

## IISH collections: United Kingdom

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### Introduction

British social history writing spans about seven centuries, from the medieval farmers' protests and enclosure movement to the 1984 miners' strike and the peace movement today. At the IISH both archival sources and secondary literature are available for research on topics such as the Industrial Revolution, the Chartists, and the political, economic, and social context of the workers' movement. The IISH reference library aims to provide a comprehensive variety of regional and national perspectives. Library materials include about 12,000 authentic brochures, pamphlets, and books on political, social-historical, and especially economic subjects from the period 1650-1880.

The collections are accessible through a [catalogue](#) for print and audiovisual materials and an online [index of archives](#). The latter includes individual records of archives as well as a list of all archives that deal with the United Kingdom (browse: 'United Kingdom'). It is also possible to submit a search for the catalogue, index, and various other databases in the IISH [search portal](#).

### Archives

The archive collections include information on many anarchist and socialist organizations and individuals and thus reflect the traditional IISH acquisitions policy. There are two archives from renowned feminists [Sylvia Pankhurst](#) and [Dora Russell](#). The Dora Russell (1894-1986) archive contains records on her achievements as a freethinker, proponent of sexual reform, and socialist who participated in the peace movement until her death. She actively participated in the Labour Party and the Independent Labour Party. In 1927, Dora and her husband Bertrand founded the experimental Beacon Hill School, which Dora kept going at various locations until 1943. In addition to her personal papers, the Dora Russell archive contains records from her school and her students. Sylvia Pankhurst (1882-1960), founder of the 'East London Federation of Suffragettes' in 1913, became a prominent anti-fascist in the 1930s. She focused on practical applications of socialism, including the establishment of infant welfare services and restaurants for mothers. Her papers reflect all these activities.

The archive of [Freedom](#) is the most extensive in the anarchist section. It takes up 17 meters of shelf space and covers the period from 1886 to 1980. *Freedom* started as an anarchist periodical by a group of friends around [Peter Kropotkin](#). The group eventually set up the Freedom Press that was to become the main publisher of anarchist literature in England. The IISH also keeps the records of *Freedom* editors [Alfred Marsh](#) and [Vernon Richards](#) just as well. A rival *Freedom*

was published from 1930-1936 by opponents such as [Oscar Swede](#), whose papers are kept by the Institute. The publication of *Freedom* still continues today. One of *Freedom's* most prolific contributors was the Austrian anarchist [Max Nettlau \(1865-1944\)](#). Nettlau lived in London for many years and enthusiastically collected archives and printed materials from the anarchist movement. One of the collections he rescued was the records of the Socialist League. All materials collected by Max Nettlau ended up at the IISH in 1938.

The [Socialist League](#) (1885-1895) had been founded as a breakaway from the [Social Democratic Federation](#). The archives of the Social Democratic Federation and many other political associates may be consulted on microfilm at the IISH. The microfilm section includes the archives, or part of the archives, of the [Independent Labour Party](#), the [Labour Party](#), the [Fabian Society](#), the British Socialist Party, and the [Trade Union Congress](#). The papers of [Frederick Yates \(1908-1991\)](#) cover a lengthy period of British communism. The General Strike, which brought British society to a standstill in 1926, generated a wealth of strike bulletins and reports of local committees. These were exhaustively collected by [Raymond Postgate](#), one of the founders of the Communist Party in Great Britain. This beautiful collection of strike bulletins came to the IISH through the intermediary of Postgate's brother-in-law, professor [G.D.H. Cole](#), who was involved in the establishment of a branch of the Institute in Oxford in 1940. George Cole, founder of the National Guilds League and for many years active in the Fabian Society, donated part of his own papers to the IISH.

The British peace movement, including materials from conscientious objectors, is very well represented in the IISH. The enormous archive of the [War Resisters' International](#) WRI, despite its international aspirations, has a decidedly British character. The Dora Russell papers, mentioned above, contain a complete documentation of the 'Women's Caravan of Peace'. [Harold Bing](#) (1897-1975), a conscientious objector imprisoned during the First World War, was a lifelong activist for WRI, the No More War Movement, and the Peace Pledge Union; he also wrote the history of the WRI.

The [National Committee of Hundred](#) was founded in October 1960 as a movement of non-violent resistance to nuclear war. It organized marches against nuclear testing, and from the mid 1960s, actions against the war in Vietnam. The archive of the C.W. Daniel Publishing Company (1902), named for its owner Charles William Daniel, is also included in this section. Daniel was strongly influenced by Tolstoy and went to visit the great Russian writer in 1909. The publishing house was a forum for Tolstoians, anarchists, pacifists, and health food advocates.

## Library

The IISH library contains dissertations and monographs on the social history of Great Britain. In addition to archives, publications of the social movement itself,

such as periodicals (e.g. Justice, The Clarion) and leaflets are available for research.

In addition, unique printed material relating to British social, economic, and political history from the seventeenth century onwards was acquired by the IISH in 1937. This collection was named 'Kashnor', for the London collectors from whom the material was purchased.

Leon Kashnor had owned the Museum Book Store in London that specialized in social and economic history, and he was among the first booksellers to gather a large collection around a movement or person. The Kashnor collection comprises nearly 4000 publications from 1650 to 1880, ranging from laws promulgated by Oliver Cromwell to discussions on the Corn Law, Indian currency and other colonial issues. This collection can be traced under a special collection code ('Kashnor') in the [catalogue](#).

## Image and Sound

The Image and Sound collection includes posters, photos, cartoons, badges, textiles, and historical objects. Items can be in the 'Visual documents' section of the search platform. Generic descriptions can be found [here](#).

The photographs mainly come from archives and collections such as the [Pankhurst archive](#). This included the banners, logos, and scarves from the 'Women's Social and Political Union' that were designed by Sylvia Pankhurst. Most of the British posters come from the peace and human rights movement, as does the beautiful badges collection that was presented to the IISH by Mr Martyn Lowe. Insignia, commemoration tiles and other historical objects have been given the place they deserve. The Image and Sound collection also contains video and sound tapes and gramophone records.

## Highlights

In 'Highlights' new or special accessions and highlights from our collections are presented. View this recent example or have a look at the alphabetical list below.

[A dozen Amnesty International Campaigns](#)

Other highlights related to the United Kingdom:

[Art to the People, including Walter Crane](#) / [Button collection](#) / [Greenpeace International film](#) / [Four manuscripts from William Morris](#) / [\(British\) refugees in Holland 1914-1918](#) / [Vernon Richards, British/Italian anarchist](#) / [Utopian experiments](#)

See also [highlights](#) concerning other collections.

## Contact

Please contact the Reading Room for general information about collections: [ask@iisg.nl](mailto:ask@iisg.nl). You can submit your questions via [www.iisg.nl/enquiries.php](http://www.iisg.nl/enquiries.php).

If you would like to have an archive or collection transferred to the IISH, please contact Mr Alex Geelhoed, [age@iisg.nl](mailto:age@iisg.nl).

See [Services](#) for information on consulting the collections.

To support the institute you can join the [Friends of the IISH](#).