1789. The public riots which broke out in Bristol, London, Worcester, Nottingham, Derby and Bath following the rejection of the second bill of Reform by the House of Lords in 1831 reflect the fact that the issue was one which was of great importance to ordinary working-class people.†

Michael S. Smith has suggested that, even before 1832, public opinion had an important effect on politics as ‘the newspapers, pamphlets, handbills, advertisements, broadsides, caricatures and other political material that flooded local communities during elections and periods of crises increased awareness, facilitated participation and heightened the public influence on national politics’. Such material forms an important part of the Dawson Turner collection and helps to shed light on how the political debate regarding parliamentary reform was played out...  

* Palmer, Yarmouth Notes, p. 345.
∥ Ibid., p. 156.
on the local level at Great Yarmouth, a constituency which, according to R. D. Fisher, was ‘remarkable for its venality and strict partisan voting’ and which returned two Whig MPs to Parliament in the general elections of 1820, 1826, 1830 and 1831.

The local support which the Reform Bill received at Great Yarmouth is reflected in a handbill advertising the Yarmouth Reform Festival, dated 12 July 1832. Triumphant language is used to claim that the bill was carried by a ‘glorious majority in the House of Commons’ and by ‘the often expressed undoubted and irresistible will of the people of the British Empire’. The handbill also includes a three-verse poem praising the merits of liberalism and contrasting the political freedom brought about by the Reform Bill to the ‘tyranny’ which the Whigs associated with the Tory party.

Such triumphalism over the passing of the Reform Bill was the result of a bitter struggle between the Whigs and Tories, and the collection includes many handbills and broadsides which were produced on both sides of the debate. Numerous items in support of reform were printed by the Yarmouth printer John Barnes. For example, a broadside dated 2 December 1830 included a list of 151 names requesting Edmund Preston, mayor of Great Yarmouth, to call a public meeting to discuss ‘the propriety of petitioning parliament for a reform in the House of Commons’. The petition produced as a result of this meeting praised the bill for reform which had been introduced into the House of Commons and requested that, in addition to the provisions of the bill, the right to vote should be granted to the children of freemen and to apprentices. It is also clear that some pro-reformers were prepared to resort to methods which went beyond petitioning Parliament. A handbill printed by Barnes, probably in May 1832, implored the men of England to force the passing of the Reform Bill by refusing to pay taxes until the act was passed.

It is clear that the opponents of reform at Great Yarmouth were equally concerned to petition Parliament and to print material in support of their cause. For example, a copy of an anti-reform petition, dated 18 March 1831, was issued by William Meggy, a Yarmouth printer and Tory supporter, and was made available for signing at his shop. The petition reflects a conservative attempt to maintain the status quo and rejects the Reform Bill as part of a larger attempt to spread what were seen as ‘revolutionary principles’ across the nation. The effect of the Reform Bill, according to this petition, was not so much an attempt to make the voting system more representative but rather to bring about ‘a total change and subversion of the British Constitution’, which, it was suggested, would severely undermine the prerogatives of the monarchy.

The debate about political reform became particularly prominent during the run-up to the 1831 general election, and the Dawson Turner collection includes a number of election songs and ballads written from both sides of the debate. One song entitled ‘To the Yarmouth True Blues’, that is the Whig supporters, presented the Whig party as one which would help to bring about a greater degree of fairness and liberty in society and overcome the ‘tyranny’ from which the country had suffered under the Tory government.
Men of England,

If you wish to carry the REFORM BILL, pay no Taxes --- Neither eat nor drink any Exciseable Articles --- Do not keep a Bank Note in your possession --- Draw out your Balances from the Banks --- insist on Gold, and in less than a month you will have Reform.

J. Barnes, Printer, Regent-Street, Yarmouth.

Fig. 1. N.Tab.2012/6, vol. 11 (item 180).
Colvile, the Tory candidate for Great Yarmouth, sought to present the Tories, the ‘true Red Party’, as a party which would promote loyalty to the King and stand against what they saw as the liberal threat to the established order.23

The political debate also produced much ephemera which attempted to support the claims of a particular party and to discredit its opposition. For example, a handbill entitled *Colvile and Slavery* revealed that the Tory candidate owned over 800 slaves on his sugar plantation in Jamaica (see fig. 2). Unsurprisingly, the author of the bill argued strongly that a man who had shown such scant regard for human dignity could not be relied upon to support the rights of his constituents in Parliament.24 A pro-Tory broadside, by contrast, argued that in supporting the 1832 Anatomy Bill, a bill which allowed the bodies of unclaimed paupers to be used for medical research,25 the Whig MPs for Yarmouth, George Anson and Charles Rumbold, had shown that they were concerned to promote liberty for the rich rather than for all members of society. The Anatomy Bill, according to Tory polemic, was a ‘Bill which gives up to the Surgeon’s Knife, the bodies of the poor, the helpless and destitute, whilst it holds sacred, those only of the rich and opulent’ and it was argued that, in wishing to oppose this bill, the Tory candidate Andrew Colvile had shown himself to be the true supporter of liberty.24 The Anatomy Bill must have been a particularly contentious issue at Great Yarmouth given the fact that during the late 1820s Thomas Vaughan was convicted of grave-robbing in an attempt to supply bodies for medical research and that subsequently high fences were built around the town’s churchyards.28 This explains both the political concern with this issue in the town and Dawson Turner’s interest in collecting ephemera which made reference to the Anatomy Bill.

**Religion**

If the first decades of the nineteenth century were a period of reform in the political arena they also reflect a degree of transition with regard to religious observance. The material contained in the Dawson Turner collection reflects the fact that, for Great Yarmouth as for other parts of Britain, the nineteenth century was a period when religious experience was important for many people but also one in which many were beginning to reject the authority of the established church and to question the central tenets of Christian orthodoxy.26 Two public notices ordering the inhabitants of Great Yarmouth to refrain from trading on Sundays and to keep their shops closed on Good Friday27 both reflect a concern on the part of the town’s authorities to maintain the observance of Christian holy days, but the fact that they needed to issue these notices at all suggests that many people did not wish to mark them.

On the other hand the fact that two new churches were built at Great Yarmouth in the 1830s suggests strength of religious observance in the town on the part of the established church. A manuscript list included in the collection shows that eighty people were prepared to subscribe towards the building of St Mary’s Chapel-of-Ease at Southtown, which fell in the parish of Gorleston, across the haven from Great Yarmouth,29 which was consecrated in June 1832.29

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23 *A New Song* (Great Yarmouth: W. Meggy, [1831]) [N.Tab.2012/6(1i/102)].
24 *Colvile and Slavery* (Great Yarmouth: William Alexander, [1832]) [N.Tab.2012/6(1i/262)].
26 Copy of a letter to John Shelly, ESQ . . . No Anatomy Bill. Colvile and Freedom (Great Yarmouth: Thomas Paul, [1832]) [N.Tab.2012/6(1i/271)].
27 Frank Meres, *A History of Great Yarmouth* (Chichester, 2007), p. 82.
29 *Town and Borough of Gt. Yarmouth, in Norfolk . . .* (Great Yarmouth : Gooch, 1834) [N.Tab.2012/6(1ii/54)]; *Borough of Great Yarmouth. The Mayor and Magistrates being desirous that Good Friday should be strictly kept . . .* (Great Yarmouth : Denew, 1840) [N.Tab.2012/6(1i/133)].
28 ‘A list of subscribers for building an Episcopal Chapel in Southtown’ [manuscript list] [N.Tab.2012/6(1i/46)].
29 *Form of Prayers to be used in Consecrating the Church or Chapel of Saint Mary, in Southtown, in the County of Suffolk, June 30th, 1831* (Great Yarmouth: W. Meggy, 1831) [N.Tab.2012/6(1i/126)].
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Freemen and Electors of Yarmouth.

Mr. Colvile having been introduced to your notice as a champion for the high honor of representing you in Parliament, it is only right that his pretensions should be carefully examined. This is at all times necessary, but more particularly at the present crisis, for UPON THE PEOPLE’S CHOICE DEPENDS THE PEOPLE’S GOOD, and if WE, the ELECTORS OF ENGLAND, fail, either through fear, favor, or affection, from honestly exercising our elective franchise, it will ill become us to complain of eventual treatment, or of the unadvised honors of Negro Slavery. I will therefore at once proceed with the proposed examination, presuming in the first instance that it rests upon PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY, and therefore cannot be denied —

Mr. Colvile is a large sugar planter, who resides in London, and is also a merchant and connoisseur of West India produce.

Mr. Colville’s own slaves amount in Jamaica to upwards of 800; besides slaves whom he has in Demerara. Mr. Wedderburn, a gentleman nearly related to him, possesses in Jamaica alone 1700 or 1800 slaves, of whose possession Mr. Colville is the envoy.

Now all these slaves, both his own and Mr. Wedderburn’s, are decreasing in number, although the relative proportion of the sexes is favourable, and has been so for at least the last fifteen or twenty years, the females being about three or four per cent. more than the males.

In two years, from March 1824 to March 1826, the decrease of Mr. Wedderburn’s slaves was upwards of 1 per cent.; and on two sugar estates of Mr. Colville’s, Blackwood and Samfield, containing, in March 1827, 240 slaves, the number in March 1828 was only 239, and in March 1829 it was reduced to 494; bringing a progressive decrease in those seven years unwonted, in the aggregate, to 84, being an average of twelve in each year, or nearly two and a half per cent. annually. The free Negroes, in the immediate neighborhood of these two estates, have increased, during the same period, at the rate of nearly 200 and a half per cent. annually, making the proportion between these free Negroes and Mr. Colville’s slave Negroes, of five per cent. per annum. Now if Mr. Colville’s slaves had been as well off, and as well fed, and as lightly worked as the Negroes, which have had no food and no supplies but what they have procured by their own industry, this murderous decrease of human life would not have taken place. In the year 1807 we found Mr. Colville and his West Indian friends carrying themselves most vigorously to preserve unsuspected that cruel and criminal traffic in slaves, which so long disgraced this country, and which, but for the very men who now direct His Majesty’s Colonies, and who were happily placed over them at that time for a brief space, would have been renewed to this hour.

Mr. Colville’s slave-farming, which he describes as tending to absolute ruin, without instant relief; but what think you, Fellow Townsmen, in the remedy which this Conservator of Slaves, this Corporation Candidate, this pretended Friend of the Poor, thus thought proper to propose? — It was nothing less than an increase of 100, or 120, on the Sugar-bounties. The effect of this proposal would be to raise the bounty from 50. or 60. which it is at present, to 75. or 80.; and as this would raise to that extent the price of the exported sugar, and there cannot be two pieces of one and the same article in the same market, the effect would be a rise; to precisely the same extent, on all sugar consumed at home. The Tax on the British Public, therefore, for this bountious, would be nearly Three Millions Sterling annually, which is probably three or four times as much as the whole actual income of all the Sugar Planters of the West Indies: and this to be paid annually, by a reduced and impoverished people, for upholding and infinitely aggravating the evil and the crime of that slavery they detest, but which the Planters are anxious to continue, and Mr. Colville, as their agent, has determined to accomplish, by obtaining at your hands, as sent in the British Parliament.

Freemen of Yarmouth, it is for you to determine whether such a Man is fit to be your Representative. If you are Lovers of Liberty, you will wish for its extinction both at home and abroad, and will never support a Slave Owner. If sincere Christian, “you will desert in this wise Others as Men should do unto you;” and will only vote for those who are pledged to the removal of heavy burdens, and determined to let the “oppressed go free!”

Such are your present Members — they have ever been true to the People’s Cause, and have at all times voted for the abolition of that odious and iniquitous System, by which Eight Hundred Thousand of your Fellow Townsman are kept in involuntary bondage, and to support which, we are already taxed in the shape of taxes, to the enormous amount of upwards of One Million Sterling.

A Lover of Freedom.

William Alexander, Printer, King-Street.

Fig. 2. N.Tab.2012/6, vol. 1i (item 262).
The previous year, the foundation stone for the new church of St Peter’s, Great Yarmouth, had formally been laid, and a handbill written by the Reverend Edward Pellew, Perpetual Curate of Yarmouth, praised this ‘laudable undertaking’ and showed that subscriptions from 38 people had raised over £2,000 towards the project. The important role which the established church played in the town of Great Yarmouth is also reflected by the fact that Pellew was active in many of the charitable societies which were created during the 1830s. Not only was he involved with churchly societies such as the Bible Society and the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, but he also preached sermons for the benefit of the town’s charity schools, as well as chairing meetings of the Temperance Society, the District Visiting Society, the Yarmouth British Free School Society and the committee for establishing a Proprietary Grammar School in the town.

Material included in the Dawson Turner collection also demonstrates that the role of the Church of England as the established church was being increasingly challenged during the first half of the nineteenth century. A handbill printed by J. Barnes in March 1833 contained a letter addressed to Edward Pellew, objecting to the building of St Peter’s church and arguing that the project was an unnecessary expense which had been forced upon the rate-payers of the town by a minority of its population. There was also strong support for Nonconformity at Great Yarmouth. The collection includes circuit plans for the Wesleyan and the Primitive Methodists, charts which divided a geographical area (known as a circuit) into specific towns, and allocated preachers to specific locations on particular days (see fig. 3). These show that, between 1832 and 1834, the Wesleyan Methodists held four services every Wednesday (at 10:30am, 2:30pm, 6pm and 7pm) at Great Yarmouth. The Primitive Methodists also held three services each Sunday at 10:30am, 2:30pm and 6:30pm. The Unitarian Chapel at Great Yarmouth’s Gaol-Street also hosted regular Sunday evening lectures on theological themes which were clearly an attempt to explain and propagate their theological principles. The collection also includes a petition signed by many of Great Yarmouth’s Nonconformists which argued that full religious and civil rights, including the right to civil registration of birth, the right to be married and buried by their own ministers and an exemption from paying church rates, should be granted to those who dissented from the communion of the established church.

30 New Church. The first stone will be laid on Thursday next . . . (Great Yarmouth: W. Meggy, 1831) [N.Tab.2012/6(1i/127)].
31 To the Inhabitants of Yarmouth . . . (Great Yarmouth: B. Gooch, 1833) [N.Tab.2012/6(1i/7)].
32 Bible Society. The annual meeting of the Yarmouth Bible Society . . . (Great Yarmouth: Sloman, 1832) [N.Tab.2012/6(1i/234)]; Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge . . . (Great Yarmouth: B. Gooch, 1833) [N.Tab.2012/6(1i/50)].
33 Temperance Society . . . (Great Yarmouth: William Alexander, 1833) [N.Tab.2012/6(1i/16)]; Yarmouth District Visiting Society . . . (Great Yarmouth: Frederick Skill, 1840) [N.Tab.2012/6(1i/111)]; Great Yarmouth British Free School Society . . . (Great Yarmouth: William Alexander, 1840) [N.Tab.2012/6(1i/93)]; Yarmouth Proprietary [sic] Grammar School . . . (Great Yarmouth: William Meggy, 1833) [N.Tab.2012/6(1i/23)].
34 To the Hon. & Rev. Edward Pellew . . . (Great Yarmouth: J. Barnes, 1833) [N.Tab.2012/6(1i/10)].
35 Plan of the Wesleyan Methodist Preachers in the Yarmouth Circuit, 1832-3 (Great Yarmouth: J. Barnes, 1833) [N.Tab.2012/6(1i/1)]; Plan of the Wesleyan Methodist preachers in the Yarmouth Circuit, 1834 (Great Yarmouth: J. Barnes, 1834) [N.Tab.2012/6(3/5)]; Yarmouth circuit. Primitive Methodist preachers’ plan, 1835 (Great Yarmouth: William Sloman, 1835) [N.Tab.2012/6(3/32)].
36 Ibid.
37 Yarmouth circuit. Primitive Methodist preachers’ plan, 1835 (Great Yarmouth: William Sloman, 1835) [N.Tab.2012/6(3/32)].
38 Subjects of a course of Sunday Evening Lectures at the Unitarian Chapel . . . (Great Yarmouth: William Alexander, 1833) [N.Tab.2012/6(1i/46)].
39 To the honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom, in Parliament assembled . . . (Great Yarmouth: J. Barnes, 1834) [N.Tab.2012/6(1i/57)].
Fig. 3, N.Tab.2012/6, vol 1, item 1.
If the prominence of Nonconformity at Great Yarmouth posed a challenge to the authority of the established church, the Christian religion itself faced a potent threat from a society known as the Universal Community Society of Rational Religionists, which, as material in the collection demonstrates, had a presence in the town during the 1840s. This society was founded in 1839 and was committed to propagating the teaching of the philanthropist and socialist Robert Owen (1771-1858), who was responsible for creating nascent communist communities where the unemployed could work on agricultural and industrial activities. According to a broadside which bears a manuscript date of March 1840, George Fleming, a leading socialist and the editor of this journal, was to visit Great Yarmouth to deliver a series of lectures to that town’s branch of the Rational Religionists (see fig. 4). The aim of these lectures was to reconcile socialist ideology with Christian orthodoxy as well as to outline the progress of the socialist agricultural community which had been established at East Tytherly, Hampshire, in 1839.

A number of items in the Dawson Turner collection make it clear that the philosophy of the Rational Religionists faced strong opposition at Yarmouth. The broadside advertising George Fleming’s lectures, for example, attacked the Methodist minister the Reverend George Hallatt for ‘having lately calumniated and vilified the character of the Socialists’ and invited him to enter into public debate with them. A handbill also advertised a series of public lectures by a prominent opponent of socialism, John Brindley, which would be delivered at Great Yarmouth’s theatre in early August 1840. These lectures would attempt to demonstrate ‘that socialism is an absurd, immoral, and atheistical system, and a direct robbery of the working classes’, and its supporters were invited to attend these lectures and contribute to a public discussion. Later that month a more formal public discussion was arranged between Brindley and a Mr Clarke, the former in opposition to, and the latter in support of, the principles of socialism. A broadside printed by T. Errington, a bookseller who was also a supporter of the socialist movement, suggests that these public lectures and debates led to a great demand for people at Great Yarmouth to purchase socialist literature and he had acquired £50 worth of socialist publications for sale at his shop.

The Dawson Turner collection also includes two issues of the socialist periodical *The New Moral World* which contain articles relating to Great Yarmouth. One of these, entitled ‘Riot and Outrage at Yarmouth’ and written by T. Errington, accused John Brindley of intruding forcefully on a socialist meeting and claimed that George Hallett was responsible for beginning a riot and attacking Mr Clarke’s house. The opponents of socialism were to describe Errington’s...
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Fig. 4. N.Tab.2012/6, vol.1ii (item 114).
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claims as ‘infamous and libellous’, and Hallatt published a tract which sought to refute them. According to Hallatt, Errington’s accusations were maliciously false, a view which was upheld by a public meeting held at Great Yarmouth’s Town Hall, a meeting which Errington failed to attend in order to support his assertions. While we can only speculate as to the truth of Errington’s claims and Hallatt’s refutation of them, the material included in this collection demonstrates that socialism was an explosive issue during the 1840s and reflects the extent to which this ideology was able to polarize opinion and stir up social unrest.

Science

A particularly interesting aspect of the Dawson Turner collection is its emphasis on a popular interest in science among the people of Great Yarmouth during the 1830s. A handbill printed in 1835 advertised a public exhibition of a hydro-oxygen gas microscope where, for the price of one shilling, the inhabitants of the town could view microscopic images of a number of specimens, including,

The wing of the dragon-fly. Dissected lime-tree leaf. Upper and under wing of the beetle . . . [and] Concluding with a drop of water teeming with the voracious denizens found in rain, rivers, and springs, which present themselves with all their seeming gigantic proportions and really terrible conformations . . .

A popular interest in science lay behind the foundation of the Yarmouth Mechanics’ Institution and Scientific Society in 1829, a society whose aim was to promote ‘the free and liberal encouragement of the Mechanical and Useful Arts, demonstrated by Lectures, periodically delivered, on these subjects’. According to a number of lecture cards collected by Turner, the lectures delivered at the Yarmouth Mechanics’ Institution focused on a range of subjects, including ‘Sketches of the Great Divisions of Nature’, fine arts and natural theology, as well as chemistry, respiration, and poisons.

While many of these lectures were delivered by inhabitants of Great Yarmouth, a number of guest lecturers also visited the town to speak on scientific subjects. Robert Goodacre (1777-1835) was a schoolmaster from Leicestershire who became a popular lecturer on astronomy and visited twenty-four towns and cities across America between 1823 and 1825 in order to speak on that subject.

In the press, and to be published on Monday next, Sept. 28th, 1840, price 2d. A refutation of the infamous and libellous charges contained in a report signed “T. Errington,” published in the socialists’ newspaper of the 5th of September, 1840, in reference to Mr. Brindley’s late visit to Yarmouth . . . (Great Yarmouth: Sloman, [1840]) [N.Tab.2012/6(1ii/223)]; G. Hallatt, A refutation of the infamous and libellous charges contained in a report signed “T. Errington,” published in the Socialists’ Newspaper of the 5th of September, 1840, in reference to Mr. Brindley’s late visit to Yarmouth (Great Yarmouth: Sloman, 1840).

Yarmouth Mechanics’ Institution and Scientific Society, Code of Laws (Great Yarmouth: Sloman, 1829) [N.Tab.2012/6(1i/39)].

Yarmouth Mechanics’ Institution and Scientific Society, Lectures intended for delivery at the hall of the Mechanics’ Institution, at Yarmouth, from April to June inclusive, 1831 . . . (Great Yarmouth: J. Barnes, 1831) [N.Tab.2012/6(1i/113)].

to deliver a series of six ‘Lectures on Astronomy and Astronomical Geography’ (see fig. 5).54

Two years later Dr Thomas Olivers Warwick (1771-1852), a Nonconformist minister who had trained as a medical doctor at the University of Glasgow, also visited the town to deliver a series of lectures on the ‘Phenomena of Nature’.55

An article on Robert Goodacre in the Annals of Science suggests that his American lectures were as much a form of popular entertainment as a serious scientific enterprise. However, as an article in the Franklin Gazette pointed out, such an approach was essential to ensuring that his lectures had an impact on a diverse range of people rather than just the learned.56 Such an approach also seems to have been adopted by Goodacre at Great Yarmouth where it was advertised that different instruments and diagrams would be used to help illustrate the content of his lectures.57 Thomas Warwick’s lectures on natural phenomena were also supported with ‘Geological Plans and the most interesting experiments in Chemistry, Magnetism, Electricity, and Electro-Magnetism’.58 This reflects the somewhat eclectic and ambitious aim of Warwick’s lectures which, according a pamphlet providing an outline of them, was ultimately an attempt to provide an overview and synthesis of a range of scientific subjects. His lectures began with geology and moved on to consider the nature of gases in the atmosphere, the composition of vegetable and animal substances, the nature of chemical elements and atomic theory, and concluding with the nature of electricity.59 One significant point of contact between Goodacre and Warwick’s lectures is that both men clearly believed that the study of science could help to complement religious faith. The second of Goodacre’s lectures, for example, was entitled ‘The study of Astronomy calculated to confirm the belief of Man in Divine Revelation’, while the first of Warwick’s lectures attempted to demonstrate that ‘[t]he present state of the globe [is] not the result of blind accident, but of the long continued operation of invariable laws guided and governed by consummate skill’.60

Transport

The Dawson Turner collection also contains much information about the establishment of a railway line to Great Yarmouth and the reaction of the town’s inhabitants to this important development. Two railway building projects which were taking place during the 1830s were of particular significance to the town, namely the Eastern Counties Railway, which was intended to form a link between London and Norwich via Ipswich and Colchester, and the Northern and Eastern Railway, which was to link London with York via Cambridge and Peterborough61 but with a branch which would also link Great Yarmouth and Norwich with Cambridge.62 A Map of

54 Lectures on Astronomy and Astronomical Geography, exemplified by splendid apparatus . . . (Great Yarmouth: W. Meggy, 1831) [N.Tab.2012/6(1ii/122)].
55 [Thomas Olivers Warwick], Dr Warwick respectfully informs the ladies and gentlemen of Yarmouth and its vicinity that he purports to explain those phenomena of nature . . . (Great Yarmouth, 1833) [N.Tab.2012/6(ii/11)]; Michael Brook, ‘Dr. Warwick’s Chemistry Lectures and the Scientific Audience in Sheffield (1799-1801)’, Annals of Science, xi:3 (1956), pp. 224-237 (pp. 224-5).
57 [Robert Goodacre], Outline of six lectures on astronomy, and astronomical geography . . . in the Theatre, Yarmouth, by Mr: Goodacre (Great Yarmouth: William Alexander, 1831), p. 3.
58 [Thomas Olivers Warwick], Dr Warwick respectfully informs the ladies and gentlemen of Yarmouth and its vicinity that he purports to explain those phenomena of nature . . . (Great Yarmouth, 1833) [N.Tab.2012/6(ii/11)].
59 [Thomas Olivers Warwick], Dr Warwick’s general view of the phenomena of nature (Kettering: Toller, 1833), pp. 1-2 [N.Tab.2012/6(ii/11)].
62 Northern and Eastern Railway . . . (Great Yarmouth: Frederick Skill, 1836) [N.Tab.2012/6(3/130)]; Eastern Counties Railway: Map of Passenger Traffic ([1836]) [N.Tab.2012/6(3/139)].
LECTURES ON ASTRONOMY
AND
ASTRONOMICAL GEOGRAPHY.
EXEMPLARY BY SPLENDID APPARATUS.

MR. GOODACRE
PROPOSES TO DELIVER
IN THE THEATRE,
SIX LECTURES ON
ASTRONOMY
AND
ASTRONOMICAL GEOGRAPHY,
ON MONDAYS, WEDNESDAYS, 
& FRIDAYS,
BEGINNING WITH
FRIDAY, THE TWENTIETH OF MAY, 1831,
AT SEVEN OCLOCK IN THE EVENING.

INSTRUMENTS BY WHICH THE LECTURES ARE EXEMPLIFIED:
I.—A HORIZONTAL TELLURIAN, LUNARIAN, and ECLIPSAREON, the Earth’s Orbit, forty feet.
II.—A VERTICAL TRANSPARENT TELLURIAN, with a triple Zodiac, and designs of the Four Seasons, fourteen feet square.
III.—A splendid TRANSPARENT ORRERY, containing the Sun, with all the Planets and Satellites, fifty feet in circumference.
IV.—A TRANSPARENT PLANISPHERE of the Sidereal Heavens, forty-five feet in circumference, capable of being rectified to time and place.
V.—Plan of a UNIVERSAL SYSTEM, or SYSTEM OF SOLAR SYSTEMS, forty feet in circumference.
VI.—Smaller INSTRUMENTS and MATHEMATICAL DIAGRAMS, amounting in number to nearly forty.

TERMS.
To the Six Lectures, Lower Circle, 12s.—Upper Circle, 15s.—Pit, 9s.—The Ticket is Transferable.
Children under Twelve years of age, 7s. 6d. in any part of the House.
To Each Lecture, Lower Circle, 3s.—Upper Circle, 2s. 6d.—Pit, 2s.—Gallery, 1s.—Children to any part of the House, 1s. 6d.

EACH LECTURE IS COMPLETE IN ITSELF.

TICKETS are on Sale at the various Booksellers; at the doors on the Evenings of Lecturing; and by the Lecturer, at his private apartments, at Mr. Hayter’s, Cabinet-Maker, King-Street; where he will be happy to see his Friends, on any day of lecturing, between the hours of Twelve and Three o’clock.

PRINTED BY W. MEGG, QUAY.

Fig. 5. N.Tab.2012/6, vol. 11 (item 122).
Passenger Traffic, dated 1836, which was included by Dawson Turner as part of his collection, shows the proposed routes of these lines. Neither of these projects proceeded as planned and Great Yarmouth was not to gain a railway connection until 1844 when a rail link was created between the town and Norwich and, two years later, a line between Norwich and London made it possible to travel by train to the capital.  

Despite this delay in providing Great Yarmouth with a railway connection, the ephemera collected by Dawson Turner provides an interesting insight into how the town’s inhabitants viewed this proposed development. A handbill, probably printed around 1840, pointed to the great benefits which Norfolk, and Yarmouth in particular, would gain if it was served by a railway. The author highlighted the value of the railways in helping to connect various parts of the country to London. He argued that, unless an attempt was made to create a railway for the eastern counties, that part of the country would be severely disadvantaged and would ‘be left behind in the race of competition by counties at thrice the distance from the Metropolis’. The establishment of a railway line would be particularly beneficial to Great Yarmouth, he argued, as it would encourage people to frequent the town as a place of recreation and, given the size of the port, it was likely that Great Yarmouth would become a packet station from which overseas goods could be transferred to other parts of the country.

Although many believed that building a railway line to Great Yarmouth would bring many benefits, there is also evidence to suggest that this view was not universally held and that the issue of railway development was a divisive one during the mid to late 1830s. In March 1836, for example, a handbill was issued entitled Northern & Eastern Railway . . . Caution (see fig. 6). This argued that, while 121 of the inhabitants of Yarmouth had signed a petition to Parliament in favour of establishing a railway connection, there was much concern in the town that the proposed Eastern Counties Railway would have a negative impact upon the town’s fishing industry. The proposed railway, it was asserted, would increase competition with other towns along the line which would then be able to transport their goods to London more quickly. There was also concern that a connection with London would lead to Yarmouth being deprived of a connection to the manufacturing towns of the north and west of the country. In response to this argument, two handbills were printed which argued that the building of a railway would not impede Yarmouth’s fishing trade and would have no more of an effect upon this industry than the improving of road links to London. Moreover, it was argued that failure to support the project would not prevent the towns of Ipswich and Colchester from gaining a railway connection with the capital, but it did have the potential of preventing the people of Great Yarmouth from sharing in the benefits which a railway would bring. It was also argued that a railway link with London would not necessarily prevent the building of a future line to form a connection with the north and west of the country.

It is interesting to note that, despite Great Yarmouth’s isolation prior to the establishment of its railway connection in 1844, the Dawson Turner collection abounds with material which suggests that the town maintained a close link with other parts of the country. Numerous playbills demonstrate that well-known actors from the London theatres, including Ellen Tree, George Bennett and William Farren, acted there on numerous occasions and the town also

64 Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire Railway to London . . . (Norwich: Matchett, Stevenson, and Matchett, [1840]), p. [1] [N.Tab.2012/6(1ii/260)].
65 Ibid., p. [2].
66 Northern & Eastern Railway . . . Caution . . . (Great Yarmouth: F. Skill, 1836) [N.Tab.2012/6(3/138)].
67 Eastern Counties Railway: Caution extraordinary! . . . (Great Yarmouth: Sloman, 1836) [N.Tab.2012/6(3/141)].
68 Inhabitants of Yarmouth . . . (Great Yarmouth: J. Barnes, 1836) [N.Tab.2012/6(3/140)].
69 See, for example, Theatre Yarmouth. The manager has the honor of announcing that he has concluded an engagement for six nights only, with that highly-popular actor Mr. Farren of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden . . . (Great Yarmouth: Sloman, 1840) [N.Tab.2012/6(1ii/155)]; Theatre, Yarmouth. The manager has great pleasure in announcing, that he has succeeded in forming an engagement, for six nights only with that highly-popular actress, Miss Ellen Tree, of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, also, for the same period, with Mr. G. Bennett, of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, who will have the honor of appearing on Monday, 17th August, 1840 . . . (Great Yarmouth: Sloman, 1840) [N.Tab.2012/6(1ii/199)].
Northern & Eastern RAILWAY.

A PETITION to PARLIAMENT, signed by 1121 of the Inhabitants of Great Yarmouth, in favour of the above Undertaking, has been forwarded to London.

CAUTION.

The FISH-CURERS and INHABITANTS of this Town are particularly guarded against signing any Petition in favour of the EASTERN COUNTIES RAILWAY, which, if established, would create a rival competition with their Fisheries, along the Line of Coast to which it so nearly approximates, as such direction of Railway would cause other places to have the advance of this Town in the supply of Fish to the London Market; exclude her at once from a Railway Communication with the great manufacturing Towns of the Western and Northern Districts; and, ultimately, tend to the annihilation of her Fishing Interests.

It is positively the intention of the Northern and Eastern Company to apply for a Bill to complete the Eastern Line, from Cambridge to Yarmouth, at the ensuing Session of Parliament.

A PLAN AND SECTION
OF THE LINE FROM
Cambridge to Yarmouth,
MAY BE SEEN AT MR. YETTS'S OFFICE.

YARMOUTH, 21st March, 1836.

PRINTED BY P. SKILL, QUAY.

Fig. 6. N.Tab.2012/6, vol. 3 (item 138).
The Dawson Turner Collection of Printed Ephemera and Great Yarmouth

hosted various musical concerts. The grand concert held to mark the Yarmouth Races in 1840, for example, included a number of musicians and actors from the London Concerts and the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane.70 The town also hosted other forms of entertainment including the George Wombwell’s menagerie, which boasted the opportunity to view a variety of exotic animals,71 and circuses, including Bridges’s Equestrian Circus.72 This reflects the importance of leisure and entertainment in nineteenth-century society73 and makes it clear that, despite Great Yarmouth’s geographical distance from the capital, the significance of the town was such that it was able to attract a number of popular figures and to provide various forms of entertainment for its inhabitants.

**Conclusion**

Although this article has focused on only a selected amount of material from Dawson Turner’s voluminous collection of printed ephemera it is clear that these themes provide interesting examples of the developments which were taking place in society during the first decades of the nineteenth century. By its very nature this ephemeral material, which was created to be read and discarded, but which Dawson Turner so assiduously collected and ordered into volumes, is able to provide an important glimpse into the impact which these developments had on Great Yarmouth and its surrounding area. The invaluable historical information which the Dawson Turner collection provides about Great Yarmouth highlights the importance of seeking to locate, conserve, catalogue and promote similar collections of printed ephemera.

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70 Yarmouth races, marine regatta, &c. Vauxhall Gardens, Suspension Bridge . . . 21st, 22nd, and 23rd of July, 1840. grand gala, promenade musicales, . . . An engagement has been formed with a brilliant constellation of artists: Mr. Gibbs, leader of the principal London Concerts, and a party of other gentlemen, to be aided by the double band . . . (Great Yarmouth: Sloman, 1840) [N.Tab.2012/6(1ii/176)].

71 Wombwell’s Grand National Menagerie of wild beasts, birds . . . (Norwich: Bacon and Kinnebrook, 1831) [N.Tab.2012/6(1i/60)]; Contrast of the two elephants. Atkins’s immense menagerie, not to be equalled in Europe . . . (Great Yarmouth: J. Evans, 1832) [N.Tab.2012/6(1i/290)].

72 Opening of Bridge’s Equestrian Circus Bessey’s Piece, North-Quay, Yarmouth. Double company of equestrians and vaulters . . . (Great Yarmouth: Frederick Skill, 1840) [N.Tab.2012/6(1ii/159)].