

# Newcastle on Page and Screen

*Christopher Goulding*

IT COULD PERHAPS BE SAID THAT THE TRADITIONAL ATTITUDE OF LITERARY ENGLAND towards Newcastle upon Tyne is crystallised by Jane Austen in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813). When Lydia Bennett's new husband, the dashing young militia officer George Wickham, has been posted to Newcastle, her mother's reaction is to cry; 'Oh, my dear Lydia ... when shall we ever meet again?'

The sense that such a posting is seen as a form of banishment to some unknown and alien region is further underlined by Mrs Bennett when she tells her neighbours in Longbourn of her daughter's fate: 'They are gone down to Newcastle, a place quite northward, it seems, and they are to stay, I do not know how long.' Her use of the words 'gone down' (where one might have expected the more usual 'up', as far as any southerner's reference to the north is concerned), even suggests that the residents of Hertfordshire have an impression of Tyneside as a rather infernal sort of place. Lydia herself is slightly more hopeful that there will be some vestiges of civilisation to be found: 'We shall be at Newcastle all the winter ... I dare say there will be some balls.'

That, sadly, is the sum total of references to Newcastle in the whole of what is generally regarded as the canon of great English Literature. Other mentions of the regional capital of the North East in novels that come anywhere near acknowledged 'classic' status are limited to passing references and brief cameo appearances. These include Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766); a rather unfavourable mention by the 18th-century Scots writer Tobias Smollett in his epistolary novel *The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker* (1771); and then again in his picaresque tale *The Adventures of Roderick Random* (1748), which exhibits the author's familiarity with the town by mentioning Pilgrim Street.

Indeed, it is only in the non-fictional travel writing of such figures as Celia Fiennes (1662-1741) and Daniel Defoe (1660-1731) that Newcastle is featured to any recognisable extent. Happily, in the case of these two visitors, the town was appreciated as being as impressive then as it is now.

Newcastle fared little better in the 19th century, and it is to the 100 years shortly to come to an end that we must look to see the city at last figure in any significant way in the world of literature, albeit to a limited extent.

Life in Newcastle during the first two decades of the 20th century is fascinatingly chronicled from opposite ends of the social spectrum by two writers from very different backgrounds. Jack Common wrote *Kiddar's Luck*, his account of life in Edwardian Heaton, and its sequel *The Ampersand* from the point of view of his own working class childhood there. Yevgeny Zamyatin's *Islanders* is a decidedly cynical look at the stifling atmosphere of the middle-class Newcastle suburb of Jesmond as seen

through the eyes of a foreign visitor. Together, they form a revealing portrait of life in two suburbs only a mile or so apart geographically, but separated at that time by a social chasm.

Taking its title from the catch-phrase of Jimmy Learmouth, a northern music hall comedian, *Kiddar's Luck* (1951) is a vividly descriptive work, evoking a Newcastle that seems almost Dickensian compared to the city of today. Common's autobiographical novel leads us by the hand through a vanished world of gaslit cobbled alleyways, trams, fleapit cinemas showing silent films, and still largely horse-drawn traffic crowding the streets. But this book is much more than a nostalgic sightseeing trip around Tyneside as it was between 1903 and 1917. In a narrative oozing with period detail, a very strong sense of the social cohesion that existed amidst the poverty and hardship of daily life in those days is conveyed to us. The camaraderie of the workplace, the corner shop, the doorstep, the local pub, and – for the children – the back lane are all used to recall an inner city landscape and a way of life that survived well into the 1960s.

*Kiddar's Luck* also forms a literary monument to the old industrial north that made it one of the great workshops of the world. The giant engineering works of Heaton employed thousands, Armstrongs of Scotswood gave work to almost the entire male population of that part of the city, the railways (where Common's father worked) and shipyards were all busy, and further afield were the pits of Northumberland and Durham. In such a society with a deeply ingrained work ethic, the author points out that within the average working family as much engineering know-how might be passed from father to son over the supper table as could be via an apprenticeship.

In its sequel *The Ampersand* (1954) Common introduces us to the world of commerce, which he entered upon leaving school aged 14. Taking its title from the '&' that appeared in the names and on the letterheads of so many companies, this novel conducts us through the bustling streets of central Newcastle. The Edwardian office blocks of Dean Street and Mosley Street are hailed as 'the newest castles of the Tyne' and successors to the Keep, whilst Pudding Chare is a warren of small offices, shops, and warehouses. Here too, the period detail leaps out of the page, with bygone clerical paraphernalia such as carbon paper, mechanical adding machines, and half-gallon bottles of ink being the common currency of the office junior.

The city's status as a port meant that it was not without its occasional glimpses of exotica. Foreign seamen were a common sight in the town, as were the often equally exotic girls who frequented the quayside seeking their company. Rare fruits such as mangoes and papayas occasionally appeared on fruit stalls, whilst a pet shop in the Butcher Market could boast a live monkey in its window.

With a disarming honesty, Common goes to some lengths to dispel any illusion that this was an age of total innocence. Petty shoplifting in Woolworths is described as 'a pastime' for him and his friends, whilst in the wider world, he wryly notes that city councillors always seemed to be getting wine and dined by the directors of construction companies.

Both of Common's novels, as well as his collections of essays such as *The Freedom of the Streets*, remain sadly underrated on the national literary scene, and are unfairly dismissed as being too parochial in character. (Parochialism of location was no bar to national success for, say, *Cider with*



Rosie.) Common's talent was recognised by his contemporaries and friends such as George Orwell, and he undoubtedly warrants a greater status today than that of the minor regional talent which he has undeservedly been labelled.

Across what Common called the 'banked greenery' of Jesmond Dene from Heaton lies Jesmond – scene of the regimented po-faced gentility of Yevgeny Zamyatin's novella *Islanders* (1918). A Russian marine architect working on Tyneside during World War I, Zamyatin was perplexed by what he saw as the dull, blinkered and top hatted world of the middle-class inhabitants of Jesmond, where he lived in Sanderson Road. The houses of the suburb are described as being 'smoke-blackened' like the city centre, but here the doorsteps shone in white rows 'like a Sunday gentleman's false teeth'. Whilst his portrayal of an insular bourgeois parish presided over by the Rev. Dewley doubtlessly had some foundation in fact, one suspects that his view was somewhat moulded by the bolshevik politics of his youth. As contemporary civic directories show, and the presence of streets of Tyneside flats bear witness, Jesmond has long been a dwelling place for the artisans of Newcastle, as well as for what were once called the professional classes.

The north is still very much an industrial landscape in A. J. Cronin's *The Stars Look Down* (1935). The story opens in Sleescale, a fictitious colliery town on the North Sea coast, but the action very quickly moves to the city of Tynecastle – a very thinly disguised Newcastle: 'Tynecastle, that keen, bustling city of the North, full of movement and clamour and brisk grey colour, echoing to the clang of trams, the clatter of feet, the beat of ship-yard hammers ... a place of possibilities and adventure.'

Throughout the novel, the author has the curious habit of alternating between using real and fictionalised names for his locations. Thus, we see references to tea rooms in Eldon Square, Grainger Street is referred to by name as 'a place of big plate-glassed drapery stores', and other places such as Plummer Street, Elswick, and the Duke of Cumberland pub are mentioned. However, the hero Joe goes to live in the Scottswood (sic) Road, and other scenes are set in 'Esmond Dene', 'Sluice Dene', and a Tyneside ship-building town called 'Yarrow'. One suspects that whilst most of these names are deliberate (if rather pointless) fictionalisations, some are imperfectly recalled from Cronin's own memories of visits to the region during the 1920s.

During the 1950s, a thinly disguised Newcastle became the setting for a murder mystery by Nancy Spain. Now almost completely forgotten, Nancy Spain was once a household name in Britain, due to her status as a national newspaper columnist and a regular guest on TV and radio panel games such as *What's My Line?* Born in Jesmond in 1917, her native Newcastle was to crop up in many of her stories and autobiographical works.

In her popular thriller *Cinderella Goes to the Morgue* a pantomime season at the Theatre Royal in 'Newchester on Tame' is the setting for a series of murders. Postwar Tyneside is easily recognisable in the form of such features as 'Atkins Street' in which the Theatre Royal of the novel stands: '... a pleasant street that had curved graciously down towards the River Tame since it was built in 1815.'

Whereas Jack Common was a chronicler of the life and culture of urban Newcastle, Sid Chaplin was more of a Durham coalfield man, whose literature sang the praises of the beauty and the industry

of his beloved native county. His writings do, however, contain numerous references to Newcastle, where he lived for much of his life. His essays and journalism in particular contain some of the most poetic and lyrical descriptions of the city ever written.

Describing the panorama of the quayside for BBC TV in 1964 as looking: '...like a conference waiting for its picture to be taken', with the city's smile '... all the better for a blackened stump or two – the Keep, the Black Gate' – he went on to hail the Tyne Bridge as 'a bright bow of promise', whilst one of its neighbours became 'Robbie's High Level', acknowledging its creator.

Though in his column in *The Journal* he compared Newcastle as a 'little apple' of a city to New York's 'Big Apple', and championed its status as regional capital and a possible seat for a regional government, Sid had little time for the 'vertical villages' and 'prisons in the sky' that were being constructed in the name of housing at the time. Nevertheless, he was always able to see the wonder of nature amidst the urban environment: 'despite all of the ugliness we have set up against it.'

Most recently, Newcastle has featured as the setting of Pat Barker's novel *Another World* (1998). Rather like Common and Zamyatin at the beginning of the century, here two very different sides of Newcastle are portrayed, but this time within a single novel. On one side of the city are Nick and Fran, a young couple who live in the well-to-do suburb of Lob's hill – an obvious parallel to Jesmond or Gosforth. On the other side lies the altogether bleaker and run-down area of Summerfield, where Nick's grandfather Geordie is dying. References to a huge factory that once stood in this area and employed thousands – a clear reference to Armstrongs – implies Elswick or Scotswood in this case. The community is rather disparagingly referred to as being nicknamed Beirut-on-Tyne.

Like Cronin, the author also includes real locations by name, such as the Bigg Market, where the uglier side of the weekend's revelries are highlighted with a description of the sight of 'tattooed arms looking for trouble'. This novel juxtaposes the passing of an old way of life with the emergence of new ways of living. However, the sordid aspects in the past of even the most genteel parts of suburbia are hinted at when Nick and Fran find obscene Edwardian drawings on the walls of their period home when they remove the wallpaper, echoing the hints given by Zamyatin in 1918 that the stiflingly prim atmosphere of such bourgeois areas could conceal suppressed emotions and dark secrets.

As the new century arrives, Newcastle is becoming a burgeoning centre for new writing, and the city looks set to enjoy a greatly increased profile in the world of literature. We might thus hope that the Jane Austens of the new millennium will be less likely to cite our city's name as the civic embodiment of the back of beyond.

### *And on Screen ...*

Until relatively recently, the majority of film production resources, screen writers, and directors in Britain were based in London and the South East. Thus, seeing Newcastle and its people portrayed in film and television drama productions – still a relatively novel experience – can give an interesting insight into how we are perceived by the rest of the country and how we see ourselves.

Unlike literature, filmed drama has to be physically located somewhere or other. Thus, Newcastle's



appearances in film and television might be divided into two broad categories. The most interesting to us would be those where Newcastle is the specifically identified location, and its regional culture and character feature strongly in the plot. The other category would be those films where the city is merely used as an interesting but non-particular scenic backdrop, and Newcastle's unique civic identity is accordingly less of a noticeable feature.

As well as the interest of seeing familiar landmarks, places, and people, part of the game in seeing one's home town on screen is spotting inconsistencies, both visually and in the script. You know the sort of thing: 'Hang on a minute – the 33 bus doesn't go anywhere near Byker!' Perhaps it is the realistic nature of films that makes such things leap out of the screen at us. Some of these apparent 'mistakes' are simply due to the practical imperatives and limitations of film-making, or the over-riding preference for getting the best shot over attention to local detail. But as we shall see, until films (and later television) started to be produced regularly in the North East by local producers and writers, it was all too often the case that the portrayal of Newcastle (and especially its people) was at best left to mere chance, and at its worst was based on sheer ignorance and a lack of attention to detail on the part of a film industry that was based in the so-called 'home counties'.

In the absence of any known surviving silent dramas, Newcastle's first appearance in a feature film was as the ostensible setting for a rather creaky British drama entitled *On the Night of the Fire* (1939). As most of the film's action takes place within studio-bound interior sets, the only appearance the city itself makes is in a handful of mute establishing shots, inserted to instil an idea of geographic location. Among them are an overhead view (probably taken from the Tyne Bridge) of a working commercial quayside bustling with ships being loaded and unloaded, and later a view of what looks like a rather run-down part of Scotswood or Elswick.

The story is a tame drama concerned with the world of a petty criminal who is black-mailed and gets out of his depth. Ralph Richardson's performance as a local barber is as unconvincing as his accent, which swings wildly between Leeds and Manchester within the space of a single sentence, and never gets anywhere near Tyneside. All in all it is an unremarkable film, whose setting in the North East is never more than incidental.

It was to be some 11 years before Newcastle was to grace the



Tony Hillman

Trevor Howard and Jean Simmons in *The Clouded Yellow*, 1950.

silver screen again, this time as one of the destinations of a man on the run in *The Clouded Yellow* (1950). Taking its title from the name of a rare butterfly, this tale of espionage and intrigue follows maverick spy Trevor Howard and a young girl played by Jean Simmons throughout the north of England as they flee from the authorities.

With the police watching all ports for them, their sojourn at Newcastle is heralded by establishing shots of the Tyne Bridge and, once again, a bustling commercial quayside. We are also shown the interior of the Central Station, and even the old Haymarket Bus Station. Indeed, our local public transport features quite strongly in this movie, especially when the elusive duo board a Newcastle Transport number 31B trolleybus at the foot of Westgate Road (with the Keep in the background) and Trevor Howard asks the conductor for 'Two to Jesmond, please.' After disembarking in Jesmond Road outside the towers of John Dobson's Victorian cemetery gates, they hasten to a rendez-vous at a house in what was then still largely a residential street.

At this house, which seems to be a sort of nerve centre for a community of East European emigrés, our hero is referred to one of their number who is a taxidermist, and can help him escape. A further clandestine meeting ensues at the shop in a nondescript dark alley where yet another meeting is arranged, to take place at: '... the old steps, near the Surtees House.' This meeting subsequently takes place on a very gothic and shadowy looking Castle Stairs. In this scene, we are introduced to the taxidermist's daughter, who is the only character in the film purporting to be a native of Tyneside. Once again, the film-makers fail to go to the trouble of authenticity, and her accent has more to do with the Yorkshire-Lancashire borders than Tyneside, though at least – unlike Ralph Richardson earlier – she sticks consistently to the same voice throughout.

In *The Clouded Yellow*, the continuing importance of the river Tyne in the city's commercial life is perhaps surprisingly evident for a film of the 1950s. Much of the action in Newcastle takes place on or near the quayside, and the couple both arrive and depart from the city by water; initially by a steam packet from London, and finally by a rowing boat conveniently left moored near the Swing Bridge.

The frequent dark settings and black and white photography of this movie cast it almost in the *film noir* genre, and it is well worth seeing, not only for the local interest factor. However, one last small irritation is the reference in the film's end credits to the city's name as 'Newcastle-on-Tyne.'

During the swinging Sixties, Newcastle was visited only once by a feature film crew, to shoot the crime caper *Payroll* (1961). Actors such as Tom Bell and Billie Whitelaw make unconvincing geordies, but the plot is fairly action-packed, and the abundance of exterior photography provides a wealth of interesting footage of Newcastle as it was just before the ravaging developments of the mid-Sixties. Once again, however, the city is being used merely as a provincial setting that would be unfamiliar to a largely southern audience. Inevitably, the film's cultural relevance to its location is minimal.

With the now legendary *Get Carter* (1971), however, Newcastle was at last placed firmly on the cinematic map in its own right. Because of the fish-out-of-water aspect of the storyline of a cockney gangster coming to the north east, the character of the city and its people is very strongly emphasised and is an integral part of the plot. 'They're tough up north' is very much the message conveyed, and





Tony Hillman

*Kenneth Griffith, Michael Craig and Barry Keagan in a scene from Payroll, 1962.*

our regional character is repeatedly portrayed as being a stark, rough-and-ready contrast to the relatively sophisticated metropolis of Carter's London. This is particularly interesting, as the book on which the film was based, *Jack's Return Home* by Ted Lewis, did not specify the nondescript northern town of the plot. Newcastle was chosen by director Mike Hodges, who had been impressed by the city's lively atmosphere on a visit during his National Service.

Carter, played by Michael Caine, arrives in Newcastle by train, and his first encounter with local culture is a visit to the long bar of the Victoria & Comet pub, across the road from the Central Station. In a scene calculated to set the tone for the rest of the film, this bar – known locally as 'the spit & vomit' – is populated by dowdily dressed beer-swilling locals, and a portly chanteuse booms some club cabaret classic through a terrible PA system. Before long, two of the local females are rolling on the floor in a screaming cat-fight, until they are separated by a grinning barman.

This scene became famous to spotters of cinema trivia by the presence of Arthur Perkins, a local man recruited as an extra who had a thumb and five fingers on each hand. Caine was said to have commented off-screen: 'I bet he never drops his pint!'

His dead brother's house in the city's west end is Carter's next stop, and there are numerous shots of the huddled terraces and cobbled back lanes of the area which, whilst perhaps a predictable cliché, nevertheless provide a technicolour document of the housing in what was then still a largely unmod-





*Michael Caine and Ian Hendry confer at Newcastle Race Course in Get Carter, 1970.*

ernised area. More local colour is added by a march-past of one of the Juvenile Kazoo 'Jazz' Bands in full uniform, which were hugely popular in the north at the time.

The underworld attached to Newcastle's thriving clubland and gambling industry obviously features strongly – a disturbing reflection of the emerging reality of those days – and, in what was regarded as quite a violent film for its time, Carter uses a variety of local landmarks and features such as the Shields Ferry, the High Level Bridge (for some reason referred to as 'the iron bridge'), and Gateshead's multi-storey car park as venues for meeting and murdering his rivals and pursuers.

Director Mike Hodges resisted MGM's attempts to cast the film entirely with big name stars, going for British character actors instead. Unfortunately, very few were native Tynesiders or were capable of a convincing local accent, and once on film, Newcastle was seemingly populated largely by Yorkshiremen and Lancashire lasses. One notable exception to this was the superb performance by a young Alun Armstrong in the part of Keith.

Apparently Telly Savalas was seriously considered to play the character of Yorkshire businessman Cliff Brumby. Fortunately, the part went to Bryan Mosley (better known as *Coronation Street's* Alf Roberts).





Mike Figgis

Tommy Lee Jones (*Cosmo*) and Sting (*Finney*) on the High Level Bridge in a scene from *Stormy Monday*.

Crime was yet again the underlying theme in Newcastle's next appearance on celluloid in *Stormy Monday* (1987), directed by the Oscar-nominated Mike Figgis, where the plot revolves around a property swindle and the seedy underworld of clubland. But despite the liberal use of local talent in the cast, there is a distinct lack of specific place in this film, which uses the local cityscape as a nameless backdrop. The setting of the action during a festival called 'American Week' removes us even further from the Newcastle we know, but accordingly makes interesting use of the architecture of the old quayside area, where the striking contrasts of level and the classical stone office buildings crouching beneath the towering steelwork of the Tyne Bridge are visually reminiscent of New York. The cosmopolitan atmosphere is enhanced by the presence in town of several European jazz musicians, who feature prominently in the film.

Mike Figgis's most recent film, *The Loss of Sexual Innocence*, was also partly filmed in Northumbria and Newcastle and features scenes set in the Central Station.

As far as representations of its local culture are concerned, Newcastle has fared rather better on television than it has on the cinema screen, probably thanks to the more regionalised structure of TV companies in this country. The formulaic nature of genres such as the detective drama also means that mass audiences are just as content to watch Spender policing the streets of Tyneside on a weekly basis as they are to see Taggart doing the same in Glasgow or Inspector Morse in Oxford.

Inevitably, parts of Newcastle have made more than their fair share of appearances as representatives of the 'cloth-cap-and-damp-cobblestones' image of the old industrial north. Dramas such as *The Stars Look Down* and *When the Boat Comes In* enjoyed a surge in popularity during the 1970s, and more





Mike Figgis films *The Loss of Sexual Innocence* in Newcastle's Central Station, 1997.

recently several of the novels of Catherine Cookson have been adapted for TV, making regular use of areas such as that around Hanover Square, which has retained much of its Victorian character.

However, television's appetite for regional variety has led to a number of series that portray a more upbeat image of the city. Building upon the success of *Spender*, actor and writer Jimmy Nail went on to produce two series

of *Crocodile Shoes*, the rags-to riches tale of local lathe operator Jed Shepherd, who makes the journey from Newcastle to Nashville to become a country & western star. In the world of children's television, the Benwell-based *Byker Grove* has been running for over ten years as one of the most successful series of its kind.

But perhaps the most durably popular show for its endearingly dry humour in a Newcastle setting has been the 1960s sitcom *The Likely Lads*, and its 1970s sequel *Whatever Happened to The Likely Lads?* The almost forgotten original Sixties series was shot in black and white and introduced us to the antics of two young lads-about town, Terry Collier (James Bolam) and Bob Ferris (Rodney Bewes). Much more studio-bound than its successor, this series was largely based in the electrical workshop where the lads were employed, and in which their adventures the night before were usually discussed rather than seen.

The much more successful and still often repeated Seventies series followed Terry and Bob into adult life, with Terry remaining footloose and true to his working-class roots, whilst Bob married Thelma and aspired towards the middle classes. Indeed, the show subtly reflected many of the social changes then taking place in a Britain approaching the premiership of Margaret Thatcher. Terry's return to the North East after an absence of some years abroad with the army also provided an opportunity for regular commentary on the changing face of Newcastle, as the city of his youth transformed itself into the modern city of today.

The terraced streets in which the lads had grown up were demolished, and Terry went off to live in a high-rise flat. Bob and Thelma, of course, joined that generation of first time home buyers that sprang up in the Seventies, and moved into a semi on the 'Elm Lodge' estate, which typified the private



housing estates then mushrooming in the outer suburbs around every large town and city. The passing of bars and clubs the two lads had once frequented was mourned by Terry with such memorable lines as; 'The Go-Go ... gone!' The eponymous feature film spin-off from the TV series also made much of the passing of old Newcastle, and poignantly included footage of Bob and Terry watching their old local pub being demolished amidst large-scale redevelopment then taking place in the west end of the city.



Tony Hillman

The credits sequence at the beginning and end of each episode formed a collage of shots of familiar locations, which included the Byker Road Bridge with the disused Cluny warehouse below it, the high-rise blocks of flats in Shieldfield, the All Saints office development near Swan House, and a demolition site in the west end.

As far as prominence in a serious drama is concerned, Newcastle's coming of age on the small screen was undoubtedly in Peter Flannery's epic series *Our Friends in the North*. Following the lives of four teenagers from the early 1960s through to adulthood in the present day, this landmark production also charted the shameful course of Newcastle's unwelcome foray onto the front pages of the national press when the Poulson scandal broke in the 1970s.

With the action swinging between the North East and Soho, this powerful political drama vividly captured the heady optimism of those times, and for once the north saw itself portrayed in a faithful and realistic way, free from caricature and patronisation. The way the four central characters' lives were seen to develop formed a microcosm of the part played by the North East in our nation's history through the past four decades.

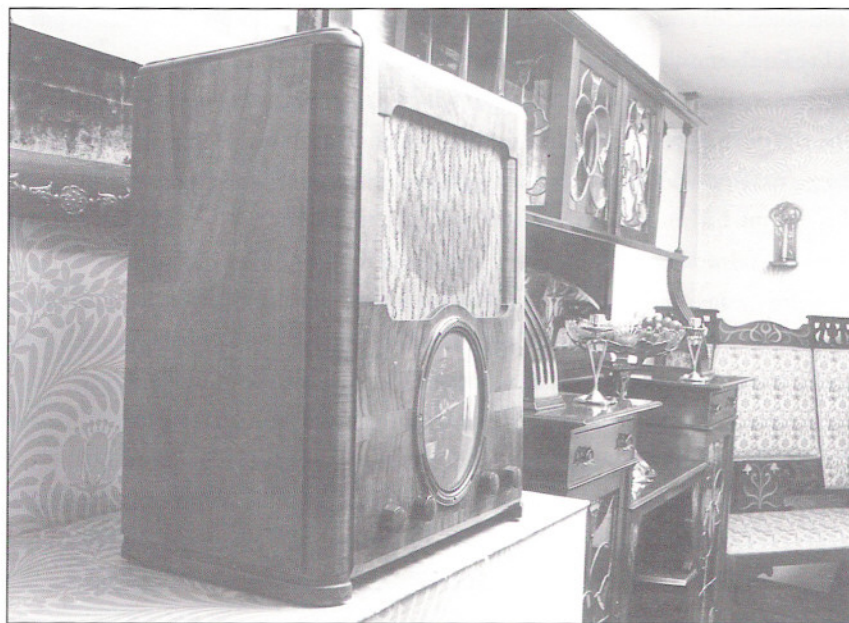
On another level, the familiar game of location-spotting was enhanced for local viewers by trying to recognise characters depicting real-life figures whose names had been changed. Most prominent among these was Austin Donoghue, played by actor Alun Armstrong, who represented T. Dan Smith. Smith had been Chief Executive of the city council in the Sixties, and had dreamed of turning Newcastle into the 'Brasilia of the North'. Donoghue's office suite (filmed in Milburn House, Dean Street) looked out over the city's roofscape towards the quayside, the view dominated by a floodlit Tyne Bridge. Other locations included the high-rise blocks of flats (the ones used were in Shieldfield), which replaced the streets of terraced housing then being demolished by the acre. At one and the same time, these flats represented the solution to the national housing problem of the time, the social dissatisfac-

tion and misery they caused among so many of their original residents, and the source of the bribery and corruption scandal resulting from the allocation of building contracts.

Though it documented an episode in Newcastle and the wider North East's history that many would rather forget, *Our Friends* remains a landmark in the television production of recent years, in which Newcastle might justly be proud to have featured from a purely artistic point of view.

It is to be hoped that the continuing expansion of the film and television industry in our region will lead to more home-produced representations of Newcastle, its people, and its culture finding their way onto our screens.

≈ Christopher Goulding is an actor (appearances in *Byker Grove*, *Crocodile Shoes*, Catherine Cookson dramas, *Our Friends in the North*), writer, and journalist. Previous publications include *The Story of the People's*, 1990; *Hidden Newcastle*, 1995; *Tinseltoon*, 1998; *Graingertoon* 1999; all published by Newcastle Libraries & Information Service.



*Before TV: The wireless took pride of place in the sitting room.*