The Dukeries Ascendant

Migration, affluence, and community cohesion in the north Nottinghamshire coalfield 1920-1974

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Abstract

The Dukeries Ascendant investigates the impact of industrial migration and community formation in the north Nottinghamshire coalfield, during its most intensive periods of development and consolidation.

The work explores how differing conditions and motivations in the Dukeries pit villages produced variations in opinion and outcome, significant as the coalfield entered decades of dispute and challenge in the later decades of the twentieth century. It explores thematic questions during the period to evaluate this hypothesis, with emphasis placed on migration history, the role of prosperity and security in occupational communities, ownership and labour-industrial cultural norms, community infrastructure, and interrelationships between place, industry, economics, and political action.

The thesis concludes that, whilst ‘particular’ circumstances did influence economic and sociopolitical behaviour in the coalfield, these were not in themselves ‘peculiar’, or unique, to the area. These particular circumstances influenced workers and their families - themselves part of a long history of migration and transformation within the mining industry - to react in largely predictable and rational ways.

Understanding the place of the north Nottinghamshire miners within the wider industrial community, rather than alienating their experience as a discordant ‘other’, could aid a greater understanding of the later trajectories of deindustrialisation and political change across coalfield Britain.

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Secondary desk research to develop this thesis was undertaken and maintained in an iterative literature review that was evaluated through academic supervision. Secondary research was the focus of research activity in 2019.

Archival research, addressing questions drawn from the secondary research process, was undertaken in Scotland, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, and Yorkshire in 2020 and 2021.

Primary research, conducted through phone and face to face oral interviews with community members in the Nottinghamshire coalfield, was completed in 2021.

The thesis is submitted for examination in January 2022, with the support of supervisors Professor Jim Phillips and Dr Diarmaid Kelliher.

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Author's Declaration

"I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution."

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Signature:

1 Introduction

This section briefly contextualises the themes of this thesis. It summarises the aims and ambitions of the thesis, and the structure employed to achieve them, and presents an outline literature review that served as the foundation for research. The section presents the purpose of this thesis in the simple question: did the Nottinghamshire coalfield have a 'peculiar history', and if so, how did this influence its development, its period of ascendancy, and its eventual decline?

Figure 1 – Ollerton Colliery Miners Memorial statue (2021)

1.1 The Dukeries Ascendant: aims and purpose

In his 1983 history of north Nottinghamshire mining, Robert Waller began by stating that "more attention has been paid to the social and economic effects of pit closure in the British coalfields than to the opening of new pits and the development of new fields."[1] This

[1] Waller, R.: *The Dukeries Transformed: The social and political development of a Twentieth Century Coalfield* (Oxford, 1983), p.1

assertion has undoubtedly been borne out by both scholarship and commentary on the subject in the 35 years since Waller published.

The gradual replacement of coal with petrochemicals and nuclear energy, the rationalisation and relocation programmes of the 1970s, then the national pit strike of 1984-5 followed by wholesale closures have dominated research and debate since the fall of British coal. With the shuttering of Hatfield, Thoresby and Kellingley collieries in recent years, and the resulting termination of deep-coal mining in Britain, the 'death row' period for mining history has been in the national gaze.[2] The sorrows of post-mining Nottinghamshire, illuminated most tragically by former MP John Mann's inquiry into coalfield drug usage[3] and later media rapportage of Brexit in the pit villages, have ensured the focus has remained on the desolation of coalfield Nottinghamshire rather than its earlier story of evolution and development.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the period of industrial growth in the north Nottinghamshire coalfield, from its transformative expansion eastwards between the wars through to its consolidation and mechanisation in the 1960s and 1970s. This is labelled here, provocatively, as a period of 'ascendancy' – the relative nature of this ascendancy will be explored.

This work will consider (in Part Two) how new communities emerged and established themselves in the developing coalfield and how mineworking families migrated into (and often between and out of) different coalfield communities. Consideration of industrial migration is employed throughout this thesis as a lens through which to consider questions of agency, affluence, solidarity and precarity. A particular focus, within the assessment of migration, is placed on the movement of miners from Scotland into the central English coalfields.

The thesis will explore how differing wage levels, security of work, and wider financial expectations and aspirations helped to shape economic realities in the coalfield in Part Three; and how culture, competition, housing, faith, discipline and power structures may have influenced coalfield community resilience and outlook (Part Four).

Accusations of exceptionalist self-interest and factionalism have been levelled at Nottinghamshire miners during and since the 1980s. In addressing this, the importance of earlier local trade union organisation will be reviewed, as will patterns of political behaviour and employer-worker relations (Part Five). This section will also consider wider

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[2] Arnold, J.: *'Like Being On Death Row'*, p.2

[3] Wainwright, M.: *Heroin fills void left when pits collapsed* (The Guardian, 21 September 2002), available at: https://www.theguardian.com/society/2002/sep/21/drugsandalcohol.drugs (Accessed: March 2021)

issues of dominance and decline in the electoral fortunes of organised labour and Labour, and north Nottinghamshire's similarities or alienation from these norms.

This is a study of the economic and social history of an important sub-regional community, rather than an industrial history of mining itself. Although it will draw on industrial sources and authorities, the purpose is not to illustrate a technical narrative. It is intended to use secondary, documentary, oral researched and community historical resources as aides in this analysis as appropriate.

The debate and question central to this thesis, however, is this: did, as Colin Griffin framed it, Nottinghamshire as a mining community have a *'very peculiar history'*?[4] Or rather was the north Nottinghamshire coalfield subject to, as Jay Emery termed it, historical *'particularities'*?[5]

Did the way that the coalfield was transformed and exploited, organised, and governed, define its path into later conflicts and dislocations? Or was there some implicit peculiarity, inherent in the industrial workers and their communities themselves, which influenced them to behave in ways that might be out of step or at odds with their contemporaries and peers?

And therefore, finally, was north Nottinghamshire really so very different from the other coalfields with which it was brigaded by the Coalfield Regeneration Trust to form 2019's 'most deprived region in the UK'?

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[4] Griffin, C.: *'Notts. have some very peculiar history': Understanding the reaction of the Nottinghamshire Miners to the 1984-5 Strike* (HSIR, Spring 2005, pp63-99)

[5] Emery, J.: *Belonging, Memory and history in the north Nottinghamshire coalfield* (Journal of Historical Geography 59:2019, pp77-89), p.88

1.2 Thesis themes and literature reviewed

This thesis is founded on an extensive review of academic and community literature relevant to the spatial and occupational communities of north Nottinghamshire, the industrial sociology of 20th century British coal mining, and the place of migration in the formation and development of labour solidarity and working community. This section presents in summary some of the key literary influences emerging from the review, that framed archival and primary enquiry.

Alan Griffin and Robert Waller, extensively referenced throughout this thesis as pre-eminent authorities on north Nottinghamshire mining in the inter-war period, both argue that pay and modernity in housing were critical points of difference in attracting workers to this district to develop the new deep concealed coalfield. Griffin is the primary chronicler of the Nottinghamshire coalfield throughout its industrial life, and Waller's focus was on the 'Dukeries' expansion of the interwar period more particularly. Colin Griffin further explores workforce motivation, through his work on the relationships between interwar wage agreements and the emergence of the non-industrial 'Spencer' Union, to demonstrate the early connectivity between wage differentials and employer-union relations.

In the post-war context, North & Spooner argue that the trajectory of the north Nottinghamshire field towards and through the 1970s *Plan for Coal* is one of profitability and increasing, rather than diminishing, viability compared to neighbour coalfields.[6] However, the dominant roles played by coal and other heavy and traditional industries in the second half of the 20th century would later expose Nottinghamshire to intense economic fragility, according to Louis Crewe, as secure and well paid jobs would be increasingly replaced by precarious retail and customer service industries.[7]

Addressing workforce migration and spatial-industrial development, the schema of new mines and cosmopolitan collieries employed in Jim Phillips' history of Scottish mining is used here as a developmental lens for the construction of new coalfield spatial communities, and their interrelationships with earlier Victorian mining communities. In the Nottinghamshire context, 'New Mines' can be applied to the Dukeries field expansion, with cosmopolitan pits focusing on the post-war development of mines to the southeast of this area and more enmeshed in metropolitan Nottingham.

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[6] North J. & Spooner D.: *The Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire Coalfield: The Focus of the Coal Board's Investment Strategy* (Geographical Journal,148.1 1982, pp22-37)

[7] Crewe, L.: *The East Midlands* (Geography, 80.2, 1995, pp166-171)

Spooner observes that the patterns of development within the Scottish mining industry are mirrored in the south eastern expansion of mineworking into the English East Midlands.[8] Waller[9] argues that the flow of immigrants into the inter-war north Nottinghamshire coalfield began in other Midland and bordering coalfields, where the Dukeries' owners already managed Victorian and Edwardian era pits, had agents operating, or enjoyed favourable business connections. However, consistently in Dukeries pit villages Waller researched, around a quarter of workers recruited originated from other regions and nations of the UK, and from overseas. The 1920s and 1930s 'first wave' of inward migration appears to have been piecemeal and haphazard, built upon company and ownership networks. Emma Hollywood terms this the 'nomadic' phase of worker migration.[10]

The period from the later 1930s to the introduction of the more formalised NCB transfer schemes - the second wave - is less thoroughly understood and categorised. However, archival research in Nottinghamshire indicates that Dukeries pits in this period drew workers from a cosmopolitan mix of nations and regions. During the period from Vesting Day to 1956, research at the National Mining Museum of Scotland shows that 30,968 workers were effected by contractions in the Scottish coal industry, and employed elsewhere within the National Coal Board network.[11] Across the wider Scottish economy during the 1950s, there was an outflow of labour twice the size of that from any other UK region or nation;[12] and in the period 1931-1951 209,000 Scottish workers emigrated to England and Wales with the greatest regional concentrations of emigrants originating from the industrial centre of Scotland.[13]

Phillips shows that from 1962 to 1971 (the third wave of migration, for the purposes of this research) 15,000 Scottish miners had transferred under the IDTS and LDRS schemes, with the Midlands and Yorkshire as dominant recipients of these migrant workers.[14] He argues that migration in this period is reflective of a wider national industry in contraction at its geographical extremities – before this time, migration is a more complex phenomenon that

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[8] Spooner, D.J.: *The Geography of Coal's Second Coming* (Geography, 66.1, 1981, pp29-41)

[9] Waller, R.: *The Dukeries Transformed*

[10] Hollywood, E.: *Mining, Migration and Immobility: Towards an Understanding of the Relationship Between Migration and Occupation in the Context of the UK Mining Industry* (International Journal of Population Geography, 8, 2002, pp297-314), p.299

[11] *Redeployment of Miners in the Scottish Coal Industry 1947 to 1966*, Scottish Area NCB Discussion Paper (Anon, National Mining Museum of Scotland Archives)

[12] Lenman, B: *An Economic History of Modern Scotland* (London, 1977)

[13] Osborne, R.: *Scottish Migration Statistics: A Note* (The Scottish Geographical Magazine, 72.2, 1956, pp153-159)

[14] Phillips, J.: *Scottish Coal Miners in the Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh, 2019)

does not necessarily connote an existential crisis in Scottish and northern mining. Ewan Gibbs presents primary evidence that, not only were 1960s and 1970s Scottish transferees motivated by fears of closures at home, they also perceived the English Midland pits as sources of "mega money" for skilled mineworkers.[15]

Turning to cultural and economic conditions within the new minefield more directly, Ackers and Payne document the trade-offs faced by workers entering the New Mine Nottinghamshire coalfield at this time - between better conditions and pay, set against cultures of deference and 'having to call everyone Sir'.[16] The impression of Nottinghamshire as an economic community of 'deferential social relations' appears in other migrant miner accounts, in contrast to the perceptions of more egalitarian communities from which they had departed.[17] The importance of deference, social ordering, ownership and aristocratic-elite control of the Dukeries is extensively addressed in the final section of Part Four below.

Ackers & Payne also demonstrate that, after 1957, the NCB operated in line with the 'stakeholder ethic' whereby the social costs of pit closures were ameliorated by 'Pick your Pit' worker transfer schemes. However, they suggest, the unintended impact of this strategy might have been to relocate Scottish and Welsh miners with "a habit and culture of militant trade unionism" to Nottinghamshire and other consolidating coalfields. The outcome might have been a hardening of political attitude amongst 'indigenous' workers and communities, and ultimately the concentration of more radical miners in a small number of pits and union branches.[18]

The modernity of the Nottinghamshire pits and their infrastructure, and the relatively stable and upward trajectory in wages, gave immigrating workers a sense of prosperity and security in the county's workforce – that you could "Leave your cares behind ye, your future has been planned, and off ye go to tae Nottingham, tae Robin's Promised Land!"[19] Former mineworkers in the area, interviewed by Jay Emery, were convinced of a post-war

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[15] Gibbs, E.: *Coal Country: the meaning and memory of deindustrialization in postwar Scotland* (London, 2021), p.122

[16] Ackers, P. & Payne, J.: *Before the Storm: The Experience of Nationalization and the Prospects for Industrial Relations Partnership in the British Coal Industry, 1947-1972: Rethinking the Militant Narrative* (Social History, 27.2, pp184-209)

[17] Phillips, J.: *Economic Direction and Generational Change in 20th Century Britain: The Case of the Scottish Coalfields* (English Historical Review, 132.557, 2017, pp885-911)

[18] Ackers & Payne: *Before the Storm*

[19] Bell, D.: *Memories of the Nottinghamshire Coalfields* (Newbury, 2003)

'certain future for East Midlands Coal'.[20] How this sense of security, and its ultimate betrayal, influenced former miners' remembrance of the coalfield's formation and 'ascendancy' emerges as a central theme of this thesis.

The broader sociology of industrial migration and resulting communities was also reviewed. Gina Harkell's oral research with Kent immigrant mineworkers supports the conclusion that economic advantage was a primary motivator for relocation.[21] Harkell's work identifies important distinctions in family member response to migration. The centrality of the attitudes of, and opportunities for, women in the migration story is mirrored by recent community oral work with miners in North-West Leicestershire.[22] Rosemary Power adds to this, demonstrating through oral research that preparedness to relocate (often in community clusters) was a persistent reality of family life in the industry, but was tempered by longer term intentions to return.[23] The growing importance of female self-empowerment, family partnerships and shared decision making in post-war mining communities also proved significant in framing oral interviews for this thesis.[24]

Phillips also addresses the duality in attitudes to migration among women and family members, acting as a loosener of identities in the interests of economic security, and then as a 'reunifier' of these bonds at times of industrial dispute and strife.[25] This duality would prove important to the political cultural understanding of Dukeries mining communities, presented in Part Five below.

Jörg Arnold's examination of the interrelationship between post-nationalisation prospects for mining, the hope or desperation amongst the workers relative to the fluctuating economic circumstance, and the climate of industrial relations was a significant influence. Arnold considers how the place of coal in the national energy mix relative to oil drove psychological as well as industrial behaviour from the 1950s to the 1980s.[26] Whilst his work focuses on the later period of deindustrialisation in the coalfield, his identification of

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[20] Emery, J.: *Belonging, Memory and history in the north Nottinghamshire Coalfields* (Journal of Historical Geography 59:2019, pp77-89)

[21] Harkell, G.: *The Migration of Mining Families to the Kent Coalfield between the Wars* (Oral History, 6.1, 1978, pp98-113)

[22] Friends of Thringstone: *Scottish in Thringstone* (Loughborough, 2013)

[23] Power, Rosemary: *'After the Black Gold': A view of mining heritage from coalfield areas in Britain* (Folklore, 119.2, 2008, pp160-181)

[24] Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, F. & Thomlinson, N.: *Vernacular Discourses of Gender Equality* (Past and Present, 2021)

[25] Phillips, J.: *The meanings of coal community in Britain since 1947* (Cont. British History 32:1, pp39-59)

[26] Arnold, J.: *"The Death of Sympathy". Coal mining, workplace hazards, and the politics of risk in Britain, ca 1970-1990* (Historical Social Research Vol 41 No1, pp91-110)

the 1984-5 Strike as having a historical and psychological *'stranglehold'* on attitudes to the 20th century industry were influential in the framing of this thesis – particularly in the identification of silences and omissions in the historical and oral record before the political coalfield's accelerating history into and beyond the 1970s.

Trans-geographical communities existed across coalfields, forged by dispute and shared experience as well as the diasporic effect of worker relocation. Arnold cites Jim Phillips as terming these 'ideological commonalities', both in mining communities themselves and in the wider population, ascribing miners' shifting identities as the ideal of masculine muscularity, imperilled traditional workers, or ultimately militant and archaic obdurates.[27] This realisation of a wider conceptual 'occupational community' draws on the work of Martin Bulmer[28], which articulates the ability of mining families to maintain a wider sense of collective identity even within more cosmopolitan and multi-occupational environments.

However post-nationalisation, the emergence of consolidated coalfields to which miners were transferred in large numbers may have affected class and union solidarity. Workers who had moved (often several times) upon vaunted guarantees of stable work, according to Notts NUM leader Ray Chadburn, might latterly prove resistant to collective action that risked their immediate prospects and prosperity.[29]

Colin Griffin cautions against caricaturing of the Nottinghamshire miners as an *'island of indifference'*[30] to wider questions of class and industrial solidarity, emphasising the efforts that Nottinghamshire miners went to in support of nationally agreed lockouts and strikes stretching from the 1890s to the 1970s. However, a range of other sources alight on the 'Spencer' interwar period of collaboration between owners and union in the county as indicative of 'exceptionalism'.[31] Alan Griffin, focusing on the four decades before the emergence of the non-political union, has noted a Nottinghamshire culture of 'prosperous butties[32] and educated managers', which might hint at a workplace culture of control and indifference to worker concerns.[33]

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[27] Arnold, J.: *'Like Being On Death Row': Britain and the end of coal c.1970 to the present* (Contemporary British History, 32:1, 2018, pp1-17)

[28] Bulmer, M.: *Sociological Models of the Mining Community* (Durham, 1974)

[29] NUM, *Annual Conference Report* (1983), p.182

[30] Griffin, Colin: *'Notts. have some very peculiar history'*

[31] Phillips, J.: *The meanings of coal community in Britain since 1947*

[32] For a more comprehensive discussion of 'butty' subcontracting, see Part 4.4

[33] Griffin, A.: *The Nottinghamshire Coalfield 1881-1981* (Ashbourne, 1981)

The effects of relative affluence in the Nottinghamshire coalfield may have proved influential and formative. Locally-agreed overtime, pay and benefits, district pensions schemes, better housing and leisure facilities constructed in areas of natural beauty may have created a bundle of advantages and preferences both worth defending, and critical to attracting immigrant workers. 'Money might indeed have been seen as a way of talking about power', argued Mike Savage.[34] Prosperity and acquisition, contingent upon this bundle, may have influenced particular community and political behaviour amongst Notts miners in later decades.[35]

An important corrective to this perception of the latter-period Nottinghamshire miner as the self-interested affluent worker is the experience of the National Power Loading Agreement and its implementation. David Amos, both in his published work and in interview for this thesis, argues that Nottinghamshire miners were often prepared to act in a collegiate pan-industrial way as political actors, when convinced of the union constitutionality of the cause.[36] Andrew Taylor adds to this, that Nottinghamshire workers entered the decades of heightened industrial disputes (the contested period of the 1970s and 80s) with experience of relative security of work tenure, but diminishing relative pay advantage over other workers.[37] Joel Wolfe notes that the cumulative effect of coalfield automation and income change over the nationalised period was to take the 1970s miner from 1st to 12th in the hierarchy of skilled manual worker earnings, a reduction of 30% in less than two decades: however, during this time, Nottinghamshire area support for collective NUM action remained largely intact.[38]

Attitudes to post-War nationalisation depended on geography, occupation within the industry, and personal political engagement. This was strongly evident in the Midland coalfields. Ackers & Payne cite interviews with surface workers, managers, and deputies from Ollerton and Thoresby in North Nottinghamshire. On the one hand, an Ollerton miner expresses reserved indifference and observes 'I had not been involved in any of the activities' that led to nationalisation, whilst a Thoresby deputy (and former south

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[34] Savage, M.: *Working-Class Identities in the 1960s: Revisiting the Affluent Worker Study* (Sociology, 39.5, 2005, pp929-946)

[35] Metcalfe, J.: *The politics of the Nottinghamshire Coalfield during the 1984-5 Miners' Strike* (Oxford BA thesis, 2000)

[36] Amos, D.: *The Miners of Nottinghamshire Vol.4* (Nottingham, 2013)

[37] Taylor, Andrew: *The NUM and British Politics, Volume 2: 1969-1995* (Ashgate, 2005)

[38] Wolfe, J.: *Corporatism and Union Democracy: The British Miners and Incomes Policy, 1973-74* (Comparative Politics, 17.4, 1985, 00421-436)

Yorkshire miner) noted a sense of 'getting away from the bosses' amongst the pit community.[39]

Clinton Jencks[40] and Kenneth Morgan[41] concur, from respective pitface and wider societal perspectives, that nationalisation might not have instituted an industrial revolution in mining commensurate with its psychological legacy in society. For R. Page Arnot similarly, nationalisation fell short of the workers' control ambitions of earlier reformers and was instead a mechanism for managing under-performing yet essential industries in a mixed economic model.[42] There was broad continuity in management and industrial relations, and only a very gradual introduction of harmonisation in terms and partnership arrangements across the different coalfields. For many miners in Nottinghamshire, little might have changed after the War across much of the coalfield until the latter 1950s saw the advance of mechanisation and fresh waves of immigrant workers from restructuring NCB divisions and beyond. Jon Lawrence has argued that the slow advance of affluence amongst industrial workers, increasing both a sense of agency and of spatial-occupational investment, were distorted and politicised by the advent of 1960s consumerism.[43] This might connote a greater adherence to affluent worker norms amongst the Nottinghamshire miners than were later ascribed during the periods of industrial dispute and schism.

Jim Tomlinson argues that, if nationalisation in coal and allied industries failed to usher in a long-term social democratic economy, it did succeed in humanising post-war corrections in labour concentration and activity.[44] It may also have tended to embed more progressive practices in the post-War workplace, prioritised regional development and investment strategy, and modernised workplace safety in a systematic way impossible to the looser and under-regulated confederations of private ownership. This view mirrors the 'moral economy' gains and ambitions presented by Jim Phillips' nationalisation thesis. It would prove striking in Dukeries primary research for this thesis that, whilst positive remembrance amongst ex-miners was for a nationalised period lived experience (as evidenced by Emery and Arnold, and natural given the age and working years of interviewees), this would often be closely balanced by an argument that positive

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[39] Ackers & Payne: *Before the Storm*

[40] Jencks, C.E.: *After nationalisation: changes in the attitude of management* (Management International Review, Vol 8, No.1, 1968, pp55-60)

[41] Morgan, K.: *Britain since 1945: The People's Peace* (Oxford, 1992)

[42] Arnot, R.P.: *A History of the Scottish Miners* (London, 1955)

[43] Lawrence, J.: *Class, 'Affluence' and the Study of Everyday Life in Britain, c. 1930-1964* (Cultural and Social History, 10.2, 2013, pp273-299)

[44] Tomlinson, J.: *A 'Failed Experiment'? Public Ownership and the Narratives of Post-War Britain* (Labour History Review, 73.2, 2008, pp228-243)

experiences and achievements were somehow organic products of the private industry's deeper past.

The construction of mechanisms for place-based community interaction were important continuity foundations for colliery workers from the 1920s onwards. Adult education, sports, leisure, and pastoral facilities were all embedded in the miners' welfare structures[45]. Tim Strangleman demonstrates how the psychological assimilation of these assets and their legacies into community lore would become critical to reminiscence and sense of place as the industry declined.[46]

Waller differs from the conception, advanced by Alan Griffin in particular, that the Dukeries presented a series of idealised and perfected 'model village' opportunities for incoming workers. The relationship of owners to local authorities in the Dukeries could be fractious and uncollaborative leading to insufficient provision of basic services, and many village schemes were little more than building sites as the workers moved in. Political and community structures were paternalistic and aristocratic, and often unresponsive to the concerns of short-term or transient workers. Ashworth argued that, despite this, there is evidence that a greater proportion of housing stock in the East Midlands coalfield was, by the advent of nationalisation, considered modern and in good condition.[47]

In the context of social provision, the pre-war phase of development is mixed. The view is clear though and supported by Bell, Ashworth, and Griffin, that even in Nottinghamshire nationalisation had a dramatically positive effect on general welfare provisions in the coalfield. Housing stock was modernised, and local authorities were similarly compelled to expand their provision, support and safety for workers was enhanced, and a more comprehensive transport system across the north of the county allowed for greater worker mobility in the New Mine and Cosmopolitan Colliery phases.

Literature and primary research for this thesis also reveals a periodic 'silence'. Whilst documentary and oral resources abound for both the interwar and conflictual (1972-1990) periods, north Nottinghamshire development in the second and third wave migration periods from 1947 to 1971 is relatively under-researched and under-discussed. Interviewees focus their accounts on either the foundations of the coalfield, or its later periods of political schism and decline – as do academic and popular researchers in the field. Whilst attempts are made throughout this thesis to provide depth and colour in this period, the silence is notable and of effect. The relative affluence, security (and ascendancy) of this second phase of Dukeries development may lack remarkability, but are

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[45] Power, R: *'After the Black Gold'*

[46] Strangleman, T.: *Networks, Place and Identities in Post-Industrial Mining Communities* (International Journal of Urban & Regional Research, 25.2, 2001)

[47] Ashworth, W.: *The History of the British Coal Industry, Vol.5: 1946-1982* (Oxford, 1986)

central to the political-cultural questions presented later in this thesis. In *Figure 29* - 100 years of North Nottinghamshire general election results presented in Section 5.2, this period of stability and calm is contextualised against the long period of Labour political hegemony in the coalfield: a settled control and influence of mineworkers over workplace, community, and often national politics. The fracturing of this consensus might hold lessons for the decline of the later coalfield, and the intensity of political change in its communities that would follow.

2 The construction of the coalfield

This section outlines the early history of the Nottinghamshire coalfield and pre-industrial story of Nottinghamshire, coal's expansion into the 'Dukeries' area of the county in the north, and the reasons for the development and success of the north Nottinghamshire pits.

2.1 Nottinghamshire: 'an asylum for outlaws'

In 1811, north Nottinghamshire woollen workers led the first machine breaking raids of what become known as the Luddite Rebellion. Incited by Parliamentary support for the easing of tenure protections for apprentices and outworkers, clandestine worker organisations inspired by the mythology of Ned Ludd attacked textile businesses that they contended threatened their way of life.[48]

The uprising spread across the Midlands and North, with the Luddites successful for a time in evading capture due to extensive community support.[49] By early 1812, Parliament felt compelled to act and pass emergency legislation, making frame-breaking a capital offence.

Speaking in opposition to that legislation in the upper house, Byron (himself a member of the north Nottinghamshire aristocracy) excoriated the intentions of the Government:

> "Can you commit a whole county to their own prisons? Will you erect a gibbet in every field, and hang men up like scarecrows?...restore Sherwood Forest as an acceptable gift to the Crown in its former condition of a royal chase, an *asylum for outlaws*? Are these the remedies for a starving and desperate populace."

The Frame Breaking Act was passed but to limited effect - the uprising was to be more gradually reduced through a combination of minimal punitive action and more sober local reconciliations between workers and business owners. However, and in a losing cause, Byron's florid depiction captured the jarring and cacophonous ambiguities of Georgian Nottinghamshire: a community commencing its rapid advance into industrial development.

A traditional district industry – woollen spinning - mechanising and consolidating into factory production, set against a traditional micro-ecology of artisan workers in village and small-town communities. The striving for order and authority in post-Napoleonic Britain, juxtaposed with the anarchic mythologies of Sherwood Forest, the Anglo-Saxon

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[48] Dinwiddy, J.: *Luddism and Politics in the Northern Counties* (Social History, 4.1, 1979, pp. 33-63)

[49] *Luddites at 200* (Created: 2011), available at: http://www.luddites200.org.uk/theLuddites.html (Accessed: March 2021)

homestead of Robin Hood mythology. A small patch of traditional England buckling under the advancing pressures of a modernising economy and society.

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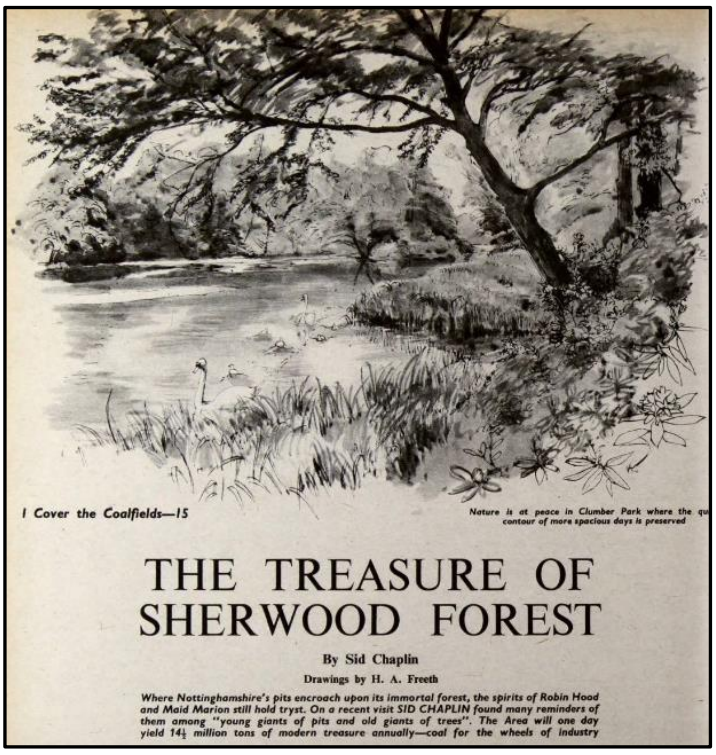
Almost exactly a century later, a local historian would note that now "Coal is to be had, and Sherwood Forest will soon be gone."[50] The title image to his article in Coal Magazine is presented below.

To the gradual 19th century development of textile production in northern Nottinghamshire, accompanying traditional agricultural occupations, was added a vastly faster-paced new drive to extract and sell coal. And this new industry would develop on such a vast scale that it would have the reverse effect of the post-Luddite period: where once industrialists had sought to reduce the numbers of workers needed, now they would require huge supplies of labour to mine the new coalfield.

This new labour would immigrate to the area from neighbouring counties, countries, and eventually from all parts of continental Europe and the British Commonwealth, forging a new social and political balance in the reshaped communities of Byron's bucolic hinterland.


I Cover the Coalfields—15

Nature is at peace in Clumber Park where the qu
contour of more spacious days is preserved

THE TREASURE OF SHERWOOD FOREST

By Sid Chaplin

Drawings by H. A. Freeth

Where Nottinghamshire's pits encroach upon its immortal forest, the spirits of Robin Hood and Maid Marion still hold tryst. On a recent visit SID CHAPLIN found many reminders of them among "young giants of pits and old giants of trees". The Area will one day yield 14½ million tons of modern treasure annually—coal for the wheels of industry

Figure 2 – 'Young giants of pits, and old giants of trees': mining comes to Sherwood Forest

[50] Cited in '*The Treasure of Sherwood Forest'* (Coal Magazine, August 1951, pp9-10)

2.2 The Scramble for the Dukeries

The focus of this research is on the exploitation of the Nottinghamshire coalfield in the years following the First World War. This period saw the rapid development of a string of new mines in the 'Dukeries' area of the north of the county; and in the decades following the Second World War, the creation of highly mechanised deep mines further east; and a range of investments in growing capacity at pre-existing pits under rationalisation plans.

Coal extraction in the East Midlands predates these modern phases of development by at least 800 years, with evidence of basic mineworkings on Roman encampments earlier still in Lincolnshire. Medieval and early modern mining activity centred on the Trent Valley to the west of the city of Nottingham, banded from Wollaton in the south to Teversal and Selston in the north.[51] The earliest surviving lease for an East Midlands mine, held by the University of Nottingham archives, was granted by Sir Richard de Willoughby on land near Selston in 1312.

Ready access to river transportation allowed coal to be transported for domestic use in the city from the 14th century onwards. The trade in coal was sufficiently advanced by the 16th century that Henry Willoughby (descendent of the Sir Richard mentioned above) was able to finance the building of his Elizabethan manor at Wollaton from its profits[52]; and, according to Alan Griffin, the sinking of the first long sough drainage system for the Willoughby's Wollaton mineworkings in 1552 was accomplished with the unmatched pre-industrial investment of £20,000.

Mining continued to expand throughout the 17th century clustered upon its western Nottinghamshire (and east Derbyshire) spine. Here, west of the Erewash Valley, coal is found at surface and shallow points easy for mining without advanced technologies and heavy investment - this is sometimes referred to as the 'exposed coalfield'. Limited competition in this period reflected relative stability in prices for urban consumers: coal was considered locally available, without significant interruption in supply saving bad weather (more significant as road transport increased), and at prices manageable for the limited local demand economy.

A step change in the scale of, and competition for, East Midlands coal was reached by the 18th century. Steam engines allowed for deeper mineworking and more effective drainage and ventilation; and the creation of commercial canals allowed coal to be delivered more reliably and at lower cost. With the completion of first the Erewash Canal in 1779 and then the Nottingham Canal in 1797, output from the East Midlands coalfield more than doubled and sharply reduced prices were seen in the metropolitan market. Transport development also enabled coal producers to compete beyond their immediate markets, and to invest in transportation stock to benefit their miners over rivals in a wider industrial strategy.

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[51] Griffin, A.R.: *Mining in the East Midlands 1550-1947* (London, 1971), p.3

[52] Beckett, J. & Amos D.: *The Coal Industry in Nottinghamshire* (Thoroton Society, 2009), available at: http://www.nottsheritagegateway.org.uk/themes/coal.htm (Accessed: March 2021)

As the industrial revolution gathered pace, the next expansion of the Nottinghamshire coalfield was accompanied by the advent of railway freight haulage in the second half of the 19th century. Interest in and competition for land and mining rights to the immediate east of the Erewash Valley accelerated. Here, the seams were deeper but would produce at better quality and higher volumes. Aristocratic landowners like the Duke of Newcastle and Lord Middleton began to enter entrepreneurial partnerships with mining magnates like Thomas North to meet the new industrial thirst for coal. By 1860 there were 21 collieries operating in the county. By 1880, there were 37. By 1910, the number had reached 62.

The scale of output expansion from the Nottinghamshire-Derbyshire coalfield in this period is evident in Figure 3. The region's share of wider UK output had more than quadrupled in the two centuries to 1910. 750,000 tons had been extracted in 1700; 1.4 million in 1815; and 31.2 million in 1910. Output from Nottinghamshire alone almost doubled from 1897 (6.9million tons) to 1908 (11 million tons).

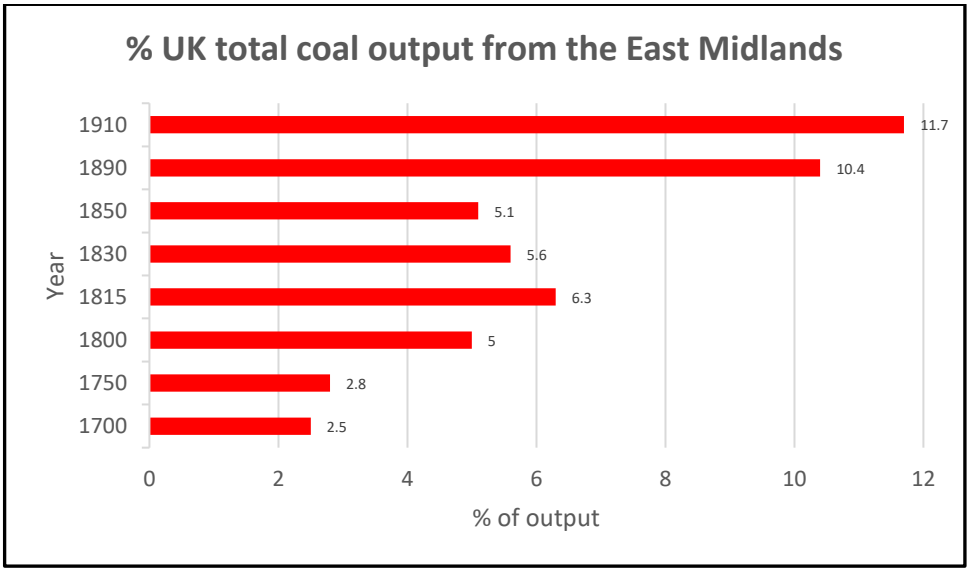

Figure 3 – East Midlands coal output as a % of UK total output[53]

The late 19th century saw the maximisation of resources and growth in the eastern end of a great outcropping of coal, running south westerly in a belt from Leeds in West Yorkshire to Nottingham in the East Midlands. This 'older concealed'[54] coalfield proved effective for the industrial needs of Victorian industry and accelerating domestic demand from metropolitan growth. This stage of expansion also created a pooling of experienced labour

[53] Flinn, M.W.: *History of the British Coal Industry Vol.2 1700-1830* (Oxford, 1984); and Church R.: *History of the British Coal Industry Vol.3 1830-1913* (Oxford, 1986)

[54] Amos, D.: *The History of Nottinghamshire Mining* (Lecture to the Nottingham Industrial History Association), 21 October 2021

in the Yorkshire-Derbyshire-Nottinghamshire coalfield, and profitable multi-mine operating companies with the financial reserves for further expansion and opportunity.

Test borings to expand the coalfield further eastward began early in the 20th century. They discovered deep seams of coal suited to heavy industrial usage – most particularly the Top Hard seam - extending through the Mansfield and Worksop districts. This expanse of untapped coal deepened further to the east, finally sinking to unreachable depths beneath the rocky promontory of Lincoln Cathedral.

It was the opportunities for expansion in north Nottinghamshire, therefore, that were explored most aggressively in the early decades of the century. This rush for north Nottinghamshire coal centred on a sparsely populated, economically underdeveloped area of the county referred to locally as 'the Dukeries'. This term is derived from the aristocratic landownerships from which mining rights were extracted by coal entrepreneurs in this period and formed the majority of sites for new mines. These were: the Welbeck estate of the Duke of Portland (north east of Mansfield); the Clumber estate of the Duke of Newcastle (to the south of Worksop); the Thoresby estate of Earl Manvers (west of Ollerton); and the Rufford estate of Lord Savile (eastwards towards Newark). These landholdings occupied most of the ancient Sherwood Forest's' remnants, and its network

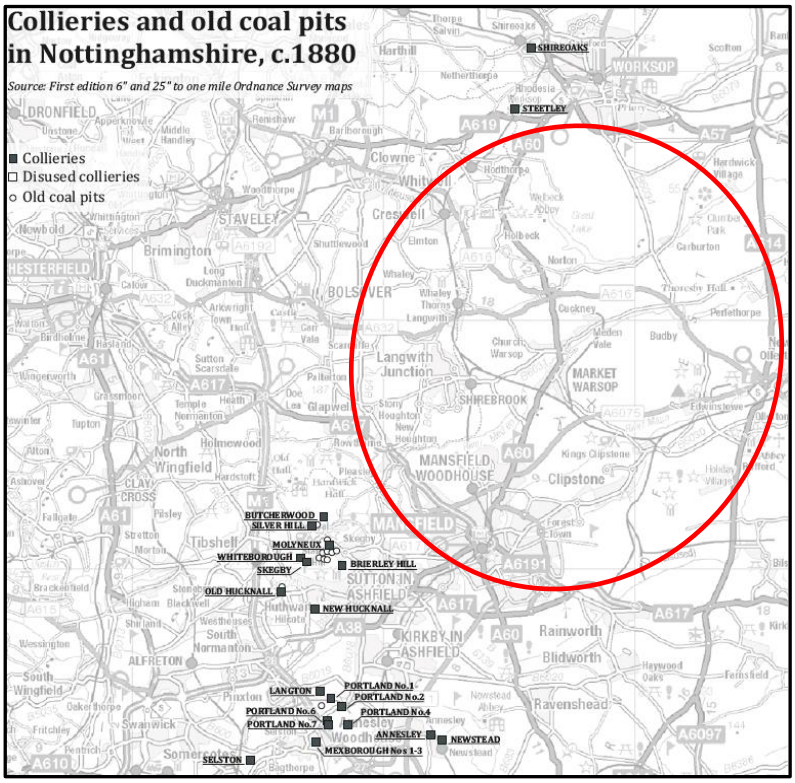

Figure 4 – The north Nottinghamshire coalfield in 1880, before the 'Scramble for the Dukeries'

of equally antique rural villages and hamlets that had supplied agrarian labour to the ducal economy over centuries.

The territory of expansion is demonstrated by the red outlined area on the map of North Nottinghamshire in Figure 4. The contrast between this and Figure 5 is marked and

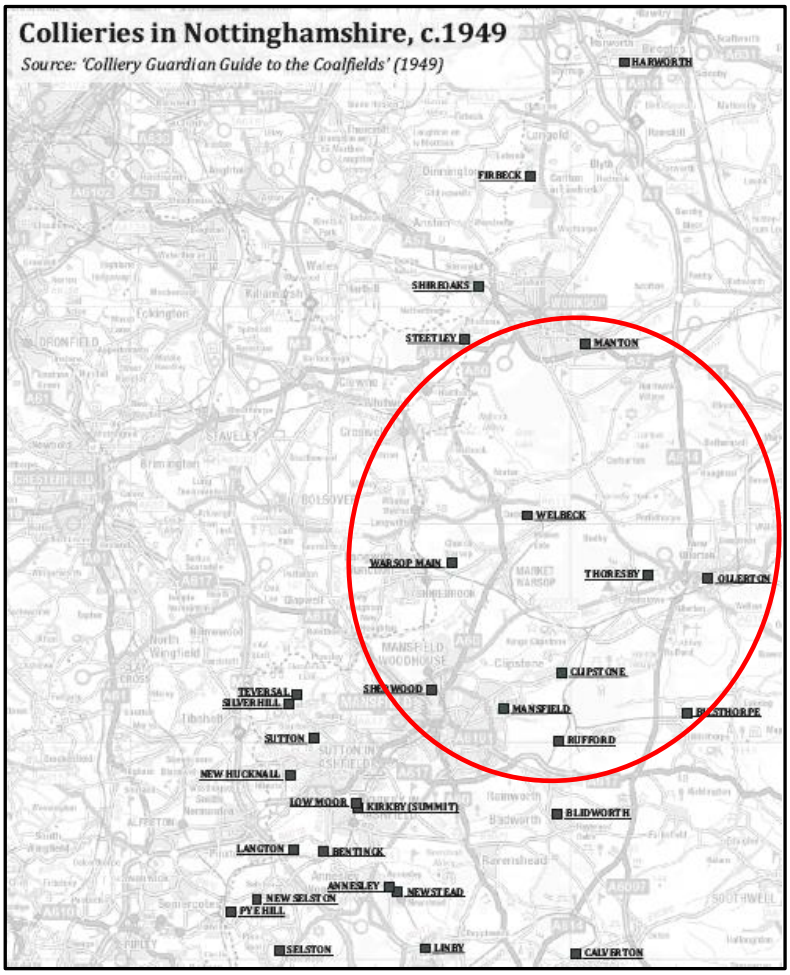

Figure 5 – The north Nottinghamshire coalfield in 1949, with the Dukeries mines producing

demonstrates the effects of the expansion in the decades either side of the First World War (noting that pits like Mansfield, Sherwood and Manton were struck in the last years of the 19th century). In a period of only two generations, the Dukeries went from no coal production to being the dominant producer in the East Midlands coalfield, displacing textiles as the leading industry in the Mansfield district economy.

So fundamental to the expansion of the Nottinghamshire coalfield were the collaborations between these landowners and their mining company partners that, in 1927, the New Statesman labelled this period as the 'scramble for the Dukeries'.[55]

Of those pits developed in the Dukeries area: Ollerton was sunk by the Butterley company; Bilsthorpe by Stanton; Rufford, Thoresby and Clipstone by Bolsover; Harworth by Barber-Walker; and Blidworth by the Staveley subsidiary, Newstead. Firbeck Main (Doncaster Collieries), like Harworth, was in fact not in the same geological system as the other Dukeries mines – both pits' workers would consider Doncaster their local town, and

[55] New Statesman, *The New Coalfield in Nottinghamshire* (24 December, 1927), cited in Waller, Robert: *The Dukeries Transformed*, p.14

Firbeck Main would be assigned to the NCB South Yorkshire area after nationalisation (the other Dukeries pits would join Mansfield to form the NCB North Nottinghamshire Area after 1947).

Whilst exploration and proving of new mines often occurred in consortia between the owners, in the Dukeries eventual development of mines was generally a sole operator - landowner undertaking.

Dukeries Mining Development 1911-2015			
Pit (company)	**Year of Sinking**	**Year Producing**	**Year of Closure**
Rufford (Bolsover)	1911	1913	1993
Harworth (Barber-Walker)	1913/1919*	1924	2006
Clipstone (Bolsover)	1920	1922	2003
Firbeck Main (Staveley) ♦	1922	1925	1968
Ollerton (Butterley)	1923	1926	1994
Blidworth (Newstead)	1924	1926	1989
Bilsthorpe (Stanton)	1925	1928	1997
Thoresby (Bolsover)	1925	1928	2015
**Sinking operations at Harworth were interrupted by the First World War, as the original sinkers were German migrant workers interned in 1914. The rights were acquired by Barber-Walker in 1919*[56]			
♦Pit assigned to NCB South Yorkshire Area, rather than North Notts, post-nationalisation			

Figure 6 - The Development of North Nottinghamshire coal mines 1911-2015

The process of sinking the Dukeries mines, due to their depth and rurality, was on average three years from inception to first production. Logistically the work was challenging, as was setting on and maintaining workforce. In most cases, proving of the pit sites in the Dukeries field occurred before the First World War, with capital for their development raised rapidly and contemporaneously. Wartime interrupted the development of new pits, as a war-focused economy soaked up available labour and demanded a focus on better production from existing pits.

The Dukeries pits, central to the north Nottinghamshire coalfield, were completed by the getting of coal at Thoresby in January 1928. In this same year, "Nottinghamshire's output exceeded Derbyshire's for the first time, and by 1930 the 46 collieries of Nottinghamshire were producing 800,000 tons more than the 108 colliers of Derbyshire."[57]

[56] Griffin, A.R.: *The Nottinghamshire Coalfield 1881-1981* (Ashbourne, 1981), p.40

[57] Griffin, A.R.: *Mining in the East Midlands*, p.265

The end of the 1920s, with 46 pits operating in Nottinghamshire, would mark a high point for the scale of the industry. New mines would be opened following nationalisation (Bevercotes and Cotgrave), both in the 1960s and both sited at the most easterly extremes of the county's coalfield. By the 1980s, 30 working pits would remain in Nottinghamshire's two National Coal Board areas, with smaller Victorian era pits in the west and south of the county closed as they became exhausted.

However, the *relative* scale and importance of the North Nottinghamshire field is demonstrated by deep mined revenue budget estimates from 1984-5, and captured by David Amos in Figure 7. In sixty years from the commencement of sinking operations, north Nottinghamshire – with the Dukeries at its epicentre – had been transformed from an agricultural mixed economy to the productive epicentre of the national coal system.

NCB Area	1984-5 Deep Mined Revenue Budget (million tons)
Scotland	5.15
North East	10.5
North Yorkshire	9.3
Doncaster	6.3
Barnsley	8.2
South Yorkshire	7.1
North Derbyshire	7.5
North Nottinghamshire	**12.0**
South Nottinghamshire	7.2
South Midlands	7.1
Western	10.3
South Wales	6.75
GB	**97.4**

Figure 7 - NCB Deep Mined Budget Output 1984-5[58]

[58] NCB South Notts Area estimates (February 1984), cited by Amos, D.: *The Miners of Nottinghamshire Vol 4* (Mansfield, 2013), p.249

2.3 Drivers of the north Nottinghamshire development

> "Analysis of long-term trends in the industry from the late nineteenth century show a gradual increase in the regional concentration of coal production has taken place...An expanding set of fields in the East and South Midlands and Yorkshire increased their share of national output from 20 per cent to over 50 per cent...thus the **centre of gravity had moved from Highland to Lowland Britain**. Reasons for this trend included the extent, nature and accessibility of reserves and market factors.
>
> In the longer-worked peripheral fields (especially Scotland and South Wales), mining was hindered by adverse geological conditions, giving lower productivity levels than in the **younger mines of Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire**, working thicker, more regular seams. Moreover, markets for the 'special' coals from some peripheral fields were shrinking."[59]

The primary advantages of the Dukeries coalfield then, and by association the wider North Nottinghamshire field, lay in geology and geography. Coal was available in the area in greater and more consistent quantities and distributions, and of a quality attractive to the contemporary market need. Although the scale of investment required to sink complex deep mine operations in the Dukeries was vast, the predicted lifespan of these pits was equally impressive (and commercially enticing). The Low Main seam, upon which the success of the coalfield was predicated, was assessed in 1945 as having at least a further 141 years of working life. A less reliable assessment of Bilsthorpe colliery in 1961 promised it 480 more years of production.[60]

The relative geological advantages of the coalfield continued to dominate development in the post-war period as well. The investment strategies of the National Coal Board Plan for Coal in the 1970s centred upon mechanization and optimization of existing (yet younger) mines over new finds and developments. As a result, "of the first 55 schemes to be completed nationally by March 1979, no less than 18 lay in North Nottinghamshire and South Yorkshire, taking 37 per cent of capital investment involved. As most of the deep pits of North Nottinghamshire have been sunk since the First World, reserves remain extensive."[61]

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[59] North J. & Spooner D.: *The Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire Coalfield: The Focus of the Coal Board's Investment Strategy* (Geographical Journal,148.1 1982, pp22-37), p.30

[60] Waller, R.: *The Dukeries Transformed*, p.23

[61] North J. & Spooner D.: *The Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire Coalfield*, p.30

Secondly, the Dukeries development benefited from a more prosaic opportunity: good timing. Despite new North Nottinghamshire mines being extensively proven before the First World War, their construction was largely deferred to the years after it. Immediately after the war, capital returned to the industry as British colliery owners sought to win export markets (as European access to German coal from the Ruhr was interrupted). As the export flows receded during the 1920s, the Nottinghamshire mines built upon their promise won an increased share of recovering domestic demand, and a national concern about a perceived dwindling of coal reserves as the peacetime economy recovered. Therefore, the Dukeries field was a beneficiary of both short-term export demand and longer-term domestic concerns.[62]

Post-nationalisation, north Nottinghamshire's pits also had a huge circumstantial advantage over those in other traditional coalfields. They were comparatively young, heavily producing, and were transferred to the control of the National Coal Board with extant planning permissions in place.[63] Post-1948 investment would benefit pre-existing locations as new planned areas (in particular, attempts to expand the Leicestershire coalfield into the Vale of Belvoir) fell foul of planning constraints, town and country planning laws, and public enquiries.

Nottinghamshire's coalfield expansion capitalised on the expansion of electricity as a domestic and industrial energy resource[64]. The creation of the Central Electricity Board in 1926[65], under the control of a public monopoly, created a ready and dependable consumer for the Dukeries' output. This demand underwent accelerated growth after the Second World War with the construction of 'Megawatt Valley' by the Central Electricity Generating Board.[66] A network of 13 coal-fired power stations clustered around the Trent Valley to the south of Nottingham, this development was commenced in the late 1950s and completed by 1982. At its peak output, the Valley was responsible for a quarter of the country's electricity production. High Marnham, completed in 1962, was Europe's first 1000MW generating station, and 17 Nottinghamshire pits were engaged in its supply chain.

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[62] Griffin, A.R.: *Mining in the East Midlands*, p.174

[63] North J. & Spooner D.: *The Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire Coalfield*, p.28

[64] Scarry, R.: *What Do People Do All Day? Digging Coal To Make Electricity Work for Us* (Harper Collins, 2010)

[65] Fox A.: *History and Heritage: The Social Origins of the British Industrial Relations System* (Allen and Unwin: 1985), p.317

[66] Clarke, J.: *20th Century Coal and Oil Fired Electric Power Generation* (Historic England, 2015), Available at https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/iha-20thcentury-coal-oil-fired-electric-power-generation/heag056-electric-power-generation-iha (Accessed December, 2021)

The construction of the central England electricity generating system was of course not circumstantial. The CEGB located their new, out of town stations with deliberate adjacency to coal supplies. However, the advent of an emerging electricity industry allowed the Nottinghamshire coalfield to continue expanding its share of overall coal output beyond the Second World War, as indicated in Figure 8 below (cited in *Spooner et al*). In each of the three post-war decades under review by this thesis, demand for electricity output from the power stations in the Yorkshire-Nottinghamshire industrial conurbation doubled.[67]

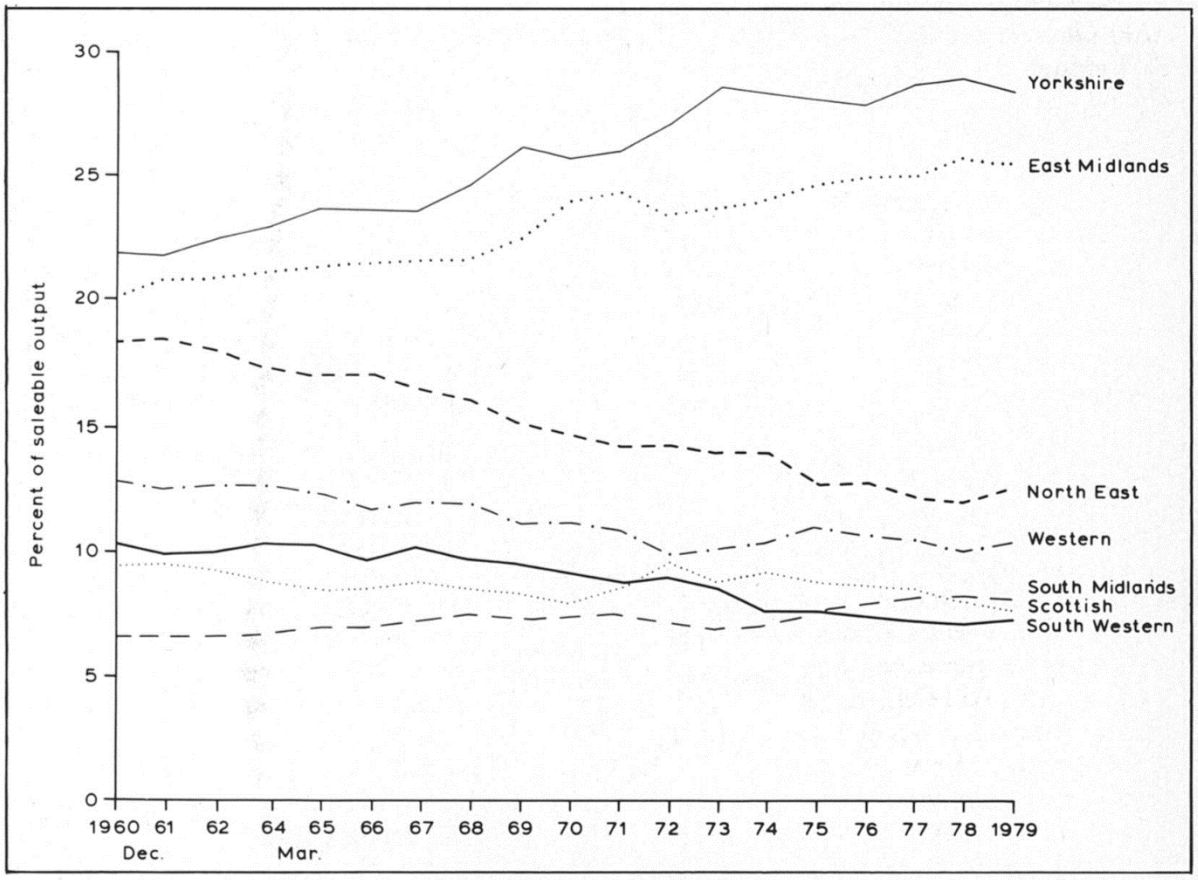

Figure 8 - Regional percentage share of UK coal output 1960-1979

Lastly, and explored further in sections below, the motivations for further development of the coalfield also lay in historically higher levels of productivity and output in the area's industry. Wage levels in Nottinghamshire mining had been relatively higher and more stable than comparable coalfields from the 1890s onwards. By as early as 1934, Nottinghamshire pits were the second most profitable in the UK after Yorkshire. And

[67] Price, B.: *The Yorks., Notts., Derbys. Coalfield* (Nottingham, 1971), p.16

comparatively harmonious industrial relations in the area encouraged confidence in the pre-war owners to invest with some confidence in long term profitability.[68]

[68] Griffin, C.: *'Notts. have some very peculiar history': Understanding the reaction of the Nottinghamshire Miners to the 1984-5 Strike* (HSIR, Spring 2005), p.76

2.4 The motivations of the new, interwar coalfield workforce

> "The degree of flux in coalmining population has been most apparent in the great days of expansion in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with substantial new workers and large-scale population flows into the booming 'frontier' mining villages of Britain."[69]

As the Dukeries new mines were striking ground in the years after the First World War, industrial Britain was entering a period of profound and multilateral crises. Initial post-war export growth in raw materials and engineered goods, and domestic consumer confidence, rapidly contracted. Industrial disputes, most notable in the mining industry in 1921 and 1926, surfaced frustrations that the post-war settlement would not include a systemic improvement in conditions, rights for working class communities, or investment in a mixed economy learning the lessons of wartime co-operation. A confident global market emerging from war turned out to be a 'phantom', prompting an unnerved British government to "jettison…their economic responsibilities helter-skelter."[70]

The period from 1920 to 1939 is often viewed as an anarchic one in economic history – defined by shock events like the British general strike in 1926 and the Crash of global financial markets in 1929. A boom-and-bust mythology continues to permeate the memory of those decades. However, and more depressingly still, the period saw sustained, high levels of unemployment, economic stagnation, and deflation, across much of Britain, the United States and continental Europe. The British unemployment rate, having briefly dipped below 2% in 1918-19, would rise and average at around 10% for the totality of the 1920s and 1930s (with a brief steepling to 16% in 1929-30). Across the same period 19-year period, the UK would see only three years of average price inflation and no overall growth in annual wages.[71]

Within this general pattern of a weak and workless inter-war economy, there lay significant regional and sectoral variations, and these are material to understanding the attraction of migrant labour to the Nottinghamshire coalfields. In Figure 9 - UK regional insured unemployment rates 1924-1936 below, regional inter-war unemployment statistics across industrial Britain show the comparative strength of the more resilient English Midlands. Midland unemployment is broadly in line with that of the North, Scotland, and Wales in the prelude to the General Strike. By the middle of the 1930s, it was half that of the North

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[69] Supple, B.: *History of the British Coal Industry Vol.4 1913-1946* (Oxford, 1987), p.488

[70] Taylor, A.J.P.: *English History 1914-45* (Oxford, 1965), p.145

[71] Hatton, T.J. & Thomas M.: *Labour markets in the interwar period and economic recovery in the UK and USA* (Oxford Review of Economic Policy, 26.2, 2010, pp463-485), pp464-467

and Scotland, and less than a third of the joblessness suffered in Wales. Across all four data collection years presented, Midlands' unemployment is below that of the UK average.

UK regional insured unemployment rates 1924-1936 (coalfields focus)					
UK Nation or Region	**1924**	**1929**	**1932**	**1936**	**% Growth 1924-1939**
Scotland	12.4	12.1	27.7	18.7	+6.3%
North East	10.9	13.7	28.5	16.8	+5.9%
North West	12.9	13.3	25.8	17.1	+4.3%
Wales	8.6	19.3	36.5	29.4	+20.8%
Midlands	**9.0**	**9.3**	**20.1**	**9.2**	**+0.2%**
UK Average	**10.3**	**10.4**	**22.1**	**13.1**	**+2.8%**

Figure 9 - UK regional insured unemployment rates 1924-1936[72]

Within these regional statistics, growing worklessness in the 1920s mining industry was still more profound. In 1921, the insured unemployment rate among workers registered as mining industry employees was 9.7%. By 1929, mining unemployment had grown to 17.5%. As a share of the overall UK insured unemployment pool, mining accounted for 6.7% in 1921 – this had risen to 18.3%.[73]

Supple sets out the scale of the inter-war challenges for mining-dependent families here:

> "In the Midlands employment held up reasonably well; and in Scotland, in spite of its relative dependence on exports, unemployment was significantly below the levels of Wales and the North East…in other areas, however, the effects of unemployment were even more devastating: prolonged unemployment rates of 60 and 70 per cent were not unknown in areas of South Wales and south-west Durham, and in some communities in the latter district, 90 per cent of miners were out of work."[74]

Decades marked by deep-seated and high levels of worklessness across Britain's traditional mining heartlands therefore coincided with the making of the new north Nottinghamshire coalfield. Just as unemployment doubled in industrial Scotland, tripled in

[72] Booth, A.E. & Glynn, S.: *Unemployment in the Interwar Period: a Multiple Problem* (Journal of Contemporary History, 10, pp611-637), p.619

[73] Department of Employment 1921-36 *The Ministry of Labour Gazette* figures cited by Luzardo-Luna, I.: *Labour frictions in interwar Britain: industrial reshuffling and the origin of mass unemployment* (European Review of Economic History, 24.2, pp.243-263)

[74] Supple, B.: *History of the British Coal Industry Vol.4 1913-1946* (Oxford, 1987), p.449

the South Wales valleys, and quadrupled in the Durham pit villages, the Dukeries would witness a "…net gain of approximately 8,600 miners and 25,000 population between 1921 and 1931…concealing a much greater level of immigration."[75] Traditional coalfields built on maritime export markets around Britain and internationally found themselves exposed both to lower productivity and sluggish global demand for energy and raw materials. Those, younger coalfields more aligned to domestic energy demands and local and regional distribution would prove more resilient.

As interwar coal demand slumped in northern and western British coalfields, it proved relatively stable in the East Midlands. Buoyed by the opening of the new Dukeries pits in the mid-1920s and expanding electrification, Nottinghamshire output increased from 12.7m to 13.7m tons by the middle of the 1930s, despite depression and sluggish international economic activity. Perhaps most significantly within this period, as quoted above, the close of the 1930s would see the smaller Nottinghamshire pit industry overtake Derbyshire in output figures, becoming the dominant partner in the East Midlands coalfield area.[76]

Alongside relative stability went the promise of relative affluence. The NMIU (Nottinghamshire Miners Industrial Union) minutes from the Rufford Colliery branch in 1927 note:

> "The advantages of our agreement [with the colliery owners] are that the average wage of the Notts and Derbyshire miners was 3s. per shift more than the rest of the British coalfields."[77]

The area's average earnings per shift (cit. Supple) were 12s in 1927, compared to an industry average of just below 9s per shift. Average Nottinghamshire shift wages would remain relatively static through the following decade (in line with wage stagnation across the country) but would retain their 2-3s per shift advantage over the industry average. Relatively higher pay is masked, however, by statistics including Derbyshire miners in the area figures. By the mid-1920s, Derbyshire shift pay was lower, and this acted as a drag on area-wide averages. As wage calculations came to reflect solely Nottinghamshire mineworkers in the 1930s and 1940s, the wage differential grew.

Employer-union wage negotiations in 1926, 1933 and 1940 (see Figure 10 – Nottinghamshire district wage agreements 1926-1940 secured a 20% increase in shift wages for underground workers, and 12-16% increases for surface and apprentice workers.

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[75] Waller, R.: *The Dukeries Transformed*, p.29

[76] Griffin, A.R.: *Mining in the East Midlands*

[77] Rufford Branch NMIU Minutes, October 1927, cited in Griffin, C.: *Nottinghamshire Miners Between The Wars: The Spencer Union Revisited* (Derby, 1984), p.4

By 1945, the average mineworker wage per shift in Nottinghamshire had reached 28s. In Scotland it was 22s. In Durham, just 20s. The contested politics of Nottinghamshire industrial trade unionism, and the union split after 1926 which led to the formation of George Spencer's NMIU, will be discussed further in Part Five below. The claim made by Spencer himself, in defence of the NMIU's industrial strategy, was that:

> "The average wage for each miner in Great Britain…was £89.14s; while in Nottinghamshire it was £91.2s., despite working 17.2 working days fewer than the average."[78]

Huge ambiguities exist withing the calculation and presentation of these figures. Numbers and length of shifts, points of calculation, deductions would all influence inter-regional comparisons. However, and of most significance, that public statements about pay established in the industry's mind a sense Nottinghamshire as a 'land of plenty' appears undeniable.

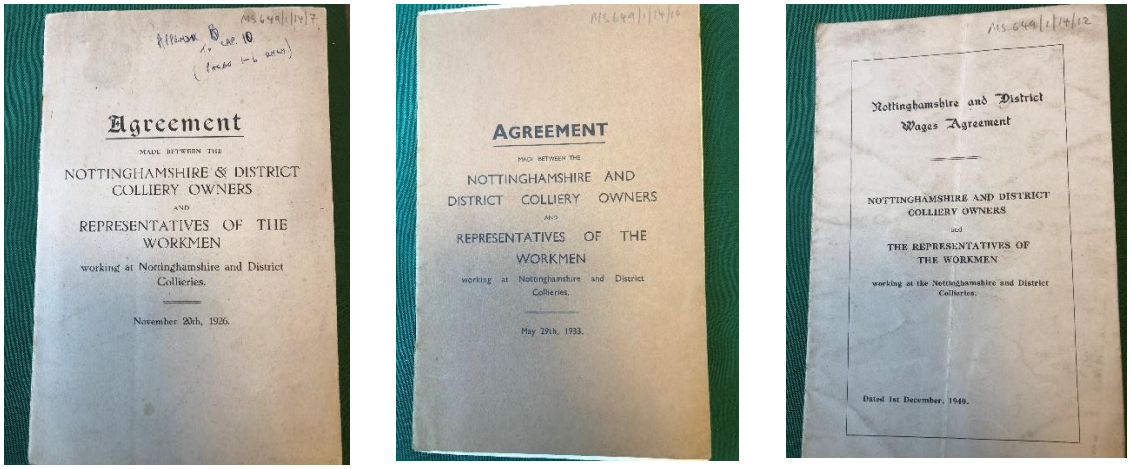

Figure 10 – Nottinghamshire district wage agreements 1926-1940[79]

Beneficial differential wage levels, higher productivity and an increasing share of national output marked the interwar development of the Nottinghamshire coalfield, against a wider backdrop of industrial stagnation and deprivation in many parts of the industry across Britain. The Nottinghamshire area, and particularly the northern county pits, would carry these advantages into the post-war period. It would not be until 1972 that nationwide shift rates would achieve parity with those of Nottinghamshire, as a result of the National Power Loading Agreement.[80]

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[78] *Colliery Guardian*, March 1930

[79] *Nottinghamshire and District Wage Agreements 1926, 1933, 1940* (A.R. Griffin Archive, University of Nottingham Special Collections)

[80] Ashworth, W.: *History of the British Coal Industry Vol.5 1946-1982* (Oxford, 1986), p.305

2.5 Patterns of inward migration to the coalfield

Alan Griffin and Robert Waller provide the principal sources on the interwar development of the new coalfield workforce in Nottinghamshire. Colin Griffin explores in more detail the period from National Vesting in 1947 through to the 1960s and the Plan for Coal. And Jim Phillips reviews patterns of coalfield migration from the 1960s and 1970s from a Scottish perspective. Their work, incorporating archival sources in Scotland and Nottinghamshire, is used here to articulate the nature and scale of the changing coalfield in north Nottinghamshire.

> "…**They was trampin' down here from Durham, Scotland - every village you could mention** in Britain…They were coming and going, coming and going in thousands. **There was fellas on the road for** debt - they'd had the '26 strike, grocery debts, rent, and different debts, and there was fellas on the run from kids and wives. Some of the real best come down and some of the worst...."[81]

This reflection from a Kent miner, interviewed by oral historian Gina Harkell, actualises interwar mining migration as a 'taking to the road'. A densely packed economic thoroughfare, delivering a steady and unidirectional flow of mining labour from the north and west of Britain towards its midlands and south. The imagery is perilous – 'on the run', 'some of the best and some of the worst'. A desperation borne of poverty and conflict, tempered by a spirit of adventure, upping sticks in search of opportunity. The migration is depicted as a solitary activity. Individual miners, either forcibly or voluntary, separating from family systems to pursue work at great distance.

In reality, and as Harkell observes elsewhere in her work, migration processes often acted as a chain rather than a road. Workers would step on and off at different stages. They would cycle back to places of origin, or to previous workplaces that proved more conducive than the next. Although it was often true that mineworkers moved alone first as opportunities appeared, they would seek to bring family too as soon as possible.

> "While miners were famous for building tight communities, *these communities were often mobile* as pits became exhausted and others opened up. Mining was seen as a job for life but not necessarily in the same place. In many cases, the community had itself been constructed in a

[81] Harkell, Gina: *The Migration of Mining Families to the Kent Coalfield between the Wars* (Oral History, 6.1, 1978, pp98-113), p.99

> relatively short period by people from different localities moving into an area…"[82]

Rosemary Power's observation accords with scholarship on the development of new mining communities in North Nottinghamshire. The migratory appeal of the area in the interwar period was specific – the exploitation of specific mining skills in self-defined, mono economic areas of opportunity (although, as shall be explored below, gradually the offer to migrant miners became more holistic into the 1950s). There is little evidence of a defined geographical objective in mind for the workers moving to capitalise on their skills, beyond a general ambition to live and work amongst fellow mineworkers and their families. The chain was often dependent on a few exploratory workers from an area settling at a new pit and sending messages home to encourage others – family, friends, former co-workers – to follow.

Robert Waller[83] argues that the dominant flow of immigrants into the inter-war north Nottinghamshire coalfield originated in other Midland and associated coalfields, where the Dukeries owners managed pits or had agents operating. Derbyshire, Warwickshire, and Staffordshire were the most common sources of labour in the north Nottinghamshire development. However, consistently in Dukeries pit villages Waller researched, around a quarter of workers recruited came from 'further afield', and still more had taken a first step of migrating to the north Midlands on their way to Nottinghamshire. The attraction of working in the expanding coalfield would also draw in labourers from non-mining industrial background and geographies, including significant number of former agricultural workers from all over England.[84]

Archival evidence, presented below, suggests it is difficult before nationalisation to be definitive about workers' points of origin. Whilst individual colliery companies formed loose association across the country to exchange labour and equipment (Barber-Walker had interests and connections in Wigan, for example), the industry was atomised and localised even after the regional planning structures imposed during the First World War. Record keeping is patchy, and after the General Strike more miners proved unwilling to share information about their background beyond that required to be set on by shift managers.

The 1920s 'first wave' of inward migration, therefore, appears to have been piecemeal and haphazard, built upon company and ownership networks, and according to Waller's interviewees regularly triggered by a personal connection in the Dukeries field. There is,

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[82] Power, R.*: 'After the Black Gold': A view of mining heritage from coalfield areas in Britain* (Folklore, 119.2, 2008, pp160-181)

[83] Waller, R: *The Dukeries Transformed*, p.27

[84] Cross, B.: *Bill of Bulwell* (Warwick, 1995), pp.1-3

however, evidence of design and organisation in the recruitment of workers in the interwar period and the 1940s. Community history from the Ollerton Dukeries pit village, referenced more extensively below, discusses recruitment vans and agents representing the Dukeries companies touring Depression-hit Wallsend, Forest Hall and Consett in the North East looking for workers.[85] Mining historian Bob Bradley concurs that recruitment drives, both physically using agents and through newspaper advertising, were commonplace in areas where pits were approaching exhaustion or unemployment was rife.

Workforce and resident turnover, evidenced by both pit and electoral roll data, were high. Alan Griffin, in his 1971 history of *Mining in the East Midlands 1550-1947*, concurs with the chain migration depiction. He argues that the development of the Leicestershire, Derbyshire and west Nottinghamshire coalfield in late Victorian and Edwardian periods had itself drawn workers from other pit communities to sink and work the new mines – Wales and Northumberland, in particular. And this itself was part of an endless, restless pattern of internal migrations between coalfields going back further still.

Yorkshire miners were so prevalent in the West Lothian coalfield of the 1850s that, in 1855, they founded their own cricket club at Fauldhouse (Victoria – one of the oldest in Scotland[86]). In 1866 (see Figure 11) a preponderance of Cornish tin miners working in the Lanarkshire pits proved interesting enough for the Daily Herald to carry out an anthropological report on their motivations and intentions. The paper was particularly interested in "whether they were likely to remain here in contentment or, after only a brief sojourn, to return disappointed" – an enquiry (and accusation) common to migrant and displaced communities through the ages. Scottish coal workers themselves were intrepid from an early stage: Jeremy Paxman notes that may 18th century workers operating the Tyne navigation coal trade were "migrants from Scotland and the border areas."[87]

[85] Hibbert, M. ed: *Ollerton of Yesteryear* (Tonypandy, 2010), p.89

[86] Fauldhouse Victoria CC, available at: https://en-gb.facebook.com/FauldhouseVictoriaCC/ (Accessed: April 2021)

[87] Paxman, J.: *Black Gold: The history of how coal made Britain* (London, 2021), p.33

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THE IMMIGRATION OF CORNISH MINERS.

In a recent number of the *Herald* we gave some particulars regarding the arrival in Scotland of a large number of miners from Cornwall. The interest attaching to this immigration movement, and the discussion which has taken place regarding the manner in which the men have been dealt with in coming to Scotland, have induced us to make further inquiries on the subject, and with this view we have visited some of the mining districts in our Western shire. Our purpose was by a personal visit to endeavour to arrive at some notion of the character of the men and their families, and to learn how far they were adapting themselves to their altered circumstances, so that an idea might be formed as to whether they were likely to remain here in contentment, or, after only a brief sojourn, to return disappointed to the moorlands of Cornwall. But in the course of conversation with the men at their work and in their homes, a number of facts were elicited which, although aside from the main subject of inquiry, are also of considerable general interest. Before entering upon any notice of what we saw during our brief visit to the mining districts it will, perhaps, be as well to collate such information as we were able to obtain regarding the nature of the work to which the men were accustomed at home, and their reason for coming at this time to Scotland.

Figure 11 – Glasgow Daily Herald interview with Cornish miners[88]

And British miners were not constrained by land boundaries in their pursuit of work. According to Ad Knotter, "60 per cent of all foreign born miners" coming to work in the United States in the 1870s were from Britain, and mining union leaders co-operated with agents to also send UK labour across the British Empire. These workers were often "young single men…who worked the miners' circuit…they would return home to Britain for winter work…and, like everywhere else, ethnic networks were important in the migration patterns of British miners."[89]

More locally, Griffin argues that two things affected this ebbing and flowing of migratory patterns when mineworking was developed in north-eastern Nottinghamshire: firstly pay, and secondly the rapid construction of purpose built housing and social services for miners and their families. In combination, these factors served to attract and retain greater numbers of mining families in pit villages and neighbouring towns in the area, guaranteeing regularity of labour and transforming the community. Whilst differential pay has been discussed earlier, housing will be considered further below in sections on economic affluence and community conditions. However, and in summary only here, the investments made by the colliery companies in housing particularly produced a stark contrast in living conditions compared to pit communities in neighbouring counties, and

[88] *Glasgow Daily Herald*, 22 November, 1866 (National Mining Museum of Scotland Archives)

[89] Knotter, A.D.: *Migration and Ethnicity in Coalfield History: Global Perspectives* (IRSH 60, 2015, pp13-39), p.25

this encouraged mineworkers to the area. It both encouraged them in, and then motivated them to stay and consolidate their positions in newly developing communities.

Waller calculates from rural district council electoral rolls in the north Nottinghamshire field (Southwell, Worksop, and Mansfield RDCs) that, between 1921 and 1931, population in the area grew from 38,704 to 60,352, an increase of 36%. Census data suggests that in that time the proportion of employed workers in the area engaged in mineworking increased from 39% to 71%. This 'first wave' of migration drew experienced mineworkers to resettle from Derbyshire and Yorkshire, whilst also capitalising on longer distance movements from Northumberland, Scotland, Wales and particularly from Ireland for sinkers. Griffin also emphasises the importance of sector migration in this first wave too: the appeal of the growing coal industry, higher relative pay and social benefits drew workers from other industries within Nottinghamshire to enter the coalfield. Employees from the rural economy, textiles, and light engineering all entered the industry at this time.

The period from the mid-1930s to the introduction of the more formalised NCB transfer schemes in the early 1950s, the second wave, is less thoroughly understood and categorised, however archival research in Nottinghamshire indicates that Dukeries pits in this period saw large pluralities of their workers originating from 'elsewhere', and from an increasingly cosmopolitan mix of nationalities and regions (see the consideration of Rufford colliery in Section 2.6 below). Evidence from the Industrial Transference Board cited by Owen, which supported structured employment relocation in the Depression years of the 1930s, suggests that inward migration to the Midlands coalfield continued but at a slower pace, although the overwhelming bulk of migrant workers were by then flowing to London and the South East. Again, there is a suggestion that the chain was at work – annual migration to the midlands in the 1930s was relatively high, but the total effect of migration on population across the period only slight. This might suggest that northern workers made their way to the East Midlands initially, and then moved on southwards to other occupations.[90]

During the post-war period from 1956, Scotland and the north eastern coalfields would continue to prove significant sources of labour for the East Midlands pits. Research at the National Mining Museum of Scotland shows that during this time 30,968 workers were both effected by Scottish pit rationalisations and employed elsewhere within the NCB.[91] Across the wider Scottish economy during the 1950s, there was an outflow of labour twice the size of that from any other UK region or nation;[92] and in the period 1931-1951 209,000

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[90] Owen, A.D.K.: *The Social Consequences of Industrial Transference* (The Sociological Review, 29:4, pp331-354), p.353

[91] *Redeployment of Miners in the Scottish Coal Industry 1947 to 1966*, Scottish Area NCB Discussion Paper (Anon, National Mining Museum of Scotland Archives)

[92] Lenman, B.: *An Economic History of Modern Scotland* (London, 1977)

Scottish workers emigrated to England and Wales with the greatest regional concentrations of emigrants originating from the industrial centre of Scotland.[93]

Jim Phillips demonstrates that in the later part of this third wave of migration, from 1962 to 1971, 15,000 miners had transferred under the formal National Coal Board IDTS and LDRS schemes, with the Midlands and Yorkshire as dominant recipients of these migrant workers. The bulk of these workers and their families originated in Scotland, Northumberland, and Durham.[94] During the 1960s, according to Ewan Gibbs, a "battle between the Scottish Division and the NCB's UK headquarters" saw (with a few exceptions) widespread investment in Scottish mines scaled back as worker relocation to England or redundancy were privileged as methods of managed decline.[95] Phillips has described the combined effect of relocation and the failure of 1950s new mine projects in eastern Scotland as "the false promise of economic security."[96]

Figure 12 – A saltire flies amid former miners' houses in the Dukeries pit village of Bilsthorpe (2021)

20th century Scottish industrial emigration occurred in marked phases, and with a growing intensity in the latter part of this thesis's period of interest. Ewan Gibbs explains that "large

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[93] Osborne, R.: *Scottish Migration Statistics: A Note* (The Scottish Geographical Magazine, 72.2, 1956, pp153-159)

[94] Phillips, J.: *The meanings of coal community in Britain since 1947* (Contemporary British History 32:1, pp39-59), p.47

[95] Gibbs, E.: *Coal Country: the meaning and memory of Deindustrialization in Postwar Scotland* (London, 2021), p.37

[96] Phillips, J.: *Scottish Coal Miners in the Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh, 2019), p.163

numbers of Scots emigrated overseas and to a lesser extent southwards [in the interwar period]…after the Second World War, migratory trends continued and objections to southwards migration were given more prominence as it exceptionally outstripped overseas departures during the 1960s."[97] In the 1940s alone, more than 100,000 Scots (predominantly younger, working Scot) moved to England, including more young Scottish women alone than all Scots who had died in the War itself.[98]

Beynon & Hudson argue that the 1960s transfer schemes were most attractive to more experienced miners and their families, who were less inclined to retrain and leave the industry. Their work suggests that many Welsh and north east English miners responded to "the idea of a better life for me and you", and Alf Roben's guarantee of "permanent employment" by moving to Nottinghamshire (in the case of Durham and Scottish miners) and Staffordshire (popular with Welsh transferees).[99]

[97] Gibbs, E.: *Coal Country*, p.241

[98] Roy, K.: *The Invisible Spirit: A Life of Post-War Scotland 1945-75* (Edinburgh,2013), p.70

[99] Beynon, H. & Hudson, R.: *The Shadow of the Mine: Coal and the end of industrial Britain* (London, 2021), p.61

2.6 Harworth and Ollerton compared

Harworth and Ollerton new mines, constructed by separate companies and at distance from each other, would both find themselves exposed to different sociopolitical (and later economic) strains at different stages and periods. Their foundations upon migratory workforces would be influential in their responses and behaviour in times of challenge.

The two tables (Figure 13 and Figure 14 below) present actual pithead data on points of origin for workers in two of the principle Dukeries mines. They are used here as well evidenced archival exemplars of north Nottinghamshire pits in the interwar period. These fragmentary stories of coalfield migration begin to indicate the long-term effects that migration patterns have on the pit community.

Ollerton is often considered the epitome of the new Dukeries pits. Sunk on the outskirts of a village featured in the Domesday Book on the north-eastern edges of Sherwood Forest, the mine was completed and opened during the 1926 General Strike. Despite a typically disciplinarian foundation as a new pit with a closely controlled model village at New Ollerton (see Part Four below), Ollerton would later develop a reputation as a left-wing pit in the post-war period and among the most contested in the picketing of 1985-5[100], and one with a significant international workforce.

Harworth Colliery, the northernmost in Nottinghamshire and later a constituent pit in the South Yorkshire NCB Area, was the earliest of the Dukeries pits to commence sinking. Surrounded by pre-existing colliery communities in the boroughs of Rotherham and Doncaster, Harworth was the site of one of the bitterest pre-war coal strikes in 1936-7, providing the crescendo of a complex period of trade union factionalism in Nottinghamshire that will be discussed in Part Five.

Both pit companies – Barber-Walker and Butterley respectively – made investments in bespoke pit housing to support their workers. The former built Bircotes as a model village to supplement Harworth, whilst the latter extended the existing village of Ollerton with the support of the dominant landlord, building ‘New Ollerton’ at the colliery gates. These developments were glowingly reported to workers across Britain by the *Colliery Guardian* and *The Sphere*[101] in the 1920s and 1930s.

On Ollerton, in 1927:

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[100] Griffin, A.R.: *County Under Siege: Nottinghamshire in the Miners’ Strike 1984-5* (Ashbourne, 1985), p.12

[101] cit. Griffin, C.: *Nottinghamshire Miners Between the Wars: The Spencer Union Revisited* (Derby, 1984), p.6

> "Ollerton…cost a million pounds to sink and another £320,000 to build the village of 820 houses, which represents the best possible illustration of communal life among the miners in this country. All red brick, solidly built…and in half of them there is constant hot water laid from the colliery. All have electricity, and every householder gets a free ton of coal a month…It would be impossible to have a village planned more scientifically, kept more cleanly, or better built."

And on Bircotes (Harworth):

> "A small town of about eleven hundred houses, with wide paved roads (some treelined), modern draining, electric lighting, and hot and cold water and a bath in every house. A large, substantially built and attracted Institute was incorporated in the plan, together with ample provision for every modern sport."

The tables below reflect both the limitations of pre-1950s coalfield employment data, and yet offer some useful patterns to illuminate the first and second wave migration stories into the north Nottinghamshire coalfield.

Ollerton Colliery (Butterley Company) Register of Insurable Workers 1926-1957		
Likely place of origin	**Number**	**%**
England	1359	86.1
Scotland	90	5.8
Wales	17	0.9
Ireland	12	0.7
Eastern Europe	88	5.7
Western Europe	8	0.5
Rest of World	5	0.3
Total	**1579**	**100**

Figure 13 - Ollerton Colliery (Butterley Company) Register of Insurable Workers 1926-1957[102]

[102] *Ollerton Colliery (Butterley Company) Register of Insurable Workers 1926-1957* (Nottinghamshire County Archives)

Harworth Colliery (Barber-Walker Company) Signing-in Books 1925-31		
Likely place of origin	**Number**	**%**
England:		
Yorkshire	2,359	48.3
Nottinghamshire	949	19.4
Midlands	605	12.4
Kent	28	0.6
North East	412	8.4
North West	371	7.6
Scotland	16	0.3
Wales	31	0.6
Others & Unidentified	113	2.3
Total	**4884**	**100**

Figure 14 - Harworth Colliery (Barber-Walker Company) Signing-in Books 1925-31[103]

Both sets of data are dependent on manual registration of insurable workers in physical ledgers, maintained by different colliery company bookkeepers over lengthy periods. The requirement for the insurers roll was to record full name, date of signing on the pit and date or dates of leaving if appropriate, and place of residence at the time of signing on. In the case of the 'first wave' Harworth data in Figure 14, cited by Robert Waller, about three quarters of the workforce in the period signed on from addresses either in Nottinghamshire or neighbouring areas (Yorkshire and 'Midlands'). 16% of the workforce was sourced from Lancashire, Cumberland, Durham, and Northumberland; and about 1% directly from Wales and Scotland. The 113 'others' are unidentifiable, possibly due to data entry omission or error.

Waller stresses that these statistics are purely indicative. There is no reason to believe that all of the workers from neighbouring areas originated from these locations – they may have been making their way along the chains of migration. He argues that younger workers were often happy to move between different pits and areas regularly; a significant minority of the workers roll worked at Harworth for a number of different periods across their careers. Waller also notes that "long-distance migrants were older, more likely to be married, and more likely to live in Bircotes than to commute by bus or cycle from other villages." A fifth of all the workers on the Harworth role had worked, according to Waller, at another Dukeries pit during the 1920s sinkings, supporting the idea that the first wave of migration drew workers into the county and then the relative stability of the coalfield encouraged them to stay, working different locations but in the same industry.

[103] *Harworth Colliery (Barber-Walker Company) Signing-in Books 1925-31*, cit. Waller, R., p.35

Turning to the Ollerton table, this demonstrates similar patterns across a smaller dataset but across a longer 'waves one and two' period. At Ollerton, bookkeepers often registered English origin workers at their places of residence in the immediate area, rather than from where their journeys to the pit started (this can be concluded from erasing and rewriting of the handwritten records), which masks migration pathways from within England. Workers from further afield (particularly Scotland, Wales and Northumberland) will have their home towns listed, and then a local address overwritten to reflect where they settle upon taking up work. In 1944, a Bevin scheme hostel was established at Forest Town in Mansfield to house transferring workers[104]. The hostel remained open through to 1959, becoming a common address for sole, young, small group and international origin workers coming to the Ollerton and neighbouring collieries.

First wave migration (in the 1920s and 1930s) into Ollerton predominantly originates from other parts of England, Scotland, and Wales. The long-distance patterns identified by Waller also prove accurate at Ollerton: more than half of the Scottish and Welsh immigrant miners eventually settle at secondary address in New Ollerton, the company's own pithead housing. Migrants from Britain and Ireland were more likely to live in multi-worker households – where (by reviewing dates of birth) multiple generations of one family lived and worked together.

Second wave migration, during the Second World War and on into the early 1950s, witnessed a greater number of Eastern European originated workers being recorded. Polish, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, and Czech workers become more common. Many of those migrants began their careers registered at the new Forest Town Hostel and other temporary accommodation addresses in the towns of Mansfield and Worksop: they were less likely than their British colleagues to immediately settle in the small villages surrounding the pit. Post-war migrants were commonly the only miner resident at their registering address (or to be living in the Hostel), and to have multiple addresses over-written as they moved during their careers.

Ukrainian and Polish mineworkers were respected for technical proficiency and reliability, recalls David Amos in interview, and built a sustained presence across the postwar north Nottinghamshire coalfield community. Bob Bradley adds that a significant Hungarian worker community was present in the Mansfield pit district following the Hungarian revolution in 1956, but this met with significant resistance from the outset and most Hungarian workers progressed to other industries and localities.

Norma Gregory's work on capturing the stories of black miners in the East Midlands confirms both the scale of Caribbean worker involvement in the Nottinghamshire industry, and the role of chain migration in those workers' lived experience. Many interviewed for

[104] Information and images available at: https://www.ourmansfieldandarea.org.uk/content/topics/public-services/forest-town-miners-hostel-1944-1959 (Accessed: May 2021)

the ‘Digging Deep’ project of oral testimonies report moving between industries upon arrival in the UK (often textiles and transportation are the first jobs) in the 1950s and 1960s, then graduating into mining. Caribbean miners in Nottinghamshire tended to gravitate to living and working around Nottingham itself (Gedling Colliery, on the north-eastern borders of the city, was known as the ‘Pit of Nations’ so diverse was the makeup of its workforce), but many experienced and valued Dukeries pit life during their careers.[105]

Ollerton, despite modest numbers of workers being involved, would rapidly develop an identity as an ‘international’ pit similar and a hub for eastern European migrant workers. Polish origin residents would play a significant role in the community and political futures of the area, and in arts and culture. At Harworth, sharp divides between Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire origin miners would have immediate trade union and industrial relations ramifications, almost as soon as the colliery began producing. These factors, and the narrative of both communities, will be explored and developed in the following sections.

[105] *Digging Deep: coal miners of African Caribbean heritage – national narratives from across the UK.* Available at: https://www.blackcoalminers.com/ (Accessed: January 2022)

3 Economic security and wages

This section explores the economic expectations and experiences of mineworkers and their families in the new 20th century coalfield, and the role that prosperity and relative economic security played in the development of community life.

3.1 'Everything was provided. That was the deal.'

Worker migration in the 20th century coalfield was a question of necessity. Mineworkers in 19th century-developed fields understood that their current pits might not operate indefinitely. The Nottinghamshire mining historian David Amos explains that there was "an expectation that the coalfield would keep moving south eastwards", and that mineworkers knew they might need to follow that drift. "The mining community was close knit"[106], but necessarily a mobile community built around occupation as much, or more than, place. This actualisation of mining migration draws on a similar glossary, but from a differing perspective, to Blauner's occupationally defined community theory developed by Martin Bulmer.[107]

Miners made rational decisions, based on need and opportunity. This is evident before the Second World War, in the less structured days of company ownership, and after Vesting Day, as mining families weighed the merits of redeployment through structured NCB relocation schemes against leaving the industry.

Primary oral research conducted with former miners in the Dukeries coalfield – all of them products of multi-generational mining families that migrated into the area – support the rationality of the bargain, or 'deal', made by those entering the workforce there:

> "When they first came [to the Dukeries new pits] the miners got a new house, hot water, electric light, a big garden. They paid nominal rent, 10s a week and 6d for their power, against a £2-3 a week wage."[108]

> "You used to get your house, rent stopped out your wages, cheap. Everything was provided. ***That was the deal***."[109]

And, on arrival at their newly constructed (or part-constructed) pit community, workers might hope to find:

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[106] *David Amos*, Oral Interview, 31st August 2021
[107] Bulmer, M.: *Sociological Models of the Mining Community* (Durham: 1974), p.80

[108] *Dr Robert Bradley*, Oral Interview, 3rd September 2021

[109] *Brian Jackson*, Oral Interview, 18th August 2021

> "…a model village which will eventually comprise 1400 houses, places of worship, shopping centre, schools, cinema, entertainment hall and institute. A Post office, shops, and a large hotel have already been built. A 15-acre sports ground has been laid which includes cricket ground, practice pitch, football, hockey, tennis and bowling green. A division of St John's Ambulance Association, a Nursing Division, and Sports Clubs have been formed…"[110]

At Thoresby Colliery, a miner whose family had moved into the coalfield in the early 1940s (firstly to Ollerton) from Glencraig in Fife, noted that:

> "'Conditions were a lot better': there were no rats, better lighting and less noise…father's weekly wage tripled from between £7-8 to between £21-30."[111]

Gilbert Doddy, a Scottish postwar transferee to the Nottinghamshire coalfield, recalled that "Coal Board paid fir oor flittin as well. Didnae cost us a penny tae move doon there. Ah wis livin in lovely house paying less rent than what ma neighbours were paying."[112]

The rational 'deal', then, was primarily economic and environmental in composition. Whilst many miners would develop a deep bond with the north Nottinghamshire districts in which they came to live (this will be developed further in Part Four), the district's aesthetic merits were not a significant motivator of immigrant workers.

To draw a stable supply of labour into the area after sinking, and then to consolidate that workforce as the post-war National Coal Board envisaged growth in the Nottinghamshire field, the primary appeals were made to the pocketbook, and home and hearth. Colliery companies that had cut their teeth on the design of 'model villages' for earlier pits in Derbyshire and South Yorkshire now invested more heavily in similar schemes for their Dukeries provings. The NCB extended that investment, sinking millions of pounds into technology behind the pit gates and community infrastructure beyond them.

Comparatively high levels of pay would serve as the primary attraction of new coalfield labour. Housing of a higher standard, in amenity and design and footprint, to that from which most of the incoming mining families had travelled would ally with pay to motivate recruitment and resettlement. Company and district savings schemes, a localised pension structure, and a bonus regime that survived long into the nationalised coalfield era would

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[110] The Stanton Ironworks Company, *Bilsthorpe Recruitment Leaflet*, April 1939

[111] Ackers, P. & Payne, J.: *Before the Storm: The Experience of Nationalization and the Prospects for Industrial Relations Partnership in the British Coal Industry, 1947-1972: Rethinking the Militant Narrative* (Social History, 27.2, pp184-209), p.194

[112] Gibbs, E.: *Coal Country*, p.244

further enhance this package. And, lastly, the expectation that the quality and volume of the coal being secured in the field would ensure a (relative) stability in available work would underpin the wider Dukeries proposition.

The following parts of this thesis attempt to catalogue the core components of this deal, presenting them where possible in comparative context. Below in Part Three the different elements of the economic proposition for mining families are discussed, attempting to demonstrate the relative affluence of the coalfield. In Part Four housing, the social and culture offer, faith, and community cohesion is discussed in more depth, with particular reference to oral sources and lived experience. These parts inform the political and industrial relations questions addressed in Part Five and, taken collectively, develop the arguments set out above relative to the 'peculiarity' or otherwise of the north Nottinghamshire miners and their experience of the mid twentieth century relative to their colleagues around the country.

3.2 Pay, pensions and benefits

The great industrial disputes in the coalfield of the 1920s, both 1921 and 1926, were in essence questions of immediacy in the relationship between pay and demand deflation. As discussed earlier in this thesis, an initial and short-lived recovery in industrial and export demand for coal decelerated in the years after the First World War. Worker expectation was that the wartime negotiation of wage settlements on a national basis would continue, and that wages or levels of employment bear the full brunt of the challenges facing the industry.

In 1921, strike action was inflamed with a reduction in collier wages imposed across the UK by a series of district settlements, ushering in a period of sub-regional ownership co-ordination and collaboration that would survive into the 1940s. Across the entire industry, worker pay per shift was to fall by 22%. The hardest hit coalfields were, inevitably, those most exposed to the export coal crisis – north eastern miners were to take a 50% cut in wages. Meanwhile, in Derbyshire, Yorkshire, and Nottinghamshire the cut was nominal (1.02%). The eventual settlement nationalised a wage cut, but held a nominal cut only in Nottinghamshire otherwise *'the miner would be taking less wages than the mineowner is willing to give him.*[113]

The industrial relations ramifications of the 1926 General Strike will be discussed at more length below, but in wage terms the resolution to the dispute was preferentially beneficial to the Nottinghamshire miners. By 1926, Nottinghamshire face workers were the best paid in the country, and workers at the north Nottinghamshire new pits were themselves the highest paid within the county. Their wages after the Strike were cut from a county wide average of 12s 1d per shift to 10s 6d (surface workers fell from 8s 5d to 7s 6d). In Scotland, face worker pay fell from 9s 4d to 7s 6d. Northumberland suffered worst, with faceworkers dropping from 7s 10d per shift to only 4s 9d. By the end of 1926, Nottinghamshire miners were earning 17% more on every shift than Scottish counterparts, and 43% more than the north easterners.[114] The differential wage attractions of the emerging Dukeries pits seem obvious and rational on this basis.

The district wage agreements negotiated from 1926 to 1940 and noted in Figure 10 – Nottinghamshire district wage agreements 1926-1940 above masked the next development in the relative pay differential amongst mining areas: a growing gap between Nottinghamshire and neighbouring Derbyshire. This gap was likely to have been a

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[113] Searle-Barnes, R.G.: *Pay and Productivity Bargaining – a study of the effect of national wage agreements in the Nottinghamshire Coalfield* (Manchester, 1969), p.20

[114] Bradley, R.: *A Comprehensive History of Mining in the Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire Coalfields*, available at: www.healeyhero.co.uk (Accessed: August 2021)

contributing factor to the apparent short-distance worker migrations from Derbyshire into Nottinghamshire discussed in Part Two. Throughout the 1910s and 1920s, pay in the two counties' closely interrelated coalfields had tracked at very similar levels, reflecting common company ownership systems, union negotiating areas, and workforce expectation. The district wage agreements negotiated by the two area unions (the NMIU and the NMA) with the owners from 1926 to 1940 ensured a broadly common floor ('basis rates') to wage awards between the two fields but did not establish a ceiling: that continued to be a matter for resolution at the pit, company, and union branch level.

The all-worker comparative shift rates presented in Figure 15 captures this trend. This table was compiled for this thesis and sourced from the records of B.A. Collieries, a merged colliery company with pits operating across the two counties. Both areas see a dropping back of shift rates in the teeth of the Depression, after the resetting of wage levels after the General Strike detailed above. Broad parity is maintained until the mid-1930s, when Nottinghamshire workers open up and maintain a 2s and above per shift wage advantage over their eastern peers. Overall, across the period, all-worker wage rates rise by 129% from the 1928 base in Derbyshire, and 139% in Nottinghamshire.

Average BA Collieries' gross wages per shift (all mineworkers) in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, 1928-1945

Year	Derbyshire		Nottinghamshire	
	S.	D.	S.	D.
1928	10	2.10	10	7.03
1929	10	1.07	10	6.49
1930	10	1.66	10	6.87
1931	10	1.45	10	7.35
1932	10	2.12	10	7.49
1933	10	3.07	10	6.59
1934	10	3.51	10	7.09
1935	10	3.85	10	7.48
1936	11	0.83	11	8.44
1937	11	10.41	13	6.32
1938	11	9.96	14	0.29
1939	11	11.65	14	7.75
1940	13	6.83	16	2.14
1941	15	5.57	18	4.10
1942	18	1.60	21	1.04
1943	20	2.06	22	10.23
1944	22	6.34	24	7.03
1945	23	4.03	25	3.46

Figure 15 – Comparative gross wages per shift for Notts & Derbys 1928-1945[115]

[115] *Extract from BA Collieries Ltd Assorted Files* (Nottinghamshire County Archives)

This advantage was also evident in comparison to Yorkshire mineworkers. Over 1936/7, Nottinghamshire worker pay was increasing at 168% of the base rate of the district agreement, whilst in Yorkshire the increase rate was 134%. This was based on profits per ton of coal being twice that in the winter of 1936 in Nottinghamshire (3s 3d per ton) compared to the Yorkshire area (1s 11d).[116] Wage recovery across the industry was accelerated by the onset of national rearmament in the mid-1930s, providing a boost to industrial output.[117]

More successful, if contested, steps towards a national pay structure for the industry were undertaken in 1944. From 20th April, the same day that RAF Bomber Command would drop its daily record of 55,000 bombs to coincide with Adolf Hitler's 55th birthday, a basic rate of pay was established for each job type in the industry. District variable additions to this base were permitted under the scheme and agreed by are board on a three-monthly basis. No overtime was permitted, but the real value of the base rate was underwritten for the following five years.[118]

The 1940s and 1950s would see a reversal of concern in wage settlement priorities: the ceiling would become the floor. Where previously the negotiation of wage settlements at district level had privileged Nottinghamshire miners due to the high productivity and profitability of their younger pits, now the post-vesting Coal Board and Union would focus on consolidating wage levels nationwide.

The Daywage Structure Agreement of 1955[119] further extended the structure of national minimum rates, and a structure of ceiling limits beyond which pay increases would be frozen. All new entrants to the industry were to be matched to these scales. Although localised variation to the Agreement would ensure that some day wage earners in Nottinghamshire maintained a per shift advantage of 2-3s, for the majority of workers' pay would approach parity with national norms by the end of the 1950s.[120]

In addition to day and shift rates, the Nottinghamshire coalfield had a heritage of piece working and incentivization common to the wider Midland industry. The Butty system was

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[116] House of Commons: *Nottingham (Miners Wages)* (HC Vol 320, 16th February 1937). Available at: https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1937-02-16/debates/f68201ee-91e6-4df6-98d0-fafbaab737be/Nottingham(MinersWages) (Accessed: September 2021)

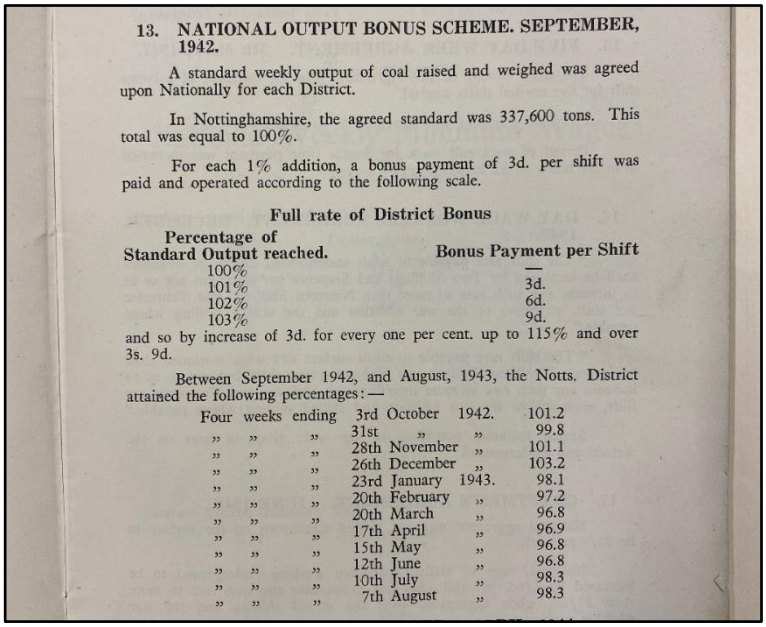
[117] Griffin, C.: *Nottinghamshire Miners Between the Wars: The Spencer Union Revisited,* p.5

[118] Bradley, R.: *A Comprehensive History of Mining*

[119] Searle-Barnes, R.G.: *Pay and Productivity Bargaining, p.25*

[120] Searle-Barnes, R.G.: *Pay and Productivity Bargaining*

a common feature of pit organisation in the 19th and 20th century, and although it was fading from Nottinghamshire during the sinking years of the Dukeries field it bequeathed a payment structure related to tonnage, employee sub-contracting and gang bonuses rather than conventional timed wage employment.[121] Whilst overtime had not been a feature of pre-War Nottinghamshire wage settlements, production incentives were embedded and these continued towards and into the nationalization period. In Figure 16 below, the nationally agreed bonus structure was set against a productivity target set at district level – the figure also demonstrates the immediate benefits in Nottinghamshire of this during the period 1942-43. District output incentivization would continue to benefit Nottinghamshire mineworkers, and particularly those in the most productive pits in the north and east of the county, well into the 1950s.



13. NATIONAL OUTPUT BONUS SCHEME. SEPTEMBER, 1942.

A standard weekly output of coal raised and weighed was agreed upon Nationally for each District.

In Nottinghamshire, the agreed standard was 337,600 tons. This total was equal to 100%.

For each 1% addition, a bonus payment of 3d. per shift was paid and operated according to the following scale.

Full rate of District Bonus

Percentage of Standard Output reached.	Bonus Payment per Shift
100%	—
101%	3d.
102%	6d.
103%	9d.

and so by increase of 3d. for every one per cent. up to 115% and over 3s. 9d.

Between September 1942, and August, 1943, the Notts. District attained the following percentages:—

Four	weeks	ending	3rd October 1942.	101.2
,,	,,	,,	31st ,, ,,	99.8
,,	,,	,,	28th November ,,	101.1
,,	,,	,,	26th December ,,	103.2
,,	,,	,,	23rd January 1943.	98.1
,,	,,	,,	20th February ,,	97.2
,,	,,	,,	20th March ,,	96.8
,,	,,	,,	17th April ,,	96.9
,,	,,	,,	15th May ,,	96.8
,,	,,	,,	12th June ,,	96.8
,,	,,	,,	10th July ,,	98.3
,,	,,	,,	7th August ,,	98.3

Figure 16 – The 1942 National Output Bonus Scheme, and immediate results in Nottinghamshire[122]

It is helpful to pause, and to take stock of what the implications for these developments were at the human level. By 1955, according to Bob Bradley, a face worker at Bilsthorpe Colliery was being paid 68s a shift and was eligible for a five-day week bonus of 16s 8d. The 1953 area power loading agreement also meant that high levels of output common in the north Nottinghamshire field could see him earn a productivity bonus of up to 10% of basis rate wages. In 1955, Nottinghamshire pit output was roughly one and a half times that of the UK average. And, as the north Nottinghamshire pits were younger and more technically advanced, a larger proportion of the workforce were on piece rate and

[121] Waller, R.: *The Dukeries Transformed*, p.125-6

[122] *Wages in the Notts Coalfield 1916-1949* (Anon, Derbyshire Public Records Office)

powerloading affected their terms less severely than in other areas, where day rates were more significant.

When the Bilsthorpe miner's father had started work in the late 1920s, if he worked at the face his shift pay would have been 10s 9d. Although highly approximate, generational inflation in surface worker pay at the pit was c.700%. Inflation across the same period, determined using the Bank of England's inflation calculator, was only 139%.

The period from 1957 to 1966 was dominated by stalled attempts to reconcile wage disparities between day wage and piece workers (the day workers having had a nationalised wage system put in place from 1955), between traditional coalcutting and power loading team members. This complex period of employer-union negotiation and dispute culminated in the 1966 National Power Loading Agreement, through which wage rates for pieceworkers were set at a uniform national rate by in stages increasing pay in poorer and less productive coal areas up to the levels in the higher paid – Nottinghamshire, Kent, and Leicestershire[123]. Although Nottinghamshire miners, through higher productivity related pay and starting the period at a higher base rate, continued to enjoy higher wage packets overall into the 1970s, the 1966 Agreement effectively suppressed future opportunities for growth – the NPLA "contained food for discontent, despite its important advantages. It might have been regarded as a warning that when the NUM put the agreement to the vote it was ratified by only the narrow margin of 269,000 to 226,000, and that all the higher paid districts had a majority against it."[124]

The structuring of non-remuneration benefits in the 1920s and 1930s was predictably piecemeal, inconsistent, and dependent on individual ownership approaches. Different pits, as noted in the introduction to this section, offered differing services to their workforce as financial benefits, or as services for which payment was stopped from wages (for example welfare fees, locally produced energy, rent).

The first area pension scheme in Nottinghamshire was agreed between the district employers and the NMIU leader George Spencer in 1939.[125] It was one of very few such schemes made available across the pre-nationalised industry.[126] The Nottinghamshire & District Miners' Pension Scheme committed the employers (firstly the area companies, then the National Coal Board and finally British Coal) to fund a non-contributory benefit to all day wage workers in the area. The scheme would prove durable, reaching a fund size of

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[123] Searle-Barnes, R.G.: *Pay and Productivity Bargaining*, p.66

[124] Ashworth, W.: *History of the British Coal Industry Vol.5,* p.295

[125] Amos, D.: *A History of the Nottinghamshire Miners' Trade Unions, Vol. 4 1980-1985* (Mansfield, 2013), p. 93

[126] Ashworth, W.: *History of the British Coal Industry Vol.5,* p.536

£148million by the 21st century and paying out c.£100 per month in benefits to mineworkers with 15 years' service in the county's pits on retirement age.[127] Mining historian David Amos notes that, although the district pension scheme provided relatively modest returns for members, "it was only £100 maybe, but it counted."[128]

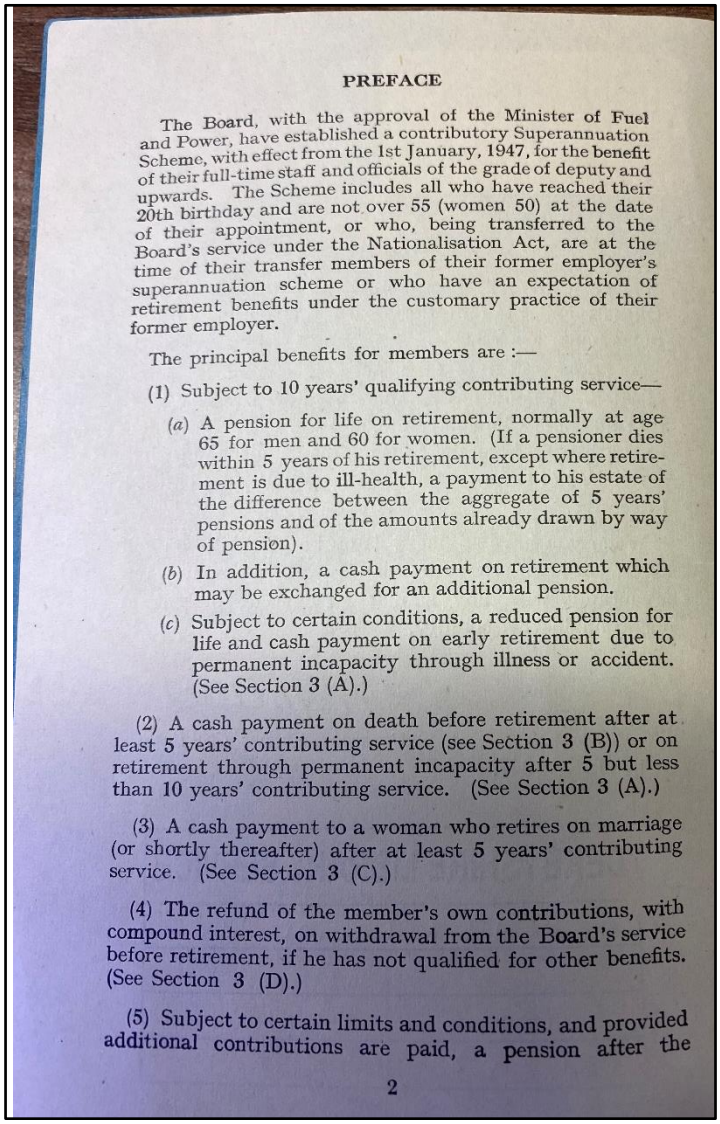
Nottinghamshire workers were then also automatically enrolled in the national Mineworkers' Pension Scheme, negotiated in 1951 and taking effect in 1952. Full-time and senior managerial staff within the National Coal Board were engaged in a superannuation plan from 1947 (see Figure 17 below), but the complications of synthesising a workforce-wide scheme took years of further work. The resulting MPS scheme, whilst initially voluntary and demanding low levels of employee (1s 6d) and employer (2s) contribution, became compulsory by agreement in 1959. By 1971 the scheme had 228,000 pensioners in receipt of benefits and was worth £124.9m. From 1975, it was moved to a final salary scheme with enhanced benefits, lump sums, and widows' allowances.[129] At the time of writing the MPS accounts show the scheme with assets of £11.2bn[130], and ongoing controversy surrounding benefit sharing between its members and the UK Government as guarantor.

[127] Nottinghamshire & District Miner's Pension Scheme, available at: https://www.nmps39.org.uk/BenefitsonRetirement (Accessed: August 2021)

[128] *David Amos,* Oral Interview, 31st August 2021

[129] Ashworth, W.: *History of the British Coal Industry Vol.5,* p.536-7

[130] MPS: *Accounts 2020.* Available at: https://www.mps-pension.org.uk/scheme-publications-and-factsheets (Accessed: September 2021)



PREFACE

The Board, with the approval of the Minister of Fuel and Power, have established a contributory Superannuation Scheme, with effect from the 1st January, 1947, for the benefit of their full-time staff and officials of the grade of deputy and upwards. The Scheme includes all who have reached their 20th birthday and are not over 55 (women 50) at the date of their appointment, or who, being transferred to the Board's service under the Nationalisation Act, are at the time of their transfer members of their former employer's superannuation scheme or who have an expectation of retirement benefits under the customary practice of their former employer.

The principal benefits for members are :—

(1) Subject to 10 years' qualifying contributing service—

(*a*) A pension for life on retirement, normally at age 65 for men and 60 for women. (If a pensioner dies within 5 years of his retirement, except where retirement is due to ill-health, a payment to his estate of the difference between the aggregate of 5 years' pensions and of the amounts already drawn by way of pension).

(*b*) In addition, a cash payment on retirement which may be exchanged for an additional pension.

(*c*) Subject to certain conditions, a reduced pension for life and cash payment on early retirement due to permanent incapacity through illness or accident. (See Section 3 (A).)

(2) A cash payment on death before retirement after at least 5 years' contributing service (see Section 3 (B)) or on retirement through permanent incapacity after 5 but less than 10 years' contributing service. (See Section 3 (A).)

(3) A cash payment to a woman who retires on marriage (or shortly thereafter) after at least 5 years' contributing service. (See Section 3 (C).)

(4) The refund of the member's own contributions, with compound interest, on withdrawal from the Board's service before retirement, if he has not qualified for other benefits. (See Section 3 (D).)

(5) Subject to certain limits and conditions, and provided additional contributions are paid, a pension after the

2

Figure 17 – Extract from the 1947 National Coal Board Superannuation Scheme document[131]

Ancillary benefits, from welfare provisions to family services, will be explored further in Part Four below. It is evident that the conditions of the Nottinghamshire coalfield, felt most intensely in its new and high-producing northern contributories, created unusually beneficial economic circumstances for workers – particularly those engaged in coal-getting, and in receipt of output-related payment. Whilst, in pay terms, the whole industry suffered in the half decade following the General Strike, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire miners suffered the least. As wages began to reflate in the mid-1930s, it was Nottinghamshire mineworker pay that most dramatically rose, and continued to do so through the war period and into the early 1950s. By this point, those workers were also registered in two modest yet consequential pension schemes for the first time in their

[131] National Coal Board, *1947 Outline of Superannuation Scheme* (Derbyshire Public Record Office)

industrial experience – one wholly employer funded, the other underwritten by the state and on a pathway to a final salary outcome.

Progressive pay harmonization in the 1950s and 1960s would erode the advantage in terms and affluence enjoyed by east Midland miners over those in the older fields, but this was necessarily a gradual and non-linear process. Nottinghamshire workers continued to see area dispensations being awarded in the post-war period, and significant incentives for powerloading which was more advanced in the Dukeries pits than elsewhere. As Lenman observed:

> "By 1945 national agreements regulated terms and conditions of employment in virtually all well-organised industries and services. The degree of national regulation could be less than absolute. In coalmining, only minimum wages were settled."[132]

[132] Lenman, B: An Economic History of Modern Scotland (London, 1977), p.237

3.3 Productivity, security, and prospects from 1972

If wage advantage slowed into the 1960s, with the national Day Wage and power loading agreements affixing a ceiling for wage increases claustrophobically close to the heads of Nottinghamshire miners, the continuing advantage of their position was forward prospect. In an industrial community conditioned to expect precarity and change, working in the Nottinghamshire coalfield seemed a relatively solid and stable proposition after Vesting Day.

Many observers of the Nottinghamshire coalfield ascribe the sustainably high output of the new pits to the area's geology: relatively thick seams of coal, at gettable depths and with little interruption from competing topographical or industrial factors. Waller, in particular, advances this view. However, as David Greasley argues, geology alone is unlikely to account for disparities in productivity. A more heterogenous explanation brigades together workforce and management productivity, technological gains and the proximity of good logistics, and the accessibility of high-quality coal to produce a productivity measure.

On this basis of multi-factor productivity, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire move ahead of other areas in a definitive way by 1924 (see Figure 18).

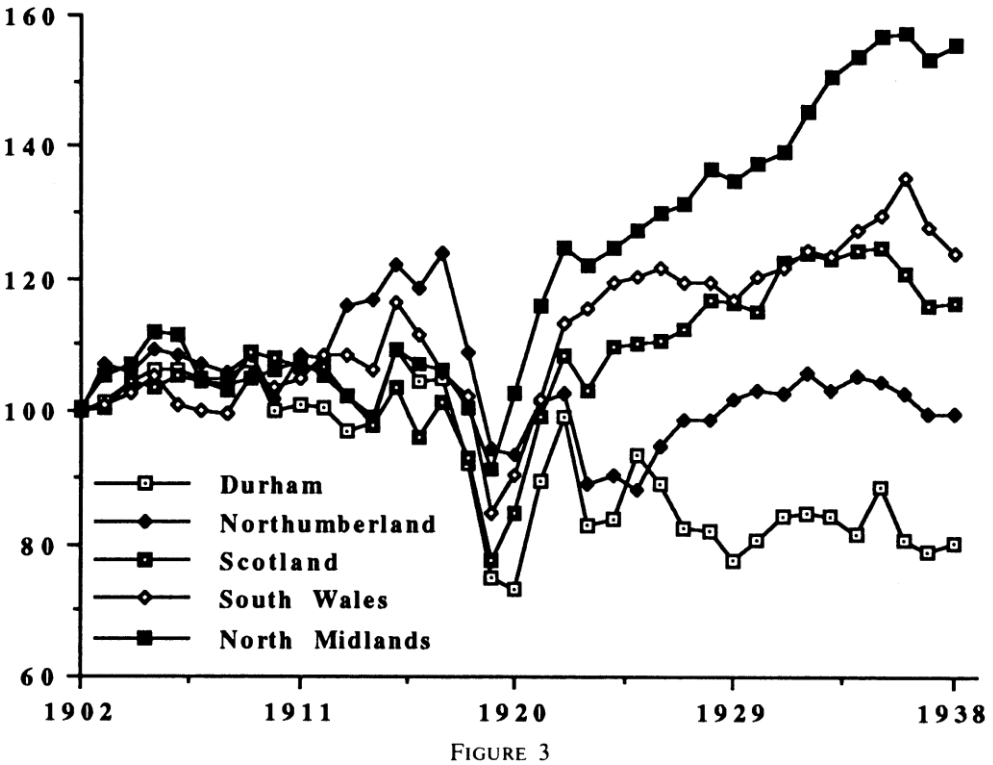


FIGURE 3

INDEX OF COALFACE MULTIFACTOR PRODUCTIVITY
(1902 = 100)

Figure 18 – Index of Coalface multifactor productivity 1902-1938[133]

Griffin, whilst labelling the 1920s and 1930s as a time when the 'Nottinghamshire Coalfield Stagnates'[134], reflects this productivity gains argument in his own analysis. Annual output from the Nottinghamshire mines, despite a national period of production slump, actually increases from 12.3m to 13.6m tons. Operating profit per ton, similarly, advances from a (temporary) loss of 5.9d per ton in 1928 to a profit of 10.8d per ton by 1933. Mechanization alone could not account for this – whilst the amount of coal recovered from the face by power loaded means had increased markedly in 1930s Nottinghamshire, it lagged behind several coalfield regions in technological development going into the War. Despite this and set again against Greasley's scale of multi-factor productivity, by 1938 Nottinghamshire and the Midlands fields were at 155.6 against the 1902 basepoint; Durham was at 80.3; and Scotland at 116.4.

The coalfield emerged from the war with its output efficiency further enhanced. Profitability per ton was regularly exceeding 2s per ton, despite wartime conditions, price controls, and wage increases discussed above. Workforce numbers and absolute output had held steady throughout the war period. As had been discussed in earlier sections, the 1940s Nottinghamshire coalfield was on all available measures, as a part of the Midlands field, the most productive in the country.

The post-war environment for coal, its initial optimism expressed through NCB investment followed by the harsh realities of contraction and consolidation, are well expressed by Royce Turner as follows:

> "In 1957, more than 207 million tons of coal were extracted from British collieries. This was down to 178 million by 1965. By 1970, it was a little over 133 million. By 1975 this had fallen to just 114.7 million tons…Between 1957 and 1975 the number of collieries fell from 822 to 241, and the number of miners from 704,000 to 245,000…"[135]

The Wilberforce Inquiry, set up to examine the miners' 1972 pay claim during the strike of that year, officially recognised the severity of this contraction, stating that 'the rundown, which was brought about with the co-operation of the miners and the union, is without

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[133] Greasley, D.: *Fifty Years of Coal-Mining Productivity: The record of the British Coal Industry before 1939* (Journal of Economic History, 50.4, 1990, pp.877-902), p. 938

[134] Griffin, A.R.: *Mining in the East Midlands,* p.265-7

[135] Turner, R.L.: *Post-war pit closures: the politics of de-industrialisation* (Warwick), p.167

parallel in British industry in terms of the social and economic costs it has inevitably entailed for the mining community as a whole.'

Some coalfields escaped the contraction relatively lightly, while others were devastated. In general, it was Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Yorkshire which experienced a lower rate of pit closures. In Nottinghamshire, for example, in 1947 there were 31,078 miners. By 1974 this had been reduced by less than a thousand, to 30,300. But in the Durham coalfield, by contrast, manpower fell from 97,924 in 1958 to 44,160 in 1974.

This reinforces the sense, keenly felt in the Dukeries field, that its pits were a relatively tranquil island in a tumultuous wider sea for the mid-twentieth industry. The tranquillity was by no means accidental. Jim Tomlinson has conceived of a nationalisation doctrine being envisaged from the 1930s into the 1940s, that fetishized instruments of productivity and efficiency.[136] OMS as a measurement tool set human responsibility and activity, output per man shift, at the epicentre of thinking in extractive industries at the very time that mechanization was taking hold. Kenneth Morgan argues similarly, in *'The People's Peace'*, that coal nationalization was a primarily technocratic rather than political endeavour: a mixed market partnership (most of the customers continuing to be private, the industrial strategy public, and the area and colliery management largely palimpsestic of its wartime predecessor) designed to drive output whilst minimising trade union dissent. Ben Fine argues that, by the end of this period of enquiry, coal industry imperatives had progressed a step further – from output efficiency to financialization – and that relationships with energy generators and the 'cost per kilojoule' were driving industrial decision making.[137]

WL Miron, the divisional NCB Chairman speaking at a Nottingham Area conference in 1967, confirms this latter point. In arguing for the longevity and relative security of the coalfield, Miron cited "the stability of pithead prices of industrial coal, including Power Station coal, in Nottinghamshire" as critical. He went on to say that where "Hitler and the Mikado" had failed to close down the Nottinghamshire coal industry during the Second World War, oil and nuclear competition would find itself no more successful.[138]

Accepting these arguments, where better for the nationalised industry to place its wager than north Nottinghamshire? It was hardly surprising that NCB mechanization efforts centred on the north midland coalfield in the 1950s, if the conceivers of the nationalization

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[136] Tomlinson, J.: *A 'Failed Experiment'? Public Ownership and the Narratives of Post-War Britain'* (Labour History Review, 73.2, 2008. Pp228-243), p.233

[137] Fine, B.: *The Coal Question: Political economy and industrial change from the nineteenth century to the present day* (London, 1990), p.179

[138] Miron, W.L.: *Address to the Conference on the future of the coal mining industry in Nottinghamshire* (Mansfield, 1967); pp24-26

had been constructing that project in chronological lock step with the advance of the Dukeries field. The area had a multi-decade track record of increasing output, of wage growth whilst maintaining and growing profitability, of incorporating power loading alongside traditional hand cutting, and of comparatively harmonious industrial relations at the local level. Nottinghamshire, as the epicentre of the north midland coalfield, may have provided the ideal birthing ground for the early National Coal Board – strategically, economically, ideologically.

The area's mineworkers, then, and the communities around them can have felt some sense of stability and continuity advancing through the decades after the Second World War. Even as wage increases slowed, and overall job increases halted, there was still productive work to be had. The miners had fallen from 1st to 12th in the league table of British industrial wages by 1970,[139] but Nottinghamshire miners continued to enjoy productivity incentives. The industry, that had been producing all but 10% of its product by hand, was power loading 92% of output by the turn of the 1970s, with Nottinghamshire central to this growth.

And, as ever with mining, with changing times would presumably come changing opportunities. The 1974 'Plan for Coal' seemed, in the wake of a global oil crisis, to offer Dukeries miners renewed confidence for the future. Whilst the NCB set a growth target over the next decade of 2% to 135m tons annually (remaining 4th in the global production standings behind the USSR, USA, and Poland), this would require 42m tons per year of new production as older pits were closed down. The two-step plan for this growth would see firstly greater investment in the Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire field, and secondly the extension of that coalfield into north east Leicestershire and north eastern Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. Both of these ambitions would provide opportunities for work into the next generation for Nottinghamshire mineworkers.

The Phase One proposition within the Plan for Coal has been best summarised by North & Spooner:

> "In North Nottinghamshire production costs per tonne have been the lowest of all NCB divisions for several years and the 14 pits here already contribute 11 per cent of UK output. Of the first 55 schemes to be completed nationally by March 1979 [in the Plan for Coal strategy], no less than 18 lay in North Nottinghamshire and South Yorkshire, taking 37 per cent of capital involved. As most of the deep pits of North Nottinghamshire have been sunk since the First World War, reserves remain extensive…major projects involving development of additional

[139] Wolfe, J.: *Corporatism and Union Democracy: The British Miners and Incomes Policy, 1973-74* (Comparative Politics, 17.4, 1985, pp421-436), p.428

> coal reserves were undertaken at Ollerton, Thoresby and Bilsthorpe, extending these pits potential working lives."[140]

That the Plan for Coal would never be fully realised, and that the extension of the coalfield eastwards to usher a new stage in the migratory journeys of the British miners would be stunted, could not be known to a Dukeries mining family in the early 1970s. Their sense of security and continuity, based on available information and their own lived economic experience, might rationally support the contention that their coalfield had emerged – relatively – ascendant.

[140] North J. & Spooner D.: *The Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire Coalfield,* p.30

4 Community life in the coalfield

This section considers the influence of the new mining population on the communities of northern Nottinghamshire, how the industry and local authorities catered for incoming workers and how mining families themselves built social structures and resilient places.

In Part Three of this thesis a range of economic factors was considered that may have influenced behaviour and attitude amongst Nottinghamshire mining communities in the middle decades of the twentieth century. Part Five will go on to explore questions of political identity, expressed through local electoral politics and trade union engagement. Both these areas are central to weighing the merits of the particularism argument in relation to the area's mining community – in relationships with power structures, in its decision making, and in its sense of a wider industrial and ideological solidarity.

These pillars of the analysis, despite their importance, are largely impersonal. They do little to illuminate the lives of individuals, families and neighbourhoods in the area and time under consideration.

In this section on community life, the intention is to present a more animated portrayal of the Dukeries coalfield and its lived experiences. Although this section will continue to draw on established authorities – there is no refuting the twin masteries of Waller and Griffin in this historiography – it will also incorporate extended first person testimony from the coalfield, community history assets, company records and the proceedings of local councils.

4.1 Housing and the built environment

Trauma is increasingly evident as a central and interdisciplinary concern of modern public health and social policy. The interrelationship between traumatic life events, extreme and multi-generational poverty, inequality and a lack of authority and influence is more and more understood; as is the importance of human response to traumatic events as expressed through memory, imagination, and victimhood.[141]

This trauma effect is found to have an endemic and unpredictable impact at a community level, proliferating and locking in a range of social and psychological vulnerabilities that societies can struggle, often indefinitely, to address.[142] Although trauma would not have been the common currency of either policy or commerce in 1920s Nottinghamshire, its presence is obvious in the period.

The Great War had decimated working class communities across the country. Almost a fifth of all coalminers in Britain enlisted in the army, 250,000 of them in 1918 alone.[143] The patriotic nature of early volunteer enlistment meant that the loss in mining manpower was greatest amongst younger workers: 40% of mineworkers aged 19 to 38 signed up.

880,000 British service personnel were killed (6% of the post-16 population), and amongst those members of conscript units from the early years of the conflict were over-represented.[144] Domestic privations were also widespread: wartime poverty at home was grinding in industrial Britain, particularly for heavy industries as international demand for output slowed during the conflict (coal output itself would see one of its most dramatic falls of the century in 1918).

Peter Dawson, a Bilsthorpe resident, recalls: “My mum was from Durham originally. She remembered World War One. She said there’d been a soup kitchen there when conscription came in. It was to feed the lads up for the pals’ regiments. That’s how hard life was.”[145]

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[141] Radstone, S.: *Trauma Theory: Contexts, politics, ethics* (Paragraph 30. 1, 2007, pp. 9-29), p21

[142] Weiner, L.: *Individual and community trauma: individual experiences in collective environments* (Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, 2020), pp3-4

[143] Supple, B.: *History of the British Coal Industry*, p.48

[144] UK Parliament, *The Fallen.* Available at: https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/research/olympic-britain/crime-and-defence/the-fallen/. Accessed: January 2021

[145] *Peter Dawson*, Oral Interview, 3rd September 2021

For those fortunate enough to return from the fighting, readjustment to a hard and unremitting pit village life awaited. Brian Trueman remembers of his father, a miner working for the East Midlands Bolsover Company:

> "My father was released from the army on 6th January 1919 aged 22 years. He would have returned to Bolsover to resume work as a loader within days of his release. He must have had great remorse at the loss of his fellow men from his region who lost their lives in the war. He was now returning to the small mining community with life experiences that would be incomprehensible to anyone else. He was also exchanging one unnatural environment for another when he returned to work deep into the tunnelled arteries of the pit."[146]

As the War itself was ending, mining communities were not to be spared from the global flu pandemic – quite the opposite. The misnamed Spanish Flu spread around the world through the flows of demobilising soldiers, and proved particularly deadly in densely populated, multi-occupant areas of industrial housing. A miner from Gedling in Nottinghamshire reflected:

> "I remember when we had the Spanish flu. They were dying like flies. We used to bury them by lamplight. I remember going to the doctors with my mother and it was packed. Eventually the doctor came out of the office and he says, 'you can all go home now. All I've got is Epsom Salts.'"[147]

Mining families were familiar with precarity, and poverty. There was plenty to experience either side of the War, much of it worsened by the industrial disputes and lockouts that littered the period without access to adequate strike pay and insurance.

Tomlinson's autobiographical book *'Coal Miner'* captures some sense of those years for a mining family's child growing up in Nottinghamshire:

> "I was born in a colliery company's house in a small mining town in Nottinghamshire. They said I was born hungry. It would be impossible to tell of my childhood without mentioning hunger because, of all the things a child might be afraid of, hunger was the most fearful to me…The unspeakable misery that has been inflicted upon countless children [by strikes] is a blot upon Trades Unions and coal-owners alike."[148]

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[146] Trueman, B.: *Ordinary People, Extraordinary Times: a personal story about life on the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire coalfields in the late 19th until the mid 20th century* (Wakefield, 2013), p.3

[147] Franks, A.: *Nottinghamshire Miners' Tales: a celebration of life in the Nottinghamshire coalfields during the twentieth century* (Nottingham, 2001), p.16

[148] Tomlinson, G.A.W.: *Coal Miner* (London, 1937), pp13-15

The mineworkers of the mid to late 1920s were a significant community of trauma survivors: victims of poverty and squalor, of wartime death and home front disease, of industrial dispute and work precarity. And they were on the move, encouraged by the new wage of colliery sinkings in north Nottinghamshire that promised a fresh start.

> "In Derbyshire, there'd been very poor terraced housing, no bathrooms, a midden down the garden. 19th century collieries were dying, and miners expected to move. It was natural. It happened regularly. The Dukeries attracted men from these dying collieries."[149]

This is how the mining historian Bob Bradley begins to respond when asked about the process of inward migration to the north Nottinghamshire new pits. The answer begins, automatically, with housing.

This is true of almost all accounts of miners in the area. Housing comes first. "It was almost universally recognized at the time that the housing provided in the Dukeries colliery villages was of a substantially better quality than that in the areas from which the immigrant miners came."[150]

The planning, design and outcomes for the pit housing are reflective of their time, geography, and historical foundations.

Firstly, the colliery companies sinking the Dukeries pits were not new: they all had pre-existing mining operations in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire and had experience of previous efforts to construct company housing in the Victorian and Edwardian periods. As younger companies, their efforts were predictably more rudimentary, and secured at lower cost. Realising the need to attract the best workers to remote locations would require a significant carrot, they seized the need for impressive housing from the outset. The investment was merited by the high profit expectations for the pits.

Secondly, the owners engaged architects with aspirational intentions to produce well-planned 'garden suburb' iterations of worker housing, perhaps themselves inspired by desires for a more optimistic and communitarian future post-war.[151]

And thirdly, the housing was intended to appease the aesthetic and socio-political concerns of the aristocratic landowners who had allowed the collieries to be sunk on their holdings in return for lease and royalty payments. The "lords of the manor were involved in

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[149] *Dr Robert Bradley*, Oral Interview, 3rd September 2021

[150] Waller, Robert: *The Dukeries Transformed*, p.254

[151] Whitelock, G.C.H.: *250 Years in Coal, the History of the Barber-Walker Company 1680-1946* (Derby, 1955), p.251

everything"[152]. The eyes of agents for the Manvers, Savile and Portland families continued to prey over plans, applications and council sessions throughout this sinking and development period. When Edwinstowe Hall was purchased and repurposed as a joint welfare centre for the six collieries, it was visited and inspected in person by the Prince of Wales before being formally opened by the Duke of Portland himself. Earl Savile's refusal to have miners' houses built within sight of his seat at Rufford Abbey affected the entire location of a pit village, pithead, and the railway line planned to shift the coal.[153] No-one can have failed to understand that the colliery owners' efforts as town planners, as well as entrepreneurial engineers, were under close scrutiny.

Although the housing schemes built across the Dukeries were different in size and layout, there were design similarities. The projects all eschewed terraced housing in favour of semi-detached housing. At Edwinstowe, for example, the new village built to serve the Thoresby pit, offered the following:

> "There were two types of houses, 'Parlour' and 'Non-Parlour', grouped in twos, threes, and fours, but with different layouts. They all have a living room, with a cooking range and a back boiler, a scullery, larder, and coalhouse, three bedrooms, a bathroom, and toilet. The bathroom and toilet are upstairs for the 'parlour' type, but downstairs for the 'non-parlour' type. Every house has a front and back garden surrounded by a hedge."[154]

Peter Dawson, in oral interview discussions about new colliery housing at Clipstone, explains that fully fitted bathrooms were partly a necessity because the newly constructed pit surface structures were not initially equipped with bathhouses for the workers – the baths actually lagged the opening of the mine by 12 years.[155] However, their ubiquity across the new North Nottinghamshire field would of itself have been appealing to mineworking families considering making the move from areas with less well-equipped housing.

Innovative district power solutions were also embedded into the new housing schemes, emanating from the new pits. At Ollerton:

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[152] *Dr Robert Bradley*, Oral Interview, 3rd September 2021

[153] *Edwinstowe, the coming of coal* (Nottingham, 2017)

[154] *Edwinstowe, the coming of coal* (Nottingham, 2017), p.11

[155] Bilsthorpe Heritage Museum, *The New Village Exhibition*

> "The village was unique in that more than half the houses were provided with a constant supply of hot water from the colliery."[156]

A barrier to the exploitation of the Dukeries coal leases had been the landowners' opposition to the smoke and air pollution caused by coal-fired mineworking. As a result, the companies agreed a collaborative plan for electrification of the industrial activity itself, which led to the mineworkers' housing and facilities also receiving a subsidised electric supply from the outset.

Figure 19 below demonstrates a house design and pit village plan for Edwinstowe. This captures some of the scale, optimism, and ambition of these new schemes.

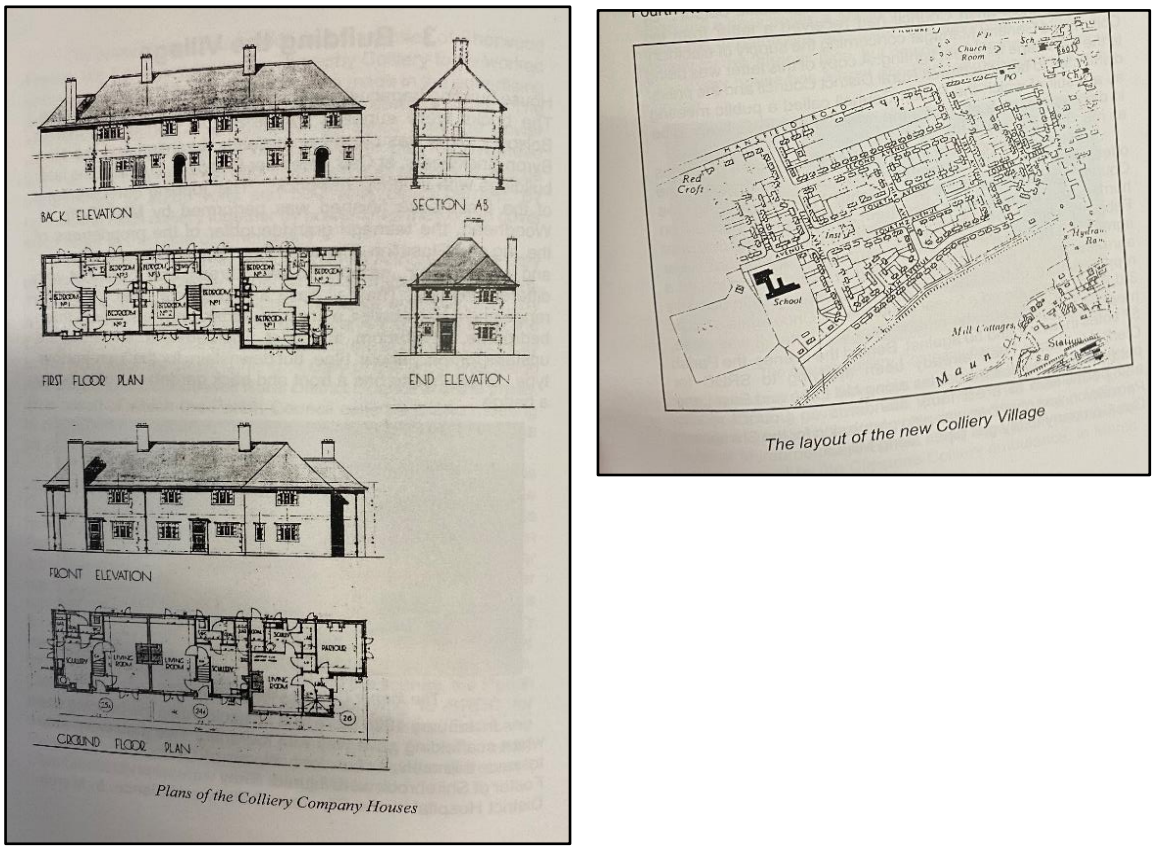

Figure 19 – Cottage drawings and new pit village plan for Edwinstowe[157]

The impact on the physical and visual environment from this phase of construction can hardly have been anything other than immense. Bilsthorpe, before the getting of coal

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[156] Hibbert, M. ed: *Ollerton of Yesteryear* (Tonypandy, 2010), p.23

[157] *Edwinstowe, the coming of coal* (Nottingham, 2017), p.21

began, had been a locality aggregating three farming hamlets with a population of 134 people. By 1939 and across three phases of pit-focused housing construction, the community had grown to more than 1600 houses and 3,000 inhabitants.[158] In 1924 the local Mansfield Reporter newspaper announced to the people of ancient Blidworth, a hilltop clustering of 150 houses, that "before the builders left the village, they would erect 2,000 houses. That means an enormous change for the quaint old-world village of Blidworth…already the colliery workers have invaded the village and the undefiled air of the parish has been polluted with Bolshevik talk."[159]

Kings Clipstone, itself a pre-industrial model village constructed by the Duke of Portland for his several hundred estate workers[160], would have the pit village of Clipstone constructed to its immediate west. By 1946, this housing growth would swell the parish population to 2,946 people.[161] The Clipstone headstocks would become the tallest in Europe when completed in 1953, and they remain standing today – an enduring reminder of the coal industry's dominant past in the area.

[158] Lawson, L.: *Bilsthorpe Village History* (Bilsthorpe Heritage, undated), p.8

[159] Franks, A.: *Nottinghamshire Miners' Tales: a celebration of life in the Nottinghamshire coalfields during the twentieth century* (Nottingham, 2001), p.20

[160] *Kings Clipstone: the royal heart of the ancient Sherwood Forest*. Available at: https://www.mps-pension.org.uk/scheme-publications-and-factsheets (Accessed: September 2021)

[161] *Nottinghamshire County Council Minutes 1946* (Nottinghamshire County Archives), p.641

Figure 20 – Clipstone Colliery Headstocks, 2021

The construction of the Bircotes colliery village to serve the new Harworth Colliery is described by the company historian below:

> "Concurrently and with the sinking of the shafts, and for some years after coal was reached in 1923, the Company embarked on establishing a colliery village so as to ensure a stable resource of manpower at the site of the new colliery. A resident Architect was appointed, with a staff of four, who carried out their duties with vision and foresight, making the most of the ideal situation in laying out a small town of about eleven hundred houses, with wide well-paved roads (some tree-lined), modern drainage, electric lighting and hot and cold water and a bath in every house."[162]

The modernity and amenity of the project is highlighted, as is the clarity of the primary purpose: *'So as to ensure a stable resource of manpower at the site'*.

And the Dukeries housing schemes were far from perfect, or perfectly planned. They were built in stages, and at speed, often in conflict with local land ownership and municipal

[162] Whitelock, G.C.: *250 Years in Coal: The History of Barber-Walker & Company Ltd – colliery proprietors in Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire 1680-1946* (Derby, 1953), p.172

authorities struggling to keep up with the pace of change in communities that had known little development for many generations. There was limited housing for the construction workers themselves coming into the districts to build the villages. In 1926, by example, a flustered County Council committee decided:

> "It would be of considerable convenience, and also tend to economy, if Sleeping Vans were provided for employees engaged on certain improvement schemes, and are at the present time without housed accommodation."[163]

District and county council minute books of the 1920s and 1930s are rich with debate, spending, and complaints about spending on infrastructure to service the new colliery housing. Roads, draining and sewage systems, power grids and government services: all were inadequate, and evidently catching up in relatively slow motion to the express pace of pit sinking and colliery house creation.

Pit housing itself was built in stages, with imperfect services and amenities to match. The purpose was to get enough labour into the mine firstly to sink the pit and then to prepare it for full operation.

Sinkers came first, and across the coalfield were housed either in hostel accommodation or hastily constructed bungalows. In Ollerton, the '*jewel in the crown*'[164] of the Dukeries pits:

> "Master sinker was Jock Green…sinkers were housed in buildings built specially for the sinkers which were known as The Bungalows. These were supposed to be temporary, but the final one actually lasted until 1976."[165]

A similar phenomenon occurred at Bilsthorpe, according to Brian Jackson:

> "Bungalow Lane was built for the sinkers. Most of them were Irish. It was built to last ten years, and it was still there in the 1960s. You had to drag people out of them houses."[166]

After the sinkers, miner housing was released for occupation as quickly as it became available. "For four or five years the village must have been a glorified building site."[167]

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[163] *Nottinghamshire County Council Minutes 1926* (Nottinghamshire County Archives), p.134

[164] *Dr Robert Bradley*, Oral Interview, 3rd September 2021

[165] Hibbert, M. ed: *Ollerton of Yesteryear* (Tonypandy, 2010), p.10

[166] *Brian Jackson*, Oral Interview, 18th August 2021

[167] *Edwinstowe, the coming of coal* (Nottingham, 2017), p.19

This was the view of incoming miners to Edwinstowe, and heading to work at Thoresby Colliery. At Bilsthorpe, according to Brian Jackson and Bob Bradley, the pit owners were careful to complete the management housing immediately after the sinkers' bungalows, only then commencing the shift worker houses. The village was well supervised before the main body of workers moved in.

Partial completion and competition for supply would continue in the post-war period, even as housing lost some of its salience as a workforce issue.

John Cheesemond, a Blidworth miner, remembers that:

> "My father came down here two years before us, in lodgings because the houses weren't available for the miners from the north and he got a temporary house for two years in Ollerton until the houses were built at Rainworth because he worked at Rufford Colliery; then in 1964 we moved to Rainworth."[168]

Yvonne Woodhead, who grew up in a mining family also in Blidworth, recalls:

> "I was born on 29th March 1950. I was born in Blidworth in a three-bedroom house and I was the third child born into our family but the first child born in that house…It was straight opposite the pit… When they put grease on the hawsers on the pit wheels, the grease used to fly into our windows and then you couldn't clean it off. My Dad used to get an extra payment from the pit, to buy special stuff to clean the windows."[169]

Industrial grease flying off pit cables into the front windows of the house is a redolent and kinetic image, and it captures something of the proximity and symbiosis of pit and village brought about in the Dukeries. Yvonne also recalled that *'it must have been an absolute nightmare, but we were born to it'*.

Taken as a whole, pit housing in the Dukeries represented an advance for industrial working families. It was offered at low rates of rent, inclusive of many services, and provided utilities and internal amenities that were as yet unavailable in many other coalfields from which the Dukeries workers were to be attracted.

The higher standard of the housing did come at a price: strict terms of tenure, tenant rights, and rules of occupancy. Demonstrated in some detail by Figure 21 below, Dukeries pit houses were offered on leases wholly tied to continuing employment at the pit. The house

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[168] *Michael Cheesemond*, Oral Interview (2013). Available at: https://www.nottscoalminingmemories.org.uk/blidworth-interviewees-continued/

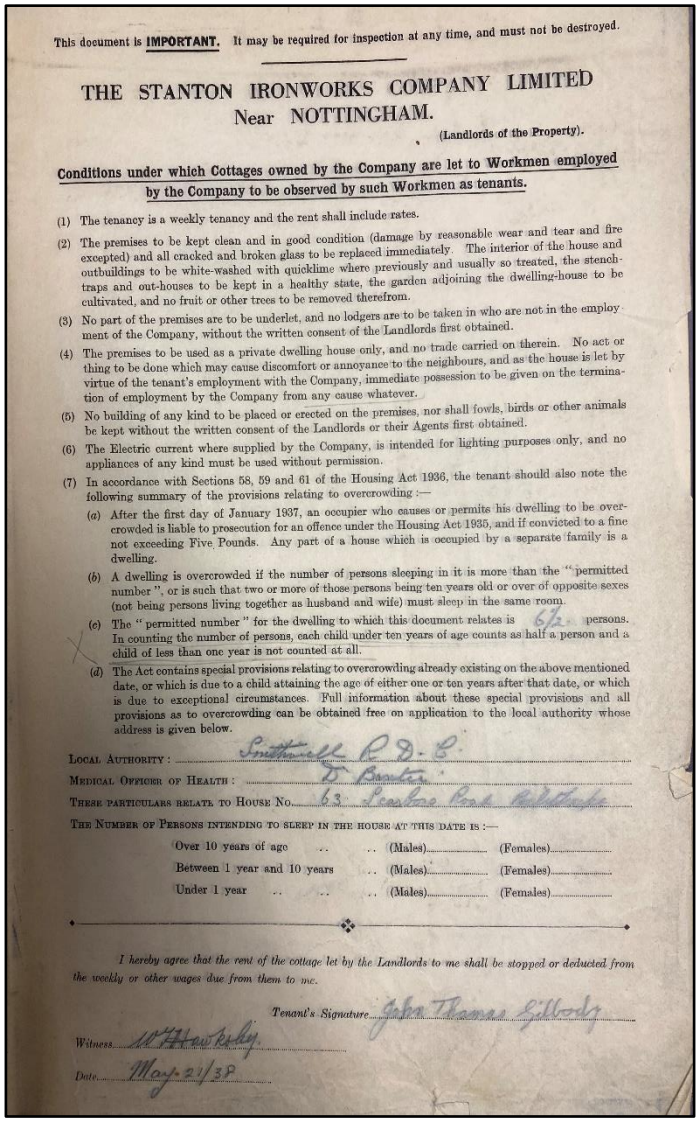
[169] *Yvonne Woodhead*, Oral Interview (2013). Available at: https://www.nottscoalminingmemories.org.uk/blidworth-interviewees-continued/

would be surrendered back to the owner if the work associated to the lease was terminated due to *'any cause whatsoever'*. And they meant it: as Bob Bradley elucidates here:

> "If a man died, his wife was given two weeks to quit the house…unless he had a son. If he did, the family could stop until he came of age and decided if he wanted to go into the pit.[170]

Sometimes this inbuilt precarity was waived by the ownership. Wartime fatality or pit disasters could result in bereaved families continuing in tenancies, there is evidence that sinkers were able to retire in original bungalow dwellings after service to the colliery companies, and not all Depression-era layoffs resulted in immediate notice to quit. However, tenants were left in little doubt that the comparative comforts of their new housing were subject to persistent landlord supervision, spot fines for poor maintenance or observance of rules, and ultimately eviction for death in service, career-ending injury, or personal or political behaviour deemed unacceptable by the colliery managers.

[170] *Dr Robert Bradley*, Oral Interview, 3rd September 2021



This document is **IMPORTANT**. It may be required for inspection at any time, and must not be destroyed.

THE STANTON IRONWORKS COMPANY LIMITED
Near NOTTINGHAM.
(Landlords of the Property).

Conditions under which Cottages owned by the Company are let to Workmen employed by the Company to be observed by such Workmen as tenants.

(1) The tenancy is a weekly tenancy and the rent shall include rates.

(2) The premises to be kept clean and in good condition (damage by reasonable wear and tear and fire excepted) and all cracked and broken glass to be replaced immediately. The interior of the house and outbuildings to be white-washed with quicklime where previously and usually so treated, the stench-traps and out-houses to be kept in a healthy state, the garden adjoining the dwelling-house to be cultivated, and no fruit or other trees to be removed therefrom.

(3) No part of the premises are to be underlet, and no lodgers are to be taken in who are not in the employment of the Company, without the written consent of the Landlords first obtained.

(4) The premises to be used as a private dwelling house only, and no trade carried on therein. No act or thing to be done which may cause discomfort or annoyance to the neighbours, and as the house is let by virtue of the tenant's employment with the Company, immediate possession to be given on the termination of employment by the Company from any cause whatever.

(5) No building of any kind to be placed or erected on the premises, nor shall fowls, birds or other animals be kept without the written consent of the Landlords or their Agents first obtained.

(6) The Electric current where supplied by the Company, is intended for lighting purposes only, and no appliances of any kind must be used without permission.

(7) In accordance with Sections 58, 59 and 61 of the Housing Act 1936, the tenant should also note the following summary of the provisions relating to overcrowding :—

(a) After the first day of January 1937, an occupier who causes or permits his dwelling to be overcrowded is liable to prosecution for an offence under the Housing Act 1935, and if convicted to a fine not exceeding Five Pounds. Any part of a house which is occupied by a separate family is a dwelling.

(b) A dwelling is overcrowded if the number of persons sleeping in it is more than the "permitted number", or is such that two or more of those persons being ten years old or over of opposite sexes (not being persons living together as husband and wife) must sleep in the same room.

(c) The "permitted number" for the dwelling to which this document relates is 6½ persons. In counting the number of persons, each child under ten years of age counts as half a person and a child of less than one year is not counted at all.

(d) The Act contains special provisions relating to overcrowding already existing on the above mentioned date, or which is due to a child attaining the age of either one or ten years after that date, or which is due to exceptional circumstances. Full information about these special provisions and all provisions as to overcrowding can be obtained free on application to the local authority whose address is given below.

LOCAL AUTHORITY : Southwell R.D.C.

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH : D. Bunter

THESE PARTICULARS RELATE TO HOUSE NO. 63 Pearlers Row Bilsthorpe

THE NUMBER OF PERSONS INTENDING TO SLEEP IN THE HOUSE AT THIS DATE IS :—

Over 10 years of age .. .. (Males)..... (Females).....

Between 1 year and 10 years .. (Males)..... (Females).....

Under 1 year .. .. .. (Males)..... (Females).....

I hereby agree that the rent of the cottage let by the Landlords to me shall be stopped or deducted from the weekly or other wages due from them to me.

Tenant's Signature John Thomas Gibbons

Witness W. Hawksley

Date May 21/38

Figure 21 – Example of a 1930s pit house tenancy agreement for Bilsthorpe Colliery (the underlining and markings are original and indicate the company agent's contemporary emphasis)[171]

The National Coal Board applied a reductionist organisational analysis to its inherited housing stock, seeking alternately to divest or arms-length both its costs and complexity. Assuming control of 140,000 colliery houses at vesting, it concluded this thesis's period of interest with fewer than 80,000 on its books.[172] According to Ashworth, "at the end of 1948…37 per cent [of the NCB housing stock] were classed as 'poor' and only 37 per cent as 'reasonably modern and in fair condition'. Only in Yorkshire, the East Midlands, and Kent did a majority of the houses qualify for the latter category." Pit housing lost money for the NCB and the housing associations it set up to manage it in all but three years

[171] *Bilsthorpe Colliery Tenancy Agreements* (Stanton Company Records, Nottinghamshire County Archives)

[172] Ashworth, W.: *History of the British Coal Industry Vol.5*, pp.539-547

through to the late 1960s. A maintaining low rental charge was accompanied by comparatively low levels of investment and modernisation. The stock would atrophy.

Ashworth observes that one of the reasons for the NCB wanting to gradually exit its unwelcome role of landlord was that "there was no overwhelming need to stimulate labour recruitment and transfer by means of housing provision." Labour requirement in the 1950s to 1970s Dukeries was relatively stable, and the absence of significant new developments mitigated against housing demand shocks. The period is also marked by a rapid expansion in council housing development across industrial England, perhaps lessening the requirement for the NCB to stand as landlord of last resort. This offers something of a bookend to the 1920s imperative of quality housing to attract the new Dukeries workforce; but it also ignores the continuing pull of Dukeries pit villages, their relative modernity and amenity, to transferring miners.

The Dukeries villages are, in the modern day, industries in their own right: housing is a dominant feature of local economic development. New housing estate construction, initially by local authorities and housing associations and latterly by private developers, continues to swell their boundaries and pressurise their infrastructure. In a cruel historical twist of fate, one of the 2020-21 housing boom's leading estate agents in north Nottinghamshire is proving to be a company called 'Strike' – the post-coal streets of Clipstone, Mansfield and Blidworth are thick with dayglo signs announcing 'Strike, for Sale'!

The entire colliery site at Harworth is being redeveloped in stages as 'Simpson Park' – the developers chose to commemorate local cycling hero Tom Simpson rather than the pit in their naming choice.

Figure 22 – Simpson Park housing development, on the site of the former Harworth Colliery (2021)

Thoresby Colliery, the iconic last mine in Nottinghamshire to close its doors, has been levelled and is being replaced by a giant new village called ‘Thoresby Vale’. The development’s marketing trades heavily on nearby Thoresby Hall but says nothing of the mineworkings beneath it where workers in 1988 broke the European productivity record for a single coalface.[173]

Thoresby-Vale does, however, hark back to the origins of the Dukeries pit villages in one respect. Its site welcome sign promises, to new potential residents:

> “800 New Homes! 350-Acre Country Park! New Primary School! New Local Centre! 20 Acres Employment Space!”

A combined appeal to hearth and home, rural living, education, amenity, and work: the recruitment plan of the Dukeries mining companies in action, 100 years on.

[173] *1989 Welcome to Thoresby Colliery* (National Mining Museum Archives)

4.2 Sport, health, and rivalry

> "A large, substantially built, and attractive Institute was incorporated in the plan, together with ample provision for every modern sport."[174]

Robert Waller devotes significant time in his book on the early Dukeries to questions of 'institutionalized leisure'.[175] He contends that, whilst the mine owners included the provision of structured leisure activity in their investments beyond the pit gates, there was also an embedded and informal culture of sport and games amongst pitworkers that existed independently of capital's' paternalist instincts.

The construction of sports and team-based facilities may have lagged the sinking and housing phases in Dukeries development, often by a decade, but they were intended and planned for from the outset of the villages' design. And, when they were undertaken, the facilities were extensive, expensive, and impressive.

At Ollerton, for example:

> "Excellent sports facilities were provided on two sites [at Ollerton]. Walesby Lane hosted a football and cricket pitch. They were so good that Nottingham Forest used the ground for pre-season training and the County 2nd XI cricket matches were played.
>
> Whinney Lane in the welfare grounds catered for bowls, tennis, skittles, and Tug o'War. The Colliery football team played in the Yorkshire League before the war and was renowned for its skill."[176]

The book chapter from which the quotation above is sourced is entitled 'Born to Win'. Understandably so. Footballing Scottish miners, and the Scottish world snooker champion Walter Donaldson, would all add to the migrant athletic stock of the village. They would join cricketing Derbyshire and Yorkshire pit workers, and the wives and children of mining families excelling on the tennis court, bowling green, dance floor and card tables. Tom Simpson, the international cycling star mentioned above, "spent his formative years in and around Harworth, his father being employed at Harworth Colliery after moving down from the Durham Coalfield in the 1930s."[177] Sporting rivalries would also be transplanted along with migrating miners: Old Firm and Wembley excursions were ubiquitous, and in some

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[174] Whitelock, G.C.: *250 Years in Coal: The History of Barber-Walker & Company Ltd*, p.176

[175] Waller, R.: *The Dukeries Transformed,* pp.189-207

[176] Hibbert, M. ed: *Ollerton of Yesteryear* (Tonypandy, 2010), p.69

[177] Amos, D.: *Controversies in coal: internment, impoundment and intrigue at Harworth Colliery (1913-1924)* (Nottingham, 2017), p.9

places organised supporters clubs were significant parts of the coalfield social fabric (e.g. the Rangers Club in Thringstone, Leicestershire).[178]

The collieries redefined the seriousness with which team and individual sports were treated in northern Nottinghamshire. The kind of £3,000 pavilion, shown in Figure 23 below and delivered in Edwinstowe in the 1930s, were largely unheard of before the arrival of the colliery companies. Bob Bradley notes, both in interview and through his online History of the coalfield, that importantly the scale of investment in sporting and leisure infrastructure continued in the period after Vesting Day, which CISWO and NCB funding replacing that of the colliery owners and Miners' Welfare Fund. Welbeck Colliery sports ground, by example, opened with significant fanfare in 1957 and continues to be a significant sporting facility in north Nottinghamshire today.

David Amos, in interview, explains that sport and competition imbued every element of the colliery and its local community. Inter-village sports were complemented by inter-pit games, even inter-shift matches. Managers and pit deputies would take to the cricket field in gleaming whites, to face the fast-bowling wrath of workers.

[178] Friends of Thringstone: *Scottish in Thringstone* (Loughborough, 2013), pp.8-9

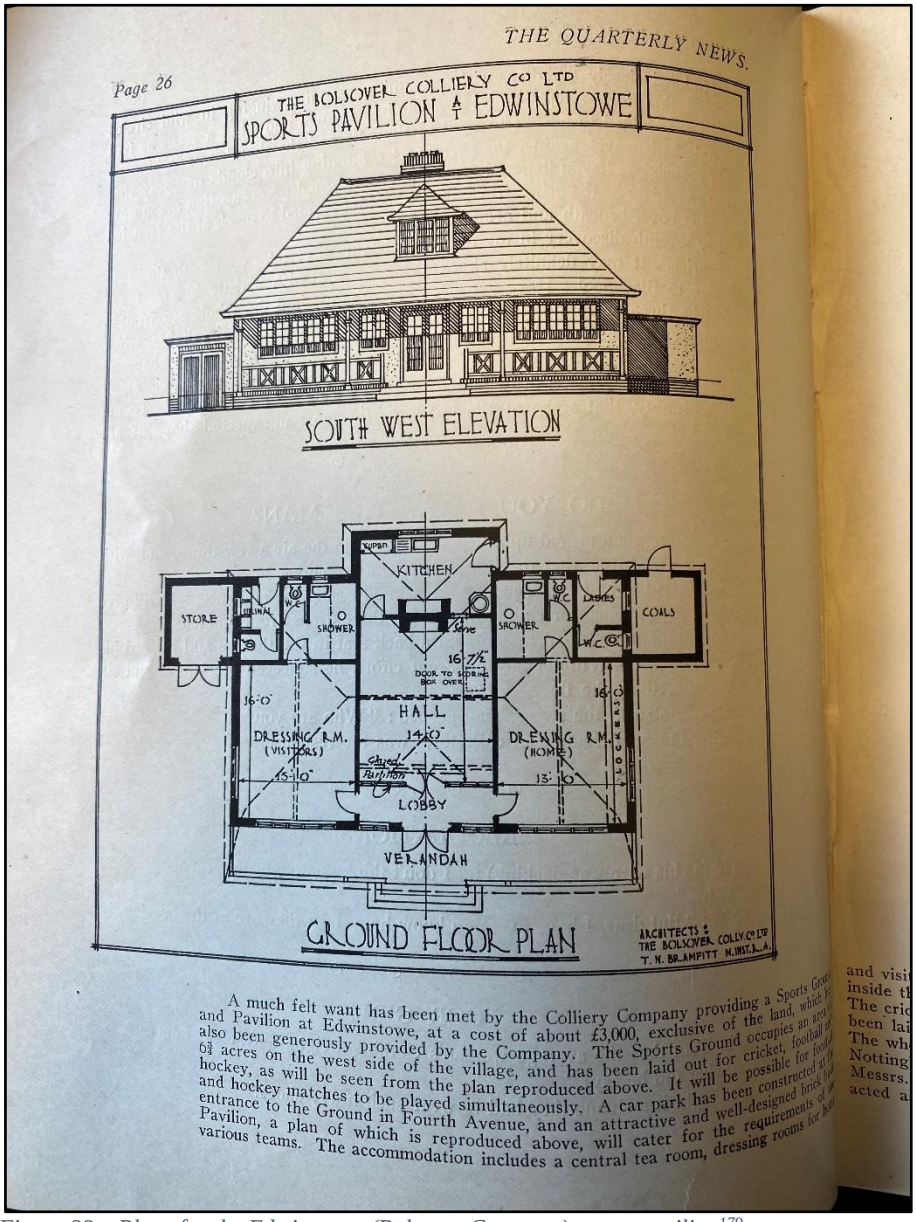

Figure 23 – Plans for the Edwinstowe (Bolsover Company) sports pavilion[179]

Cricket is a helpful exemplar of the team sports explosion that followed the sinking of the Dukeries. The game was not new to the area. Such was the interest in the sport in Edwardian north-western Nottinghamshire that a formal league was established there as early as 1904. The Bassetlaw League has existed ever since, a significant contributor to the sport's county and international tiers over that period.

[179] *Bolsover Company Quarterly News, April 1935* (National Mining Museum Archives)

At inception, the league had 8 founder members, of which four were colliery-backed sides. Applications to join accelerated so rapidly over the coming decades that, in 1952, the 33 members had to be reorganised into a conference system to accommodate them (see Figure 24 below). Two thirds of the teams involved were coal industry related. The legacy of mining in cricket persists to this day: 2021's iteration of the Bassetlaw Championship saw 'Clipstone & Bilsthorpe CC' champions, Thoresby Colliery CC third, and Welbeck CC fourth. Former colliery grounds in the county continue to be used for the professional game – Welbeck in particular. Cricket in the pits was so strong by the end of the 1930s that, in addition to the league discussed above, most collieries also entered sides into a dedicated Notts & Derbys Collieries' Alliance competition.

Section A	Section B	Section C
Blidworth Colliery*	Clipstone Colliery	Bilsthorpe Colliery
Bolsover Colliery	Creswell Colliery	CWS Glassworks*
British Ropes	Gainsborough Britannia	Kiveton Park Steel & Wire
Dinnington Colliery Institute	Killamarsh Juniors	Mansfield Colliery*
Harthill Miners Welfare	Langwith Colliery	Manton Colliery
Kiveton Park Colliery	Retford	Marshall's Sports
Ransome & Marles	Shirebrook Colliery	New Hucknall Colliery*
Rose Brothers	Teversal & Silverhill Colliery*	Ollerton Colliery*
Ruston & Hornsby	Thurcroft Main	Shireoaks Miner's Welfare
Steetley Works	Wales Church	Welbeck Colliery*
Worksop	Warsop Main	Whitwell Colliery

Figure 24 – Colliery teams and the 1952 reorganisation of the Bassetlaw Cricket Championship[180]

The area's footballing pedigree persists to a similar extent. Sherwood Colliery and AFC Mansfield (playing on a site adjacent to the old Forest Town Miners Welfare) are joined by Clipstone FC in the upper reaches of the Northern Counties leagues, and many other colliery teams continue to play in the Midlands and Nottinghamshire feeder leagues. The Ollerton Colliery football club of the pre-war period was so proficient that its Whinney Lane ground was used as a training facility by Nottingham Forest, and its senior teams of Scottish, Welsh and English miners also included a range of ex-professionals from Forest, Notts County, Mansfield Town, and Doncaster Rovers.[181]

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[180] *History of the Bassetlaw and District Cricket League*. Available at: https://www.bdcl.org.uk/history/ (Accessed: September 2021)

[181] Hibbert, M. ed: *Ollerton of Yesteryear* (Tonypandy, 2010), p.71

Sports prowess could often be a ticket into the pit, as much as a recreation stemming from it. David Amos confirms that, even in the post-war nationalised period, there was pit kudos attached to having outstanding athletes on the workmens' register, and they could often be forgiven productivity targets or even shifts. Quoted by Waller, Barbara Buxton from Edwinstowe also noted that:

> "They got a job if they could play cricket, or they could play football, if they'd got a good voice or if they were musical…if they were any good at any of those sorts of things they got jobs and they kept them as well."[182]

Whilst rivalries between collieries, companies and villages could be played out on the sports field, ownerships also sought to draw the communities together through leisure activity.

> "'The first use made of Edwinstowe Hall [bought and redesigned to serve as a coalfield recreational centre] was weekend visits to the 'Dormitories' by the Boys and Girls Brigades. Thirty-six at a time were able to come and visit and sports were organised for them. The meetings mostly consisted of gymnastics…marching and for some the Bugle Band. Annual inter-village sports days began to be run with events such as relay races, obstacle races and gymnastic displays.' So ran the announcements in the 1932 Quarterly News. This magazine was edited by Major Moncur from about 1927, as a Company attempt to draw the six villages together and promote sporting rivalry."[183]

This sense of a competitive but collaborative community between the Dukeries pits is common across accounts of their of establishment and expansion. Whether in St Johns Ambulance practices, area finals of marching bands or district choir group recitals, harnessing and channelling the "competitive spirit of the miners"[184] was a concern and interest of the owning companies and of the successor local and area management structures of the NCB. As the 1935 Derbyshire Times, quoted by Waller, remarked, perhaps sports were seen as a way for owners to try and ward off 'Bolshevism and socialism' amongst the mining community. Figure 25 below perhaps encapsulates the perfect sporting miner of the patrician mind – genial, sportsmanlike, committed.

And a company man, first and foremost.

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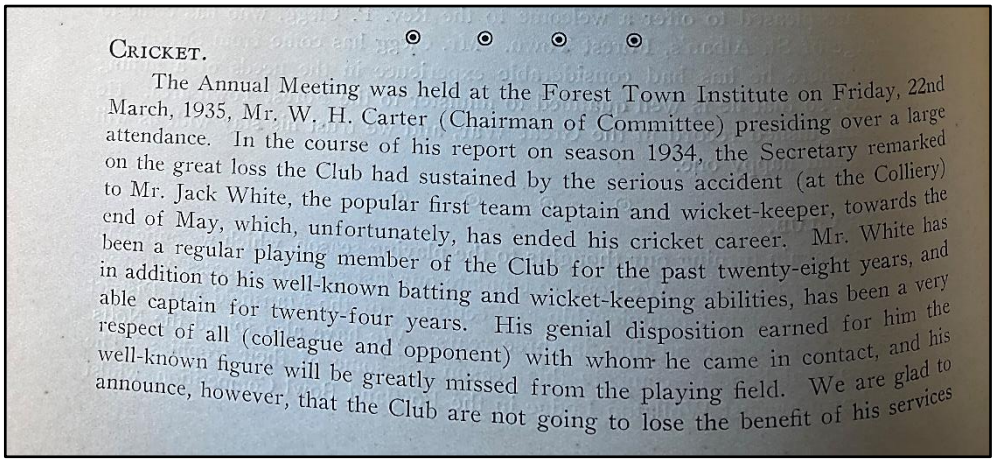
[182] Waller, R.: *The Dukeries Transformed,* p.193

[183] *Edwinstowe, the coming of coal* (Nottingham, 2017), p.18

[184] Franks, A.: *Nottinghamshire Miners' Tales,* p.24



CRICKET.

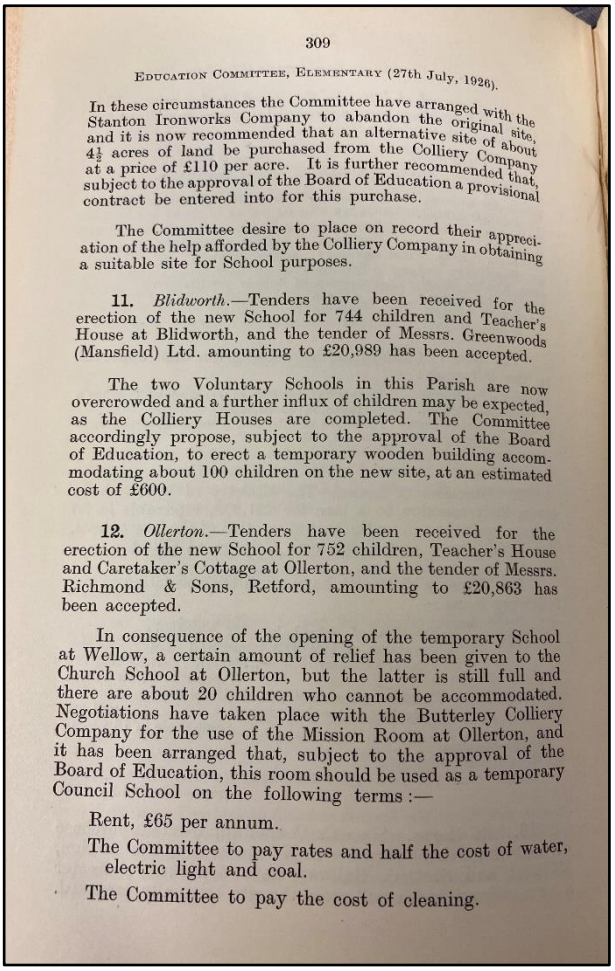
The Annual Meeting was held at the Forest Town Institute on Friday, 22nd March, 1935, Mr. W. H. Carter (Chairman of Committee) presiding over a large attendance. In the course of his report on season 1934, the Secretary remarked on the great loss the Club had sustained by the serious accident (at the Colliery) to Mr. Jack White, the popular first team captain and wicket-keeper, towards the end of May, which, unfortunately, has ended his cricket career. Mr. White has been a regular playing member of the Club for the past twenty-eight years, and in addition to his well-known batting and wicket-keeping abilities, has been a very able captain for twenty-four years. His genial disposition earned for him the respect of all (colleague and opponent) with whom he came in contact, and his well-known figure will be greatly missed from the playing field. We are glad to announce, however, that the Club are not going to lose the benefit of his services

Figure 25 – Sporting extract from the Bolsover Company Quarterly News[185]

[185] *Bolsover Company Quarterly News, April 1935* (National Mining Museum Archives)

4.3 The social coalfield: family, community, opportunity

Across the Dukeries pit projects, sinking was followed by surface structure construction, then a means of removing the coal to market by road or rail. As this was achieved, next came the housing stock and some immediate priority facilities for the new community. These always included new or extended schools for the pitworkers' children – education stood next to organised leisure and work (and slightly ahead of religious observance) as priorities for the colliery companies. The rural district councils and county council were animated by the drive to expand schooling in the 1920s (see Figure 26 – Example of early municipal investments in Dukeries' education to meet these needs, and schools were constructed at pace.



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EDUCATION COMMITTEE, ELEMENTARY (27th July, 1926).

In these circumstances the Committee have arranged with the Stanton Ironworks Company to abandon the original site, and it is now recommended that an alternative site of about 4½ acres of land be purchased from the Colliery Company at a price of £110 per acre. It is further recommended that, subject to the approval of the Board of Education a provisional contract be entered into for this purchase.

The Committee desire to place on record their appreciation of the help afforded by the Colliery Company in obtaining a suitable site for School purposes.

11. *Blidworth.*—Tenders have been received for the erection of the new School for 744 children and Teacher's House at Blidworth, and the tender of Messrs. Greenwoods (Mansfield) Ltd. amounting to £20,989 has been accepted.

The two Voluntary Schools in this Parish are now overcrowded and a further influx of children may be expected, as the Colliery Houses are completed. The Committee accordingly propose, subject to the approval of the Board of Education, to erect a temporary wooden building accommodating about 100 children on the new site, at an estimated cost of £600.

12. *Ollerton.*—Tenders have been received for the erection of the new School for 752 children, Teacher's House and Caretaker's Cottage at Ollerton, and the tender of Messrs. Richmond & Sons, Retford, amounting to £20,863 has been accepted.

In consequence of the opening of the temporary School at Wellow, a certain amount of relief has been given to the Church School at Ollerton, but the latter is still full and there are about 20 children who cannot be accommodated. Negotiations have taken place with the Butterley Colliery Company for the use of the Mission Room at Ollerton, and it has been arranged that, subject to the approval of the Board of Education, this room should be used as a temporary Council School on the following terms:—

Rent, £65 per annum.

The Committee to pay rates and half the cost of water, electric light and coal.

The Committee to pay the cost of cleaning.

Figure 26 – Example of early municipal investments in Dukeries' education[186]

[186] *Nottinghamshire County Council Minutes 1926* (Nottinghamshire County Archives), p.309

This on the expansion of education at Ollerton captures the amenity and discipline attached to the new neighbourhood schooling:

> "Because many children could not receive education [the existing village school was filled immediately that the pit opened], three new schools were built. They still stand today as a tribute to the quality of construction. The welfare of the pupils was of prime concern, and all had school milk and infant pupils had an afternoon nap. Attendance was closely monitored by a school 'bobby' who visited absentee houses and discipline was strictly enforced…"[187]

The schools construction drive, backed by local authority rate payers and mandated coal company contributions, was part of the wider 1920s mini-boom for local subcontractors discussed above in relation to housing. The making of pit village infrastructure was a vital fillip to regional builders, themselves hit by the postwar downturn in economic fortunes. Where there was opportunity, there were also accusations of graft: Greenwoods builders, for example, proved enduringly successful in winning schools contracts from Mansfield Rural District Council, but equally successful in bungling the builds. Making good the firm's construction errors would prove so costly for the school board in Edwinstowe that they were forced to slash teacher pay by a third in the 1930s.[188]

Peter Short recalls an idyllic time as an immigrant miner's son at the village school in Bilsthorpe. "There was never any agro – everyone looked after each other." Secondary education could be more challenging, as Peter noted, because its district scale would bring more mining and non-mining family children together. "It was a whole new world. I modified my accent in secondary school, the eastern European miners' children did the same."[189]

The impact of the coalfield on north Nottinghamshire education would continue beyond the initial phase of development. New primary schools were constructed across the pit villages into the 1950s, expansions to secondary schools matched this in the Mansfield and Southwell districts, and technical education followed suit. Mansfield College emerged as a major regional technical institution for initial, advanced and deputy training for the mining industry alongside Regional College of Technology in Nottingham (which would become Nottingham Trent Polytechnic). Nottingham University (initially as University College Nottingham) provided geological and chemical higher courses for the sector, as well as

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[187] Hibbert, M. ed: *Ollerton of Yesteryear* (Tonypandy, 2010), p.45-6

[188] *Edwinstowe*, p.16

[189] *Peter Short*, Oral Interview, 7th June 2021

societies and business courses for senior management.[190] The first chair of mining at the University College, William McMillan, became a coalfield 'reserve immigrant' – leaving in 1936 to take up a senior engineering role at Heriot Watt College in Edinburgh.[191]

Once essentials like schools and clinics were established to serve the communities, Miners' welfares and institutes came next and were at the heart of Dukeries social life. These were critical to the remoter pit villages because they might pre-date commercial leisure facilities and pubs by some years.

Figure 27 – Bilsthorpe Miners' Welfare (2021)

Welfare institutes were important intermediaries between ownership and mineworkers in a variety of ways. Land to build them was generally provided for in the colliery company schemes, with construction grants to match. However, worker-subscription welfare associations were contributors both to the costs of constructing and equipping the facilities. The National Miners Welfare Fund (later CISWO) was also a critical financial partner in

[190] Walker, M.*: 'Rule of thumb methods no longer suffice': Development of British coal industry education and training 1900 – 1970: Lessons for present day education policy makers* (Journal of Educational Administration and History, 47.4, 2015), p.6-21

[191] Bradley, R.: *A comprehensive history of mining in the Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire coalfields.* Accessible at http://www.healeyhero.co.uk/rescue/individual/Bob_Bradley/A-1.html (Accessed: September 2021)

the universe of cultural and leisure infrastructure accessible to miners: the MWF paid for the construction of the Sherwood Baths in Mansfield, for example, in which Olympic champion Rebecca Adlington perfected her skills.[192]

Worker and family committees were also responsible for the management and organisation of the institutions in practice, initially with substantial oversight and intervention from ownership. Nationally, the MWF and successor were managed by regional and national committees (ad hoc at the regional level) which ensure workforce and owner-Board representation and collaboration.[193]

The Welfare at Ollerton was "a fantastic place. You'd get 2,000 people in there on Fridays and Saturdays, upstairs and downstairs. Massive stage…they used to have bands there when they've been number 1 in the charts. You could be an associate member if you wasn't a miner…they used to put on art exhibitions, miners' work…it was the place to be and meet."[194] And at Bilsthorpe, "The Welfare was the centre of it. Fridays at the Welfare used to be 'grab-a-granny night'. They used to come in from all over the county for it."[195]

Fred Simpson, a north Nottinghamshire miner interviewed at length by Angela Franks, was a lifelong devotee of the Welfare's community life and opportunity. He describes institutions providing (for both mineworker and wider community) interactions arts and drama, sports and entertainment, night school and correspondence further education, literature, and periodicals. He describes how "the influx of Welsh miners" led to male voice choirs prospering across Nottinghamshire, and how the cosmopolitan mingling of Scottish and Yorkshire colliers would precipitate massed excursions from Nottinghamshire to Hampden for international football games.

It is evident in the literature and oral sources that nationalisation brought about an amplified sense of collective community ownership of the welfare and social institutions available. The Coal Board did not attempt to replicate the strictures of the private owners (it had been commonplace for Dukeries' management to impose closing times and drinks limits per customer on pre-war miners' socials and welfares), and the interrelationship between social activity and more extrovert expressions of collective social identity grew. "When nationalisation came in 1947 there was always miners' rallies and things like that",

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[192] Stone, D.: *The Miners' Welfare Fund, 1920-1995: State and Voluntary Sector in Harmony?* (Huddersfield, 2021), p.7

[193] Morgan, W.J.: *The Miners' Welfare Fund in Britain 1920-1952* (Social Policy & Administration, 24:3, 1990, pp199-210), p.202

[194] Franks, A.: *Nottinghamshire Miners' Tales,* p.58

[195] *Brian Jackson*, Oral Interview, 18th August 2021

explains Simpson, and "hardly a week went by without some mention of the miners [in the local press] – their galas, their coal queens, galas, their brass band contests."

Social activity, both within and without structures welfare organisations, was critical to the sustainability of an immigrant workforce in the transforming Dukeries:

> "The new families moving into the area found themselves amongst strangers from all parts of the country, with various dialects. Many had come from close knit communities in the old mining areas, and were homesick."[196]

Social cohesion was important in the attraction and retention of skilled coalfield labour, both in its foundational early period and more gradual and planned transfer period after Vesting. Gina Harkell's 1970s research with Kent mineworkers, cited earlier above, identified isolation – particularly amongst family members – as a significant barrier to stability and resilience in migrant coal communities. This was also true of the new Dukeries mines, where workers and families from diverse geographies and backgrounds were brought together in often isolated and unfamiliar environments.

Whilst those structural instruments for organised leisure discussed above – the sports match, the boys brigade outing, or the brass band competition – were important, they could not in themselves provide space for necessary informal and everyday interactions. Friendships, love, familial connection would all depend on those more informal arteries between pit and place.

As time passed from the establishment of the Dukeries coalfield, so did the uniformity of the company village life start to fragment. Reliance on the company store and the welfare institute would naturally diminish as local economies redeveloped to meet the changing needs. From one pub (or no pub) in a pit village in the 1920s, by the 1950s there might be half a dozen. Retail providers would also be attracted. Scrooby Road in Harworth and Forest Road in New Ollerton became mile-long district commercial hubs, competing with the more established regional centres at Doncaster and Mansfield. Retail provision in the post-war period would reflect increased access to disposable income amongst the miners (and the lure of hire purchase and debt): Ollerton had thriving electrical goods suppliers, bike shops, a car showroom and garage. Miners from Blidworth, Calverton and Bilsthorpe would become staple clients of north Nottingham's home improvements industry.[197]

Where Edwinstowe and Bilsthorpe of the 1920s held amateur film nights in the Welfare, Ollerton of the 1930s would quickly warrant the construction of a commercial cinema. The

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[196] *Edwinstowe, the coming of coal* (Nottingham, 2017), p.24

[197] *Bill Alker,* Oral Interview, cited in Metcalfe, J.: *The Politics of the Nottinghamshire Coalfield during the 1984-5 Miners' Strike* (Oxford University BA Finals thesis, 2000)

Picture House was also an early example of entrepreneurial migration aligned to the coal industry: its manager, Alfred Barron, had followed the miners from his native St Helens in Lancashire to play piano for the silent movies, settling in the Dukeries and becoming a successful businessman.[198] At Blidworth, the Scala cinema became such a critical hub for the new mining community from the 1930s onwards, drawing in people from across the county, that local historians credited it for helping the village to be become "almost self-sufficient) for retail, entertainment and service needs.[199]

Immigrant miners could also find local celebrity from interacting with the coalfield social scene. While Charlie Williams, a south Yorkshire miner and footballer, was establishing himself as the first famous Black British (and coalfield) comedian, the 'Four Geordies' were impressing BBC radio audiences on Opportunity Knocks. The four were migrant Durham miners to the Dukeries, forging successful secondary careers by entertaining coalfield families on the area's pubs and clubs circuit.

The deepening social milieu within the pit villages themselves was matched by the broadening of horizons beyond their streets. Connectivity between conurbations and the Dukeries villages, though imperfect and contested to the present day, would improve in the postwar period. Regularised bus services allowed for outings to the theatres and clubs of Nottingham and Lincoln. Weekend nightlife in Mansfield, Worksop and Retford expanded to meet the coalfield customer base.

Transport was a significant challenge in the new coalfield, particularly in the new villages furthest from Mansfield, and fed into the challenges of isolation and dependency. Peter Dawson in interview recalls that "there was nothing at all for women in the village to do apart from look after families. There was no bus out for a long time. There was a Saturday special bus to go the shops or the pictures that was it."

Whilst limitations in regular transport were barriers to social integration in the early coalfield, the lack of non-mining employment opportunity was debilitating for economic diversity and family. The Dukeries villages and housing projects were constructed to attract and maintain labour at the pit gates: little thought was given to alternative sources of local work. This was fitfully and imperfectly addressed over time and often only at a workshop industry scale, but coalfield entrepreneurship did emerge. The development of more advanced leisure and work opportunities was important, particularly in a period of rapidly changing aspiration for postwar working-class women.[200]

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[198] Hibbert, M. ed: *Ollerton of Yesteryear* (Tonypandy, 2010), p.71

[199] Blidworth & District Historical Society, *The Scala Cinema*. Available at: http://blidworthhistoricalsociety.co.uk/62812.html . Accessed: January 2021

[200] Langhamer, C.: *Women's leisure in England 1920-60* (Manchester, 2000), pp.29-31

"Later on", recalls Peter Dawson of Bilsthorpe in interview, "Jack Eastwoods started going round the village with a tractor, picking up the women and children to work on his farms." In fact, Sir John Eastwood expanded a family engineering business into a nationwide group – first winning contracts to sink Dukeries pits and build the villages, then establishing agricultural and logistics divisions to benefit from the captive labour. His obituary is an exemplar of the coalfield entrepreneur, similar to that of the later and more famous Richard Budge.[201] The long-serving and founding manager of Ollerton Colliery, Monty Wright, was (according to the community history) petitioned by the miners to expand local economic opportunity. "He saw the benefit of providing some form of employment; by doing so he hoped to keep miners in the village rather than let them leave". Small scale textile businesses would develop across the coalfield, both inter- and post-war, growing out of the extensive and pre-existing Mansfield hosiery and Nottingham textile industries.

Although the Dukeries were not well served by passenger train routes, chartered and special train services did open up organised company and pit trips to locations across the country. Thoresby Colliery established formal ties for annual seaside family trips to Scarborough and Yarmouth. Later, excursions to Rhyl in North Wales were added.[202] Ollerton coalfield trips would require several trains, and included annual visits to the Houses of Parliament. For the mining families of Bilsthorpe, trips to the Lincolnshire coastline were valued and much remembered: according to one of the village's miners, "The holiday camp was really something special and I spent two holidays there with my mates. In its heyday it rivalled Butlins."[203] The locations of Dukeries village excursions would provide enduring connections: North Wales and the Lincolnshire coast continue to serve as retirement hotspots for mining families.

When not socialising in the new Dukeries high streets and pubs, or bonding on organised holidays and excursions, many friendships were forged in the intermediate environment of the natural coalfield. Engaging with nature and the outdoors, and its value for both social interaction and personal wellbeing, features extensively in the oral and personal written evidence from the coalfield.

"As a child, we had lots of play areas, the woods and the warren", notes Nottinghamshire miner Gary Roe in interview, whilst Bob Collier reflects that "being born into a mining village was a wonderful experience for my generation. We had everything that children wanted. We'd got the football teams, we'd got nearby woods, we'd got everything that made life happy for children." Interactions with nature could also take expressive, even

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[201] Edgar, C.D.: *Obituary: Sir John Eastwood* (The Independent, 1995). Available at: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary-sir-john-eastwood-1575903.html (Accessed: August 2021)

[202] *Edwinstowe*, p.22

[203] Jackson, J.: *Memories of a Mining trainee* (Bilsthorpe, 2016)

activist, forms: Brian Walker, a Nottinghamshire retired miner originally from Dumfries, recalls how "the whole family used to go every week to things like the Mass Trespass on Kinder Scout. I was too young to understand what was going on, I just thought it was a lot of people all together."

The juxtapositions and ironies of squalid underground working and the natural splendour of the district above ground jarred with and was remembered by many workers. Brian Jackson in interview referred to the Dukeries pits as 'their own county, underground'. Tomlinson recalled, on being informed by a colleague underground that they were 'right under Clumber Wood', that: "It had never occurred to me! And there I was in a narrow black tunnel dripping with sweat. Clumber Wood. With its beeches and bracken and lovely little hollows where I could lie all day without seeing a soul."[204]

The layering of social interactivity, and the wider inclusion of families beyond the immediate pit community through connections made in the cinema, pub, village or work, may have helped to shift perceptions of local communities to the miners migrating into the Dukeries. Those earlier expressed concerns about the immigrant industry and its workforce appear lessened by time and socioeconomic integration. As the Guardian Journal observed in 1971 "40 or 50 years ago, it was considered that a colliery area was the toughest district anyone could live in. That is a thing of the past. Miners these days are sociable, and very pleasant indeed."[205]

[204] Tomlinson, G.A.W.: *Coal Miner* (London, 1937), p108

[205] *Guardian Journal*, February 23 1971 (National Mining Museum Archives)

4.4 Faith, structure, and ownership influence

The expansion of religious institutions in the coalfield would prove a profound statement about both the scale of workforce migration, and the powerful influence of ownership structures in community development.

Rural north Nottinghamshire before coal exploitation was an area of traditional-conservative Anglican monotheism, where clerical and aristocratic elites were closely intertwined. The introduction of working families from a variety of religious backgrounds - non-conformist, Catholic and national church affiliations being ubiquitous amongst miners – presented challenges for local social cohesion and the continuance of traditional forms of control and influence.

The solution broadly adopted by the colliery companies was to invest in new churches in line with their construction of new model villages, and to underwrite the financing (and selection) of clerical officers to minister to their workers. At Harworth, as example, "a Church, Church Hall and Parsonage were built by the Company at their own expense, and £400 a year was provided towards the stipend of a curate-in-charge, for the Bishop of the Diocese decided to place the new Church under the jurisdiction of the Vicar of Harworth. The new village was christened Bircotes."[206]

At Bilsthorpe in 1932, ownership funded the construction of a new church (St Luke's) in deliberate rivalry with the established St Margaret's that had been the parish centre for seven centuries. There was politics, money, and spite behind their action. The rector of St Margaret's between the wars, William Hunt, had antagonised the Stanton Company: firstly, by demanding compensation for the unborn child of a sinker of the pit killed in a 1927 accident; and secondly, in 1929, by providing a church field for a meeting to establish a new branch of the Nottinghamshire Miners' Association.[207]

Without direct company support, Methodism also established itself in Bilsthorpe, with a 'Mission' founded on its successes in constructing a Hall at nearby Blidworth. Methodism's exponential growth in north Nottinghamshire directly tracked that of pit communities, although it is important to note that the church had roots in the area dating back several generations before mining. Methodist registers for Forest Town (a housing area serving Clipstone and Mansfield collieries, accessed at the Nottinghamshire County Archives and listing 'occupations', demonstrate that by the 1950s almost all male church members were miners or in pit associated trades.

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[206] *250 Years in Coal: The History of Barber-Walker & Company Ltd*, p.176

[207] Little, L.: *Bilsthorpe's Churches* (Bilsthorpe, 2021), p.4

This both corporate and communitarian religious expansion was also seen at Ollerton. There "temporary accommodation was provided for worship in the Mission Hall…subsequently other religious denominations came to the village and eventually Church of England, Salvation Army, Baptist Chapel, Catholic and Methodist churches were built".[208]

Just as church activity could both serve and seek to influence mining communities, it was also true that churches could act as conciliatory fora in intra-community relations. Anti-miner indigenous feeling seems to have been most apparent in those areas where pit villages were made as extensions to existing communities, rather than as standalone developments. Old Ollerton fretted about the morals of new Ollerton to its west. Kings Clipstone looked suspiciously up the hill to the Clipstone Colliery headstocks and Forest Town beyond.

Churches and allied institutions appear to have smoothed the way, where these barriers existed. This was the case in inter-war Edwinstowe, where "there was resentment amongst the members of the agricultural village when it was invaded by so many 'foreigners'. The Church of St Mary, the Wesleyan and Primitive Methodist Churches were meeting grounds, as was the Women's Institute and the Mothers' Union."[209]

Structures like the Women's Institute, district Red Cross, the British Legion and village horticultural societies allied with churches to bring together pit and village – and to bring together worker and owner. They served as social glue, in an adjusting and transitional community. The interplay between workers, community, colliery owners and landed elites was critical to the history and development of the Dukeries coalfield. These factors played out in community relations, as elsewhere.

Some consideration has been given in Part Two above to the colliery ownerships in the pre-nationalisation Dukeries, and in Part Four to the aristocratic control of the district that earned it its epithet. The owners were, it should be remembered, industrial aristocrats in their own right – and building the Dukeries after long pre-existing relationships with those landowners benefiting from the coal extraction royalties.

The Bolsover Colliery Company, the most prolific colliery specific company in the Dukeries, had been founded by Emerson Bainbridge in 1890 after winning his first rights in Derbyshire from the Duke of Portland. Bainbridge was himself a 'migrant' – a Newcastle-born mining and engineering consultant who had been working for noble coal leaseholders since 1870. He held (and quickly lost) a Lincolnshire Parliamentary seat as a Liberal in 1890. Bainbridge's son Oswald would join the company board upon reaching

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[208] *Ollerton of Yesteryear,* p.23

[209] *Edwinstowe,* p.26

maturity, but was killed in service in 1915. BCC would build its first model village in the surrounds of Bolsover Castle, and go on to mine across Derbyshire and the Dukeries. At its peak, the company employed 10,000 people and outputted 6.25m tonnes of coal – all of it extracted from, and paying royalties to, the Duke of Portland's estates.[210]

Bainbridge's entire career was an interplay with his aristocratic masters – both economic and social. When he opened the 'Bainbridge Home for Waifs and Strays' in Sheffield, as one of numerous acts of Edwardian philanthropy, it was the Duke and Duchess who cut the ribbon. According to Franks, when a campaign emerged to win civic honours for Winifred (6th Duchess Portland) in recognition of her work with the local cottage hospital, it was BCC and the company-backed Miners' Welfare Association that did the petitioning.

The Butterley Company, sinker of the Ollerton Colliery, was an industrial conglomerate whose history tracks not only the development of the industrial East Midlands but is central to the wider story of British industrialisation. Founded in 1790 by partnership between Derbyshire engineer Benjamin Outram and Nottingham financier John Wright, Butterley grew from iron foundry to brickworks, canal sinker to railway contractor, construction giant to colliery operator. St Pancras Station was constructed by Butterley in 1868 using imported Nottinghamshire bricks, to ensure its customers would know at which end of the Midland Line the power was truly located. The Falkirk Wheel in 2002 was one of the company's last, great engineering feats. John Wright, the first sole owner of the company, secured a Victorian fortune valued at £2bn in today's money, built a Derbyshire stately home second only to Chatsworth, was High Sheriff of the county, and further mimicked the aristocracy by endowing a public school at Trent College.[211]

A third example of the ownership model was the joint stock company. Barber-Walker, owner of Harworth-Bircotes, was a combine of west Nottinghamshire and North East Derbyshire coal and iron giants, with its first mining rights having been issued by Oliver Cromwell and its merger occurring in the late Victorian period. With rail subsidiaries underpinning the company's growth, and control of seven East Midlands pits as well as 5million tonnes of South Yorkshire production, Barber-Walker was a commanding regional business with widespread political and financial networks. Its mid-20th century board members, drawn from the two owning families and presented in the official company history, epitomise capital management and elite leadership of their time. Their only distinguishing biographical features are that most of the Barbers attended Eton College, whilst a few of the Walkers ventured to Repton School.[212]

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[210] *History of the Bolsover Colliery Company 1889-1939* (Derbyshire Public Records Office)

[211] *Butterley Company Timeline*. Available at: https://www.rdht.org.uk/butterley-company/company-profile (Accessed: October 2021)

[212] *The History of Barber-Walker & Company Ltd*, pp204-228

These company pen portraits are provided to reinforce the enmeshed nature of the ownership forces underlying the frontline management of the Dukeries pits and villages. Long experience of multiple industries, deep pockets, socioeconomic partnerships across wider business communities and with land ownership, and influence stretching into the church, military, civic community, elite society, and national politics.

It is with this experience, confidence, and outlook that the Dukeries owners instituted the local systems that greeted the migrant miners of the 1920s and 1930s. So a family migrating to Ollerton for work might find access to local schooling, but the price of that schooling was the intervention of a schools inspector who retained the right to visit houses owned by the company and fine families for non-attendance.[213] That inspector was backed up by Bobby Ely, the ex-Forces 'Pit Bobby' at New Ollerton who had "the powers of God".[214] There was a pit policeman at Bilsthorpe too, capable of issuing fines or even evictions for drunkenness, an untidy front lawn, or playing football in the street. Company bobbies were tacitly supported by formal local policing, and the bobbies had the power to intervene with pit managers in extreme cases to force evictions or ejections from work.

Blacklisting for political activity was common: Mal Haworth from Blidworth recalls his father having to travel from Mansfield to distant parts of Derbyshire to find work in the interwar period, and "it was all to do with the General Strike". The rights and protections of mining families in the villages were limited. Tenancies, as discussed above, had strict terms of occupancy and limited rights of appeal against owner termination.[215]

Although the butty system of coalface team contracting in the Dukeries field appears to have been widely abandoned by 1939, it was a significant factor in the earlier development period. The colliery companies attracted their best workers from expiring Derbyshire and Yorkshire pits through networks led by butties.

Bob Bradley again: "the first to come were butties, or promised jobs as butties. They brought in men they knew, particularly family and friends. They were in the palm of the bosses. The butties became rich men, but hated."

The butties and their associates created an additional layer of pit community supervision and control, from within the workforce itself. This sub-section of the immigrant workforce would naturally progress in deputy and management roles in future decades (having been privileged in terms, security and access from the inception of the coalfield onwards), and assume community leadership positions.

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[213] *Ollerton of Yesteryear*, p.42

[214] *Dr Robert Bradley*, Oral Interview, 3rd September 2021

[215] *Brian Jackson*, Oral Interview, 18th August 2021

Some of these factors might have contributed to a sense, expressed broadly across the community literature and oral evidence, that nationalisation did not immediately affect great change in the structural cultures of the Dukeries villages. The official history of Ollerton reflects that management and manager presence in the village demonstrated significant continuity pre and post Vesting Day. Geoff Peace, a Blidworth miner, felt that "there were still the same old managers in the colliery and still the same old system for producing coal" as before nationalisation, whilst Bob Bradley in interview observes that "the colliery company rules lasted for years after Vesting. The discipline, the tellings off." The more granular responses of the complex migrant communities in the coalfield to the advent of nationalisation is worthy of further research: whether as suggested in Paul Cox's fictional account, indigenous and migrant workers stood together on Vesting Day and observed "*National* Coal Board, eh? That's me an thee." [216]

Some of this duality and dichotomy of Dukeries' pit life – the oppressive nature of ownership control, the countervailing sense of localism and pride – is best expressed by Brian Jackson in interview at Bilsthorpe:

> "It was very difficult, it was a company town before '47. If you stepped out of line then you got fired. You only got a week's notice if you were put out of the pit before you lost your house."

But:

> "After 1947, things changed. It was us and them. The NCB did things in the village, but it wasn't the same."

[216] Cox, P. *The Foreigner* (London, 1999), p.99

5 Political change in the Dukeries

This section begins with a brief chronological summary of the political and trade union history of the coalfield in this period. It then considers the influence of coalfield expansion in community politics, the effects of workforce migration on both wider community and internal coalfield politics across the period, and evidence of inter-community tension explored through governmental and associated processes.

5.1 From Wartime to Wilberforce: a political-union sketch 1920-1974

> "British coalmining history, as we customarily recall it, is punctuated by the giant national conflicts of 1926, 1972 and 1974, and 1984-5, prompting a lurid image of apparently continuous and endless industrial relations conflict…There is, of course, another side to the story, found in the arbitration, conciliation and sliding scale arrangements of the late Victorian period, or the modern Nottinghamshire collieries that can barely remember a strike before 1972."[217]

> "If the Nottinghamshire miners were so selfish, why did they sign on with the NPLA for a five-year wage cut? They saw it was done fair, and at an NUM conference."[218]

Field research to facilitate this thesis was undertaken in the north Nottinghamshire coalfield in 2020 and 2021. This work on the period from the 1920s to the 1970s in the county complements primary work previously undertaken in 1999-2000, in preparation for an undergraduate research thesis on the politics of the Nottinghamshire coalfield in the 1984-5 Miners' Strike.[219]

Between the two projects, more than twenty oral interviews were completed in Nottinghamshire with former miners, trade union officials (from both the NUM and the UDM), politicians, coalfield businesspeople, police, and probation officers, and more. In between times, I have also lived in both north Nottinghamshire and South Yorkshire, working in community organisation and local politics.

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[217] Ackers, P. & Payne, J.: *Before the Storm: The Experience of Nationalization and the Prospects for Industrial Relations Partnership in the British Coal Industry, 1947-1972: Rethinking the Militant Narrative* (Social History, 27.2, pp184-209), pp.185-9

[218] *David Amos,* Oral Interview, 31st August 2021

[219] Metcalfe, J.: *The Politics of the Nottinghamshire Coalfield during the 1984-5 Miners' Strike* (Oxford University Finals thesis, 2000)

These experiences and interactions would tend to confirm the broad assertions made by Ackers & Payne above. A generation on from the great strike of the 1980s, and decades on from the end of large-scale mining, battle lines remain drawn both within and around the county. Political debate continues to be consumed by the narrative of the great industrial moments of discord. There is, in most perspectives of the north Nottinghamshire of the 20th century, no demarcation between trade union and party politics. And, in the march from national union (NMA-MFGB), to company union (NMIU), and back again (NUM), and back again (UDM), there lies an eternal debate about an elusive *otherness* amongst the Nottinghamshire miners. A sense of difference and exclusivity carried either as a mark of pride or as a stigma depending on the point of view. And that events from the dim and misunderstood industrial-political mists of the pre-war period had programmed a political course both destructive for the county itself, but also consuming the wider industry and polity.

This thesis argues that here were circumstances, if not unique then at least particular, to the Nottinghamshire coalfield, most keenly evident in the pits that emerged in the aftermath of the First World War. These were shaped by powerful forces of industrial modernisation, high productivity expectation and a demanding and controlling ownership system, and the socio-economic aspirations of thousands of migrating workers and families. It is contended here that, whilst these forces might have led to particular – even singular – political outcomes in the Nottinghamshire coalfield, they were not in and of themselves peculiar or inexplicable.

Political unionism amongst the Nottinghamshire miners did not originate in a particular, or unusual, way. The county's Miners' Association, in line with the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB) of the time, was broadly supportive of the liberal consensus in late Victorian and Edwardian England.[220] In fact Alan Griffin argues that the Nottinghamshire Miners' Association (NMA) became "very much less antagonistic to socialism than Derbyshire", and supported candidates in the radical liberal tradition in the 1880s. The county union did fall out of step with the MFGB when the latter joined the Labour Party in 1909, although both the NMA and MFGB had rejected ballot motions to affiliate only two years earlier.

By 1914, the Liberal consensus in the leadership of the NMA was being maintained by personality: JG Hancock and George Spencer, as senior union officials, maintained close relationships with Liberal politicians and Liberal-supporting colliery owners. This axis attempted to remove the NMA from the MFGB Political Fund but was defeated by a campaign waged by younger mining activists from the north of the county. Immigration to the county also produced its first clear political outcome at this time: a branch of the Socialist Labour Party was established in the Mansfield area by "Jack Lavin, an Irishman

[220] Griffin, A.R.: *Mining in the East Midlands*, pp.197-198

employed at Welbeck Colliery. Lavin had lived in the U.S.A. where he had been influenced by Eugene Debs…although this branch of the S.L.P. had no more than nineteen members at any time, it had an influence which played a powerful part in the dissensions of the 1920s".[221]

George Spencer was in effective control of the NMA by the close of the First World War, although the area's Council had moved significantly to his left in both programme and resolution. Griffin foreshadows, however, that:

> "The division of opinion between those who supported, and those who opposed, direct industrial action for political ends is at the root of the split which developed in the N.M.A. On the one hand, the Mansfield District Committee…became an organizing centre for the left; whilst on the other hand an organization calling itself the British Workers' League campaigned in favour of 'non-political' trade unionism, and became the organizing centre for the right. Its strongholds were the Bolsover and Barber Walker collieries…the BWL was an offshoot of the British Commonwealth Union, a right-wing pressure group formed towards the end of the war by a group of provincial industrialists. The vast majority of miners were in favour of permanent national ownership of the industry, and in the first half of 1919, they seemed to have a fair chance of getting it."[222]

These were foundational developments in two central ways. At the opening of the 1920s and before even many of the new Dukeries mines were producing, the north of the county had become the centre of power in mining politics (Mansfield district, and the Bolsover and Barber Walker pits). Secondly, the ideological division within political unionism was being articulated by a liberal-market platform on the one hand, influenced and backed by capital, and a radical-nationalizing campaign on the other rooted in socialist and ILP traditions. The discord that would grow in the years ahead was not internal to the miners themselves – they were to some extent prey to the external pressures of political change and owner manipulation.

The resolutions to the 1920 and 1921 lockouts, as has been discussed above, were of less significance to the Nottinghamshire miners than other areas (wage reductions proposed were marginal in the more productive coalfields, whilst being catastrophic for workers in the North East). However, by participating in the lockouts and meeting costs of strike pay

[221] Ibid., p. 201

[222] Ibid., p. 218

for members, the NMA found itself in debt and with the political divides across it further entrenched. D.J. Douglass observes of this time that:

> "The ruthlessness of the coal owners, and their indifference to the suffering of the miners and their families…was legendary. The miners had perhaps thought that such a clear expression of injustice in the post-war era, which had contained so much promise, might have extracted widespread public condemnation. If so, they were to be cruelly disappointed, and the isolation felt by many pit communities from general society seemed underlined once again."[223]

The crushing of hopes for a more egalitarian future for the miners after the war by the lockout settlements, and the collapse of collective pay bargaining and by implication the route to nationalization sought by the organised left in mining trade unionism, also influenced the balance of power within the NMA at exactly the moment that the Dukeries pits and workforces were coming into being.

By the 1926 General Strike, the NMA was both virtually bankrupt (Griffin claims the county union could only fund one week of strike pay in the dispute thanks to grants from the Derbyshire union and the MFGB emergency fund, and thereafter distributed allowances remitted from Russian trade union gifts) and, in Frank Varley and George Spencer, led by industrial politicians broadly opposed to strike action where mediation alternatives appeared available. "Right from the beginning of the dispute, three Nottinghamshire pits, Blidworth, Clipstone and Ollerton, where coal had not long been reached, worked normally, supposedly by arrangement with the NMA."[224]

In August of 1926, the NMA Executive requested authority from the MFGB to negotiate a bespoke local settlement. Permission was denied whilst the prospect of national agreement continued. At this point a third of the Nottinghamshire miners had already returned to work; by October two thirds of NMA members were back at work, and George Spencer called for the remaining strikers to return. He was subsequently expelled from the MFGB for breaking with the national position, by a Conference vote of 759 to 4.

George Spencer had been born in 1872 in Sutton-in-Ashfield. He worked as a farm labourer in Worksop from the age of eight and had gone underground as a pitworker at Blackwell when he was twelve. An auto-didact and beneficiary of the WEA, he became a Wesleyan preacher alongside pursuing his career as a union official. Despite the Liberal preferences of the pre-war Union, Spencer was elected as a Labour MP for Broxtowe and served for a decade. He was also variously President of the county cricket club, a Justice of

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[223] Douglass, D.J.: *Strike, not the end of the story: reflections on the major coal mining strikes in Britain* (Overton, 2005), p.11

[224] Griffin, A.R.: *Mining in the East Midlands*, p.240

the Peace, and a Lord Lieutenant of the county. He eventually died in 1957, as the NUM in Nottinghamshire he had opposed was negotiating the area NPLA with the National Coal Board.[225]

The intricate daily machinations that followed Spencer's expulsion will not be recounted here, but a pathway to a split in the union was set when the Executive of the NMA expelled Spencer and his associates from the Association. With the backing of the BWL faction mentioned above, many of whom were butties from the northern county pits, Spencer commenced negotiations with the area owners to form a local union with preferential recognition rights and an area pay and terms deal for its members. In November 1926 the Nottinghamshire & District Miners' Industrial Union (NMIU) was formed and "George Spencer was elected leader of the men at work represented. The colliery owners undertook to support the new Union by giving it sole negotiating rights; by agreeing to deduct the Union contribution from wages; by contributing £12,500 to the Union's pension fund and by harrying known members of the NMA."[226]

Despite the preferential position enjoyed by the NMIU from its inception, it never came to fully dominate union representation in the county. In 1927, 28.7% of the 57,955 Notts miners were in the NMA, 22.1% in the NMIU. By 1937, NMA share had dropped to 21.3% of the 45,579 registered workers, with the NMIU at 37.7%.[227] The NMIU, in members and income, was certainly the larger entity during the union split in the 1920s and 1930s, but despite its inbuilt competitive advantages it by no means overwhelmed its rival.

Where the new 'non-political' union would prove most dominant, however, would be in the Dukeries. Referenced in Waller, by 1934 only 31.2% of miners at Kirkby Summit colliery in the west of the county were NMIU members. However, at Blidworth, 90.9% were NMIU; at Clipstone 91.5%; Bilsthorpe was 97.3%; and at Ollerton, Harworth and Thoresby the NMA membership was in single digits. The national union was effectively locked out of the new pits in a closed shop arrangement, where ownership at the local level would refuse to negotiate with its officials or to allow collection of dues on colliery property. At Bilsthorpe, attempts to form a branch of the NMA were thwarted by the ownership sacking the newly elected officials. NMIU and company officials co-operated against the NMA at Ollerton, where the local mining agent commented that "the red men can only be kept in check by joint action." Meanwhile at Blidworth, the expressed view of ownership was simply that it would be better for the men to join no union at all – and many obliged.

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[225] Cornelius, R.: *Vision in 1939: George A. Spencer and the creation of a pension scheme for Nottinghamshire colliery workers*, (Mansfield, 2001)

[226] Ibid., p. 247

[227] Waller, R.: *The Dukeries Transformed*, pp.116-7

Griffin and Waller largely concur that the NMIU, as a 'non-political union', was an anachronism and an imposition with a limited shelf life. The intention, to create a worker negotiating organisation that eschewed political doctrine in favour of economic incrementalism, had appeal in the teeth of a debilitating General Strike and Depression. However, the enterprise would face three principal challenges that would lead to its termination in the late 1930s. Firstly, the MFGB and the NMA recovered both their financial sustainability (mislaid in 1926) and their organising confidence; secondly, the wider recovery in industrial production precipitated by rearmament would reduce primal fears of worklessness and destitution, allowing mineworkers the capacity to envision a more political approach to unionism; and thirdly, Spencer himself proved enduringly unpopular amongst the workers, meaning that the NMIU even where it was predominant lacked a visceral loyalty from its members.

To these causes for the emergence of the NMIU, Beynon & Hudson have recently added spatial dislocation and butty interference to the chart sheet. "The 1926 Strike", they argue, "had broken down first in the Nottingham area…here many of the miners lived in and around urban centres such as Nottingham and Mansfield, commuting to the mines. This weakened the link between mine and local community. The work was also organised in a different way, with the use of subcontractors (butties)…these butties 'seemed a middle class amongst the miners'".[228] The cosmopolitan nature of Nottinghamshire's interwar miners, and the true scale and importance of butty oversight, are disputed and discussed elsewhere in this thesis; but it is interesting to note that the exceptionality of the Nottinghamshire miners is considered significant as early as the 1920s, even predating the emergence of the NMIU.

It would be, to some extent, the intangible issue of Spencer's popularity and loyalty that would frame the dispute that erupted at Harworth in 1935-6. Despite being the dominant union at the pit, the NMIU and Spencer were unable to convince incoming miners from Yorkshire and beyond that a prosaic local dirt deduction agreement was fair for their terms and conditions. The issue electrified the moribund local NMA branch, which doubled in size and assumed left-wing leadership under Communist Party member Mick Kane: "For much of the interwar period Harworth was also the first pit with work available for North East miners travelling south on the Great North Road. Miners from the North East including Kane himself played a leading role in the re-emergence of the NMA at Harworth."[229]

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[228] Beynon, H. & Hudson, R.: *The Shadow of the Mine: Coal and the end of industrial Britain* (London, 2021), p.23

[229] Gilbert, D.: *The Landscape of Spencerism: mining politics in the Nottinghamshire coalfield 1910-1947* in *Miners, Unions and Politics 1910-1947* (London, 1996), p.191

When the expanded NMA branch requested workplace recognition from the ownership in 1936, twenty-five of its members were sacked. The resulting and prolonged strike, stretching into 1937, was notable for violent confrontations and some of the earliest incidences of organised picketing of a Nottinghamshire pit by miners from other areas. Police involvement was substantial, and in December 1936 police were required to maintain order in the village and secure the pit gates.

The dispute at Harworth boosted calls for recognition across the NMA area, and by April 1937 these were front page news across the country. The MFGB successfully moved a motion for a national strike action in support of the NMA at Harworth, causing the Government to intervene and broker a resolution. In May 1938, the Nottinghamshire and District Miners' Federated Union was formed by remerging the NMIU and NMA. Spencer remained its leader, and existing wage settlements with the owners were kept in place. Separate 'political meetings' of the union were constituted, to ensure that the core work of the Federated Union would remain 'non-political'. According to David Gilbert, "whoever were the winners in the dispute, it was clear that neither George Spencer nor the Barber Walker company were losers."[230]

> "The decision to form a National Union of Mineworkers was taken at a Conference held in Nottingham where Spencer's was the only voice raised in opposition. He warned his members that they would lose by it financially, but few of them took much notice. In the event, of the 24,001 men voting in Nottinghamshire, only 2,836 opposed the formation of the NUM…when the new Union came into existence on 1st January 1945 Spencer…had to go into retirement."[231]

Spencer's extraordinary and controversial career would recede in its significance and vehemence as years beyond Vesting Day rolled by. His warning, however, that "the more you narrow responsibility and freedom, the more you undermine in the long run the permanency of the structure and the power"[232] would retain some of its sting. Nottinghamshire reassimilation into the MFGB and the NUM had come, through the negotiated settlements of the 1930s and 1940s, at the cost of a complicated web of area exemptions and guarantees in a federal structure. This tended to encourage the view in Nottinghamshire (and in other areas in the Midlands with similar union-political attitudes) that the union rulebook was a constitutional bulwark against centralisation or overarching national authority within the NUM. As Andrew Taylor explains:

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[230] Ibid., p.193

[231] Griffin, A.R.: *Mining in the East Midlands*, p.311

[232] cit. Taylor, A.: *The NUM and British Politics: Volume 1: 1944-1968* (Abingdon, 2003), p.5

> "Nottinghamshire represented a distinct and legitimate industrial culture in an NUM traditionally managed by federalism and compromises inherent in the 1944 Rulebook. This tradition formed the basis of a political and social contract in which membership of a national organization – with whose interests they often clashed – was acceptable only as long as the Union's rules, constitution and procedures were strictly adhered to."[233]

This construction was tested by the implementation of the district and national wage agreements of the 1950s and 1960s which, as discussed, above, had the effect of slowing pay increases for day workers in Nottinghamshire to the benefit of other, traditionally lower paid areas. A rationalist consensus that these agreements were negotiated fairly, in the interests of the sustainability of the wider industry, and against a backdrop of overall relative advantages for mineworkers against other industrial workers would begin to fray by the end of the 1960s.

However, the preparedness of the Nottinghamshire area to assume a constitutionalist attitude persisted. As wages were discussed by the 1970 NUM Conference, Len Clarke, President of the Notts NUM and national executive member, predicted that the Nottinghamshire NUM would vote by over the two-thirds majority needed to support national strike action if required to. He and Nottinghamshire colleague Len Martin were principal among the leaders in London who rejected the initial pay offer made by the NCB. Nottinghamshire miners had demanded an immediate overtime ban from 24th September in a bid to ensure a nationally agreed pay demand was met.[234]

Clarke, speaking at the conference, said that "I will assure you of this. If that course [industrial action] is taken in conformity with the rules of this organisation, and the majority of our members vote in favour of strike action of any kind, you will find we are as solidly at the back of you as we have ever been."[235]

And so Nottinghamshire supported the eventual industrial action taken in 1972 and maintained solidarity with the negotiation and dispute strategy of the Union through the following two years. Brian Lawton, an Ollerton and Blidworth miner and NUM activist, recalls that north Nottinghamshire support was "just solid" and in line with the wider Union, and that "the Nottinghamshire area was probably more left-wing then" than it was to be in later disputes.[236] Further, Diarmaid Kelliher observes, in his study of mineworker solidarity movements in London, "warm personal relationships" and strategic "twinning"

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[233] Taylor, A.: *The NUM and British Politics: Volume 2: 1969-1995* (Abingdon, 2005), p.283

[234] Bradley, R.: *A Comprehensive History of Mining*

[235] Taylor, A.: *The NUM and British Politics: Volume 2,* p.36

[236] *Brian Lawton,* Oral Interview undertaken by Diarmaid Kelliher (London, 2017)

between metropolitan trades councils and 1970s Nottinghamshire NUM branches, including Clipstone.[237] Little evidence of political peculiarity existed there.

The acrimony generated in Nottinghamshire by the rejection of an NCB incentive scheme, first courted and then opposed by the national NUM leadership, would represent a significant fissure between those more productive coalfield areas and the cause of national-industrial unity. It would not be until 1978 that area incentive schemes would be introduced across the coalfield, which helped the miners to return to the top of the industrial 'wages league' in each of 1978, 1979 and 1980.[238]

The court of inquiry into coalfield pay chaired by Lord Wilberforce, which brought to a close the 1972 strike, concluded with a concise report recommending a package of pay improvements for workers balanced against the productivity and pit closure imperatives of the Coal Board. In his report, Wilberforce set out what he considered some of the 'special circumstances of the miners' case':

> "The British coalmining community is in some ways quite unique. Coalminers and their families often live in poor housing in isolated communities. There is often a strong egalitarian feeling among the men, which manifests itself in their concern for the lower paid men in the industry. Since about 1957…they have seen their numbers working in pits reduced from over 700,000 to under 290,000 and the number of producing collieries fall from over 800 to under 300."[239]

In the NCB's case submission to the Wilberforce Inquiry, the Board was eager to draw his Lordship's attention to the scale of 'Violent Picketing' witnessed in the strike action. A full day by day catalogue of events is provided. 'Physical intimidation of staff', 'windows smashed', 'officials injured', 'NACODS members chased away from the pit and knocked down'. Of the 41 separate incidents reported by the NCB at or near its property, only one involved a Dukeries pit. Whilst numerous clashes would occur in the south of the county (Gedling, Calverton and Bevercotes collieries appear throughout the list), only a single day

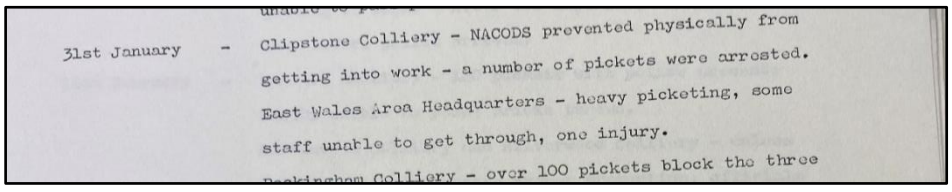
31st January - Clipstone Colliery - NACODS prevented physically from getting into work - a number of pickets were arrested.
East Wales Area Headquarters - heavy picketing, some staff unable to get through, one injury.

Figure 28 - Excerpt from NCB submission papers to the Wilberforce Enquiry (viewed at the Derbyshire Public Records Office

[237] Kelliher, D.: *Making Cultures of Solidarity: London and the 1984-5 Miners' Strike* (London, 2021), p.23

[238] Ashworth, W.: *History of the British Coal Industry Vol.5*, pp.372-374

[239] *The Wilberforce Report to Parliament, February 1972* (Derbyshire Public Records Office)

of picketing at Clipstone would warrant a mention in the northern districts (see Figure 28 below), which required police attendance.

Into the 1970s, then, it can be argued that the Dukeries miners continued to be less likely activists than their near neighbours, whether inside their own collieries or through their engagements with county and national union activity. However, it is also evident in the behaviour of their union representatives during the first decades of nationalization that these members were repeatedly prepared to set aside immediate pocketbook concerns where wider interests – and the security of the national industry – were at stake. Contrary to Wilberforce's generalisation, Dukeries miners did not live in substandard housing, they were not members of a contracting coalfield, nor had their wages been poor by industrial standards.

They had, one might conclude, every reason to be Spencerites; and yet they voted to rejoin the national Union, they supported conference and executive decision making, they backed standardised national wage agreements that would atrophy their own pay growth, and they embarked on strike action in the 1970s that would see soup kitchens in the coalfield despite their being little prospect of personal or collective benefit to the Dukeries miners themselves.

5.2 The Labour Ascendancy

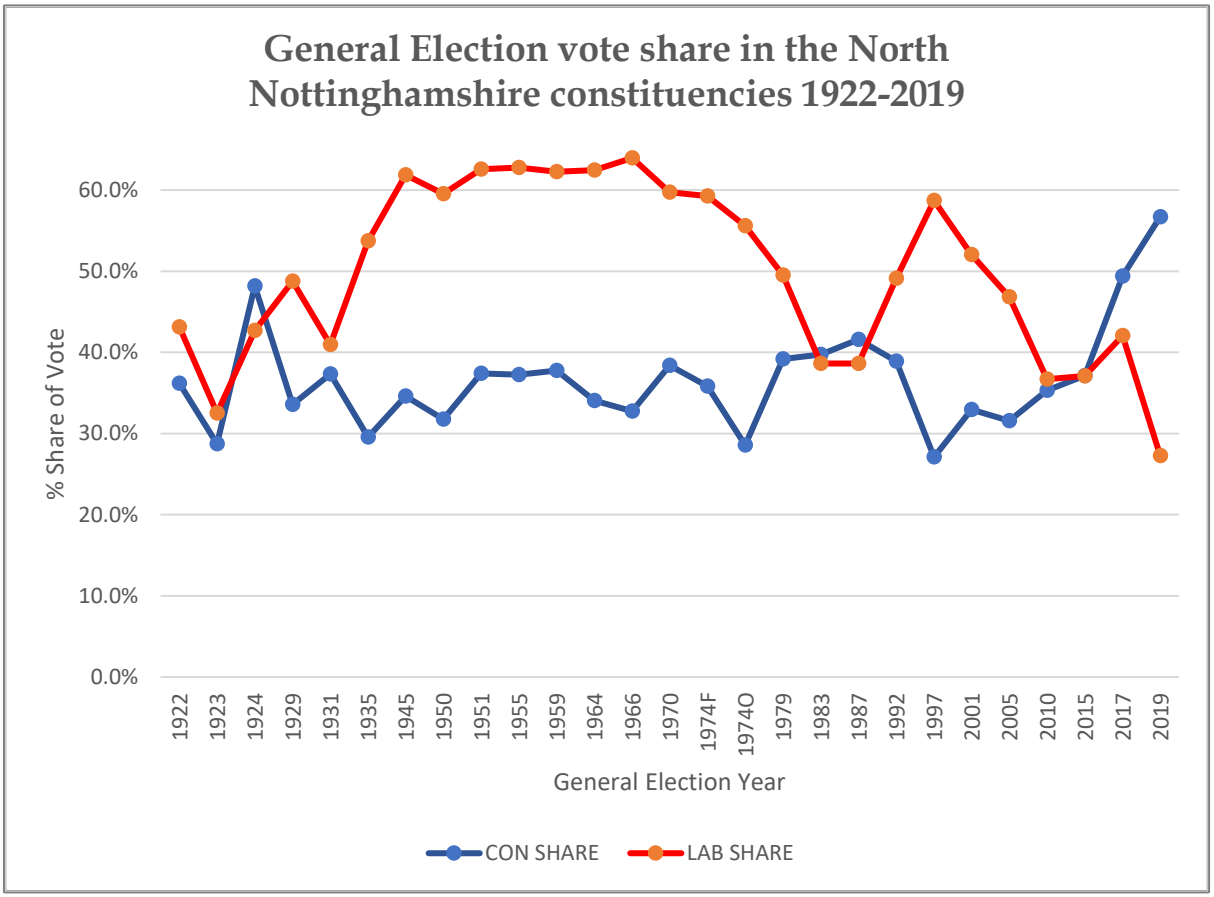

Figure 29 - 100 years of North Nottinghamshire general election results[240]

The population of the United Kingdom grew by 22.1% from 1931 to the millennium.[241] The number of electors in the north Nottinghamshire constituencies in the same period (which postdates the 1928 extension of the franchise) rose from 161,519 to 389,097 – an increase of 41.5%. The expansion from three to five Westminster constituencies in the area across the century reflects this acceleration. Less than 150,000 votes determined the 1945 Election in the area; a quarter of a million would be cast in 2019.

Industrialisation was the driving cause of this change; and the coal industry was at the epicentre of that cause. The demand for labour would continue long into the century, and even past the peak of coal extraction. The industrial East Midlands would still be in the top

[240] *General election results from 1918 to 2017* (House of Commons Library, August 2019), available at: *https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-8647* (Accessed: March 2021)

[241] *2011 Census: Population Estimates for the United Kingdom* (ONS, December 2012), available at: https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160108132257/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_292378.pdf (Accessed: March 2021)

three regions for labour market growth by the final decades of the twentieth century and predicted to see the highest GDP growth in England in its closing five years.[242] In political terms, the more localised effect was to radically change the composition of the north Nottinghamshire electorate, over a century of change but most radically in a few short decades of radical interwar industrialisation that would overlap upheavals in party political – and sociopolitical – loyalties and expectations.

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The 2019 General Election delivered a string of eye-catching results across the English North and Midlands. Within minutes of the exit poll being delivered by the BBC, commentators began to frame the outcome as a grand breaching of the '*Red Wall'* of Labour-held seats spanning Merseyside, Manchester, South Yorkshire, the North East and the post-industrial Midlands. In Nottinghamshire, the scale of the political change was pronounced. For the first time since the First World War, Labour failed to hold a Parliamentary seat in the county beyond the Nottingham city limits.

The Labour Party, political vehicle of organised industrial workers since its inception, had been represented in the north of Nottinghamshire for all of the previous 101 years since 1918 as is starkly by Figure 29 above.

In that century, northern Nottinghamshire had sent MPs to Parliament from (east to west) the divisions of Bassetlaw, Mansfield, and Newark. In 1955, the Ashfield constituency was created to the south-west of this cluster on the Derbyshire border, and finally in 1983 Sherwood constituency was added to the north-east of the city limits. Whether a three, four or five constituency cluster, the area had never failed to send Labour to Westminster in each election from the victories of David Lloyd George to the landslide of Boris Johnson.

The term 'Red Wall' has been attributed to the 2019 pre-election analysis of pollster and strategy adviser James Kanagasooriam[243]. A relationship between working class voters, industrial identity and post-Thatcherite residual animosity had been ascertained along this 'Wall' and deemed definitive. The categorisation is of a 'left behind' hinterland of voters grown mistrustful of external forces, international migration, and craving agency and community control.[244] The potential for some realignment in what is more traditionally termed 'Heartland Labour' England might be identified, looking again to Figure 23 above. Whilst the banner results of 2019 certainly capture the attention, this chart demonstrates

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[242] Crewe, L.: *The East Midlands* (Geography, 80.2, 1995), p.168

[243] James Kanagasooriam (Created: 14 August 2019), available at: *https://twitter.com/JamesKanag/status/1161639307536457730* (Accessed: January 2020)

[244] Goodwin, M.: *What Brexit Means for Britain* (Current History, 116:788. 2017, pp107-111), p.109

that Labour support in the area was in fact at parity or falling behind the Conservatives at each of the previous four general elections.

The two vote shares were within 10% of each other throughout the premierships of Margaret Thatcher and John Major, and Conservative recovery began and continued almost immediately following Labour's 1997 victory. In the pre-war period Labour did not establish a commanding advantage until 1935. The absolute dominance - so caricatured in northern Labour England - is in fact largely evident here only in the 1945 to October 1974 string of results.

As is discussed above in the history of the development of the north Nottinghamshire coalfield, the electoral ascendance of the Labour Party in the middle years of the 20th century almost exactly mirrors the establishment of new pits and the entrenchment of an expanded industrial working-class population in transformed communities across the area. Labour's period of greatest advantage over its opponents mirrors the years of mining in the north of the county post-nationalisation and before the industrial disputes and pit closures of the 1980s and 1990s.

Political attitudes can be seen to be built through the aligning influences of place, agency, class, occupational solidarity, and personal or family concern. The unusual and particular circumstances of the formation of the Dukeries coalfield had an ongoing impact on political opinion and activity and was subject to the interdependence of these forces.

Griffiths & Johnston argue that "this interdependence goes beyond the exercised domination of the employers and their mutual supports…it involved hegemonic processes by which relations of domination and subdomination infused the whole lived experience of Dukeries' miners and their families, imbuing social practices, relationships and expectations."[245]

This analysis is itself highly dependent on Waller's earlier work, which emphasises the slow growth in Labour support in the interwar years relative to that of comparable coalfields. Waller[246] argued that relatively poor Labour performance at borough and county elections in the 1930s Dukeries (a period when Labour were already dominant in mining western and southern Nottinghamshire) was a by-product of colliery management and local aristocratic candidacies, and of deliberately suppressed Labour Party organisation.

On organisation: "No ward or branch [Labour] parties were founded in the new colliery villages, and activity was confined to the occasional informal effort by a group of like-

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[245] Griffiths, M.J. & Johnston, R.J.: *What's in a place? An approach to the concept of place, as illustrated by the British National Union of Mineworkers' Strike, 1984-5* (Antipode, 23:2, 1991, pp185-213), p.203

[246] Waller, R.: *The Dukeries Transformed,* pp.130-145

minded friends…the poor Labour organization in the Dukeries contrasted sharply with that of their opponents."

Colliery management and ownership combined in the villages to fund, organise, and field candidates for either Conservative or Liberal formations, depending on the preferences of the local elites. Even where Labour was electorally successful either side of the First World in local north Nottinghamshire politics, Liberal and Conservative politicians would collaborate to minimise its influence: in Mansfield and Sutton in Ashfield, for example, these opponents united to bar Labour out of all council committee chairmanships into the late 1920s.[247] With non-political trade unionism holding sway in the Dukeries before the war, there was little space to oppose these constructs – and the relative prosperity and stability of work discussed earlier in this thesis made the rationale for taking on the risk of organising against the established system more tenuous. Where Labourism and left socialism did break out at district level in the pre-war Dukeries, it was often a product of miners who had migrated from more politically engaged area. Mick Kane, the leader of the NMA revival at Harworth and an elected district councillor, was a Scot. It was the north-eastern Todhunter mining family who provided a candidate to stand against Lady Savile for the Bilsthorpe ward in 1937.

Although the sweep of 1945 and the ensuing nationalization of the coal industry would engulf the Dukeries in electoral labourism, so extends the argument, it did so without the deep and engrained community cultural and organisation bases witnessed in other areas. This shallow-rooted Labourism, accompanied by "local specificities…decisive in producing experiences and senses of belonging distinct from miners in other coalfields"[248], would create a coalfield Labour ascendancy vulnerable to shocks like the 1977 Ashfield by-election, the Conservative reversals of the early 21st century, and the Brexit vote briefly discussed below.

Whilst this north Nottinghamshire peculiarity is compelling, the sources tend to overemphasise certain explanations. Both Griffiths & Johnston and Waller (the former's analysis being heavily constructed on the latter's) set store by the importance of the butty system in interwar political developments: that butty gang managers, as a kind of coalfield bourgeois rentier class, constrained and manipulated the politics of their underworkers in close concert with capital and management. However (according to Bob Bradley) the butty system as it was applied in the midlands coalfield, was rapidly dying out as a structure by the late 1920s and early 1930s. Butties were "cashing in and buying up houses back in

[247] Johnson, B.: *Nine days that shook Mansfield* (Chesterfield, 2005), p.9

[248] Emery, J.: *Belonging, Memory and history in the north Nottinghamshire* (Journal of Historical Geography 59, 2018, pp77-89), p.81

their own villages or on the coast", rather more than entrenching themselves as political operatives for the ruling system.

Similarly, the role and attitudes of the pre-existing communities in the Dukeries, and of miners' wives and families not directly in daily contact with pit authoritarianism, is little researched and understood in this early period. To what extent resistance to the advent of coal achieved political salience in neighbouring or host communities is unclear, and too easily dismissed in consideration of the coalfield's political balances.

And lastly, whilst it is true that when the 20th century Labour ascendancy began to degrade across the wider political East Midlands it was the Dukeries where this was most immediately felt, it is not correct that the fabric of Labour north Nottinghamshire disappeared out of hand. Post-coal Nottinghamshire did not witness the same order of rout for Labour as the post-war Dukeries had previously unleashed on organised liberalism.

Although the future of electoral politics in the district in the age of populism cannot be predicted, labour organisation, membership and elected officialdom persists across the area – from Bassetlaw and the Yorkshire borders through to the outskirts of Nottingham City. It is striking that – at point of writing and with much turmoil across wider UK politics - those seismic shifts in coalfield political opinion already appear in some retreat and an improbable Labour resurgence is being seen. And most strongly, in the former coalfield.[249]

[249] Wood, P.: *Red Wall Tory MPs would face near wipeout in General Election* (The Independent, 19 January 2021), Available at: https://inews.co.uk/news/politics/red-wall-tory-mps-poll-near-wipeout-boris-johnson-leadership-crisis-1410368. Accessed: January 2021

5.3 Repercussions

Was Brexit a definitive expression of post-industrial Dukeries political opinion? The narrow consensus for leaving the European Union in the 2016 Referendum was achieved with 51.9% of votes cast across the United Kingdom, and 53.4% of those in England. A consistent pattern of higher levels of Leave support occurred in non-metropolitan and industrial England – north Nottinghamshire was no exception, as demonstrated in Figure 30 below.

The three north-western seats of the county (Ashfield, Bassetlaw, and Mansfield) delivered Leave votes of approaching or over 70%, on comparatively large turnouts. Newark and Sherwood, both on the peripheries of the city's commuter zone, also delivered significant leave votes, but slightly less than two thirds of the total.

Overall, the north Nottinghamshire bricks of the 'Red Wall' produced a substantial 65.6% vote to leave the European Union, much in line with neighbouring areas of Derbyshire (Dennis Skinner's Bolsover was 70% Leave) and South Yorkshire but unlike the city of Nottingham (50-50) or Ken Clarke's affluent South Nottinghamshire suburbs of Rushcliffe (57.6% Remain).

Constituency	Leave	Remain
Ashfield	69.8%	30.2%
Bassetlaw	67.8%	32.2%
Mansfield	70.9%	29.1%
Newark	55.7%	44.3%
Sherwood	63.7%	36.3%
Total Average	65.6%	34.4%

Figure 30 - 2016 EU Referendum result by North Nottinghamshire constituency[250]

In fact, the 2016 result amounted to a direct reversal of the last referendum held in the county. In 1975, 66.8% of Nottinghamshire's 147,000 votes were cast to remain in the European Common Market, closely aligned to the 67% vote to stay across the UK. Although the results cannot be broken down by constituency or settlement (they were collected and reported as the single Nottinghamshire reporting area), there is no evidence to suggest differing behaviour in the northern seats. If Notts voters had acquired a defining 'Europhobia', they would appear to have done so in only very recent decades. And this reversal of support for European co-operation from 1975 to 2016 was nothing new in the

[250] *EU Referendum Results* (BBC News, June 2016), available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/politics/eu_referendum/results (Accessed: March 2021)

wider context of the British coalfield: Jim Phillips has observed that significant majorities for Brexit were delivered in the English Northeast and the West Wales Valleys.[251]

It is also important to note that, despite clear support for the common market stated above, at least a pragmatic view of Europeanisation might have pre-existed the Labour collapse. Ken Coates, in assessing the root causes of the April 1977 Ashfield by-election victory for the Conservatives mentioned earlier (and from a position of some partiality), cites as causes "inflation and prices that have ripped away whilst wages have been tightly restrained…the [Labour] Government highly unpopular…miner and hosiery workers dismayed by the results of entry to the Common Market. People have felt *their loyalties have been taken for granted.*"[252]

Returning to the voter analysis of Figure 29 - 100 years of North Nottinghamshire general election results, it is difficult to resist generalisations built upon a consensus of industrial stability. From 1935 through to the later 1970s, the support for political Labour in northern Nottinghamshire appears clear and consistent with comparator industrial areas. This mirrors a period of relative economic security and opportunity in the district, built on a productive coalfield and a dynamic ecosystem of partner and allied industries. Growth in these industries might be expected to expand the scale and impact of organised labour – in the workplace, community, and at the ballot box. In the post-war period, generally peaceable relations between political Labour, the north county's NUM and the NCB maintained this sociopolitical equilibrium in all but the most extreme circumstances of dispute. This 'cohabitation' has been identified, by Stephen Catterall and in the context of Lancashire, to be central to the long Labour hegemony of the postwar period.[253]

However, a resurgence of cultural conservatism in north Nottinghamshire and its electoral pact with Euroscepticism suggest a later, post-industrial rupturing of this consensus. Or, perhaps, a post hoc hankering for social certainties and securities. The industries underpinning the Labour ascendancy retreated or disappeared from the 1980s onwards, leaving behind them isolated working-class communities shorn of agency, resilience, and economic purpose. In many pit-dependent towns and villages north of Nottingham, the 1990s saw unemployment doubling and even tripling. As this 'de-industrialisation revolution'[254] gathered pace, it might be argued, the traditional Labour coalition recalibrated its interests away from class, workplace, or industrial priorities towards

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[251] Phillips, J.: *The meanings of coal community in Britain since 1947* (Contemporary British History 32:1, pp39-59), p.51

[252] Coates, K.: *Ashfield: what's going wrong?* (Nottingham, 1977), p.1

[253] Catterall, S.: *The Lancashire Coalfield 1945-1972: NUM-Labour Party Hegemony and Industrial Change* (Manchester Region History Review, 2000), p.113

[254] Arnold, J.: *'Like Being On Death Row': Britain and the end of coal c.1970 to the present* (Contemporary British History, 32:1, 2018), p.4

questions of family, community, and more esoteric expressions of identity. Returning to the theme of collective trauma, discussed earlier in this thesis as a driver of interwar migratory worker behaviour, it is striking that Jay Emery also employs the framing of trauma in his work to contextualise the impact of 'industrial ruination' on deindustrialised mining communities.[255]

Although employment levels in the north Nottinghamshire constituencies have eventually returned to close to the national averages, recent research has shown that mining, heavy industry, and textiles have been replaced by "relatively low value-added, low paid service sector employment".[256] Average earnings in Mansfield and Sherwood districts (£15,226) are £5,000 below the East Midlands average, and £7,000 behind the national figure. The two areas are both in the UK bottom 10 for social mobility. Political opinions leading to the Brexit decision, and rapid changes in party political support, appear to be the outcome of these and a basket of other grievances: low post-industrial skills and opportunity, working insecurity, immigration and community change, and general underinvestment and decline in local infrastructure.[257] Reflecting on the contested role of the Nottinghamshire miners in the 1984-5 Strike, one former NUM activist has written that "The Notts miners missed out on a part of history that could have changed the policies of this country for the better."[258] Could a sense of a lost agency, of control and a recognised place in wider industrial-political history, also have influenced later political behaviour by the coalfield community?

Another 2019 event - less celebrated than the December election of that year - proves no less revealing for the Nottinghamshire coalfield story. That summer, the Coalfield Regeneration Trust (CRT) and Sheffield Hallam University published their 'The State of the Coalfields' report, building comparatively on work from 2014. Across a range of statistical indicators, the report presented a national coalfield (a generation on, in most places, from its definitive diminution) dominated by an aging population, outward migration, underemployment and low productivity, weakened educational attainment and poor health outcomes. The authors summarise the landscape of the post-industrial coalfield starkly:

> "The starting point here has to be the scale of the coalfields. With a population of 5.7 million (on tightly defined boundaries) the former

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[255] Emery, J.: *Urban trauma in the ruins of industrial culture: Miners' Welfares of the Nottinghamshire Coalfield, UK* (Social & Cultural Geography, 10, 2020), p.15

[256] Gartzou-Katsouyanni, K. et al: *Understanding Brexit: Impacts at a local level – Mansfield case study* (LSE Conflict and Civil Society Research Unit, 2018), pp4-10

[257] Ibid, p.17

[258] Ambler, K.: *A Coalfield in Chaos* (Wakefield, 2016)

coalfields of England, Scotland and Wales have a population equivalent to a typical English region, a little more than the whole of Scotland and far more than the whole of Wales. The point is that if the coalfields had been a 'region' in their own right, all clustered together in one corner of the country, the statistics would probably show the former coalfields to be the most deprived region in the UK."[259]

[259] Beatty, Fothergill & Gore: *The State of the Coalfields 2019* (Coalfields Regeneration Trust, 2019), available at: https://www.coalfields-regen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/The-State-of-the-Coalfields-2019.pdf, p.44

6 Conclusion

6.1 Dukeries miners: particularists or peculiarists?

This thesis has set out the conditions, ambitions, and perspectives at play in the creation of a new coalfield in 20th century north Nottinghamshire. In so doing, it has applied the specific lens of workforce migration to examine the history of this industrial place and period.

By combining community history, oral interviews with former miners and community members, archival research in Scotland and England, and an appraisal of extensive secondary material on 20th century industrial and economic history, this work has compiled new evidence to explore the developmental conditions of the coalfield and its workers from inception to consolidation and on towards conflict.

The research presented here confirms the contention that unusual - if not exceptional - circumstances did exist in the Dukeries field and that these did affect workforce, management, political and social behaviours.

Although the extent is contested and local variations applied, it can be concluded that twinned geographical and geological factors made this coalfield high-producing, dependable and long-living, and therefore a profitable concern. The expansion of electricity generating demand, synchronous with the development of the coalfield, proved material in the particular resilience of the Dukeries.

Profitability and longevity attracted investment from a group of already successful and well-connected regional colliery companies, themselves drawing on established workforces ready for redeployment and with experience of constructing worker communities from the ground up. The sensibilities of landownership, the high dependence on new combinations of migrant workers entering a previously non-industrial area, and the scale of expenditure and expectation of return all led to relatively intensive forms of company control in the new pit villages.

As additional waves of new labour entered the Dukeries workforce over time – first from bordering counties, then from northern England, Wales, and Scotland, and finally Europe and the wider world – workers encountered embedded, interconnected and highly traditional norms of paternalistic authority and structure. These sought to influence every element of life for the occupational mining community – its working and team organisational practices, family life and disciplines both inside and outside the home, what its children learned at school and how its workers voted in the union hall.

The rewards available - compared at least to other contemporaneous British mining areas - were found in preferential pay, standards and modernity of housing and amenity, and prospects for stable employment in an unpredictable wider industry. Social solidarities

were empowered to flourish, and lavish provisions were made for structured competition, leisure time, entertainment and more. However, this solidarity had its limits: its expression in class-political forms, most particularly in adversarial labour relations contexts, was vigorously opposed and actively curtailed by ownership. Whilst electoral politics would broadly mimic the trends of the wider Labour ascendancy across industrial Britain, the Dukeries would incubate a distinctively becalmed union-political culture across this period – its most profound, but not only, expression being the short lived making of the non-political Industrial Union in the interwar period.

This architecture of subdued industrial politics would have a legacy in the Dukeries beyond nationalisation Vesting Day. The area would participate fully in the structures and politics of the NUM, and its workers submit themselves to collective bargaining strategies even where these were of little immediate benefit to themselves (and sometimes, where they were directly detrimental to their pay and terms).

However, pacific relations between workers and management would be maintained into and beyond the 1950s, disputes where they occurred would seldom be vitriolic, and symmetries between mining unionism and the political Left not readily mirrored in the Dukeries towns and villages. Relative stability in these still 'young' communities of the 1960s and 1970s (themselves overlaid and enmeshed with the very 'old' traditional communities of their hosting districts) largely absented psychological and political fears of imminent deindustrialisation, both as threats and compelling forces.

There is little to substantiate the claim (however much it was offered as a canard in the first place) that there was anything 'peculiar' about the Dukeries at their development and zenith, or that could invest the coalfield's eventual nemesis with special meaning or context. Mineworkers and their families in the area suffered many of the same privations, and cherished the same aspirations, as their colleagues across the wider industry and other industrial communities. Their behaviours – as migrant workers pursuing employment in times of uncertainty, as settled members of their new spatial communities, and as sociopolitical actors in the sub-regional polity – were not imbued with a singular or exceptional perspective.

It is, rather and finally, more appropriate to describe the mineworkers in the ascendant and post-ascendant Dukeries as a 'particular' occupational community, one subjected to a very particular set of circumstances and conditions and attempting to make rational decisions. Any group of workers, however composed and assembled but meeting these same conditions, might be expected to react in similar ways.

Whilst the workforce met and suffered geographical isolation and an often oppressive climate of owner interventions - and sometimes indigenous neighbour mistrust - they themselves appear to have participated in forging resilient and relatively integrated communities. Accusations of a peculiarly self-interested economic culture amongst the Dukeries miners are not borne out by evidence: rather, they broadly seized the particular opportunities afforded by the new coalfield to invest in community infrastructure,

collective pension and welfare provisions, and in opportunities for family and neighbourhood. They and their families also became invested over time in a slowly diversifying set of local economies, as allied industries and entrepreneurial ventures rose alongside the ascending mineworks.

A 'peculiar' coalfield community would have followed its employers' wishes by voting Liberal or Tory: this particular coalfield, despite owner pressures, was resolutely Labour for half a century, in lockstep with its peers in industrial northern Britain (and across the rest of working-class urban Nottinghamshire). A peculiar creation the NMIU may have been; but the Dukeries miners, a decade on from its creation, were content to witness its passing and for it to be replaced by a constitutionally grounded readmission to the NUM.

If there is a relative peculiarity in this district's mining community, one that is illuminated by the oral evidence collected in support of this thesis, it lies in its development falling towards the end of the story of coal. Although new mining developments and communities would follow the Dukeries in the nationalised period – for example the ill-fated new sinkings in Alloa and Fife,[260] Selby, west Leicestershire and beyond – the north Nottinghamshire expansion still falls late in the wider history of the industry and is one of the largest whole 'field' developments of the post-Victorian period.

Posthoc assessments tend to view the north Nottinghamshire pit communities as if they were centuries in the making – static, inert places, where heritable work passed down generations of miners. From this false vantage point, it would be understandable to mislabel Dukeries miners as defensive, insular, individualist and disinterested in the wider industry. But this was not, and never could be, the case.

Colliery workers and their families were attracted into the new field as part of an ongoing process. They always expected to move on in time – to new pits, new fields, new regions – as existing mines deteriorated and expired. From Scotland, the North East, Lancashire and beyond, that had been their lived experience. Lincolnshire and Leicestershire pits would come next, and the story of kinetic south-eastward economic migration would continue. This was why waves of migration to the Dukeries were broadly welcomed and assimilated (particularly after nationalisation), and why north Nottinghamshire workers stood behind collective action in the 1970s.

By 1974, despite much economic evidence to the contrary, Dukeries miners were still looking ahead rather than backwards. Their collision with the existential threats to the wider industry that would come in the 1980s and 1990s, from this perspective, would necessarily produce a jarring, particular response. Perhaps their lesson to contemporary debate around deindustrialisation – and from the eventual long decline of the area's economy, its unstable and shifting politics, its resulting health and its inequality challenges

[260] Perchard, A. & Phillips, J.: *Transgressing the moral economy: Wheelerism and management of the nationalised coal industry in Scotland* (Contemporary British History, 2011, pp1-19), p.8

– was that of a dynamic industrial community becoming entrapped, unexpectedly, in a fixed and declining spatial community.

That is their particular, tragic, but far from peculiar, long story.

6.2 Notes of thanks, omission, and future ambition

This thesis was made possible by the kindness and support of family, friends, academic supervisors, and of new friends in the coalfield and the many archives and libraries across the country accessed for resources.

My wife Sarah and children Rosa and Ally have borne three years of my divided attentions and absences as the work has been researched and written. Without them I would not have started, progressed, or finished. Gail Metcalfe and Bill Alker kindly accommodated me during weeks of archival and field research in Nottinghamshire.

This work was undertaken alongside full-time employment with Scottish tertiary education agency, College Development Network. I am indebted to the Board of CDN (and particularly its Chair, Paul Houlden) alongside my colleagues for allowing me space to finish this study, and particularly for permitting me sabbatical time in 2021.

My supervisors at the University of Glasgow, Professor Jim Phillips and Dr Diarmaid Kelliher, have provided vital support at every stage of this work. Their guidance has been instrumental to the direction, content, and research strategy employed in the thesis, and their understanding and flexibility in helping me to overcome the challenges of the Covid-19 lockdown period were crucial to its completion.

I have been shown immense kindness and wisdom by staff and volunteer teams at the Bilsthorpe Heritage Museum, the Nottinghamshire County Archives, the Derbyshire Public Record Office, the National Mining Museum of Scotland Library, the National Coal Mining Museum Library, the University of Glasgow Library, and the University of Nottingham Special Collections.

A range of individuals agreed to participate in oral interviews both in the period 2019-2021 and during preparation of undergraduate research in 1998-2000, and all of those cited in this thesis are listed with immense gratitude in the bibliography. However, I would like to express particular appreciation here to Dr David Amos and Ken Ambler, who at different times (and from very different perspectives) encouraged me, guided me, and showed patience in the face of my misunderstandings.

As is stated above, this thesis was completed during a challenged period of restrictions to travel, complications in accessing archival resources, and most particularly limitations in the practicality of field and oral research. There was an ambition to address a wide range of questions relative to the research hypothesis, across an extended period and in a complex geography. As a result of the challenges and tightened scope of the writing, there are unfortunately silent (or at least muted) voices in the finished work. The lived experience of women as partners and distinct actors in the coalfield was not adequately captured in oral testimony, nor were the voices of workers from European and wider international backgrounds. Questions of sexuality, gender, racial diversity, and mental health could not be explored here but are all viable (indeed vital) future fields of enquiry, alongside the lens

applied here to migration and the coalfield. Much more consideration could be given in future studies of this place and period to histories of coalfield criminal justice, of public health and occupational safety, of allied industries and alternative employment, and to the development of coalfield environmentalism and attitudes to renewable energy as an emerging alternative industry in the 21st century.

Finally, a note on the research resources available. In completing field work in Nottinghamshire and beyond, it was apparent that there is renewed interest in the coalfield. The Brexit focus, allied with the rapid approach of the 40th anniversary of the 1984 Strike, is encouraging both community and academy to revisit the history of coal with fresh eyes. There is an appetite for new publications, documentaries, and social media discussion which will continue to draw researchers into Nottinghamshire, still the heartland of British mining debate and dissent.

Sadly, and simultaneously, there has been an unwelcome fracturing of the documentary resources that present this important story. Papers, testimonies, oral recordings, and news clippings are scattered across local history societies, public archives, museums and libraries, universities, attics, and garages from Wakefield to Richmond. Many of those assets in private and community hands are placing a burden on (often elderly) former mineworkers and their families to steward and protect them. Given the importance of this period and place to British industrial history, it would be welcome for financial and stakeholder efforts to be focused on drawing these many assets together, intelligently and patiently, in one location: preferably, a location in the heart of the Dukeries.

Figure 31 – Blidworth Colliery memorial (2021)

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