NOTES ON SOURCES

Many records that would have been useful in telling Goodwin’s story have vanished over time. Some of this was done deliberately and without apparent lawful authority, as we have seen, and by people who knew better. In other cases, we just don’t know why records have disappeared. Adding to the Goodwin mystery (and research frustration) are numerous inaccuracies. The date and place of Goodwin’s birth, published variously and often erroneously, are easily available from his birth certificate in London. But even it has a mistake: He was born at 113 Well Lane, not 113 Bole Hill, as written on the certificate. This is an understandable confusion because it is one continuous street that suddenly changes its name. Treeton historian Tom Rossington, who knew from childhood that there was no such low number as 113 for the Bole Hill houses, cleared this one up. An extract from Goodwin’s death certificate, issued in 1982 by the Division of Vital Statistics at the Ministry of Health in Victoria, says that Goodwin was born in Barnsley (misspelled Barnesley). This error has been repeated many times. It was based on incorrect information provided in 1918 by John McMillan. The extract also says that Goodwin was born on 10 May 1877 when, in fact, it was 10 May 1887, and that he was buried on 2 April 1918 — when, of course, it was 2 August 1918. The 1901 British census says that Goodwin was born in Denaby Main when, in fact, he was born in Treeton.

Folklore has it that Goodwin, hiding from the police while evading conscription, would return from the hills on Saturday nights to attend dances in Cumberland. Indeed, in Harry and Mildred Gutkin’s Profiles in Dissent (Edmonton: NeWest Publishers Limited, 1997), W.A. Pritchard said it happened. But, the story did seem too good to be true. I asked Jean Letcher, whose sister Mary was a good friend of Goodwin. She said it was not true. She was 15 years old at the time and would know.

The Cumberland Islander of 9 September 1911 reported that Goodwin and his two good friends, Arthur Boothman and Tom Carney, played soccer for Tottenham Hotspur — the famous north London club now in the Football Association Premier League — but this turned out to be a tall story. No one had thought to check with the club, which has no record of them ever playing for the Spurs.

There has been confusion between two different families named Clark in Cumberland: It was the family of John and Margaret Clark (not Andrew Clark), at whose house Goodwin frequently boarded, from which he was buried. There has also been confusion between Albert Goodwin and Rich-
ard Goodwin in Cumberland: Was this one man, or two men? Were they related? They were two men, both miners in Cumberland at the same time, but they were not related to each other. Also unrelated was miner Watts Goodwin whose wife Lily travelled on the same ship to Canada as Ginger Goodwin.

Microfilm wound in the wrong way (how often this happens!) has led to an incorrect identification of the ship that brought Goodwin and other miners to Halifax. Confusion surrounded George Henry Roe whose name was spelled, variously, Roe, Row and Rowe, even on the record of the inquest and the Preliminary Investigation.

The frailties of human memory are obvious to all of us in everyday life and have invaded the Goodwin story in a serious way. To pick only one example: Goodwin's gravestone has been said by some (from memory) to have been carved and erected, variously, a few years after his death in 1918 and in the 1940s. In fact, it was in 1936-37. Error followed Goodwin literally to the grave: The gravestone says Goodwin was “shot July 26th 1918.” In fact, it was 27 July 1918.

I would draw special attention to the excellent videotape issued by the United Mine Workers of America in 1990 as a companion to its official printed history, United We Stand: The United Mine Workers of America 1890-1990. The 100-minute documentary video, which includes historical as well as contemporary film and still photographs, traces the struggles of miners. It is called Out of Darkness: The Mine Workers Story. Good glimpses into mining conditions in Cape Breton in and around Goodwin's time, as well as contemporaneous footage from Britain and the US, are contained in 12,000 Men, a National Film Board videotape made in 1978.

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