KENT MINERS:

STABILITY AND CHANGE IN WORK AND COMMUNITY,

1927-1976

by

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ABSTRACT

Despite a voluminous literature the social history of the British coalminer is incomplete. Traditional union histories are marred by a partisan approach, neglect of valuable source material and ignorance of social life beyond the committee room. Classic sociological accounts, on the other hand, are rarely placed in context through reference to time or place and tend to over-emphasise the deterministic influence of industrial and class factors upon social relationships and behaviour. A more balanced and sociologically informed history needs to place more emphasis upon the 'rank and file' miner and his attitudes, values and beliefs. Furthermore, the implications of the pattern of labour mobility associated with coal extraction must be fully explored. Coal is ultimately an exhaustable resource and therefore miners must either move from declining collieries and coalfields to those which are expanding or remain and find work elsewhere. What are the implications of this movement for social relationships and behaviour?

An answer to this question is sought through an examination of the experiences of a group of miners and their sons associated with one particular colliery (Snowdown) during two contrasting phases in the history of the coalfield. Their (tape recorded) oral accounts, together with other evidence, give insight into the social processes associated with the 'cycle' of coal extraction.

In the first period (1927-1939) unemployed miners migrated to Kent from all over Britain. Many of these men were young and impoverished and had left for Kent in desperation. Their move was characterised by a reluctance (to leave home) and a limited objective (to find work). This can help to explain the failure of a high proportion of migrants to settle in Kent and the subsequent delay in the development of stable social relationships. Moreover, these factors were conducive to division and conflict in and beyond the colliery as was evident in the operation of a form of subcontracting (the 'butty system'). The diversity and complexity of this system itself fuelled internal cleavages and encouraged an unstable and divided work and community environment.

In the second period (1957-1976) the Kent collieries were threatened by contraction and closure and established work relationships were disrupted by extensive mechanisation and altered payment systems. A considerable number of men left the industry - although not the area - and some of their sons never entered. However, as Snowdown Colliery began to decline the population dependent upon it matured into a stable, homogeneous and close-knit community. In this context values and patterns of behaviour traditionally associated with mining communities persisted and bound miners and non-miners together in an 'occupational community' which included those who were no longer employed at the colliery.

The contrast between these two periods of expansion and decline gives some indication of the gaps which remain in the social history of the miner and the mining community; more extensive use of the first hand account may help future investigators to fill them.

PREFACE

This thesis is about miners and their communities - a subject where our knowledge is less comprehensive than most imagine. The overall line of argument is sketched out in the Abstract and Chapters 1 - 7 are each accompanied by a small introductory comment. It only remains, therefore, to thank those who have helped along the way during the course of the research. In Dr. Alan Armstrong and Dr. Richard Scase I had two academic supervisors who consistently gave advice and encouragement over a five year period: I am grateful to them both. For the taped interviews (and much else besides) I am indebted to those men and women who made the 'fieldwork' so enjoyable and without whose efforts this study would not have been possible. I should also thank the officials and staff at the Offices of the National Union of Mineworkers (Kent Area) in Dover for their patience and help during the course of my enquiries. Finally, my thanks are due to Victoria Marriott for typing a difficult manuscript.

CHAPTER ONE

COALMINERS AND COALMINING COMMUNITIES: SOCIOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Introduction

Coalminers in Britain and, indeed, elsewhere have for many years now attracted the attention of politicians, civil servants, journalists and novelists as well as academics. More recently the miners have come under the scrutiny of the mass media and, in particular, television. During the first three years of the research, for example, two detailed reconstructions of the events of May 1926[1], two historical drama series set in mining communities[2] and two documentaries concerning the Kent miners were shown on television[3]. In 1976 a spate of programmes were networked in recognition of the fiftieth anniversary of the General Strike. Two years before, of course, the national miners' strike, which culminated in a general election and a change of government, received massive coverage from both television and press and thereafter, in a period of rapid inflation the policies and ballots of the National Union of Mineworkers - particularly in relation to wage demands - were carefully monitored by the mass media. In some respects this amount of attention was exceptional: the national strikes of the early seventies were the first since 1926. Nevertheless, the key role which the industry played in the process of industrialisation and the dramatic socio-political history of the miners has ensured that the story of this particular group of men is considerably better documented

than most other occupations. Academic research has focused upon various aspects of the miners' economic and social situation including the physical conditions of coalgetting, trade union and labour organization, strike rates, political ideology and leisure activities. These studies, along with various government reports and the more impressionistic evidence of journalists, novelists and autobiographers form an impressive corpus.

It would be foolhardy to attempt in this introductory chapter any kind of comprehensive survey of such a wide range of statistical and literary material; instead, certain aspects of historical and sociological analyses of miners and mining communities are selectively and critically reviewed. The aim is to delineate a range of methodological, conceptual and empirical deficiencies and to explain, where possible, their source. More recent research indicating the promise of alternative approaches will also be cited by way of an introduction to the issues dealt with in the main body of the thesis.

(i) The union histories

The studies of trade unionism in the British coalfields represent a major source of historical information on coalminers. Furthermore, in terms of subject matter, methodology and style the union histories may, justifiably, be collectively identified. It is these area and national histories which are considered here; the more general work of historians which has influenced the development of sociological concepts is assessed in Section (iii).

In a recent review of coalfield studies it was pointed out that, with the exception of the West Midlands, a regional history existed for each of the major coalfields such that the geographical deficiencies of mining labour history were 'largely ...remedied'. Furthermore, 'progress...towards rectifying the chronological imbalance' was described as 'even more encouraging'[4]. Whilst the first evaluation was undoubtedly accurate the second was perhaps over optimistic given the limited number of studies which went far beyond 1926. Only three area studies, for example, made even a brief survey of developments during the 1950s and there was no comprehensive analysis of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) almost thirty years after its formation[5]. Although the interwar period - particularly prior to the General Strike - was more comprehensively covered the adequacy of many accounts was questionable[6]. The limitations of union histories were scathingly exposed by Williams in an influential article published in 1962[7]. According to the author the absence of any economic or social analysis of the roots of the miners' unions was directly related to the shallow, descriptive style normally adopted in these studies. For

their part, the authors under fire often attempted to point out from the beginning their limited aims. In the preface to The Miners: In Crisis and War, for example, Arnot asserted that 'this history deals only with the mainstream of a national body representing the British miners'[8], and he made a plea akin to this in his first study, The Miners:

> The importance of the life and conditions of the men who produce the coal is often given less attention (than the industry itself). Though...it is still a rich field for historians to investigate.
> This history does not seek to cover so wide a field...it sets out to deal with their national trade union activities...The whole development of technique, and the changes in capitalist structure, lie outside its scope, as is also the social life of the miners, including their religion, their recreation and other communal activities[9].

A similar apology was made in Evans' preface to The Miners of South Wales:

> It is not intended as a social history of the miners, or as an account of the coal industry's development in South Wales...I have confined myself to the rise of trade unionism and the basic problems that appeared in the field of industrial relations...other researchers might have...laid greater stress upon political, sociological or other factors[10].

By following a strategy which separated the activities of the union from economic, social or political 'factors' these studies forsook the wider realities of the mining community in preference for a detailed discussion of the institutional affairs of the trade union. This division of labour could only be recommended on practical rather than academic grounds

and the unfortunate consequence was manifest in a body of work which provided an elaborate summary of a small group of miners in committee rather than in 'pit, home and community'[11].

This imbalance in the miners' history was directly related to the limited range of source material typically drawn upon by union historians. The abundance of union records, particularly in relation to the scarcity of surviving documents held by employers, led to their consultation almost to the exclusion of other important primary sources. Even within the union records attention was focused upon the minutes of executive meetings rather than the membership books or accounts, both of which could potentially provide more information concerning the relationship between rank and file miners and their leaders. The major limitation of written minutes, of course, was that they only recorded what a small number of officials <u>said</u> at particular meetings and unfortunately this did not necessarily bear any relationship to what they actually <u>did</u>. Moreover, there was no guarantee that the minutes were, in fact, an accurate or comprehensive summary of what was actually said. Despite these potential shortcomings the possibility that certain conflicts, arguments or details may have been distorted or simply excluded from the recorded account was rarely, if ever discussed. Trade union historians were selective in a further sense: the minutes which they consulted invariably concerned the meetings of area or coalfield organizations, and not those at the pit branch level. In an industry where the union branch traditionally played an

exceptionally important part in day to day affairs and possessed a considerable degree of autonomy in relation to the area organization such an omission was particularly significant.

The resulting ignorance of the everyday life of the ordinary union member was compounded by the tendency to gloss over divisions and conflicts within the union leadership and between officials and the rank and file miners (including, of course, non-unionists). This tendency 'to simplify the issues and paper over the cracks' was not entirely an indirect result of the consultation of particular primary sources[12]. A number of the histories were commissioned by the contemporary officials of the union which was to form the subject matter and it seems that the authors they chose, and indeed, what the authors subsequently chose to write about, were directly affected by the terms of this arrangement[13]. As a result the ensuing accounts frequently gave a limited and uncritical picture of the miners' history which Williams characterised as follows:

> It describes in eulogistic terms how the miners have struggled through adversity, under the enlightened and inspiring guidance of their leaders, to reach the promised land...Whilst the union is in conflict with the employers, there is an absence of conflict within the union. The union's policy is always right[14].

The national studies undertaken by Arnot[15] and the regional histories of Yorkshire, Northumberland and Nottinghamshire by Machin[16], Davison[17] and Griffin[18] respectively tended to take this line of approach, although more recent work by the last

mentioned author incorporated an informative account of the so-called 'Spencer Union' which concluded as follows:

> Spencerism is, at bottom, an appeal to self interest. Miners' leaders, and miners themselves, have demonstrated that Spencer had no monopoly of whatever personal characteristics are required to pursue this end[19].

This type of critical appraisal was rarely proffered in the 'traditional' texts and judging from recent events in Yorkshire it seems unlikely that more recently commissioned works will alter the pattern. The dismissal of Robert Neville as author of the official NUM history of the Yorkshire miners was precipitated by the manner in which he described events in the 1893 mines lock-out. The particular details of the case are not of importance here: suffice to say that Neville's 'history' did not match up to the expectations of the Yorkshire NUM officials and in the face of his refusal to alter his account he was dismissed[20]. This striking example of the powerful editorial sanctions of the union underlines the earlier criticisms put forward by Williams who argued that the predominantly pro-union stance and ignorance of alternative sources led to 'a good deal of airy and unsubstantiated generalisation' whilst contributing 'little to knowledge of social factors'[21].

Despite Williams' warnings and recommendations the social history of the mining community after 1880 was described nearly a decade later as 'almost a complete void'[22]. This critical evaluation was supported by Raphael Samuel:

> It may be thought that the history of the miners is very near complete. On the contrary, it has scarcely begun. The real history of the miners' organizations, and of their amazing power to fight back, is to be found not in their trade unions - the almost exclusive concern of the county histories - but in those endless 'confabulations' on the bank and at the face, which coalowners complained of ('They will do nothing without having a talk over it first'), in the club and in the home[23].

and the authors of a subsequent bibliography of miners' history published in 1975:

> It must be stressed, of course, that there are many areas of study relating to the miners movement as a whole where there has either been no research or where much fuller investigation is necessary. For example, we know only too little about those who did not join trade unions. It would be valuable to have a detailed analysis of the underlying causes of non-unionism, its incidence, its impact on colliery communities and the reactions of trade unionists throughout the country[24].

Together, these authors acknowledged that the social history of the miners was inadequate. Despite the emphasis upon the unions a proper explanation of their strengths or weaknesses could not be given, largely because so much going on around and outside the union headquarters had been forgotten or ignored. Each also offered a similar route out of the existing impasse: greater consultation of the <u>first hand</u> accounts of miners and their families.

(ii) <u>The promise of oral history</u>

These recommendations were voiced at a time when 'oral history' represented something of an academic growth industry

in Britain. A journal was established in 1971[25] and several studies relying on the extensive use of oral evidence were published[26]. Oral history was a convenient label for studies of the past which incorporated first hand accounts of lived experience[27]. However, it implied (wrongly) a new subject, whereas, in fact, oral history described a method of historical enquiry. Just how new was this method? Thompson correctly pointed out that much of the 'documentary' evidence frequently consulted by historians was, in fact, based primarily upon oral evidence and he cited newspaper articles and the reports of government commissions as two particularly apposite examples[28]. Nevertheless, oral history was novel in terms of the weight given to the deliberate and systematic collection of first hand oral accounts; the use of a tape recorder to ensure a complete verbal record; and the vastly higher status which this type of evidence was accorded in the final published account[29].

Prior to the boom in oral history sociologists had, of course, made extensive use of first hand accounts, invariably through the interview or questionnaire. Although much of their attention was focused upon contemporary issues this was not exclusively the case. Zweig's enquiry, for example, based largely upon conversations with several hundred miners during a four month tour of the British coalfields, frequently contrasted the present with the past[30]. The later study by Dennis et al., of a Yorkshire mining community also reproduced the reminiscences of older miners although these were treated with extreme caution where no other sources of information were available[31]. In discussing the reaction of families to hardship during the thirties they noted that:

> On this question, it must be realised that only the evidence of the memories of Ashton residents is available; there is no record of direct observation. The examples given are of this sort, and for that reason this section on the family in the past is kept brief[32].

During the seventies several investigators used the memories of individuals in a less inhibited manner to reconstruct the social history of miners and mining communities and their accounts indicated the promise of oral history in this area of study. Storm-Clark offered examples from his own research which demonstrated the manner in which first hand evidence might re-shape our perspective on the miners' experience[33]. For example, how far did average employment, hours and wage data distort the individual collier's situation? Storm-Clark suggested that in South Wales, prior to 1914, the contract worker at the coal-face had no conception of a wage rate nor expectation of a regular shift in terms of hours. In this sense oral evidence pointed up a crucial difference between the perceptions of the academic statistician on the one hand, and the miner on the other. Further questions were prompted. How could the availability of fresh food be realistically assessed without reference to the incidence of poaching and stealing? How far were the inter-war social problems of the South Wales Coalfield related to earlier waves of migration as much as any subsequent decline in employment or earnings after 1921? How did 'cosmopolitan' pits differ from 'family' pits?

Did miners in isolated communities react differently to unemployment and hardship when compared to those integrated in broader based industrial settlements? Storm-Clark's oral material stimulated a host of fresh questions and also indicated that the further collection of first hand evidence often represented the only way in which such questions could be answered convincingly.

To this end a sizeable project in the South Wales Coalfield was of direct relevance for its aim was to 'salvage' oral as well as written evidence concerning the history of the area[34]. 330 hours of taped interviews were completed but, in the first instance, the archival character of the research left little room for analytical discussion. Nevertheless, there were indications that this work provided evidence which undermined traditional notions, particularly those based upon a simplified model of the 'socialist' mining community. One of the 'major revelations' of the community study of Maerdy (known as 'Little Moscow' during the inter-war years), for example, was the discovery of 'a well developed tradition of working class toryism in the heart of Bolshevik territory', and a pattern of allegiance that reconciled a tory vote at general elections with a communist vote at the colliery lodge[35]. The interviews also brought home to the project workers how misleading the popular image of the stable mining community was; in fact, the coalfield's history was characterised by a remarkable fluidity and mobility of human population.

Elsewhere, MacFarlane based an account of working life in Denaby Main, a pit village in South Yorkshire, around interviews he had conducted with three retired miners and a miner's wife[36]. The oral evidence successfully conveyed the enormous economic and social power of the employers in the 'total institution' context of the colliery company village and illustrated the way in which this led to a polarisation of the inhabitants into 'company' and 'union' men. Moreover, just as Storm-Clark referred to the problematical period of transition between 'settlement' and 'identity' following years of heavy migration, MacFarlane referred to population movement as a possible explanation of local militancy:

> It would not be unimportant that all the miners at Denaby were migrants from other regions. This influx of industrial workers, without the restraints on behaviour of traditional home ties or established social patterns and institutions would seem likely to adopt 'a new frontier' or 'wild west' social norm, to be less well disciplined than workers in a more settled environment[37].

From another angle and in a different coalfield, Moore also discussed certain sources of differentiation amongst miners during the period between 1870 and 1926 when labour ideology finally replaced the firmly entrenched liberal tradition[38]. In a carefully constructed framework which incorporated the intensive study of four West Durham mining villages, Moore demonstrated how Methodism inhibited the development of class

consciousness and class conflict by encouraging the union leaders to identify with their employers and adopt an organic view of capitalist society. This general thesis was considerably illuminated by the use of first hand evidence which indicated the strength of informal ties of kinship and friendship as a binding force of greater strength than the associational tie of formal membership - although this later inhibited the adoption of any side during periods of industrial conflict. Oral material also proved useful in presenting detailed portraits of the 'respectable Methodists' and in the detective work of tracing Methodist members and adherents.

In a more contemporary study of the social consequences of declining industries Allen analysed the dramatic events in the coal industry during the years between 1957 and the early 1970s[39]. His aim was 'to examine the manner in which the British coalminers responded to the sharp decline in employment opportunities in the coal industry and to analyse the determinants of that response[40]. To fulfill this objective he analysed questionnaires completed by miners from five collieries of differing character in the Scottish, Yorkshire and Kent Coalfields. These were supplemented by 'open-ended interviews of two hours duration' with a smaller group of miners and their wives 'chosen to represent group interests'[41]. Their evidence helped Allen to explain how the predominantly individualistic 'solution' of leaving the industry, adopted by so many miners after 1957, was transformed into the collective

'solution' of staying put and supporting radical union policies. The miners' changing, inconsistent and contradictory ideas and perceptions were related to exposure to differing 'dominant' and 'subordinate' ideologies. Thus mechanisation represented, in general terms, 'progress' and 'efficiency', yet at the pit it disrupted work roles and introduced new and unknown hazards; a strike was supported despite the expected suffering and the professed view that 'no-one benefits'; anticipated hazards in the underground environment were treated largely with indifference but the unexpected dangers of, for example, fatal poisoning from rats' urine (experienced at a Scottish pit in 1952) or death through winding gear failure (as at Markham Colliery in 1973) were met with an exceptional reaction. Allen's perceptive treatment showed the complexity of personal 'world views' and implicitly suggested that these might be best studied through the detailed analysis of first hand accounts.

Finally, George Ewart Evans, the 'doyen of British oral historians'[42], recently returned briefly to his native Welsh valleys to look at 'the specific effects of mechanisation on mining and the mining community'[43]. Evans applied the oral method upon which he established his reputation in East Anglian agricultural history to this new area and the resulting interviews demonstrated, once again, his skilful interview technique and belief that it is 'best for the informants to speak for themselves'[44]. As a result, the lengthy excerpts reproduced gave many insights into the changing 'social climate

of mining'[45]. The special relationship between 'man' and 'boy' in the Welsh pits, for example, and the manner in which the introduction of machinery eliminated this type of informal apprenticeship and altered social relationships between established colliers and new entrants was skilfully brought out in the interviews. Unfortunately, not all of Evans' oral evidence received this sort of critical attention; indeed, his work gave warning of the dangers involved in placing too much emphasis upon the first hand account alone. Allowing men to 'speak for themselves' often left Evans with very little room to make any explicit analysis of what they had said. In consequence, the oral evidence was rarely compared with other historical sources, or even existing published work and much of the material included added little to the accounts by, for example, Dennis et al.,[46] Trist et al.,[47] Goldthorpe[48] and Sigal[49]. Indeed, Evans' work was often deficient by comparison to these earlier publications. His sensitivity to different types of mines and mining techniques before the introduction of machinery, for example, was marred by an apparent ignorance of the variety of mechanical adaption and the differing ways in which machinery may be handled in terms of the division of work tasks.

In sum, the application of oral history in this study of miners and mining communities illustrated at once the attractions and dangers of the method. Clearly, oral evidence should be used with caution and, where possible, in conjunction with other

sources. Several recent investigations have demonstrated the potential of the method: it is for future researchers to confirm this promise.

(iii)Sociological studies

Amongst sociological accounts of the miner and his community Coal is Our Life has held a central place ever since its publication in 1956[50]. An indication of the enormous influence of the study may be given by reference to several reviews which have cited it as an example of a particular type of working class community and model of social analysis. Thus Klein[51], Frankenberg[52] and Bell and Newby[53] have each presented largely uncritical summaries of the original work in their own attempts to survey and synthesize a variety of community research. The study gained added importance when it was used by Goldthorpe and his colleagues in their study of the affluent worker[54]. In effect, the miners' profile constructed by Dennis et al constituted the empirical base of the 'traditional proletarian' worker and thus the yardstick against which recent changes were measured; the point of comparison for the rootless workers in the modern factories and housing estates of Luton[55].

Coal is Our Life looked at miners and their families in Ashton during the early 1950s. Ashton was 'predominantly a working class town owing its development to the growth of its collieries' around the turn of the century[56]. Coalmining dominated the town physically: slag heaps were all around and

the main pit stood in the centre. Economically too, the town owed its existence to coal for in 1931 68 per cent of the male working population were engaged in mining and in the early 1950s the figure remained above 60 per cent, so 'for the average inhabitant of the town' pitwork was the major way of earning a living[57]. This fact provided the starting point of the analysis, for Dennis and his colleagues attempted to delineate the way in which coalmining as an occupation engendered certain types of social relationships and values which were then carried over into the wider sphere of the community. As such, theirs was a study of an 'occupational community'; Ashton formed a framework in which to discuss the distinctive inter-relationships of work, family, leisure and community from a marxian standpoint[58].

What were the salient sociological characteristics of the mining community depicted by Dennis et al? In their analysis of the shift cycle of coal production and the various associated work tasks the authors demonstrated that teamwork was essential and that solidarity amongst the men was a necessary consequence of the nature of work. Adverse and dangerous conditions at the pit encouraged dependency and group involvement and attachment not only for the purpose of safety but for the practical aim of earning a living. The relative autonomy of the workgroups and their reliance upon piecework encouraged the formation of tightly knit teams composed of men who took pride and satisfaction in the completion of difficult

tasks. Certainly there were divisions amongst the men: between workers within groups, groups of workers, union officials and rank and file, old and young, 'bosses men' and rebels and so on, but these were ultimately overcome by the strength of social bonds:

> Solidarity, despite the division into interest groups amongst the miners in a given pit, is a very strongly developed characteristic of social relations in mining; it is a characteristic engendered by the nature and organisation of coalmining[59].

This characteristic was confirmed and strengthened by 'the participation in and sharing of a common set of community relations and experience through time'[60]. Work-ties overlapped and interlocked with non-work ties of family, neighbourhood and friendship; the stable and close knit character of the local population thus reflected and re-affirmed the solidarity of work. As such the miner who broke the code of loyalty to his 'mates' faced a whole range of sanctions beyond the immediate workplace; the 'blackleg' was 'made a social outcast in every way'[61]. Furthermore, the common memory of mining families, their shared experience of hard times, created a 'bond of suffering' which minimized economic and social differences[62]. The depression, however, did not hit Yorkshire quite so hard as, for example, Durham so that possibly the resulting solidarity was 'shallower'; on the other hand this was probably outweighed,

argued the authors, by the sort of economic and social comparison which Yorkshire miners could make with workers who were not so badly off and this represented 'yet another factor in the integration and solidarity of a village like Ashton'[63]. Finally, solidarity was 'recognized as being the basis of the union's bargaining power', a fact which constantly was in evidence because of the need to re-negotiate piece-rate earnings according to environmental conditions at work[64]. The men demonstrating the greatest solidarity at work - the colliers - were also those most involved in the union and most likely to occupy the official positions.

The principal leisure activities in Ashton were male dominated and, centred around drink, talk, sport and gambling, they were characterised as 'vigorous' and 'predominantly frivolous' for they involved the pursuit of immediate pleasure and enjoyment rather than any longer term goals[65]. This, argued Dennis et al., was a direct consequence of the various forms of insecurity associated with coalmining for the miners' logic seemed to be as follows: if tomorrow may bring injury, unemployment or the inability to cope with the better paid, but more arduous, tasks then all the more reason to enjoy oneself tonight. High earnings were spent rather than saved, on items not missed when income 'inevitably' declined. The miner therefore tended to spend his surplus money and time outside the home in the club and pub, at the bookmakers and on the sports field in the company of fellow miners.

Whilst the man - when not sleeping or eating - was frequently out of the house, the woman was normally in for the home and family were her social domain. Employment opportunities for women were extremely limited so most of them spent their time looking after husband, home and family and interacting socially with kin - of which there normally were many - and neighbours. Whilst sons were not normally encouraged to enter the pit most eventually found their way there and thereby continued the tradition of occupational inheritance. As in other spheres then, coalmining exercised an important influence because, as the authors observed:

> ...the basic features of family structure and family life derive their character from the large scale framework of Ashton's social relations. This framework consists of Ashton's basic industry and the relations which it enjoins on Ashton's population, together with the institutional life which has grown upon that basis[66].

The aim of the Ashton study was to demonstrate the inter-relationships between work, leisure and the family through the use of an anthropological type approach. The authors emphasised that no attempt was made to study social life comprehensively and that those aspects reviewed could have been described differently given a different set of premises. Furthermore, the community study framework, they said, inhibited their discussion of social change, particularly when the source

of this change was national rather than local, for Ashton was not 'a microcosm of the national framework' but merely a particular part of it[67]. It followed from this that it could be 'entirely misleading to draw conclusions about the whole society from the study of one English community'[68].

These disclaimers were perfectly legitimate although they could not conceal errors and weaknesses in the study. Thus despite their professed reluctance to generalise the authors frequently implied that, in many respects, Ashton could be considered as typical. Yorkshire, they claimed, 'might be described as a microcosm of England' and Ashton was 'fairly typical' of the South and West Yorkshire Coalfield[69]. Moreover, mineworking in Ashton was 'fairly typical of British mining'[70]. A series of similar judgements were made:

> To all intents and purposes the inhabitants of Ashton are all of the working class. In relation to the stratification of our society they are all in the same category. In this, Ashton is typical of mining villages[71].
>
> In fine, those features peculiar to mining and miners in Ashton itself add no new quality to the characteristics of the miner already described[72].
>
> ...we are convinced that in many respects Ashton is typical of mining communities[73].

These evaluations took little account of the wide range of evidence which indicated a considerable degree of variation between coalfields in terms of geological conditions, types of

work organisation, payment systems, wage levels and so on. In 1929, for example, Evan Williams, Chairman of the coalowners' organisation, remarked that:

> The coal industry is not one unit, but a series of units, each of which has its own problems, which can only be dealt with in the district by those who know the situation[74].

This view doubtless held certain advantages for the owners but it was supported, to a considerable extent, by the men themselves and, indeed, reflected in the loosely constituted federal organisation of the miners' union. Even after nationalisation these pit and regional differences continued to exercise a considerable influence. Whilst Dennis and his colleagues were completing their fieldwork Sir Hubert Houldsworth, then Chairman of the National Coal Board (NCB) remarked:

> All generalisations about the coal industry or the miner are dangerous; most of them are simply untrue...In a sense there is no industry: there are statistically only 900 pits[75].

These physical and organisational differences suggested a considerable variation in attitudes and social relationships which the contrasting histories of the area unions confirmed. Unfortunately, these were overlooked by the authors of Coal is Our Life. Thus 'the persistence of very concrete aspects of the old social relations of the mineworkers' and the

'continuous framework of conflict' were, they claimed, best illustrated by the wage disputes which were developing in the Yorkshire Coalfield[76]. But would this 'truth' have been demonstrated in, for example, Northumberland and Durham, Lancashire or the Midlands? In these coalfields there were far fewer disputes at this time and, in fact, during the year to which Dennis et al., make reference, Yorkshire recorded the highest - bar Scotland - tonnage lost per man through disputes when compared to the other regions[77].

The failure to place the study properly in a contemporary context was further compounded by an ignorance of the historical specificity of the research. Most Ashton families had 'a continuous record of existence in the town for fifty to sixty years at least'[78]. Approximately four-fifths of all families resident originated from the 1895-1908 period and only 7 per cent of the population had left the town since the late 1920s. But this, surely, was the consequence of over thirty years of relative stagnation following rapid expansion at the turn of the century. How might Ashton have looked after thirty years of boom conditions? In a similar frame, Moore questioned how far the attitudes of the Ashton miners were influenced by contemporary events:

> The Ashton study was historically specific, being carried out after the Second World War, amongst miners who had recently experienced the depression, in a period when political and industrial consciousness was heightened by the activities of the post-war Labour government and the nationalisation of coalmining[79].

To their credit Dennis et al., made greater reference to the past than a good number of community studies but ultimately, to repeat Willmott's generalised criticism, 'time' was 'left out'; in the concern to provide anthropological explanations the historical perspective was largely ignored[80]. This made some of the arguments forwarded in the book questionable. How far, for example, was the popularity of the pub and club explained by the old practice of payment of wages in kind through the provision of 'beer money' under a truck system or their use as a convenient place to divide piecework earnings from a collective contract[81]? These traditions could undermine notions of leisure activities being conditioned by the insecurities of mining as an occupation. In a similar vein, how far was the incidence of absenteeism determined as much by the compulsory 'holidays' of the inter-war years as by the intrinsic nature of the work[82]? Such questions were rarely asked and where aspects of social life with a potentially significant history were touched upon, the treatment was disappointingly brief. The extremely short review of 'The Churches', for example, did not adequately analyse the influence of religion upon the inter-relationships of work, leisure and the family, whilst the brief references to the 'butty system' (operative in the Yorkshire Coalfield during the 1920s) were incomplete because of the failure to discuss the implications for social relationships at work and in the community[83]. In sum, the significance of time and place - of historical and

geographical variation - were under-estimated and this encouraged exaggerated claims of typicality and the inadequate treatment of certain aspects of social life in Ashton.

A further source of weakness stemmed from the authors' ambiguous use of the concept of solidarity[84]. Clearly, in terms of relationships and activities the mining community demonstrated a remarkable cohesiveness both in and byond the colliery. However, solidarity, as Allcorn and Marsh have indicated, implies co-operation between (unlike) individuals and groups and should be distinguished from sociability which implies the association of individuals and groups 'likely to share many opinions, beliefs, ideas and possibly images of society'[85]. Dennis et al., did not make a clear distinction, and therefore could not indicate the nature of connections between the two sets of social relationships. Did drinking and talking in the club, for example, reflect the solidarity of workmates, the sociability of friends or both[86]? And who demonstrated solidarity? Pairs of men who always worked together, or particular groups of workers, or all the workers in one colliery or area, or indeed, all mineworkers? It is clear that pieceworkers were the men to whom Dennis et al., referred when discussing the factors favourable to the development of solidaristic ties yet the other day-wage men underground and on the surface did not constantly face exceptional dangers, demonstrated different relationships and attitudes and often had goals and interests which conflicted with those of the pieceworkers[87]. Just how did these differing group

solidarities ultimately add up to solidarity at the colliery level or beyond? How did the 'arse creepers', 'bosses men' and 'tale tellers' fit in with the notion of solidarity[88]? If the miners' solidarity was occupationally based did this inhibit the development of 'solidarity with other workers'[89]? These connections were given inadequate attention because of the authors' assumption that inter-personal, group and occupational solidarities could be cemented together 'brick by brick' to eventually form class solidarities.

The tendency to generalise from the experiences of the minority of pieceworkers - and in particular, the coal-face men - stemmed from the observation that the colliers were 'the hub of the social structure of coalmining'[90]. These were the men most likely to be involved in the union and the miners' welfare, to frequent the clubs and societies and to be generally established and involved in the community. They were also the most likely candidates to attract the researchers' attention. Sigal, during his stay in Yorkshire mining villages during the late 1950s remarked:

> It is this nucleus, this bound up core that I am to spend my time with. Only numerically are they a minority. For they are convinced of themselves as the real heart of the village ...those others, this majority...to listen to Davie you would never know they existed[91].

Dennis and his colleagues appear to have involved themselves, in the main, with this same minority; the miner with low job

involvement and the tendency to spend some time at home with the family received little attention. Thus after admitting that day-wage men were not as mutually dependent or as exposed to danger as colliers nor as personally interested in the completion of their relatively monotonous work, they summarised the relationship of 'Man and Job' as follows:

> ...he is proud, as he ever was, that he does a difficult, arduous, and dangerous job...In the pit itself, among his workmates, the miner is proud of doing his job as a good man should, and to a great extent a man becomes identified with his particular job...Pride in work is a very important part of the miner's life[92].

Later, in the discussion of leisure pursuits, Dennis et al., indicated that the reaction to insecurity need not be 'vigorous and...predominantly frivolous', but could be of a more long term, 'spiritual' nature[93]. Nevertheless, whilst devoting considerable space to the clubs, pubs, sport and gambling they had rather less time for the churches, and men who spent 'a good deal of time pottering about with household improvements' or had an interest 'in some hobby' were briefly dismissed as 'a small minority' in the later analysis of family relationships[94]. In sum, Dennis et al., made the same type of error as the union historians: they drew on the experiences of a minority of men and assumed, unfairly, that these accurately represented the 'unseen' majority. As a consequence their study 'helped to propogate a stereotype of the rough and tough, hard-drinking, Labour-voting miner', and only recently has social

research begun to question the validity of this widely held image[95].

Why, in fact, were the arguments and evidence forwarded by Dennis et al., accepted in an uncritical fashion for so long? To a considerable extent the answer lies in the large volume of evidence, published both before and after Coal is Our Life, which supported the central features of the mining community depicted in the study. In their examination of socio-technical organisation at the coal-face, for example, Trist and Bamforth referred to the 'responsible autonomy' of face teams and the overlap between work and community:

> Stable relationships tended to result, which frequently endured over many years. In circumstances where a man was injured or killed, it was not uncommon for his mate to care for his family. These work relationships were often reinforced by kinship ties, the contract system and the small group autonomy allowing a close but spontaneous connection to be maintained between family and occupation...[96]

In a later discussion of differing strike propensities between different industries Kerr and Siegel emphasised the importance of the industrial environment[97]. They argued that the coalmining industry tended to produce communities which were detached from the employer, and indeed, society at large. Within the community employees were relatively undifferentiated and in this sense formed a 'mass' from which there were only limited channels for occupational, geographical and social

mobility, and within which the union occupied a role of preponderant importance. In sum, the workforce was homogeneous, isolated and cohesive. Moreover, the unpleasant, physical character of coalmining tended to foster an independent spirit and a 'tough', 'inconstant', 'combative' workforce which was inclined to strike.

In another analysis of strikes Knowles made similar references to the 'density' of the population in mining areas and the relative homogeneity and isolation which produced an exceptional degree of loyalty and solidarity[98]. In order to support this argument he quoted the views of two historians, both of which are worth repeating here:

> The miner not only works in the pit: he lives in the pit village, and all his immediate interests are concentrated at one point. The town factory worker, on the other hand, lives often far from his place of work and mingles with workers of other callings. The townsman's experience produces perhaps a broader outlook, and a quicker response to social stimuli coming from without; but the miners' intense solidarity and loyalty to their Unions is undoubtedly the result of the conditions under which they work and live...their isolation ministers to their own self-sufficiency and loyalty one to another...They are narrow and slow to understand others or to feel the influence of outside public opinion[99].

> Coal-miners have always been a class apart, with mentality and aspiration unlike those of the rest of the working class. This spiritual isolation is largely a reflection of physical isolation. Living remote from the quick life of the town, the collier has developed speech and habits that effectively cut him off from his fellows. If this is so in an age of developed communications ...how wide must have been the gulf in earlier centuries when the collieries were sometimes several days' journey from the centres of urban life[100].

The first of these two excerpts came from Cole who was referring to the earlier part of the present century[101] and the second from Ashton who indicated that the mining population had borne these distinguishing characteristics for several centuries[102]. Both views later received support from Court who characterised the mining community in a very similar manner to Dennis et al., and from Nef who referred to the marked separation of wage earning miners and their employers owing to the strong, 'pre-industrial revolution' capitalist tendencies of the British coal industry[103]. This produced a distinctive community where miners drank a great deal, saved very little and 'developed a sense of solidarity akin to that felt by soldiers'. In sum, 'the seventeenth century coal workers were already beginning to possess the same independence of outlook and spirit which distinguishes many of the colliery communities of our own day'[104].

Several important elements in the model constructed by Dennis et al., could therefore be detected in the earlier works of sociologists and historians and the same may be said of journalistic and autobiographical accounts. Zweig, for example, made extensive references to the miners' distinctive leisure pursuits - drinking, talking, gambling and sport - and the 'sense of true comradeship (which) runs through the whole colliery life'[105]. Furthermore, a 'great sense of solidarity' ensured that:

> once...you become an integral part of the great communal body...your mates will never let you down...they know that one miner counts for nothing, but that the whole body of miners is a powerful force equalled by none[106].

These characteristic attitudes sprang from the unshakable belief that the miner 'belongs to a separate class of men, who earn their living by working with their hands, and whose interests are served by the unions'[107].

Earlier in A Man's Life, Lawson recalled the overriding influence of the colliery not only upon the miners but also their wives and children and he summed up the mining community thus:

> Miners live a very communal life. All live in the same colliery village, and all work at the same colliery; when not at work they are always 'at home' to one another. The doors are always open. Therefore they know each other intimately[108].

The common experience of hardship and suffering and the reality of pitwork created a strong sense of solidarity:

> The pit speaks in the same language to us all - the language of toil, discipline and danger ...How strong the bond between us! ...We were one family held together by the common bond of a common experience[109].

In this context the union played a very important part in the miners' everyday life, to the extent that 'it is in the texture

of his thought even when he is not conscious of it'[110].

Finally Lawson explicitly acknowledged (and concurred with) the popular impression of the miner and his values:

> When it is said, as it often is in other circles, that we miners have minds peculiarly rooted in our life and conditioned by it, then let the life and toll of our trade speak for us. But, anyhow, it is a well-disposed mind and wide open with charity. Perhaps our trade has not a little to do with that, for it early teaches us to know the need of these things[111].

Even the reminiscences of Tomlinson, a self-confessed conservative who had rejected the 'facile, mechanical philosophy' of socialism, included acknowledgements of the miners' comradeship at work, their determination and solidarity and the common practice of mutual aid for 'they have learned the lesson of life through adversity - love thy neighbour as thyself'[112].

This wide range of supporting evidence continued to appear after the publication of Coal is Our Life in 1956. In an article criticising the Kerr and Siegel 'isolated mass' hypothesis, Rimlinger noted the possibility of differing reactions to the industrial environment witnessed by the variations in strikeproneness even within industries such as coalmining[113]. Nevertheless, he agreed that miners tended to live apart from the wider society and that the mining environment was a potential source of tension and discontent. Consequently, the miners' separation, their intensely felt need

for co-operation and the psychological burden of a dangerous and arduous job moulded their response to the problems with which they were confronted such that 'the natural tendency' was to produce 'labour solidarity and aggressiveness'[114]. Later, in an analysis of industrial relations in Lancashire collieries Scott and his colleagues used the excerpt from Cole quoted above to link the isolation of the miner to his union militancy and after a discussion of working conditions in the pit they asserted:

> Naturally these conditions have their effect upon those who work in them, and they create their own problems. The solidarity and independence of the miners, for example, must in part be due to feelings engendered by working in a world of their own faced with an ever-present sense of danger[115].

Historians continued to follow a similar line. Gregory, with an almost ritualistic acknowledgement of Cole's observations, opened his account forcefully. 'The characteristic of the miners that has most impressed the outside world' he noted 'is their solidarity...there is no doubt that they know how to "stick together" '[116]. Why was this the case? Because of the separation, homogeneity and close knit character of the mining population and their common experience 'of hard times, accidents and strikes'[117]. This social environment produced 'naturally enough...a similarity of outlook over a wide range of issues; what was in the interest of one miner was in the interest of

every miner, and this went for politics as much as anything else'[118]. Later, E.P. Thompson, discussing the national miners' strike of 1972, looked back and noted that they 'have had for centuries this deplorable communistic tendency, arising from the very conditions of their work and community life, the egalitarianism of necessity'[119]. The picture of the mining community upon which these analyses were based was re-affirmed by the observations of Sigal, an 'outsider' in Yorkshire[120], and Chaplin, a 'native' from Durham, which gave more impressionistic accounts of the inward looking, close knit nature of the mining villages and the difficulties experienced by the few who even considered the possibility of an alternative way of life[121].

Perhaps the most final and complete confirmation of these interpretations came in the series of articles and monographs published by Goldthorpe and his colleagues which characterised the miner, along with the docker and shipbuilder, as the 'traditional proletarian' with a distinct social consciousness shaped by his immediate work and community environment[122]. Lockwood's well known analysis brought together many of the important elements discussed in this section and is therefore worth quoting at length:

> ...industries such as mining...tend to concentrate workers together in solidary communities and to isolate them from the influences of the wider society. Workers in such industries usually have a high degree of job involvement and strong attachments to primary work groups that possess

> a considerable autonomy from technical and supervisory constraints. Pride in doing 'men's work' and a strong sense of shared occupational experiences make for feelings of fraternity and comradeship which are expressed through a distinctive occupational culture. These primary groups of workmates not only provide the elementary units of more extensive class loyalties but work associations also carry over into leisure activities, so that workers in these industries usually participate in what are called 'occupational communities'. Workmates are normally leisure time companions, often neighbours and not infrequently kinsmen. The existence of such closely knit cliques of friends, workmates, neighbours and relatives is the hallmark of the traditional working class community. The values expressed through these social networks emphasize mutual aid in everyday life and the obligation to join in the gregarious pattern of leisure, which itself demands the expenditure of time, money and energy in a public and present-oriented conviviality and eschews individual striving 'to be different'. As a form of social life, this communal sociability has a ritualistic quality, creating a high moral density and reinforcing sentiments of belongingness to a work dominated collectivity. The isolated and endogomous nature of the community, its predominantly one-class population, and low rates of geographical and social mobility all tend to make it an inward-looking society and to accentuate the sense of cohesion that springs from shared work experiences[123].

(iv) Alternative sociological approaches

Despite the impressive range of publications which supported the Ashton analysis there were references within the literature which suggested the possibility of an alternative approach; one more sensitive to the possibilities and implications of change

and differentiation within and between mining communities. For example, both Zweig[124] and Scott et al., pointed to the differing locale and character of mining settlements and suggested associated differences in attitudes and behaviour[125]. Similarly, Rimlinger argued that in certain situations the actions of miners might be interpreted as 'aggressive individuality' rather than solidarity and that this could lead to 'friction between workers', 'refusals to co-operate', 'heavy absenteeism', 'the rise of informal or secret organisations' and 'mutual recriminations and acts of violence'[126]. Gregory also pondered upon exceptions which disturbed his explanatory framework: why, for example, were there as many Conservative as Liberal miners in the coalfields of Lancashire and Staffordshire[127]? On a related theme, Sigal noted the divisions and recurrent violence that broke out between individuals and groups in 'Dinlock' and, significantly, at the point of an impending fight between two men one character ponders, 'Aye, Socialism. Will it every come to a village like Dinlock'[128]?

In the explanations forwarded to account for these variations and divisions the incidence of migration was often interpreted as a significant influence upon the character of social relationships. Zweig referred to the 'constant ebb and flow' of the mining population at certain collieries and noted the incidence of a 'floating population' at most mining villages which made 'the pattern of behaviour different' and (according to the managers) spoilt 'the whole atmosphere of the colliery'[129]. Lawson made a similar connection in recalling

conditions at a colliery in Newcastle at the close of the nineteenth century:

> Boldon Colliery was at that time a typical example of the way in which the county of Durham had become a sort of social melting pot owing to the rapid development of the coalfield during the nineteenth century. Its population consisted of people from every pit of the British Isles...marriage and time have now almost obliterated the old country and national landmarks, and made them one people. But at the time of which I write there was a combination of...accents,dialects and languages...families in each group gravitated together and formed a common bond. While we were all good neighbours, I have seen the clans come together in my boyhood days and fight it out in very rough and ready style... lines of division existed in Boldon, as in all the other growing collieries of the east of the county, (but) it was different in the west of the county. There the process of amalgamation was farther advanced, because they were older collieries. The older collieries were more settled in their personnel, but among the great coast collieries there was constant ebb and flow of the population...this fact...produced a different type of people from those of the west, and a different spirit as well. They had many problems which did not trouble the older collieries. Union and mining officials have a different and far more difficult job in these new collieries than in the older collieries[130].

Only recently have the implications of these observations begun to be fully explored. Goldthorpe et al., wrote that 'the salient characteristics of the "traditional" type of working class district could be said to derive from the relative stability and social homogeneity of its population', but how far did this apply to mining communities at different times and in different places[131]? The authors of the Affluent Worker

study claimed that their 'traditional working class community' was a sociological rather than historical concept and thus contained 'no implication that at some period of time all or even most of the members of the working class displayed social characteristics, of the kind that are labelled as "traditional" '[132]. If this was so it was difficult to see how this ideal type construct illuminated actual historical processes. In fact, the use of the term was, as Davis and Cousins pointed out, ambiguous: at several points Goldthorpe and his colleagues did refer to actual industries, communities and their histories[133].

We may ask them how far the conditions outlined, for example, by Lawson in East Durham were exceptional? Several authors, in fact, suggested that such conditions may not have been unusual. Harris noted how, in the eighteenth century, the craft, skill and 'knack' of boring, sinking and coal-face workers travelled with the men themselves[134] and Redford pointed out that during the following century the occupation of coalmining had the reputation of being a migratory trade[135]. According to Storm-Clark the nineteenth century Yorkshire and Durham miners were constantly on the move:

> Like atoms in motion, these men were in a perpetual state of migration over short distances as each accessible local seam, sometimes measured in single inches, was worked out. Even in County Durham, where the coalowners had sunk their capital in pits with steam-powered winding and drainage, it did not seem necessary to build workmen's houses with a life-expectancy of more than thirty years. If ever the miners of the Industrial Revolution could have transmitted to their successors the feeling of belonging

> to a collectivity, it would have been that of a Gypsy encampment or of a cluster of huts in a Canadian lumber forest[136].

Earlier the Samuel Commission had referred to the 'obselescence and closing of collieries' as 'a normal feature of the industry, and indeed, essential to its nature'[137], and Prest, discussing the Lancashire Coalfield, remarked that 'the inherent instability of coalmining' and the uneven development between coalfields represented 'a feature which has not been accorded the recognition it deserves either in the formulation of theory or in the determination of policy'[138]. Over forty years later this considered judgement still applies.

Recently however, Davis and Cousins re-examined the position of the Northumberland miners in the nineteenth century and tentatively differentiated between developing areas with high population turnover where 'a kind of class consciousness' was achieved and the more established communities characterised by stability where the 'accommodative' institutions of co-op, chapel and union produced a sectional and isolated conservatism[139]. Based on a careful reading of existing histories this argument turned Lockwood's analysis on its head by relating proletarian traditionalism to the conditions of flux associated with the development of new pits[140]. Furthermore, the interest in the significance of migration reflected the emphasis of the oral investigations, referred to above, conducted by MacFarlane, Storm-Clark and the South Wales Coalfield Project[141].

The more critical stance recently adopted by sociologists has been best illustrated in the contemporary work of Bulmer. An important article published in 1975 discussed various sociological approaches used to study the mining community. Comparing the models constructed by Dennis et al.,[142] Kerr and Siegel[143], Rimlinger[144] and Salaman[145], Bulmer concentrated upon the source of social change (whether it originated from within or beyond the locality) and the level of sociological analysis which might 'focus either upon the social structure (the social institutions and collectivities of actors at a local level) or upon the social interactions between actors in settlements with a particular industrial and occupational character'[146]. Concerned primarily with the manner in which industry and community, economy and social structure were linked Bulmer found the 'occupational community' constructed by Salaman and others to be most satisfactory for this model successfully integrated considerations of social structure with 'the patterns of shared meaning' displayed by 'those who work together in the same occupation'[147]. As such it did not assume a simplistic one way relationship between industrial and class factors on the one hand and social relationships and behaviour on the other. Reiterating Blumer's more general thesis[148] Bulmer pointed out that 'people in single-industry communities respond to the industrial processes which shape their lives' and suggested that this could be illustrated in the tendency for occupational communities to persist through the autonomous influence of local social formations which defied the decline of economic factors

originally responsible for the formation of the community[149].

In his conclusion Bulmer recommended the use of an ideal type as a tool with which to 'make sense of the mass of empirical material on mining which is available'[150]. The (ahistorical) ideal type mining community is characteristically isolated, geographically and socially, and opportunities for mobility are limited. Mining dominates local employment (and housing) and minework, whilst 'exacting, dangerous and uncertain', is also conducive to feelings of pride, satisfaction and involvement[151]. Non-work activities, interests and relationships are directly influenced by mining and this is particularly apparent in the nature of leisure activities, and the structive of the family. More generally, the 'social ties of work, leisure, family, neighbourhood and friendship overlap to form close-knit and interlocking locally based collectivities of actors'[152]. The solidarity thus created is re-affirmed 'by a shared history of living and working in one place over a long period of time'[153]. This history invariably incorporates a record of economic and political conflict between associations of colliery owners and miners, each attempting to protect their divergent interests.

Bulmer claimed that this model was drawn from the range of formulations surveyed in his article, although it must be said that it bears a remarkable resemblance to Ashton. Nevertheless, future interest will 'lie in identifying and explaining departures from the ideal type, in the expectation that such discrepancies will be found to occur'[154]. This strategy of

'disconfirmation' was taken a step further in a later edited collection on mining in Durham during the twentieth century where empirical work from a larger programme of research at the University of Durham enabled Bulmer to put some of his theoretical speculations to the test[155].

Finally, some mention should be made of the body of research undertaken over recent years in response to the dramatic decline in the British coal industry from the late fifties onwards. During the 1957-1970 period the mining labour force fell from 700,000 to 300,000 men and over 650 collieries were closed[156]. For those that stayed in the industry as well as those that left this huge contraction had far-reaching implications, the dimensions of which were indicated in several case studies of rundown and closure situations[157]. These suggested that the shutdown of a pit was typically preceded by a period of insecurity marked by high levels of voluntary wastage, particularly amongst the younger miners. Older men, on the other hand, tended to stay in the industry and were frequently encouraged to do so by the possibility of relatively generous redundancy payments. The closure itself was often surrounded by confusion and suspicion and the miners' reaction characterised by both opposition and resignation - an ambivalence, in fact, which reflected their attitudes towards pitwork in general. The 'competing rationalities' of the NCB and the miners frequently led to conflict although not always of an organised nature. Those that transferred to other NCB collieries often experienced considerable difficulty in adapting to the differing

physical and social environment and the 'receiving' collieries and mining communities were sometimes disrupted by the influx of miners causing dissatisfaction at work, cleavage and conflict in the community and a high level of turnover in both. Furthermore, those communities which 'lost' the migrants were left demographically unbalanced and economically stagnant. Many miners attempting to find work elsewhere were constrained by their age, health, limited industrial experience and strong social ties to the mining community. The nature of the local labour market frequently acted as a further constraint on job choice which was accentuated by the miners' own limited perceptions of 'available' jobs. Those managing to find employment typically worked longer, earned less and travelled further, although these costs were sometimes offset by a more pleasant working environment. In general, miners did not experience problems of adaption to other types of work tasks or find difficulty in programmes of re-training, but, a substantial number returned to the collieries after a spell outside, drawn not only by the attraction of shorter hours and more money but also the continuing pull of family, friends and neighbours in the mining community. Many of the older miners failed to find alternative work and subsequently experienced lengthy periods of unemployment resulting in a loss of purpose and self respect and reduced social activity.

This basic outline brings together some central findings of a range of separate case studies; inevitably, particular details have been omitted and variations glossed over[158]. A

more extensive summary of this work cannot be justified here because the wealth of factual information provided has rarely been accompanied by any developed historical or sociological framework which might provide new insight for our understanding of the mining community[159]. Much of the research in question was sociographic rather than sociological and limited to particular closures over relatively short time periods of rapid decline[160]. Further, the characteristic adoption of a rather rigid 'questionnaire type' approach led to an excessive emphasis upon the quantity rather than quality of the data obtained. Thus Knight's study in Cumberland uncritically accepted NCB definitions of 'voluntary' and 'involuntary' wastage when, in reality, the distinction between the two was rarely as clear-cut as this neat division implied[161]. Elsewhere, the impressions of the interviewers at Ryhope were relegated to an addendum rather than integrated into the main body of the research report despite the admission that 'the interviewers were increasingly impressed by some views and attitudes of the ex-Ryhope men which did not always come within the precise categories covered'[162].

However, the studies by Sewel[163], Smith[164] and, in particular, Taylor presented more sensitive accounts of persistence and change in mining communities[165]. Taylor examined the motives and decision making processes associated with the migration of mining families from West Durham via the NCB transference scheme and demonstrated that the migrants' goals significantly influenced their pattern of adaption. By

focusing upon migrants before and after their move Taylor was able to compare and contrast the original mining villages with the newer estates and as such relate his findings to those of other working class groups on the move[166]. Thus in the 'receiving' areas Taylor noted that social networks were characteristically looser knit and that family relations were altered by a greater 'home-centredness' and a more equal partnership between man and wife. The original mining communities underwent change also, although this was not entirely disruptive: the tendency for 'dissenting' members to migrate actually increased the social cohesiveness of those who remained. Despite these valuable insights, Taylor, like Smith and Sewel, did not attempt to systematically advance the work of Dennis et al.; the Ashton study was, in fact, regarded more as a model which could perhaps, be subject to slight modification.

In sum, recent research into the contracting coal industry has often proved factually comprehensive although theoretically inadequate. Thus in discussing the post-1957 decline in coalmining Bulmer's judgement that 'relatively little sociological work has been done' holds true[167]. In more positive terms the redirection of attention towards social change resulting from decline may, however, serve to emphasize the 'inherent instability' of coalmining; if so, then these studies will have been of considerable value.

(v) Conclusion

Clearly, there remain inadequacies and gaps in the sociology and history of the miner and the mining community. The extent of these deficiencies has recently been exposed by research which has made use of previously neglected sources - in particular, the first hand accounts of miners and their families - and questioned the popular assumption that mining communities have always been of one character, 'isolated, inbred and with a settled population of many years standing'[168]. Future work must build upon this base in an attempt to map the contours of regularity and variation displayed by mining communities at different times and in different places. The present research is intended as a contribution to this growing corpus: the manner in which it was shaped is outlined in the following chapter.

NOTES

1. 9 Days in '26, first broadcast on BBC TV 19.4.74; Days of Hope, a serial first broadcast on BBC TV 11.9.75.

2. The Stars Look Down, first broadcast on Thames TV 4.9.75; How Green was my Valley, a serial first broadcast on BBC TV 29.12.75.

3. Once a Miner, always a Miner, first broadcast on Southern TV 22.11.74; Word of Mouth: The New Men of Kent, first broadcast on BBC TV 9.9.76.

4. R.G. NEVILLE and J. BENSON, 'Labour in the Coalfields (II): A Select Critical Bibliography', Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History, 31, 1975, p. 45.

5. J.E. WILLIAMS, The Derbyshire Miners, London, 1962; R.P. ARNOT, A History of the Scottish Miners, London, 1955; W.R. GARSIDE, The Durham Miners, 1919-1960, London, 1971. For information on the NUM contained in more general works see W.W. HAYNES, Nationalization in Practice: The British Coal Industry, London, 1953; G.B. BALDWIN, Beyond Nationalization: The Labour Problems of British Coal, Cambridge (Mass.), 1955; H.A. CLEGG, The System of Industrial Relations in Great Britain, Oxford, 1970; M.P. JACKSON, The Price of Coal, London, 1974; J.D. EDELSTEIN and M. WARNER, Comparative Union Democracy, London, 1975.

6. For a comprehensive guide to the relevant works see

J.E. WILLIAMS, 'Labour in the Coalfields: A Critical Bibliography', Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History, 4, 1962; R.G. NEVILLE and J. BENSON, op.cit.

7. J.E. WILLIAMS, (1962), 'Labour in the Coalfields'.

8. R.P. ARNOT, The Miners in Crisis and War, London, 1961, p. 12 quoted in J.E. WILLIAMS, (1962), 'Labour in the Coalfields', p. 25.

9. R.P. ARNOT, The Miners, 1889-1910, London, 1949, p. 7.

10. E.W. EVANS, The Miners of South Wales, Cardiff, 1961, pp. vii-viii.

11. C. STORM-CLARK,'The Miners 1870-1970: A Test Case for Oral History', Victorian Studies, 15, 1971, p. 51. (This is not a direct quote.)

12. J.E. WILLIAMS, (1962), 'Labour in the Coalfields', p. 26.

13. See, for example, R.P. ARNOT, (1949), op. cit.; (1961) op. cit.; (1955) op. cit.; The Miners: Years of Struggle, London, 1953; F. MACHIN, The Yorkshire Miners: A History Vol. 1, Barnsley, 1958; J.E. WILLIAMS, (1962), The Derbyshire Miners; A.R. GRIFFIN, The Miners of Nottinghamshire (Vol. 1) 1881-1914, Nottingham, 1957; The Miners of Nottinghamshire (Vol. 2) 1914-1944, London, 1962.

14. J.E. WILLIAMS, (1962), 'Labour in the Coalfields', p. 26.

15. R.P. ARNOT, (1949), op. cit.; (1953), op. cit.; (1961),

op. cit.

16. F. MACHIN, op. cit.

17. J. DAVISON, Northumberland Miners, 1919-1939, Newcastle Upon Tyne, 1973.

18. A.R. GRIFFIN, (1957), op. cit.; (1962), op. cit.

19. A.R. GRIFFIN, Mining in the East Midlands, 1550-1947, London, 1971.

20. For further details see the Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History, 35, 1977, which includes letters from R.G. Neville and A. Scargill.

21. J.E. WILLIAMS, (1962), 'Labour in the Coalfields', p. 31.

22. C. STORM-CLARK, op. cit., p. 49.

23. R. SAMUEL, Review of R. CHALLINOR, The Lancashire and Cheshire Miners, Newcastle, 1972, in New Society, 22, 1972, p. 588.

24. R.G. NEVILLE and J. BENSON, op. cit., p. 46.

25. Oral History, the journal of the Oral History Society, contains articles, reviews, conference reports and a list of current British work in the field.

26. For two popular versions of this genre, see R. BLYTHE, Akenfield: Portrait of an English Village, London, 1969; J. SEABROOK, City Close-up: A Study of Blackburn, London, 1971. The publications of George Ewart Evans were extremely influential although they did not reach such a

wide audience. See, for example, G.E. EVANS, Ask the Fellows Who cut the Hay, London, 1956; The Horse in the Furrow, London, 1960; The Pattern Under the Plough, London, 1966; The Farm and the Village, London, 1969.

27. This term is used by M. BULMER, in 'Personal Documents as Sociological Data', in S. CHAPLIN, Durham Mining Villages, University of Durham Department of Sociology and Social Administration, Working Papers in Sociology No. 3, 1972. Both are reproduced in M. BULMER (ed.) Mining and Social Change, London, 1978.

28. P. THOMPSON, 'Problems of Method in Oral History', Oral History, 1, 4, pp. 1-4.

29. For further discussion of oral history see Chapter 2.

30. F. ZWEIG, Men in the Pits, London, 1948.

31. N. DENNIS, F. HENRIQUES and C. SLAUGHTER, Coal is Our Life, London, 1956. A second edition was published in 1969 (London), to which reference is made here and throughout the thesis.

32. Ibid., p. 192, (footnote 1). This quotation is cited in R. TURNER, 'The Contribution of Oral Evidence to Labour History', Oral History, 4, 1, 1976, p. 26.

33. C. STORM-CLARK, op. cit.; 'The Miners: The Relevance of Oral Evidence', Oral History, 1,4. Some of the ideas expressed in these earlier articles have been reiterated in several shorter pieces. See, C. STORM-CLARK, 'The

Pit and The Pendulum', The Listener, 91, 1974; 'The Two Faces of Coal', New Society, 40, 1977.

34. W.A. COLE and G. WILLIAMS, South Wales Coalfield History Project: A Research Report, (SSRC, London), 1974.

35. Ibid., p. 140

36. J. MACFARLANE, 'Denaby Main: A South Yorkshire Mining Village', Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History, 25, 1972; 'Essay in Oral History, Denaby Main: An Addendum', Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History, 26, 1973.

37. J. MACFARLANE, (1972), op. cit., p. 99.

38. R. MOORE, Pitmen, Preachers and Politics, Cambridge, 1974.

39. V. ALLEN, 'Ideology, Consciousness and Experience: The Case of the British Miners', paper presented to the BSA Conference on Advanced Industrial Societies, University of Kent, 1975.

40. Ibid., p. 1.

41. Ibid., p. 9. Allen does not reveal the manner in which these interviews were recorded.

42. Description used by M. BULMER, (1972), op. cit., p. x, (footnote 26).

43. G.E. EVANS, From Mouths of Men, London, 1976, p. 124.

44. Ibid., p. 129

45. Ibid., p. 123

46. N. DENNIS et al., op. cit.

47. E.L. TRIST, G.W. HIGGIN, H. MURRAY and A.B. POLLOCK, Organizational Choice, London, 1963.

48. J.H. GOLDTHORPE, 'Technical Organization as a Factor in Supervisor-Worker Conflict', British Journal of Sociology, 10, 1959.

49. C. SIGAL, Weekend in Dinlock, Harmondsworth, 1962. Although fictional this last account is based upon the author's experiences during his stay in a Yorkshire mining village.

50. N. DENNIS et al., op. cit.

51. J. KLEIN, Samples From English Cultures, Vol. 1, London, 1965.

52. R. FRANKENBERG, Communities in Britain, Harmondsworth, 1966.

53. C. BELL and H. NEWBY, Community Studies, London, 1971.

54. See, for example, D. LOCKWOOD, 'Some Sources of Variation in Working Class Images of Society', Sociological Review, 14, 1966; J.H. GOLDTHORPE, D. LOCKWOOD, F. BECHHOFER and J. PLATT, The Affluent Worker: Industrial Attitudes and Behaviour, Cambridge, 1968; The Affluent Worker: Political Attitudes and Behaviour, Cambridge, 1968; The Affluent Worker in the Class Structure, Cambridge, 1969. Lockwood's 1966 paper is reprinted in M. BULMER (ed.), Working Class Images of Society, London, 1975. This volume is a collection of

papers originally given at an SSRC Conference on The Occupational Community of the Traditional Worker, held at University of Durham in 1972.

55. A point made in several of the papers given at the 1972 SSRC Conference. See M. BULMER (ed.), (1975), op. cit.

56. N. DENNIS et al., op. cit., p. 14

57. Ibid., p. 25

58. Bell and Newby make the point that 'Coal is Our Life is, then, another example of using the community study as a method. It only indirectly asks, what kind of community is "Ashton"?' C. BELL and H. NEWBY, op. cit., p. 167.

59. N. DENNIS et al., op. cit., p. 79.

60. Ibid., p. 83.

61. Ibid., p. 79.

62. Ibid., p. 80.

63. Ibid., pp. 80-81.

64. Ibid., p. 88.

65. Ibid., p. 130.

66. Ibid., p. 171.

67. Ibid., p. 24.

68. Ibid., p. 24.

69. Ibid., p. 11.

70. Ibid., p. 38.

71. Ibid., p. 37.

72. Ibid., p. 83.

73. Ibid., pp. 249-50.

74. E. WILLIAMS, quoted in Iron and Coal Trades Review, 8 November 1929, and cited in A.M. NEUMAN, Economic Organisation of the British Coal Industry, London, 1934, p. 357.

75. H. HOULDSWORTH, 'The Pits of Britain', Transactions of the Manchester Statistical Society, February, 1953, p. 8.

76. N. DENNIS et al., op. cit., p. 74.

77. B.J. McCORMICK, 'Strikes in the Yorkshire Coalfield, 1947-1963', Economic Studies, 4, 1969, p. 179.

78. N. DENNIS et al., op.cit., p. 172.

79. R. MOORE, 'Religion as a Source of Variation in Working-Class Images of Society', in M. BULMER (ed.), (1975), op. cit., pp. 35-6.

80. P. WILLMOTT, The Evolution of a Community: A Study of Dagenham after Forty Years, London, 1963, p. ix.

81. For evidence of this practice see J.E. WILLIAMS, (1962), The Derbyshire Miners, p. 29; A.R. GRIFFIN, (1971), op. cit., pp. 29-30, 39-40.

82. 'The practice of absenteeism has much deeper historical roots than present day wage conditions. The miner used

to work full time only in exceptional years of trade prosperity. "You call it absenteeism now" said an old deputy, "but remember that in the old days I was quite lucky when I could get three or four days' work...this was not absenteeism on our part; it was forced absenteeism imposed by the owners, and no great fuss was made over it".' F. ZWEIG, op. cit., pp. 66-67.

83. N. DENNIS et al., op. cit., pp. 23, 58, 169-170.

84. Since Durkheim's classic treatment the concept of solidarity has received insufficient attention from sociologists despite its frequent use. Thus the authors of a recent study of manual workers in a chemical factory spend much of their time discussing the barriers to solidarity without an explicit discussion of what they mean by the term. See T. NICHOLS and P. ARMSTRONG, Workers Divided, Glasgow, 1976.

85. D.H. ALLCORN and C.M. MARSH, 'Occupational Communities - Communities of What?', in M. BULMER (ed.), (1975), op. cit., p. 212.

86. Ibid., p. 212.

87. According to Dennis and his associates more than half the underground workforce and all those on the surface were on day wage rates. N. DENNIS et al., op. cit., p. 38.

88. Ibid., pp. 48-50, 58, 62.

89. For an earlier period Ashton and Sykes make reference to

the 'fences between colliers of one area and those of another' but go on to point out that 'between colliers as a whole and labour in other occupations' there were 'mountainous barriers'. See T.S. ASHTON and J. SYKES, The Coal Industry of the Eighteenth Century, Manchester, 1964, p. 155. More recently, Allcorn and Marsh suggest that the strikes of miners and dockers in 1972 'appear much more like collective action undertaken in defence of their immediate economic interests by the workers directly concerned than like concerted action undertaken on behalf of a class'. See D.H. ALLCORN and C.M. MARSH, op. cit., p. 213.

90. N. DENNIS et al., op. cit., p. 45.

91. C. SIGAL, op. cit., p. 21.

92. N. DENNIS et al., op. cit., p. 23.

93. Ibid., p. 130.

94. Ibid., pp. 180-181.

95. R. MOORE, (1975), op. cit., p. 36.

96. E.L. TRIST and K.W. BAMFORTH, 'Some Social and Psychological Consequences of the Longwall Method of Coal-Getting', Human Relations, 4, 1951, pp. 6-7.

97. C. KERR and A. SIEGEL, 'The Inter-Industry Propensity to Strike: An International Comparison', in A. KORNHAUSER et al., (eds.), Industrial Conflict, New York, 1954.

98. K.G.J.C. KNOWLES, Strikes: A Study in Industrial Conflict, Oxford, 1952.

99. Ibid., p. 165.

100. Ibid., p. 164.

101. G.D.H. COLE, Labour in the Coal-Mining Industry, 1914-1921, Oxford, 1923, p. 7.

102. T.S. ASHTON, 'The Coal Miners of the Eighteenth Century', Economic Journal, Economic History Supplement, 3, 1928, p. 307.

103. W.H.B. COURT, Coal, London, 1951.

104. J.U. NEF, The Rise of the British Coal Industry, Vol. 2, London, 1932, p. 176.

105. F. ZWEIG, op. cit., p. 13.

106. Ibid., p. 14.

107. Ibid., p. 15.

108. J. LAWSON, A Man's Life, London, 1932, p. 187.

109. Ibid., pp. 213-214.

110. Ibid., p. 218.

111. Ibid., p. 186.

112. G.A.W. TOMLINSON, Coal Miner, London, 1937.

113. G.V. RIMLINGER, 'International Differences in the Strike Propensity of Coal Miners: Experience in Four Countries', Industrial and Labour Relations Review, 12, 1959.

114. Ibid., p. 395.

115. W.H. SCOTT, E. MUMFORD, I.C. McGIVERING and J.M. KIRBY, Coal and Conflict, Liverpool, 1963, p. 25.

116. R. GREGORY, The Miners and British Politics, 1906-1914, Oxford, 1968, p. 1.

117. Ibid., p. 3.

118. Ibid., pp. 3-4.

119. E.P. THOMPSON, 'A Special Case', New Society, 19, 1972, p. 402.

120. C. SIGAL, op. cit.

121. S. CHAPLIN, op. cit.

122. See, in particular, D. LOCKWOOD, op. cit.; J.H. GOLDTHORPE et al., (1968), Industrial Attitudes and Behaviour; (1968), Political Attitudes and Behaviour; (1969) op. cit.

123. D. LOCKWOOD, op. cit., pp. 250-251.

124. F. ZWEIG, op. cit., pp. 39-49.

125. W.H. SCOTT et al., op. cit., p. 30.

126. G.V. RIMLINGER, op. cit., p. 395.

127. R. GREGORY, op. cit., p. 4.

128. C. SIGAL, op. cit., p. 61.

129. F. ZWEIG, op. cit., p. 45.

130. J. LAWSON, op. cit., pp. 56-58.

131. J.H. GOLDTHORPE et al., (1969), op. cit., p. 86.

132. Ibid., p. 86, note 1.

133. R.L. DAVIS and J. COUSINS, 'The "New Working Class" and the Old', in M. BULMER (ed.) 1975 op. cit.

134. J.R. HARRIS, 'Skills, Coal and British Industry in the Eighteenth Century', History, 61, 1976.

135. A. REDFORD, Labour Migration in England, 1800-1850, Manchester, 1964.

136. C. STORM-CLARK, (1974), op. cit., p. 73.

137. Royal Commission on the Coal Industry, Report,(Vol. 1), London, 1926, p. 46.

138. W. PREST, 'The Problem of the Lancashire Coal Industry', Economic Journal, 47, 1937, p. 295.

139. R.L. DAVIS and J. COUSINS, op. cit., in M. BULMER (ed.) 1975 op. cit.

140. See the accounts by R.J. FYNES, The Miners of Northumberland and Durham: A History of their Social and Political Progress, Sunderland, 1923; E. WELBOURNE, The Miners' Unions of Northumberland and Durham, Cambridge, 1923.

141. See Section (ii)

142. N. DENNIS et al., op. cit.

143. C. KERR and A. SIEGEL, op. cit.

144. G.V. RIMLINGER, op. cit.

145. G. SALAMAN, Community and Occupation, Cambridge, 1974.

146. M. BULMER, 'Sociological Models of the Mining Community', Sociological Review, 23, 1975, p. 63.

147. Ibid., p. 78.

148. H. BLUMER, 'Industrialization and the Traditional Order', Sociology and Social Research, 48, 1964.

149. M. BULMER, (1975), 'Sociological Models', p. 78.

150. Ibid., p. 84.

151. Ibid., p. 85.

152. Ibid., pp. 87-88.

153. Ibid., p. 88.

154. Ibid., p. 88.

155. M. BULMER (ed.), (1978), op. cit. Unfortunately the publication of this volume occurred at a stage when it was impossible to incorporate those original contributions included into this introductory chapter.

156. Details of this decline are given in Chapter 3.

157. See, for example, J.W. HOUSE and E.M. KNIGHT, Pit Closure and the Community, Newcastle, 1967; E.M. KNIGHT, Men Leaving Mining, Newcastle, 1968; Department of Employment and Productivity, Ryhope: A Pit Closes, A Study in Redeployment, London, 1970; M. BULMER, 'Mining Redundancy: A Case Study of the Workings of the Redundancy Payments Act in the Durham Coalfield', Industrial Relations Journal, 2, 1971; 'The Decline of Mining: A Case Study in Spennymoor' and 'The Growth of Factory

Industry: Miners become Textile Operatives', in M. BULMER (ed.), (1978), op. cit.; P.M. KELLY, 'Contraction of the Coal Industry: Some Aspects of the Effects on Manpower', Economic Studies, 4, 1969; W. SNAITH, 'The Adjustment of the Labour Force on the Durham Coalfield: A Study of Redundancy', Economic Studies, 4, 1969; J. SEWEL, Colliery Closure and Social Change: A Study of a South Wales Mining Valley, Cardiff, 1975; S.W. TOWN, Problems Resulting from Industrial Decline in a Welsh Mining Valley, Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, University College of Swansea, 1975.

158. Reference to more specific information included in these works are made, where appropriate, throughout the thesis. For further details the reader should consult the original studies.

159. The paper by V. ALLEN, op. cit, represents an exception to this observation.

160. This is particularly true of J.W. HOUSE and E.M. KNIGHT, op. cit.; E.M. KNIGHT, op. cit.; Department of Employment and Productivity, op. cit.

161. E.M. KNIGHT, op.cit.

162. Department of Employment and Productivity, op. cit., p. 77.

163. J. SEWEL, op. cit.

164. C.S. SMITH, 'Planned Transfer of Labour, with Special Reference to the Coal Industry', unpublished Ph.D thesis, Bedford College, University of London, 1960.

165. R.C. TAYLOR, 'Implications of Migration from the Durham Coalfield', unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Durham, 1966; 'Migration and Motivation', in J.A. JACKSON (ed.), Migration, Cambridge, 1969.

166. See, for example, M. YOUNG and P. WILLMOTT, Family and Kinship in East London, London, 1957; P.B. TOWNSEND, The Family Life of Old People, London, 1957; C. ROSSER and C. HARRIS, The Family and Social Change, London, 1965.

167. M. BULMER, 'Social Structure and Social Change in the Twentieth-Century', in M. BULMER (ed.), (1978), op. cit., p. 34.

168. R. SAMUEL, op. cit., p. 586.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH

Introduction

The research upon which the doctoral thesis is based often marks the first occasion upon which the social scientist ventures beyond the critical evaluation of the existing body of knowledge and attempts to contribute to this corpus through his own original work. Because of this novelty the thesis represents an important stage of educational development during which the problems of actually doing social research are directly confronted. The way in which these problems are handled over an extended period of three years or more will inevitably involve some change in the theoretical and practical development of the research yet it is a fact that the majority of research accounts rarely acknowledge their own history[1]. This oversight may contribute to a polished and consistent report yet it denies the reader any insight into the original concerns of the investigator or the way in which these developed during the course of the research[2].

Such an omission is particularly regrettable when the research is located in a subject area which is itself the cause of some dispute and based upon a methodology which is exploratory in character. There is still no widespread agreement as to how best to unify the concerns of history and

and sociology although there is now some indication of the practical alternatives which might be considered[3]. The extensive collection of first hand evidence through the use of interviews and their subsequent analysis and incorporation into accounts of social change has presented itself as one such alternative. But these are early days and the viability of what has come to be termed oral history has still to be established. During this exploratory phase it is essential that a full discussion of the practical and theoretical issues associated with the use of oral evidence should take place in order that we might learn how best to incorporate the first hand account into social and historical studies.

When I began this research there was no established methodology or field technique which could be readily adopted; oral history was an area without clear academic guidelines so to a large extent I had to construct my own during the course of the research. Because of this the following comments attempt rather more than a straightforward summary of method and technique; instead, the aim has been to point up the <u>developments</u> of the research design from the initial stages through to the final period of analysis and presentation. Work of this kind demands such an account for ultimately the establishment of 'ground rules' in oral history will depend upon the accumulation of explicit research statements by practitioners in the field.

(i) The background to the research

> For the rest, I would only say that the more sociological history becomes, and the more historical sociology becomes, the better for both. Let the frontier between them be kept wide open[4].

These famous words delivered by E.H. Carr at Cambridge in 1961 marked the beginning of a period during which conscious attempts were made to break down the barriers between two academic disciplines which were restricting development in both areas. The resulting deficiencies became increasingly conspicuous. Sociology was abstract and static; as a discipline it was difficult to relate to the changing real world which it purported to describe and analyse. Nowhere was this better portrayed than in C. Wright Mills' devastating critique of Parsonian 'grand theory'. The practitioners of this type of social science never, complained Mills, 'get down from the higher generalities to problems in their historical and structural contexts'[5]. History, on the other hand, was too often rooted in the chronological ordering of empirical data and little attention was paid to the development of adequate theoretical and conceptual frameworks. Some historians were merely 'compilers of alleged fact, which they try to refrain from "interpreting" ', except, of course, by way of a general narrative[6]. However, in Britain during the 1960s a number of general studies of the development of industrial society were published which indicated the promise of integration; notable amongst these were the works of Thompson[7], Hobsbawm[8] and Perkin[9]. Gradually new specialisms developed - in urban and demographic history, for example - and

more detailed case studies began to appear which gave concrete form to the new approach. Here Moore's study of miners in Durham[10], Anderson's work on the family in Lancashire[11] and Foster's comparison of class in three nineteenth century towns[12] represented outstanding examples.

These developments shaped my approach and, more specifically, my choice of subject area for this research. For a number of years I had been interested in the development of working class communities and in this context the contemporary observations of Goldthorpe and his colleagues on the development of the 'new' working class had proved particularly stimulating[13]. However, their work was itself an illustration of the persisting ignorance of working class history; a deficiency which allowed the ambiguous use of categories such as 'traditional worker' and encouraged a sociologically static conception of working class communities[14]. Moore noted that 'Lockwood seems to suggest that the miner is the traditional proletarian worker par excellence', yet to what extent did the miner and the mining community 'fit' within this categorisation[15]? This question was given a sharp and immediate focus when I began to consider the possibility of research in the Kent Coalfield. The late development of the coalfield and the extremely cosmopolitan make-up of the workforce were sufficient in themselves to force me to think critically about the popular notion of what it was that constituted a mining community. I became particularly interested in the extent to which the stability and homogeneity traditionally associated with these communities had diverted attention from what was, after all, an essential element in the process of coal extraction: the migration of the labour force.

The geological dependence of the industry upon the extraction of finite resources meant that ultimately seams became worked out and that collieries closed. Moreover, because of the unique 'non-transferable' quality of the mineworkers' skills labour tended to follow capital to new collieries and coalfields. This core reality in the life of the miner and his family had been largely overlooked by an excessive concern with the characteristics of mining communities at one particular stage in their development. This was normally the middle, prosperous stage, after discovery, boring and sinking but before the decline through exhaustion; a period when sufficient time had passed for a core of long established families to develop and become dependent upon the relatively thriving and dominant local industry of coalmining. This was clearly the point in the 'cycle of coal extraction' at which the famous study of Ashton had been undertaken[16].

But what of the less certain periods of development and decline - how did they influence social relationships in and beyond the colliery? The Kent Coalfield was discovered around the turn of the century and developed, fitfully prior to 1926, and more consistently thereafter. After a relatively brief period of stability the coalfield declined from the late fifties onwards[17]. How did the miner's working life and his social environment compare between these two contrasting eras? How far were they influenced by the local pattern of expansion and contraction and to what extent were these forces mediated by developments in the coal industry at national level? To answer these questions I began by sketching out four major areas within

which historical comparisons might be drawn. These were: employer/employee relationships; trade union organisation; work organisation; and the community. Despite this selection I did not begin with any well formulated hypotheses which I wished to test; the aim, in view of the dearth of adequate social histories of contemporary mining communities was rather to develop interpretations and hypotheses during the course of the research. This did not mean that I threw myself blindly into the collection of 'facts' and expected a theoretical framework to naturally emerge. Instead I believed that experience 'in the field' would help me to formulate particular problems which were of significance in the lives and experiences of miners and their families and which could be feasibly studied. Here, the observations of Worsley and his colleagues were pertinent. They noted that 'community studies' were:

> ...often extremely valuable precisely to the extent that their main themes and concepts are not based on hard and fast preconceptions... but on suggestive leads or ideas partly current in sociological theory and research, but always too, grounded in and emerging from the research itself[18].

By selecting the Kent Coalfield I had the opportunity to use a source of data which was very familiar to the sociologist but which had only recently been utilised by historians: I could trace the history of the coalfield not only through written documents but also through the first hand oral evidence of the miners and their families who had lived through the period. Because of the relatively recent development of the coalfield the

men who had sunk the pits, the miners who had migrated to the area during the inter-war years and their sons and grandsons who had increasingly looked elsewhere for employment were still alive and able to tell their side of the story. Through the use of interviews I could tap the combined experience of these men and by doing so unite two influential traditions in history and sociology. Although sociologists have been concerned to outline objective features of social structure and social process there has always been, from Weber onwards, an influential school stressing the importance of first hand accounts of social experience as a significant source of data. This tradition has gone under a variety of sociological labels but the attempt to understand subjective experience in particular social contexts has been a common and consistent ambition[19]. More recently a new generation of social historians have indirectly expressed a sympathy with this sociological tradition by their attempts to personalise discussion of major historical themes through the introduction of individual accounts of lived experience. Writers such as Burnett[20], Samuel[21] and Thompson[22] have placed 'personal documents' in the forefront of their treatment of social change in industrial society. My decision to use the interview method in studying miners and their families was influenced by these two parallel creeds and regarded as a practical way in which to contribute to an authentic sociologically informed history.

The bulk of what follows is concerned with the way in which I used oral evidence in the construction of this thesis. I do not attempt a prolonged discussion of the advantages and

disadvantages of the oral method in general because these issues are best discussed in relation to the actual research context. Nevertheless, in discussing the practical manner in which I set about contacting miners, collecting oral evidence and analysing and presenting the material I hope to make certain observations which will have a relevance beyond the immediate confines of the present research.

(ii) The formulation of a research design

a) Miners and their sons: the mining family and the mining community

From the beginning it seemed most appropriate to focus the study by tracing the lives and experiences of miners and their families who were associated with one particular colliery in the coalfield. The advantages of this approach were essentially practical. Given limited time and resources it appeared expedient to concentrate attention through a single case study which would lay emphasis upon the quality of the data collected rather than its quantity. Furthermore, looking at one colliery promised the possibility of locating changes in 'non-work' attitudes and patterns of behaviour within the more visible (and therefore measurable) context of one particular settlement. With these considerations in mind Snowdown Colliery and the neighbouring village of Aylesham were eventually selected. Snowdown was the first Kent colliery to produce coal - in 1913 - and Aylesham was the first sizeable settlement developed as a direct result of mining activity in Kent. Neither Tilmanstone nor Chislet Collieries were linked with housing development on a

similar scale and the latter had, in any case, closed in 1969. Only Betteshanger Colliery and the nearby Mill Hill estate could be considered as alternatives but their later development mitigated against their selection[23].

The original intention was to interview men from a limited number of families based in Aylesham. Within each family I aimed to interview men from two, or possibly three, working generations. I expected that typically these families would have at their head a grandfather who had migrated to Kent during the inter-war period, spent his life in mining and was now retired. Beneath him would be a son who had followed his father's footsteps to the colliery and who was still working (although not necessarily as a mineworker); and beneath him a grandson who, having begun work during the last ten years, may have looked elsewhere for employment and in so doing left Aylesham altogether. I therefore sought families which were originally 'Aylesham/mining' based but was prepared to include men who had once been miners but had now taken alternative employment and also men in the younger generations who were without any first hand experience of employment in mining. In sum, a family connection with the coal industry in Kent was necessary but this connection did not need to be an ongoing one. These flexible terms of reference meant that a family with no current occupational links with the coal industry and an individual without any personal experience of mining could nevertheless be included in the study. As such, the term 'mining families' was used in a loose sense to represent a range of 'family : employment in coal industry' links.

I was not therefore solely interested in miners (whether currently employed or retired) nor prepared to make residence in Aylesham (at the time of interview or in the past) a necessary condition of inclusion. To have studied only those who had spent their lives working at Snowdown and living in Aylesham would have been to ignore the processes of geographical and occupational mobility which had originally attracted my attention. Instead the aim was to draw upon a range of individual experience and to relate this to changes in and beyond the colliery. Thus to find out about developments at Snowdown during the inter-war years, for example, the evidence of a man living in Dover - either then or now - was potentially as valid as that of his workmate living in Aylesham. Similarly, a miner's son living and working, for example, in Canterbury could nevertheless provide evidence of childhood days in a mining family in Aylesham - and, indeed, of the processes whereby he came to reject the colliery and the village. Accordingly, the overall strategy was to use Snowdown and Aylesham as the central stage of the action. The starting point of this action began with the experiences of the inter-war migrants - the 'grandfathers' - and continued through their working lives and those of their sons and grandsons. How far this process of tracing inter-generational biographies took the investigation beyond the immediate confines of the colliery and the village was, to some extent, dependent upon those individuals who were eventually contacted. However, I was aware that by beginning with older or retired Snowdown miners in Aylesham or the surrounding environs any group contacted would be biased towards those individuals and families that had

successfully established themselves in the area. This was largely unavoidable: the investigation had, after all, to begin somewhere and Aylesham was plainly a more practical proposition than elsewhere. The most important consideration was to explore, with the aid of insight from first hand accounts, the implications of colliery expansion, stability and decline. The older, migrant miners would be able to talk about all three periods; their sons and grandsons would provide an alternative perspective on the later phases from both inside and outside the colliery and the village. Despite the centrifugal influences which were anticipated in the later stages of decline it was nevertheless considered advantageous to continue to focus attention upon Aylesham where it would be possible to supplement individual accounts of non-work social change with data which dealt with the village as an administrative unit.

A further proviso concerning my use of the term 'mining families' should be added here. Within each family I was primarily interested in the men and specifically in the father-son inter-generational link. An important question was: 'In the face of rundown and threat of closure how far would traditional values and patterns of behaviour persist and influence the occupational choices of miners' sons'? By concentrating upon fathers and sons I hoped to be able to talk around common issues and experiences and to compare and possibly integrate some of the statements made by members of the same family. There were two further, more practical, advantages promised by the 'family-centred' approach. First, by working

within families I would have the opportunity to develop relationships with those interviewed and possibly encourage trust and confidence[24]. Second, the practice of asking the older men whether their sons or grandsons would be willing to talk to me appeared an appropriate and relatively straightforward way to contact members of the younger generations. The formal exclusion of women was primarily the consequence of an interest in developments at the colliery and the occupational community of miners and, possibly, their sons. I had no intention of discussing, for example, husband-wife relationships or the role of wives and daughters in the extended family network, even though these may have been related to colliery work[25]. Furthermore, the range of issues which would have required discussion had women been formally included was considered to be beyond the feasible scope of the present study.

Despite the 'father-son' emphasis I did not consider the family as a social entity separate from the 'social networks' or 'community' in which it was located. To have attempted such a conceptual distinction would have been a futile exercise, for as Elias and Scotson point out:

> ...the structure of family cannot be understood and explained as if families existed in a communal vacuum or as if the structure of the families determined by itself that of the communities in which they lived...if one observes that the configurations of people to which one refers as 'families' greatly vary in structure and type and asks why they vary, one soon discovers that the forces responsible for these differences are not to be found within the families themselves. They can be found only in the larger units of which families form part[26].

This necessary interest in social relationships beyond those between fathers and sons led to an early consideration of the concept of 'community' and in particular 'mining community'. During my early visits to Aylesham I heard the place described variously by locals as a 'village', a 'mining village', a 'community' and a 'mining community'. What was to be made of these descriptions? How could they be interpreted? Would I use the same terms and, if so, would they convey a similar meaning? Even if it were possible, an all-embracing definition of terms will not be attempted here; indeed, a central task of the research was to present evidence which might provoke a critical re-evaluation of the key components of mining communities. Nevertheless, a number of points should initially be made in order that the content of the following chapters may be better understood.

'Community' is a particularly difficult concept to handle. In everyday usage the term carries a range of different meanings and value assumptions and this makes its conversion for use as a scientific concept extremely hazardous. Attempts by social scientists to define the term comprehensively have been defeated not only by diversity of popular usage but also by the marked inconsistencies within and between various academic community studies. As Bell and Newby point out, 'every sociologist, it seems, has possessed his own notion of what community consists of'[27] and this variety has been such that 'the analysis of various definitions was at one time quite a thriving sociological industry'[28]. In one well known paper Hillery analysed no less than 94 definitions of community and concluded that beyond a common concern with people there was no further fundamental area of agreement[29].

This rather pessimistic conclusion was amplified by recommendations from other sociologists that the term be, in effect, abolished in favour of the more rigorously defined 'local social system' or 'social network'[30]. Of these two alternatives the social network in particular has proved to be a potentially useful tool of analysis. Introduced by Barnes[31], the concept was later applied by Bott in her study of the urban social environment of a limited number of families in London[32]. Put simply, the network traces the pattern of social contact between various individuals. The extent or range of the network varies between individuals as does the 'connectedness'. Where an individual knows and sees people who also know of and have relationships with each other then the network may be described as 'close-knit'. The 'loose-knit' network, on the other hand, describes a situation where few of those with whom an individual interacts know or see one another. The distinctive analytical utility of the social network is now widely recognized - however, the range of practical problems encountered by those who have attempted to operationalise the concept have frequently proved insuperable. Clyde Mitchell wrote that:

> ...the study of personal networks requires meticulous and systematic detailed recording of data on social interaction for a fairly large group of people, a feat which few fieldworkers can accomplish successfully[33].

Subsequently the use of 'community' in social science literature has survived albeit with a questionable status.

Despite the impossibility of pinpointing any one specific meaning it is possible to draw out certain common terms of reference present in most discussions of community. These include a notion of area or locality; a sense of belonging or awareness of social ties; and an element of social interaction. Thus community frequently has a spatial as well as a social reality; whatever label is used - place, settlement, territory - the geographical factor persists as an important component. Certainly this is the case in discussions of traditional working class communities where characteristically social networks are close knit and bound by the locality[34]. As such these traditional communities have been located in both urban and rural settings. Working class communities in the countryside have often been termed 'industrial villages' and frequently the great majority of the population are dependent for their livelihood upon one dominant industry; hence, for example, the 'fishing village' or the 'mining village'. These settlements are invariably small and isolated and the almost unavoidable overlap of work and non-work relationships, attitudes and values has led to their categorisation as 'occupational communities'[35]. The occupational community of mineworkers has been sketched in Chapter 1, primarily through reference to the classic account of Ashton. The miners at Ashton, however, lived and worked in an urban rather than a rural setting and this demonstrates the important point that geographical isolation is not a <u>determinant</u> of an occupational community. Nevertheless, size and location can influence social behaviour: residents in a pit village may experience significant

constraints upon choice and action as a result of their isolation in a small scale settlement.

How does this discussion relate to the research strategy adopted here? To begin with it was decided to retain the terms 'community' and 'mining community' since it was clear that they were used frequently and spontaneously by residents. To have abolished their use in the context of research which sought to find a place for the first hand account appeared perverse if not impossible. Rather than ban these labels it seemed more appropriate to attempt to understand the different ways in which they were used in individual descriptions of social life at different points in time.

What of my own preconceptions of 'community' and 'mining community' and the manner in which they might apply to Aylesham? Certainly I did not believe it would be possible to describe the village simply as a 'unitary whole' or as a self-contained unit which was geographically confined to a particular area[36]. This much was implicit in my original critical interest as to whether or not the twin bases of the traditional mining community - a stable and homogeneous local population - ever developed in Kent (and if so, when). Indeed, the recognition that family lines might be traced beyond the village was an acknowledgement of the way in which social ties and relationships might penetrate physical boundaries. Nevertheless, Aylesham was seen as the starting point and 'central stage' of the research and this reflected my belief, from preliminary observations, that the geographical and administrative boundaries of Aylesham also represented a significant breakpoint in the social networks of

residents. So although the village was not perceived as a socially discrete unit it did appear to exercise a powerful 'magnetic' influence upon social relationships such that social networks were predominantly locality bound[37]; in this, Aylesham resembled other traditional working class communities. The applicability of these ideas can only be judged by reference to Chapters 4 - 7 in which the processes whereby a mining community becomes established, and thereafter perpetuated and changed according to a set of industrial and social factors, are examined in relation to the empirical findings of the present research.

b) Preparing for the interviews

I began without a strict limit in terms of the number of families or individuals which were to be included in the study but it became clear at an early stage that numbers would need to be limited if the oral evidence was to be properly analysed and placed in context through reference to other documentary sources. As a result I set a flexible target of 45 interviews with members of three generations of Aylesham based families. It was never intended that this group should form a statistically representative base from which quantitive generalisations could be made; the longitudinal framework of the study in any case made this an impossible task. Instead the aim was to collect sufficient oral evidence from a range of families in order to illustrate and provide insight into the processes of social change at the colliery and in the community.

Given this emphasis and the fact that I would be solely responsible for the collection and analysis of the interviews it did not appear necessary to adopt a rigid or standardised approach to the research design. Indeed, I viewed the field research as an opportunity to escape the constraints of large scale survey techniques which can serve to reduce communication between researcher and subject[38]. As far as was possible I intended the interviews to be informal, open-ended and flexible and if a relationship was established beyond the interview situation then this would be regarded largely as an advantage rather than something which might detract from the 'objectivity' of the research findings. The aim was to cultivate a trusting relationship with those who were interviewed for without this the task of collecting authentic life histories seemed impossible[39].

By recording the interviews on tape I anticipated two immediate advantages, both of which would enhance the quality of the oral evidence used in the research. First, the tape would free me from note taking or box ticking and so encourage a more informal, free flowing exchange such that either the respondent or myself could follow through areas of particular interest or elaborate on certain themes as they arose within each interview. Second, the exchange could subsequently be analysed in great depth after the interview by replaying the recording, transcribing particular sections and so on. By thus delaying <u>some</u> of the processes of selectivity - which are inevitable in all academic activity - the recording would allow the opportunity to place greater emphasis upon what was actually said and the way in which it was said; statements could be properly placed in context and

therefore better understood[40].

Before making any contacts in Aylesham I had undertaken a six month period of background reading and research based largely upon the consultation of local newspapers and the records of the Kent Mine Workers' Association (KMWA) and the NUM (Kent Area)[41]. The aim of this exercise was to gain some outline of 'what had happened' in the Kent Coalfield - at least as seen through the eyes of local journalists and union officials - so that I did not go into the interviews entirely ignorant of past and contemporary developments. Although these written documents could only provide a partial view I felt that the knowledge gained from them would help me to focus the interviews and 'feed in' information which would stimulate my respondent. In fact, this preliminary documentary survey was of use in another sense for it helped to define more clearly the particular time periods of development and decline which were to form the basic framework of the study. Finally, although the subsequent interviews were expected to form a major source of data for the research it was not my intention to ignore the printed word or other documentary evidence after this initial six month period was complete; rather, I anticipated that documentary material would form an integral part of the whole serving to inform the interview data, and in turn, <u>being</u> informed by oral evidence[42].

(iii) <u>'Making contact'</u>

For the type of interview which I was attempting a personal introduction to potential respondents by someone with whom they

were familiar appeared the most satisfactory manner to initiate a relationship. At the outset I intended to make contact with certain 'key' individuals in Aylesham, outline the research to them and ask for their help in locating appropriate individuals and families. Whilst consulting the union records in Dover I had noted the names of Snowdown Colliery Branch Committee members of the NUM and I began the interview field work by contacting one of these men. This resulted in my drawing up a list of about ten names; included in the list was the organiser of the local old persons' social club who, in turn, gave me the names of over twenty other individuals. Most, although not all, of this first group of men were retired or near retirement age because I had decided initially to concentrate upon the older men whose experience ranged from the beginnings of the coalfield through to the present and thus formed a comprehensive background into which subsequent interviews with younger men could be fitted.

To virtually everyone else that was contacted during the following two year period of interviewing I put a uniform question: 'Do you know of anyone who might like to help by consenting to an interview?' In this way personal contacts and recommendations led to further contacts and so on, snowball fashion so that as the research progressed I came into contact with individuals from a variety of 'directions'. Beyond the union committee member and the old persons' social club organiser I acquired names from NCB staff employees at Snowdown Colliery, the warden of the local old persons home and through various university related sources. For example, two members of the

university academic staff lived close to Aylesham, a student had already completed some interviews with miners in Kent and some of the service workers on the campus were ex-mineworkers - all were able to recommend people that I should see. Later, I discovered, by chance, a personal acquaintance of mine (living in Norwich) was the son of a miner and had lived in Aylesham for the greater part of his life. Through this individual and another son of a miner - whose wife had recently completed a small survey of Aylesham - I made several contacts with the younger members of the local population. Finally, I also contacted some individuals as a result of letters which appeared in the local press and the Miner[43]. None of these letters were directly aimed at making local contacts for interview purposes although some of the replies did lead indirectly to this eventuality.

The manner in which contact was made is recounted in some detail in order to demonstrate that the range of sources drawn upon was fairly diverse; there was not one snowball but many and they began rolling from a number of different points. This appeared to be an appropriate safeguard against the danger of concentrating upon a small, inter-connected group within Aylesham.

The first major problem encountered concerned the difficulty which surrounded the attempt to trace three generational families willing and able to participate in the research. The earlier average age at death of miners meant that many of the early pioneers and settlers had died or, in some cases, were too

incapacitated to be able to co-operate. Even after contacting an older miner and establishing his willingness to talk, there was, of course, no guarantee that he would have a son or grandson or that these men could be easily contacted or willing to co-operate. Part of the problem was caused by the pattern of migration which had continued into and out of the coalfield until the close of the Second War such that many families were only two generational[44]. Also, whilst I had anticipated the industrial and geographical mobility of the third generation I had certainly under-estimated the mobility of the second generation. These difficulties made progress in contacting three generational families extremely slow and soon forced a re-assessment of the original research design.

The advantages of the family centred approach have already been outlined but it should be emphasised that although this method promised a unique insight it was not essential to the research. Ultimately, I wished to study aspects of social and economic change at the colliery and in the community rather than the family as a social group and so I adopted a more opportunistic approach to the interview field work. As far as possible I intended to include fathers and sons from individual families but was prepared to make up the numbers with interviews conducted with only one member of particular families. This proved to be a more practical way to gain the numbers I required and made the initial contact with potential respondents easier to manage. Instead of worrying <u>before</u> an interview about whether a man had sons and whether or not they might be available I completed the interview and only then

mentioned my interest in other members of the family. This approach had two advantages: first, the respondent now knew me a little better and what was involved in co-operation; second, I avoided the embarrassment of 'rejecting' individuals who were quite prepared to co-operate but who, for one reason or another, did not have sons available for future interviews.

Although many of the initial contacts were made in the presence of a 'mediator' - a father would introduce me to his son, a resident would walk with me to a neighbour, a friend would introduce another at a bar - I did, on a number of occasions introduce myself alone. Whenever this occurred I always ensured that I could mention at least one local person who had recommended my visit. Frequently on these occasions the prospective respondent had already heard of my interest and expected my call; in this case the 'grapevine' effect of operating in a small community worked to my advantage although this was not always so[45]. The personal method of contact proved to be relatively successful and contributed, at least in part, to the low rate of direct refusals which in sum numbered only four.

(iv) The men who were interviewed

The great majority of the oral evidence used in this thesis is drawn from tape recorded interviews with 47 men[46]. 30 of these men came from 12 families and their position within each family is indicated in the simple diagrammatic profiles which are provided in Appendix 1. In 2 families I was able to interview 4 men respectively; in another 2 I interviewed

3 members; and in the remaining 8 I interviewed 2 members. 17 men were interviewed as 'isolates', being men who were not related through the father/son/brother link to any of the other men who were interviewed (see Appendix 1). First hand experience of mining employment was not a necessary condition of inclusion although 46 of these men had such experience[47]. The emphasis of the research was predominantly upon the individual account rather than statistical aggregation but the following tables giving basic age, birthplace, residence and occupational information may serve to provide a profile of these 47 men.

TABLE 2.1: PLACE OF BIRTH

AREA	NO.
S. Wales	7
Lancs/Cheshire	6
Scotland	6
North'lnd/Durham	5
Notts/Derby/Staffs	4
Yorkshire	4
Kent	15
TOTAL	47

Note: Kent figure includes 2 men from 'local' Kent families and 13 men representing the second and third generation of migrant families.

TABLE 2.2: AGE DISTRIBUTION

AGE GROUP (YEARS)	NO.
16-25	4
26-35	6
36-45	3
46-55	6
56-65	5
66-75	20
76-85	3
TOTAL	47

TABLE 2.3: PLACE OF RESIDENCE

PLACE	NO.
Aylesham	37
Surrounding villages (Snowdown, Nonington, Adisham, Woolage)	6
Elsewhere in Kent	4
TOTAL	47

TABLE 2.4: OCCUPATIONAL BACKGROUND

EMPLOYMENT POSITION	NO.
In employment	
Mineworkers (without occup. experience elsewhere)	9
Mineworkers (with occup. experience elsewhere)	7
Other employment (ex-mineworkers)	4
Other employment (without occup. experience in mining industry)	1
Not in employment	
Unemployed (redundant as mineworkers)	3
Retired (as mineworkers)	22
Retired (elsewhere, ex-mineworker)	1
TOTAL	47

From Table 2.2 it can be seen that the group is weighted towards men in the older age categories. To an extent this was intentional because, as already indicated, the oral evidence of these men spanned the entire period with which I was concerned and was therefore given a higher priority. Despite this apparent imbalance it should be remembered that the working experience of the older men continued through, in many cases, to the late sixties and early seventies and that a substantial proportion of the younger men had experience of employment outside the mining

industry. In fact, 12 out of 21 men in employment at the time of interview had worked elsewhere. As such it was considered that these men provided sufficient evidence in their first hand accounts to enable the discussion of the more contemporary issues of rundown and mechanisation in the coal industry and the implications which these developments had for occupational choice and community change. The objective was that such evidence might provide insight into aspects of continuity and change rather than a means through which quantitative generalisations concerning the social profile of Aylesham at particular points in time could be made.

Finally, although women were not formally included in the interviews, 9 miners' wives did make substantial contributions to the taped sessions with their husbands and some of their evidence has been incorporated into the ensuing chapters. The use of oral evidence from a variety of sources beyond the taped interview is outlined in Appendix II.

(v) Collecting oral evidence in a small community

Aylesham remains today a geographically remote and socially isolated village which has not expanded beyond the population levels of the early thirties[48]. Because of its size and position, and the character of the mining based families which dominate it, much personal information, which would remain private elsewhere, rapidly and unavoidably becomes public in Aylesham. This public quality of everyday life may serve to promote an appreciation of the common situation of local

residents and lead, for example, to the widespread practice of mutual aid during times of hardship[49]. Conversely, the availability of ordinary confidential information may fuel divisions and cliques and encourage cleavage within and between individuals and groups in the community[50]. In sum, working class villages like Aylesham may be both close knit and internally divided dependent upon the particular social context. Because of this reality I encountered two sets of barriers in undertaking the field research.

To begin with I was an 'outsider'. I had no personal connections with anyone living in Aylesham nor any links with miners or the mining industry. To those that I met during the early stages of the research I was a student from a nearby university undertaking a study in order to gain an academic qualification. The first barrier which I faced thus concerned my 'outsider' status[51]. Now it should not be assumed that this is an entirely disadvantageous position for the social researcher; it is conceivable that individuals will confide more readily, particularly on certain personal issues, with a stranger than with someone more familiar to them[52]. Equally, someone defined as an 'outsider' would appear destined to be denied access to information or attitudes which would be expressed to one with whom more trust could be placed. The problem of 'social distance' between investigator and respondent is a familiar one for sociologists and is not easily resolved[53]. Where possible I chose to develop relationships beyond the interview in order to enhance the quality of the interview itself and also to establish myself as one who was known within Aylesham.

As the research progressed and I became a regular visitor my relationships with several respondents developed to the extent that I had meals with families, went out on social occasions to pubs and clubs and often called in for 'tea and a chat' at the homes of those I knew. There were, without exception, extremely enjoyable occasions and were an enormous benefit to the research for they provided the opportunity to make discoveries which would have been impossible had I relied solely upon visits for interview purposes alone[54]. At a later stage in the research this partial involvement in everyday aspects of life in Aylesham helped me to assess the material contained in the taped interviews and to inform my subsequent selections from them.

Nevertheless, this level of familiarity was not without its disadvantages. Some relationships became so informal that the introduction of a tape recorder seemed unnatural and became more difficult to handle than in situations where I was less familiar with the respondent. I also found it difficult, for example, to gauge the extent to which information collected in the course of the research could be divulged over a dinner table or at a bar. The expression of my own opinions could also be problematical yet relationships of trust are built upon the exchange of confidences and I often felt obliged to acknowledge the demands of these informal associations. This led to my encountering a second barrier: after partially overcoming my 'outsider' status I faced the further problem of excessive identification with particular groups or cliques within Aylesham.

This threatened to endanger the number of directions available for me to contact individuals and families. 'Taking sides' within Aylesham seemed entirely inappropriate but by not committing myself I ran the risk of failing to acquire the confidence of my respondent. Although I did not suffer any direct refusals through identification with particular individuals I sometimes felt that the quality of some of the interviews was affected by the respondents' knowledge that I was in regular contact with others in Aylesham. For example, on one occasion I had arranged to meet a man in the lounge of the old persons home. While I was waiting for him I chatted with another man who, by this time, I knew very well. Eventually the man I had intended to see arrived and after briefly acknowledging the other man we left for his room. On arrival his first words to me were, 'He's not a good miner, you know!', and I felt that during our subsequent interview this man had lost some confidence in me because I had listened to someone 'who knew nothing about pitwork'. Again, on a number of other occasions I formed the impression that refusals were made <u>within</u> interviews lest information divulged should 'end up in the wrong hands' within Aylesham.

These difficulties were a direct result of the conflict between the <u>public</u> nature of a small community and the <u>private</u> quality of the taped interview. Focusing upon one small village offers the advantages of depth and the opportunity to use anthropological techniques of involvement and observation

to supplement recorded material. Oral historians must, in future, weigh these benefits against the hazards of operating in a social milieu where it is extremely difficult to keep secrets.

(vi) The interviews

With the exception of 2 interviews, which were completed in the workplace, all the recordings were conducted in the homes of the respondents. This setting was well suited for the type of open ended, informal interview which was intended since the respondent was in a familiar environment and normally had a relatively unlimited amount of time at his disposal. Nevertheless, there were important drawbacks involved in arranging interviews in this locale. For example, although I always made a note of the date of a proposed visit my respondents rarely did, largely, I imagine, because they had only to ensure that they were at home. This sometimes led to my arrival coinciding with that of other visitors which made an interview impossible. Even if there were no other guests the interruptions of other members of the household sometimes made the interview exchange extremely difficult if not impossible. In most cases these interruptions were largely unavoidable because of the physical constraints imposed by the houses in which most of the families lived. Characteristically, these had one main living room which was warm and regularly used; if there was another downstairs room beyond the kitchen it rarely seemed to be utilised.

These problems created a dilemma in terms of the style adopted in the interview. As far as was possible I aimed for informality but ultimately I had limited time and resources and was primarily concerned with collecting good quality taped interviews. To this end I would try to make it clear that I had come to talk to one person and not the whole family, and if it was suggested that we go to a quieter room alone then I invariably agreed. However, I never proposed this move or indicated that I would prefer others to leave the room since I felt that to do so may have harmed my relationship with the respondent. This policy undoubtedly affected the quality of the interviews although it is difficult to assess this influence with any degree of specificity. Certainly the presence of a wife appeared to inhibit the discussion of particular topics and the use of certain modes of expression(!) and for my part, I am sure that I sometimes lost concentration because of the attentions of an inquisitive child or the intrusion of a neighbour[55]. What was lost through these situational constraints was, to some extent, balanced by the gains of informality and the positive contribution which was made by some of the 'interrupters'. Wives, for example, could often fill the role of 'second interviewer' by their ability to mention an event which their husbands had forgotten or temporarily overlooked and they also made substantial contributions in their own right.

If I had not met my respondent before I immediately explained the purpose of my visit by reference to my interest in miners and mining communities and concern to trace the social

history of the Kent Coalfield through reference to the first hand experiences of those who had lived through the period. This was normally sufficient as a preliminary explanation of my enquiries although on a number of occasions the initial response to this opening was characterised by the expression of some doubt as to the possibility of helping me. This attitude was based upon a misconception of my purpose; a belief that I was engaged primarily in collecting 'historical information' and that for this I should consult Mr. A, B or C (there were two or three acknowledged 'authorities' in Aylesham whose names were constantly referred to on these occasions). To this I would point out that I was primarily interested in the unique life experiences of each person I spoke to and that for this purpose historical ability or knowledge, as generally understood, was not particularly important.

The tape recorder was introduced essentially as a device which freed me from the task of note taking and thus enabled a more informal interview exchange. I stressed that the interviews were confidential and that the tapes would only be used for the academic purposes of the research. This was normally sufficient to indicate that although the recordings might be publicly reproduced to an 'academic audience' the content of interviews would not be revealed to other residents in Aylesham or members of families connected with the village[56].

Just as introductions were relatively standardised, so too were questioning patterns. I began by asking the respondent to talk me through his working life beginning, literally, from his place and date of birth and schooldays through to the present.

My interests were based upon the themes outlined above and my questions ranged around the four areas which I had preselected for attention. In this manner I undoubtedly shaped the content and character of the interview. However, each individual was allowed the freedom to stress particular aspects of his life history and so exercise a determining influence upon the issues to which we would pay considerable attention. Many of my questions were deliberately broad and open-ended; they encouraged the individual to speak for himself from his own experience. Characteristically, they did not open with a proposition with which the individual might agree or disagree but with: 'Could you tell me about...'. The objective was to urge the men to talk and talk freely, rather than confine them to 'yes/no' type answers. As each man spoke about his life I would try to introduce issues which might not otherwise have been included in an effort to produce some degree of comparability between the interviews. The more direction and guidance that was given the more structured the interviews became and although this made subsequent analysis a more straightforward task it could also inhibit expression and the respondents' ability to influence the direction of the interview. The extent to which I intervened varied according to the ability of the individual to talk freely on his own behalf; some men could talk for twenty minutes or more with ease whilst others rarely managed more than single sentence answers. At each extreme there were disadvantages: the former sometimes producing an aimless and irrelevant monologue and the latter often failing to produce the depth in replies which the taped interview can

achieve.

In general, the older men seemed to find it easier to talk at length without my needing to constantly direct them. These men had more to talk about, more time on their hands to allow them to talk and were often more appreciative of my company and presence as an interested listener. The tape recorder may have initially caught the attention of these men but thereafter it was largely ignored. The younger men were more aware of the presence of a tape recorder and more dependent upon my verbal prodding during the course of the interview. This may have been a reflection of their greater familiarity with the potential of the tape recorder but in a more fundamental sense the entirely different 'life position' of these men undoubtedly influenced the quality of their accounts[57]. Men in their twenties and thirties found it more difficult to sit back and reflect on their lives, particularly in those cases where the coal industry had not played a significant part in their personal occupational histories[58]. In this sense, although the interviews may have covered common ground those with the younger men were of a different quality to those with the older men; whilst the latter came closer to a conversation in a normal sense, the former were often closer to a formal interview.

The manner in which I moulded the interviews altered as experience in the field articulated and resolved some problems and introduced others. Fortunately this did not lead to a complete change in emphasis; instead, ideas became more narrowly focused and closely defined so that my interest, for example, in work organisation began to centre around the

operation of the subcontracting system and the process of mechanisation, and my concern with 'community' developed into an elaboration of the influences of geographical and social mobility. Nevertheless, the changes in emphasis which occurred made the later interviews different - and perhaps more informed in the limited terms of this research - from those carried out at an earlier stage[59].

The interviews also varied in terms of length and the number of visits which were needed to complete them: from one man I collected five hours of tape spread over four visits; from another only 25 minutes from one visit. Between these extremes most interviews lasted from between one and two hours and took between one and two visits to actually complete. However, the process of arranging interviews and the social obligations which frequently accompanied these predominantly informal occasions resulted in my visiting most households at least three times for each single interview which I recorded. Wherever possible these visits were no more than days apart, for obvious practical reasons, but in some cases individual taped interviews spanned a period that extended into weeks.

In all cases but one I was solely responsible - initially, at least - for putting the questions to my respondent but on several visits friends, neighbours or other members of the family acted as an alternative source of questions and prompts. On one occasion one of my academic supervisors was present at an interview and contributed to a number of questions during the course of the recording. All of the taped interviews were completed between the summers of 1974 and 1976[60].

(vii) Problems of analysis and presentation

a) Some introductory observations

There are numerous difficulties associated with the collection of oral evidence but it is at the stage of analysis and presentation that a range of key problems concerning the weight and status of the first hand account are necessarily confronted. The use of the interview as a tool of social investigation has long been familiar to the sociologist yet the manner in which interviews are conducted and subsequently analysed remains an issue for debate; the recent contributions of ethnomethodologists and socio-linguists have, for example, provoked a re-assessment of the sort of information which is, in fact, derived from the interview[61]. Historians have only just begun to concern themselves with these issues since the systematic collection and analysis of first hand accounts represents a comparatively recent activity - although the use of documentary sources which are primarily based upon interviews is long established. The new practitioners of oral history have found it necessary to devote considerable time and energy justifying their consultation of first hand evidence and this pre-occupation with the establishment of oral history as a plausible, indeed respectable, academic activity has diverted attention from the more fundamental problems associated with the actual use of this type of evidence[62].

Many of the objections which have been raised against oral history could equally be directed at the use of interviews in general whilst the specific problems associated with this technique - which seem to centre around the reliability of

individual recall - have been placed convincingly in perspective by Paul Thompson. He made the important point that the problems associated with 'memory' are inseparable from those of 'perception' such that 'interviewing older persons does not introduce major methodological issues separate from the normal problems of the interview'[63]. Thus the 'problem' of respondents re-interpreting the past in terms of the present may be present in an interview focused upon the events and experiences of yesterday just as in one concerned with a period, say, thirty years ago. The only major difference is, of course, the time span in which this re-evaluation may have occurred. But how far is this a 'problem'? The historians' concern with 'accuracy', whilst legitimate at one level, should not be taken so far that it negates the richness and diversity of first hand accounts. As Green has commented,

> Perhaps it might be both wiser, and ultimately more creative, to use the oral source in the interests of a different kind of historical writing; one in which the participants themselves...tell their own story and make their own definitions[64]?

Ultimately the validity of oral history will stand or fall by the quality of the empirical work which uses this methodology. The insights offered by miners' oral evidence have already been outlined[65]. On a broader level the contributions of George Ewart Evans have consistently demonstrated that the human memory can be an excellent source of information, particularly for an investigation of the everyday lives of working people[66]. Indeed

it frequently represents the only feasible method of discovering those aspects of social life which, for one reason or another, may not be documented elsewhere[67]. More recently, Raphael Samuel has skilfully demonstrated how the written and spoken word may be successfully integrated in the historical analysis of particular communities[68]. Furthermore, as Samuel has indicated, the use of oral evidence in the construction of historical accounts introduces a welcome bias for it gives a voice to the voiceless section of society; that mass of individuals who are unlikely to leave behind them any written records of their lives. From this point of view, it would appear that it is the historians who ignore the oral method - where it is feasible - rather than those who employ it, who should be issuing statements justifying their position.

The real problems associated with oral evidence do not concern whether or not this material should be consulted but rather how it is subsequently used. This is an area which demands continual discussion, particularly during these early stages, yet this need has scarcely been met. This neglect betrays an approach to historical investigation which continues to exercise a pervading influence even in contemporary work. To quote Thompson, 'historians too easily believe, with Durkheim, in "social facts as things" '[69] despite the potent warning issued by E.H. Carr many years ago[70]. Following on from this approach many oral historians have perceived their task to be essentially archival in nature; the spoken word is seen to be merely another historical source which must be duly recorded. This is clearly revealed in the words of the British

Oral History Society which defines oral history as 'the collection and preservation of first hand historical evidence' and recognises it as 'a method of obtaining hitherto unavailable source material for the study of history and as a medium by which the experience of those now living may be transmitted to our successors'[71]. This position comes dangerously close to encouraging an approach to oral history which entirely overlooks the unique qualities of the interview which distinguish it from all types of documentary sources. It suggests that the interview is purely a medium of transference and that each individual is regarded as a potential source of a given number of facts which the historian must tease out and record - and there the oral historians' work ends. It is for others, with a presumably more theoretical bent, to consult the recordings and make what they can of them. Thus Samuel has recently remarked that the 'greatest contribution' of the oral historian 'may well be in the collection and safe preservation of his material rather than in the use he can immediately find for it, or the way he writes it up'[72]. The danger of this line of argument lies in its potential to divert attention from the collaborative aspects of the interview and inhibit acknowledgement of the fact that the spoken word is directed towards the oral investigator in response to his signals, prompts and questions. The interview is thus a social relationship into which novel problems may be introduced, uncertainties developed into certainties, thoughts re-evalued and modified and contradictions resolved. In sum, the oral historian plays a positive role in the construction of the data he records and it is this formative influence which

distinguishes this 'source' from any other which may be consulted.

As a direct consequence of this active role the oral historian is obliged to be explicit about his underlying assumptions and values, his interview methods and his procedures for subsequent analysis. Without some discussion of these issues - and the way in which they developed during the course of the research - there can be no proper understanding of what the investigator 'brought to' the interviews, and therefore only a limited comprehension of what 'came out' of them. Throughout, the collector of oral evidence must be aware that his activity is selective and that this selectivity is derived from his implicit purpose of solving perceived historical problems - no matter how ill-defined these problems might be. This holds true even for the collector of 'life histories' because even in the most comprehensive interviews different events, developments and so on draw their significance or meaning from the context in which they are told, and it is this context which the oral historian unavoidably moulds. In view of these comments it is now necessary to discuss some of the problems which were encountered in actually using tape recorded material in the writing of this thesis.

b) <u>The practical analysis of taped interviews</u>

A major advantage of the use of the tape recorder is that an entire verbal exchange can be completely reproduced, whenever necessary, after the interview. At this point - alone and listening to the replay - I became most aware of the immediate

problems of selection and choice which were necessary in order to give shape and form to the 'untidy reality' which the tape comprehensively records. I began by listening to the first interviews several times, making notes as I did so. These early sessions were important in assessing the relevant contributions of myself and my respondent. I began to work out those areas which were successfully dealt with through the interview and which seemed of interest and importance to both participants in the exchange. In this way the interviews were refined and focused whilst the fieldwork was continuing. During this period I had begun to transcribe particular sections of tapes to supplement my notes, but it was not until the closing stages of the fieldwork that I began to make extensive transcriptions of entire interviews. This was an extremely time consuming activity yet one which proved worthwhile in the long run. I had noticed a tendency for my note taking to gloss over complexities and contradictions which were evident in the first hand account in the interests of producing a summary of what was said. It was more difficult to make this error if the tape had been transcribed since this allowed rapid access to different parts of the interview and facilitated the careful analysis of particular sections. It was only through these transcriptions that I began to fully realise the richness and complexity of the interview exchange and recognise the intricacies and ambiguities of the individual account[73].

The discovery of these inconsistencies, or 'loose ends', in the statements of my respondents justified the open ended

interview and the transcription yet this immediately presented problems of selection. How could the first hand account be dissected and represented in the context of the arguments forwarded in the thesis without damaging the authenticity of the original statement? This was certainly a problem but it was not peculiar to this type of research for as Carr has indicated, 'the historian is necessarily selective'[74]; and those that fail to recognise this do so at the expense of their material whilst those who attempt to avoid selection are shirking their responsibilities and misguiding their readers. Thus Studs Terkel has presented his tape recorded accounts with an absolute minimum of 'intellectual packaging' and this has led some to interpret his work as if it were a direct portrayal of of experience. A reviewer remarked of Division Street: America that 'a city speaks uninhibitedly through this book' yet it is advisable to remember that this study was based upon approximately 60 interviews, that Terkel selected the individuals, asked the questions and selected and ordered the answers[75]. In a sense, his work is only remarkable because of the absence of any explicit argument or analysis to accompany his first hand accounts. Faced with a mass of tape recorded data Terkel opted out at the last, and most difficult stage, and left his reader to it. It was this irresponsibility which encouraged a reviewer of the more recent collection, Working, to ask in exasperation:

> Is there no middle ground between a celebration of the individual at the expense of structural understanding, and a sociology which will include people[76]?

Although the problems of selection are unavoidable steps can be taken to ensure that the judgements involved in this process are well informed. Those parts of interviews which are reproduced in this thesis were selected on the basis of extensive analysis through playback and transcription and in this way the tape recorder allowed a more considered choice than would have been possible if statements had been hastily noted at, or soon after, the interview. The tapes also allowed relatively lengthy verbatim excerpts to be incorporated into the text and these do allow some insight into the subtlety and feeling of the original account.

Where excerpts are used in the text the aim has normally been to illustrate not only individual experience but to give some indication of a wider reality. This introduces the familiar problems associated with any attempt to generalise from a limited base. An early decision had been made favouring the use of a small number of relatively lengthy interviews since this promised the greater returns, given the constraints of time and finance. This choice did not involve any denial of the large scale statistical approach; indeed, throughout the research there was a consistent attempt to fit the interview data into a wider pattern which could be drawn by the eclectic consultation of statistical and other documentary sources. The systematic use of a range of other sources - including, of course, the untaped conversations and observations which accompanied my limited participation in Aylesham social life - aided the selection from the taped interviews and gave greater weight to the claim that these could be considered indicative of a more

general state of affairs. As Lummis pointed out, statistical validity is not, after all, an end in itself or a guarantee of the 'truth' but merely an aid to understanding; the excerpts used here from the taped interviews are intended as another such aid[77].

The process of fitting interview material with data drawn from other sources was crucial in making evaluative judgements concerning the status of the oral evidence collected. In a sense, the oral investigator has to continually decide whether or not to 'believe' what he is told; he must judge whether the information contained in statements is self-evident and therefore non-problematic or whether this data represents raw material which must be analysed and interpreted in order to discover the 'real' meaning. To give an example: in marshalling the oral evidence which I collected particular 'pieces of information' were taken at face value (for example, 'I was born in 1908 in Lancashire') whilst other 'pieces' were considered indicative of a set of underlying values, attitudes and beliefs (for example, 'Nationalisation did not improve the lot of the miner'). At the extremes these two types of information were distinguishable but difficulties arose in those cases which were nearer the borderline. For example, individual estimates of the prices which traders charged when they visited Aylesham or of the earnings of 'butty men' appeared to indicate more about attitudes towards, in this case, 'outsiders' and 'subcontracting' than about the actual prices which were charged or wages earned. Unfortunately, there is no ready made solution which may be offered in the face of these sort of problems. The most

practical course is to consult as wide a range of sources as possible in the expectation that ' a much higher degree of confirmation' will be accorded research using 'multi-dimensional approaches to the data problem' than that which is dependent upon a single source[78].

The manner in which the interviews varied has been outlined above where particular emphasis was placed upon the influences of age (the older men spoke more freely) and timing (the later interviews were more informed and focused). These differences restricted comparability although this limitation had been anticipated: if interviews were to be grounded in the life experience of individuals then some allowance had to be made for the unique qualities of each biography. A man could not give first hand evidence of working at the coal-face if he had never been employed there nor compare the experience of work outside the coal industry if he had never ventured beyond the pit yard. The interviews could never therefore be standardised in any rigid sense although individuals were guided into discussing a common set of issues. Within this framework the freedom which was allowed each man to stress particular aspects, and sometimes ignore others entirely, may have restricted comparability but this was the price paid for a greater understanding of the individual biography and the range of experience which these accounts collectively delineated.

Wherever possible passages from the interviews have been reproduced verbatim without any form of editing. However, some instances of hesitation or repetition have been omitted and in other cases sections have been excluded because they have not

been relevant to the issue under discussion. The judgement of relevance is necessarily subjective although every attempt has been made to retain the original sense of the passage. Where parts of a statement have been omitted this has been indicated by dots in the text. All statements have been attributed to the particular individual responsible so that the reader may relate them to the biographical data provided in Appendix 1. In order to maintain the confidential character of the evidence given by miners and their families all names have been changed[79].

NOTES

1. Bell and Newby made this point in the course of their review of community studies and later went some way towards rectifying this deficiency in their edited collection of 'confessions' illustrating the manner in which research was actually undertaken. See C. BELL and H. NEWBY, Community Studies, London, 1971; C. BELL and H. NEWBY (eds.), Doing Sociological Research, London, 1977.

2. Two examples of studies which clearly benefit by a forthright discussion of their own history are, E. BOTT, Family and Social Network, London, 1957; J. PLATT, The Realities of Social Research, London, 1976.

3. For a recent discussion of these alternatives see M. BULMER, 'Sociology and History: Some Recent Trends', Sociology, 8, 1974.

4. E.H. CARR, What is History? London, 1961, p. 66.

5. C.W. MILLS, The Sociological Imagination, Harmondsworth, 1970, p. 42.

6. Ibid., p. 159.

7. E.P. THOMPSON, The Making of the English Working Class, London, 1963.

8. E.J. HOBSBAWM, Labouring Men, London, 1964.

9. H. PERKIN, The Origins of Modern English Society, 1780-1880, London, 1969.

10. R. MOORE, Pitmen, Preachers and Politics, Cambridge, 1974.

11. M. ANDERSON, Family Structure in Nineteenth Century Lancashire, Cambridge, 1971.

12. J. FOSTER, Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution, London, 1974.

13. In particular, J.H. GOLDTHORPE, D. LOCKWOOD, F. BECHHOFER and J. PLATT, The Affluent Worker: Industrial Attitudes and Behaviour, Cambridge, 1968; The Affluent Worker: Political Attitudes and Behaviour, Cambridge, 1968; The Affluent Worker in the Class Structure, Cambridge, 1969.

14. These points are discussed in Chapter 1.

15. R. MOORE, 'Religion as a Source of Variation in Working-Class Images of Society', in M. BULMER (ed.) Working Class Images of Society, London, 1975, p. 35.

16. N. DENNIS, F. HENRIQUES and C. SLAUGHTER, Coal is Our Life, London, 1969.

17. A more detailed account of the development of the coalfield is provided in Chapter 3.

18. P. WORSLEY and CONTRIBUTORS, Introducing Sociology, Harmondsworth, 1970, p. 266.

19. Examining this 'cluster of doctrines' Bulmer identifies "Weber's 'interpretive understanding of social action', W.I. Thomas' emphasis on the actors' 'definition of the situation', and G.H. Mead's 'generalised other' ". See

M. BULMER, 'Personal Documents as Sociological Data', in S. CHAPLIN, Durham Mining Villages, University of Durham Department of Sociology and Social Administration, Working Papers in Sociology No. 3, 1972, p. ii.

20. J. BURNETT (ed.), Useful Toil, London, 1974.

21. R. SAMUEL (ed.), Village Life and Labour, London, 1975; Miners, Quarrymen and Saltworkers, London, 1977.

22. P. THOMPSON, The Edwardians, St. Albans, 1977.

23. See Chapter 3.

24. The rationale of this approach is elaborated later in this Chapter.

25. As they were, for example, at 'Ashton'. See N. DENNIS et al., op. cit.

26. N. ELIAS and J.L. SCOTSON, The Established and the Outsiders, London, 1965, pp. 44, 49-50.

27. C. BELL and H. NEWBY, (1971), op. cit., p. 27.

28. Ibid.,

29. G.A. HILLERY JR, 'Definitions of Community: Areas of Agreement', Rural Sociology, 20, 1955.

30. M. STACEY, Methods of Social Research, London, 1969; R. PAHL, Patterns of Urban Life, London, 1970.

31. J. BARNES, 'Class and Committees in a Norwegian Island Parish', Human Relations, 7, 1954.

32. E. BOTT, op. cit.

33. J.C. MITCHELL, 'The Concept and Use of Social Networks', in J.C. MITCHELL (ed.), Social Networks in Urban Situations, Manchester, 1969, pp. 10-11. It has been estimated by Boissevain that to examine the extent to which those included in one individual's personal network (numbering 1750) interacted with each other required a matrix (1750 x 1750) beyond the scope of all but the largest computers. See A. MACFARLANE, 'History, Anthropology and the Study of Communities', Social History, 5, 1977.

34. See C. BELL and H. NEWBY, (1971), op. cit., for a clear and comprehensive survey of the literature and summary of major components in the use of 'community'.

35. For a pioneering discussion of occupational communities see R. BLAUNER, 'Work Satisfaction and Industrial Trends in Modern Society', in W. GALLENSON and S.M. LIPSET (eds.), Labour and Trade Unionism, New York, 1960. Recent research in Britain is reported in M. BULMER (ed.), (1975), op. cit.

36. See the discussion in P. WORSLEY et al., op. cit., p. 255.

37. Ibid., p. 252.

38. See J. GALTUNG, Theory and Methods of Social Research, London, 1967, Part 1, Chapter 6; M. STACEY, op. cit., Chapter 5.

39. For a theoretical discussion of this style of interviewing

see F. FRIEDLANDER, 'Behavioural Research as a Transactional Process', Human Organisation, 27, 1968. The practical results of this approach are evident in the consistently high quality of the first hand accounts collected by G.E. Evans. See G.E. EVANS, Ask the Fellows Who Cut the Hay, London, 1956; The Horse in the Furrow, London, 1960; The Pattern under the Plough, London, 1966; Where Beards Wag All: The Relevance of the Oral Tradition, London, 1970; The Days that we have Seen, London, 1975.

40. I was not unaware of the possible disadvantages of this approach, or constraints which it might place upon comparison and generalisation. These problems are dealt with at a later point in the Chapter.

41. For details see Bibliography.

42. The sociologists' (sometimes deliberate) ignorance of the historical record has often had disastrous consequences for the validity of their studies. See, for example, the comments of Thernstrom on Lloyd Warner's 'Yankee City' series. S. THERNSTROM, Poverty and Progress: Social Mobility in a Nineteenth-Century City, Cambridge (Mass.), 1964, p. 230.

43. See Appendix II.

44. See Chapters 3 and 4.

45. See below, Section (v).

46. In addition to this number two interviews were recorded with (i) a locally born market gardener living in Adisham

and (ii) the owner/manager of the Aylesham cinema/bingo hall. The flexibility of the research strategy meant that interviews of this sort could be undertaken without fear that they might not 'fit' into any rigidly conceived sample. Both interviews threw light upon two important themes in the research: the reaction of the neighbouring, locally born population to the migrant miners and the organisation and availability of certain types of leisure pursuits.

47. All of these men began their employment in the coal industry as ordinary workmen and the majority of them finished in the same category. A minority rose into supervisory grades (shotfirer, deputy, overman) but no-one had achieved the position of undermanager or above. No attempt is made here, or throughout the thesis, to break down the 'miner' or 'ex-miner' category into the differing grades or types of manual work which this covers. Such a distinction appeared unnecessary in terms of the themes discussed and may have imposed a misleading impression of stability upon changing occupational biographies.

48. See Chapter 3.

49. See, for example, B. JACKSON, Working Class Community, Harmondsworth, 1972.

50. See, for example, the comments of J. KLEIN, Samples From English Cultures, Vol. 1, London, 1965.

51. For a classic account of an outsider attempting to 'get in'

See W.F. WHYTE, Street Corner Society, 2nd Edition, Chicago, 1955.

52. See the comments of Thea Thompson in the 'General Discussion', at an SSRC Conference on The Interview in Social History, University of Leicester, 1972, Oral History, 1, 4, p. 137.

53. For useful discussions of the relationship between the researcher and the researched in community studies see R. FRANKENBERG, Village on the Border, London, 1957; H.J. GANS, The Levittowners, London, 1967.

54. These occasions also frequently served to reduce certain inhibitions when the interviews were undertaken.

55. These problems could often be overcome by a careful timing of the interviews.

56. A number of the men, particularly those more advanced in years, expressed little concern as to the manner in which I used the recordings which they provided. This rather surprising attitude may have been related to the more marginal - and therefore less responsible - position which retired (and often widowed) miners held in the local social structure.

57. Thompson, reviewing memory development, cites the psychological phenomenon of 'life review' - ' a sudden emergence of memories and the drive to bring these memories out' - which frequently accompany retirement. P. THOMPSON, 'Problems of Method in Oral History', Oral

History, 1, 4, p. 13.

58. Much of the recent oral history in Britain has been based upon interviews with elderly men and women. There may be interesting comparisons to be drawn between their memories and those of younger individuals.

59. In the sense that I was more able to ask the 'right' question; see the discussion in Chapter 8.

60. This relatively long time period allowed an unhurried approach to the interviews and the opportunity for some re-appraisal during the course of the fieldwork. I was fortunate in having several illuminating conversations with Michael Winstanley who was engaged at the University of Kent at that time on a far larger oral history project concerned with aspects of everyday life in Kent before 1914. Though our approaches differed he was the source of several useful tips which I eventually incorporated into my own research. I also benefited from a short paper which he circulated. See M. WINSTANLEY, 'Practical Hints on Oral History Interviewing', University of Kent, 1975.

61. See, for example, A. WOOTTON, Dilemnas of Discourse: Controversies about the Sociological Interpretation of Language, London, 1975; R. HARRE (ed.) Life Sentences: Aspects of the Social Role of Language, London, 1976.

62. This is evident in the approach adopted by, for example, R. TURNER, 'The Contribution of Oral Evidence to Labour History', Oral History, 4, 1, 1976; C. STORM-CLARK, 'The

Miners, 1870-1970: A Test Case for Oral History', Victorian Studies, 15, 1971.

63. P. THOMPSON, op. cit., 1, 4, p. 14.

64. T. GREEN, 'The Leicester Conference on Oral History: Four Impressions', Oral History, 1,3, p. 9.

65. See Chapter 1.

66. See G.E. EVANS, (1956) op. cit., (1960), op. cit., (1970), op. cit., (1975), op. cit.

67. This is aptly demonstrated in Evans' account of the previously unknown annual migration of East Anglian workers to the Burton-on-Trent maltings. G.E. EVANS, (1970), op. cit.

68. R. SAMUEL, 'Headington Quarry: Recording a Labouring Community', Oral History, 1, 4, pp. 107-125; 'Quarry Roughs': Life and Labour in Headington Quarry, 1860-1920. An Essay in Oral History', in R. SAMUEL (ed.), (1975), op. cit.

69. P. THOMPSON, (1977), op. cit., p. 16.

70. E.H. CARR, op. cit.

71. Oral History, 2, 1, 1974, p. 2. (My emphasis).

72. R. SAMUEL, 'Perils of the Transcript', Oral History, 1,2, p. 22.

73. These advantages outweighed the 'perils' of transcribing the spoken word as outlined by R. SAMUEL, op. cit., 1, 2.

74. E.H. CARR, op. cit., p. 12.

75. Nadine Gordimer, quoted on the jacket of the Pelican edition of S. TERKEL, Division Street: America, Harmondsworth, 1970. R.J. Grele provides some useful insights into the editing activities of Terkel in an interview where he asserts 'I cut a fantastic amount. See, I've got a sixty-page transcript...it's going to be six pages...it can be refined and refined'. Quoted by P. THOMPSON, Review of R.J. GRELE (ed.), Envelopes of Sound, Chicago, 1975, in Oral History, 5, 1, 1977, pp. 143-4.

76. D. MARSDEN, Review of S. TERKEL, Working, New York, 1974, in New Society, 33, 1975, p. 485.

77. T. LUMMIS, 'The Occupational Community of East Anglian Fishermen: An Historical Dimension through Oral Evidence', British Journal of Sociology, 28, 1977, p. 52.

78. J. GALTUNG, op. cit., p. 450, quoted in M. BULMER (ed.), Sociological Research Methods, London, 1977, p. 32.

79. The tape recordings conducted in the course of this research are deposited with the University of Kent. Initially they may only be consulted with written permission of the author in order to safeguard confidentiality.

CHAPTER THREE

THE COAL INDUSTRY IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: NATIONAL AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENTS

Introduction

The bulk of this thesis is concerned with the experiences of a small group of miners and their sons in one community in the Kent Coalfield. Attention is further confined to a specific set of issues within two particular time periods. Any study which is limited in this manner requires a background which will allow the research to be placed in a broader context. Here a sketch of the major developments in the British coal industry and the Kent Coalfield over the past seventy years is presented. As with the research attention is focused upon two eras - 1927 to 1939 and 1957 to 1976 - and the chapter concludes with a brief introductory description of Snowdown Colliery and Aylesham village where most of the interviews were conducted. A survey of this scope cannot be any more than a simple outline when confined to a single chapter; however, if it helps the reader to better comprehend those aspects of social life which are discussed in some detail later on then it will have served a purpose. It should be stressed that this is not an attempt to condense - and therefore conveniently eliminate - the 'history' before presenting a relatively static portrayal of social life (the 'sociology') at two points in time. Each of the following chapters has a longitudinal framework and many of the historical themes which are introduced here are elaborated later.

Both periods under review are characterised by an instability and flux which demonstrate that the history of this particular coalfield presents an excellent opportunity to assess the implications of the 'cycle of coal extraction' during those relatively neglected phases of rapid expansion and decline.

(i) The British coal industry

a) 1913-1946

Sidney Pollard's assessment of coal as 'the symbol of old industrial Britain' is indicative of the mixed fortunes of this particular industry over the past century[1]. The expansion of the industry during the nineteenth century was crowned by a phase of unprecedented development from the 1880s onwards. In 1888 439,000 men were employed in the production of 170 million tons of coal but by 1913 this number had expanded to over 1.1 million and total production stood at 287 million tons[2]. This extraordinary growth established coal as the primary driving force in the British industrial economy and Britain as the world's major coal producer. By 1913 one-third of British coal output was exported and this accounted for approximately 25 per cent of world, and 50 per cent of European coal production. One male worker in every ten was employed in the industry and the coal which they produced for the world market represented 10 per cent of the total value of British exports[3]. At this time few contemporary observers could have foreseen that an industry 'which for one hundred years before 1914 was a prime source of wealth, power and civilisation of Great Britain' was to become 'an actual and potential cause of poverty, weakness and division'[4].

After the high-point of 1913 the British coal industry, despite periodic fluctuations, declined dramatically and lost its central place in the economy. The primary reason for this trend was aptly summarised by Allen:

> The basic characteristic of the coal industry, and the one from which the greater proportion of its problems and policies have stemmed, is that it is producing a product, the demand for which is falling[5].

However, the diminishing market for British coal was to an extent disguised during the turbulent years following 1913. The First War, the subsequent boom and the shortages created by the U.S. coal strike in 1922 and French occupation of the Ruhr in 1923 were enough to prevent any lasting re-assessment of the industry despite the miners' pressure for nationalisation, four major government enquiries and the serious industrial conflict which eventually led to the 1926 General Strike. As a result, it was 1927 before 'the industry was at last freed from the influence of fortuitous and temporary demands and of subsidies'[6].

TABLE 3.1: U.K. COAL OUTPUT 1913-1946

YEAR	OUTPUT (M.TONS)	YEAR	OUTPUT (M.TONS)
1913	287.4	1930	243.9
1914	265.7	1931	219.5
1915	253.2	1932	208.7
1916	256.4	1933	207.1
1917	248.5	1934	220.7
1918	227.7	1935	222.3
1919	229.8	1936	228.5
1920	229.5	1937	240.4
1921	163.3	1938	227.0
1922	249.6	1939	231.3
1923	276.0	1940	224.3
1924	267.1	1941	206.3
1925	243.2	1942	204.9
1926	126.3	1943	198.9
1927	251.2	1944	192.7
1928	237.5	1945	182.8
1929	257.9	1946	190.1

Notes: (1) Output from S. Ireland is excluded after 1921
(2) Coal mined from quarries is included 1913-1937 and 1942-1946

Sources: 1913-1938: B.R. Mitchell and P. Deane, Abstract of British Historical Statistics, Cambridge, 1962, Coal Table 3. 1939-1946: B.R. Mitchell and H.G. Jones, Second Abstract of British Historical Statistics, Cambridge, 1971, Fuel and Power Table 1.

The harsh reality of domestic and world market conditions hit the coalowners through declining output and profit margins and the coalminers through rising unemployment and falling wages. Over 243 million tons were produced in 1925 but by 1933 this figure had fallen by 36 million tons and despite a recovery in the mid-thirties the 1925 level was not approached until 1937 (see Table 3.1). Moreover, the average profit per ton of coal of 7d between 1929 and 1938 represented a sharp fall from the returns of the early 1920s and did not allow for an adequate programme of re-investment[7].

TABLE 3.2: EMPLOYMENT IN U.K. COALMINES 1913-1946

YEAR	NOS.EMPLOYED ('000s)	YEAR	NOS.EMPLOYED ('000s)
1913	1,127.9	1930	931.4
1914	1,133.7	1931	867.9
1915	953.6	1932	819.3
1916	998.1	1933	789.1
1917	1,021.3	1934	788.2
1918	1,008.9	1935	769.5
1919	1,191.3	1936	767.1
1920	1,248.2	1937	791.7
1921	1,131.6	1938	790.9
1922	1,148.5	1939	766.3
1923	1,203.3	1940	749.2
1924	1,213.7	1941	697.6
1925	1,102.4	1942	709.3
1926	1,115.6	1943	707.8
1927	1,023.9	1944	710.2
1928	939.0	1945	708.9
1929	956.7	1946	696.7

Notes: (1) Output from S. Ireland is excluded after 1921
(2) Prior to 1921 the totals include a small number of men (mainly in Scotland, where they numbered about 6,000) working minerals other than coal

Sources: 1913-1938: B.R. Mitchell and P. Deane, op cit., Coal Table 4. 1939-1946: B.R. Mitchell and H.G. Jones, op cit., Fuel and Power Table 2.

The miners suffered through unemployment levels which were consistently high and occasionally catastrophic. As Table 3.2 indicates, between the General Strike and the outbreak of war numbers employed in the industry fell from over 1.1 million to less than 766,000. Consequently there were never less than 14 per cent of the mining work-force unemployed between 1928 and 1938 and the rate reached 34 per cent in 1932 (see Table 3.3).

TABLE 3.3: PROPORTION OF GB COAL INDUSTRY WORK-FORCE UNEMPLOYED 1928-1938

YEAR	%AGE
1928	22
1929	16
1930	20
1931	28
1932	34
1933	33
1934	28
1935	25
1936	21
1937	14
1938	15

Note: Unemployed included 'wholly unemployed' and 'temporarily unemployed'

Source: M. Bulmer, Employment and Unemployment in Mining, in M. Bulmer (ed.) Mining and Social Change, London, 1978, Table 11.2.

Those in employment fared little better: the owners' success in reducing wages (and increasing hours) after the 1926 strike meant that 'miners were still considerably worse off in 1932 than they had been before the General Strike'[8] and that 'even at the end

of the 1930s (employed miners) were living worse than they had done before the First World War'[9].

These are pronouncements of some certainty yet to tie them to comprehensive statistical data is difficult because of the shortcomings of the information collected on social and economic conditions during the inter-war period and the tendency for 'average' statistics to gloss over a fundamental feature of this era: the extreme contrasts between social groups and regions[10]. This holds true even within the coal industry where, for example, a miner in work in Nottinghamshire might (on average) earn over £1 a week more than his counterpart in Durham during the late thirties[11]. Despite these variations overall figures can provide some insight into the miners' plight. Average weekly earnings in mining in 1936, for example, (at 50s 5d) were 2s 7d below Rowntree's estimate of the minimum wage necessary for the decent maintenance of a man and wife and three children[12]. Furthermore, material deprivation through low wages, unemployment (and the burden of large families) was systematically related to ill-health and malnutrition as several local Medical Officer of Health Reports demonstrated[13]. The infant mortality rate in 1935, for example, stood at 42 per 1000 in the Home Counties but was considerably higher in the traditional mining areas of Glamorgan (63), Durham (76), Scotland (77) and Sunderland (92)[14].

The declining fortunes of coal were a consequence of stagnant home consumption and a diminishing share in the world market. As the coal dependent staple industries declined the expansion of the 'new' industries was based upon alternative

industrial fuels, the most popular of which was oil. Technical advances which allowed greater efficiency in fuel burning further diminished coal requirements so that home consumption in 1938 was no greater than it had been prior to the First War[15]. The effect of fuel economies and the utilisation of alternative sources of energy was compounded, in the world market, by growing competition from the European coal producing nations and as a result, by 1939 British coal exports were, at 46 million tons, approximately half the 1913 level[16]. The reaction of the colliery owners to these adverse conditions was shaped by an individualism and competitiveness which had marked out these men as classic entrepreneurs during the era of rapid growth prior to 1913[17]. As such, all forms of 'government interference' were firmly opposed and during times of difficulty wage cuts were seen as the prime method of reducing overall costs and restoring competitiveness[18]. The owners were reasonably successful in imposing these policies since, on the one hand, the strength of the miners' unions had been considerably weakened after 1926, whilst on the other, government activity - characterised by a confusion of aims, indecision and inadequate planning - was largely ineffective. Despite the owners' predilection for straight wage cuts as a means of reducing labour costs and improving 'efficiency' this was an era of considerable mechanisation in the collieries. Between 1929 and 1939 the amount of British coal output which was mechanically cut increased from 28 per cent to 61 per cent whilst that which was mechanically conveyed from the coal-face increased from 12 per cent in 1928 to 58 per cent by 1939 (see Table 3.11)[19]. This

sharp increase was to have important social as well as economic effects; Court later reflected that the 'drastic' programme of mechanisation 'meant that coalmining as the nineteenth century had known it was going out, and with it the old fashioned miner, owner and mine official'[20].

Although mineworkers continued to dominate the pattern of industrial strike activity between 1927 and 1939 they were, in strategic terms, on the defensive throughout this period[21]. Union membership fell considerably, the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB) losing 255,000 men within three years of the General Strike[22]. Furthermore the Federation 'once so powerful and united' was 'seriously weakened and made subject to internal dissensions' as a result of the re-imposition of district (as opposed to national) based negotiations after 1926[23]. Torn from within the union faced the considerable threat from without of the 'non political' Spencer Unions which were established during the General Strike. From a strong base in Nottingham this rival organisation spread to several other coalfields before it was incorporated within the MFGB in 1936[24]. In general, union leaders favoured an 'accommodative' stance towards the owners rather than one of 'confrontation' and their attitudes were paralleled, to some extent, in the reaction of rank and file miners to the hardships which they faced. Several contemporary observers stressed the 'down to earth' approach of the British working class; their 'disposition to grin and bear it'[25] and 'make the best of things on a fish and chip standard'[26]. The Pilgrim Trust investigators noted that:

> The Durham miner who has been out of work for 5 years has not a perpetual sense of grievance, but rather... a determination to make the best of things[27].

In consequence many miners survived by 'sticking it out' in what were often chronically depressed areas. However, a considerable number moved with their families to other areas of the country to find work and this movement of human population reflected the changing industrial structure of inter-war Britain. Over half a million people were said to have left South Wales and Northumberland and Durham alone between 1921 and 1934[28]. Many of these were miners in search of work in the more prosperous South East or on those exceptional coalfields - like South Yorkshire and Kent - which were expanding[29].

This movement was assisted by grants made available to the Industrial Transference Board, established in 1928, 'for the purpose of facilitating the transfer of workers, and in particular of miners'[30]. Although transference represented a central plank in the policies adopted by inter-war governments its success was distinctly limited. Many of those in the depressed areas of Scotland, the North East, South Wales and parts of Lancashire opposed transference on the grounds that it deprived ailing communities of the 'better social types'[31], 'the most enterprising'[32] and the 'more active and adventurous elements'[33] who were more likely to take advantage of the scheme. On the other hand, a large number of those that did leave failed to settle. 115,849 men (largely from the coalfields of South Wales, Northumberland and Durham) were transferred between 1928

and 1935 yet in 1936 it was estimated that 41,137 of these had returned to their own districts[34].

In sum, the years after 1926 were 'some of the worst the miners had ever experienced'[35], and despite some improvement in the mid-thirties it was not until the war years that a more permanent amelioration in conditions was achieved. At work miners suffered longer daily hours, lower wages and the disruption of short-time working and mechanisation. A weakened union did little to combat the dominance of the coal-owners who further strengthened their position through 'selective employment policies' which discriminated against those defined as 'troublemakers'[36]. Out of work miners often lived in physically dilapidated pit villages or increasingly derelict urban areas[37]. Environmental and material deprivation went hand in hand and were in turn linked with an exceptional incidence of disease and ill-health. Within this overall pattern there were, of course, exceptions: enclaves of relative prosperity which offered a way out of the depression. For a minority, the Kent Coalfield offered just such a possibility.

The war radically altered the position of the industry and the miners employed within it. After initial fluctuations the demand for coal increased and opened an era in which coal and miners were in short supply. In order to increase this supply the government took control of the industry from 1942 onwards and introduced a series of measures designed to boost manpower and output levels. One such measure involved conscription for the mines and, as a result, over 20,000 so called 'Bevin boys' were drafted into the mines during 1944/45[38]. Increasing

government involvement set the stage for the Coal Nationalisation Act of 1946 and the subsequent creation of a National Coal Board to run the industry. These developments were matched by the emergence in 1945 of one union, the National Union of Mineworkers, to replace the old federal organisation of the MFGB. In general, the war brought considerable improvement in the employment conditions of mineworkers; average weekly earnings, for example, rose between 1939 and 1945 by about 90 per cent compared to a 30 per cent increase in the working class cost of living index[39]. Furthermore, two long standing goals of the miners were achieved when national negotiating machinery and a minimum wage were established. Despite these improvements the coal industry was not without its difficulties at the close of the war and, according to Court, 'no other major British industry carried so many involved problems into the war; none brought more out'[40].

b) 1947-1976

Until 1956 the post-war era was characterised by a high level of demand for coal which the NCB consistently struggled to meet. There were frequent threats of a coal crisis during these years and there was always a shortage of miners. Despite a £500 million investment programme between 1947 and 1956[41], production did not approach pre-war levels until the fifties and stood at 207 million tons in 1956 (see Table 3.4); productivity improved by 15 per cent but this was not regarded as by any means an impressive margin[42]. For the miners this was a period of mixed fortunes. Nationalisation brought improved conditions and wages but failed to live up to expectations: the drive for

efficiency and output overrode any serious consideration of wider issues - for example, the question of workers' control - which, in the past had been central to the nationalisation debate[43]. Union leaders found themselves in an ambiguous position as a result of their desire to make a success of nationalisation and, at the same time, to represent the interests of their members[44]. That some miners felt that the union did not adequately represent them was evident in the incidence of short, unofficial strikes which were noticeably more frequent in particular coalfields, including South Wales, Yorkshire and Scotland[45]. Miners wages and living standards continued to improve, however, such that weekly earnings doubled during the ten years following Vesting Day compared to an 85 per cent rise in male wage levels[46].

TABLE 3.4: DEEP-MINED OUTPUT FROM NCB MINES 1947-1976

YEAR	OUTPUT (M.TONS)	YEAR	OUTPUT (M.TONS)
1947	184.4	1961	179.6
1948	194.6	1962	187.6
1949	200.7	1963/4	187.2
1950	202.3	1964/5	183.7
1951	209.4	1965/6	174.1
1952	210.6	1966/7	164.6
1953	209.8	1967/8	162.7
1954	211.4	1968/9	153.0
1955	207.8	1969/70	139.8
1956	207.3	1970/1	133.3
1957	207.4	1971/2	109.2
1958	198.8	1972/3	127.0
1959	192.5	1973/4	97.1
1960	183.8	1974/5	115.0
		1975/6	112.6

Source: NCB Statistical Tables 1975/76.

After 1956 the fortunes of the industry took yet another dramatic turn and once again an alteration in market conditions proved to be a decisive factor. A flood of cheap foreign oil undercut the price of British coal and considerably reduced home consumption levels[47]. Between 1956 and 1959 inland consumption fell by over 26 million tons and this decline in demand continued throughout the sixties and saw production fall from 207 million tons in 1957 to 140 million tons by 1969/70[48]. Employment fell, as Table 3.5 indicates, over the same period from 704,000 to 305,000 as over 650 collieries were closed. This massive rundown of the industry represented a dominant experience for mineworkers and their families and it directly affected job security, earnings and the physical and social environment of the collieries.

TABLE 3.5: EMPLOYMENT IN NCB MINES 1947-1976

YEAR	NOS.EMPLOYED ('000s)	YEAR	NOS. EMPLOYED ('000s)
1947	703.9	1962	550.9
1948	716.5	1963/4	517.0
1949	712.5	1964/5	491.0
1950	690.8	1965/6	455.7
1951	692.6	1966/7	419.4
1952	709.7	1967/8	391.9
1953	711.5	1968/9	336.3
1954	701.8	1969/70	305.1
1955	698.7	1970/1	287.2
1956	697.4	1971/2	281.5
1957	703.8	1972/3	268.0
1958	692.7	1973/4	252.0
1959	658.2	1974/5	246.0
1960	602.1	1975/6	247.1
1961	570.5		

Source: NCB Statistical Tables 1975/76

The NCB opted to contract (in terms of numbers employed and productive units) in order to improve productivity and restore the competitive market position of coal. For the miners these policies created considerable insecurity despite the introduction of relatively generous, government subsidised redundancy, retirement and transfer arrangements designed to alleviate the more serious social effects of these policies[49]. The uncertainty of this period was heightened by the miners' inability to distinguish any clear pattern to the closure programme. In general, Coal Board objectives involved a concentration of production in larger collieries in the more productive coalfields and as a result the rundown had a far greater impact in areas such as Scotland, South Wales and Northumberland and Durham than in Yorkshire or the Midlands. Nevertheless, there were closures in all coalfields and this led Allen, for example, to assert that 'there appeared to be no logic in the pit closure programme...All types of pits were closed. Large pits and small pits, old pits and modern pits'[50]. Elsewhere, Bulmer correctly pointed out the inevitable overlap of political and economic factors in determining the fate of individual collieries and concluded that there was 'no simple explanation of the decision to close a particular pit'[51].

Despite this ignorance of the fate of their own colliery the miners were aware that since 1959 the NCB was committed to a policy of closures which would not be counteracted by new developments[52]. Furthermore, it was clear from the mid-sixties onwards that the government favoured a cheap energy policy which implied a greater decline in the industry than even the NCB

envisaged. In view of this many miners did not wait for a closure or redundancy but simply left the industry of their own accord[53]; as a result a major part of the large reduction in manpower after 1957 was as Table 3.6 indicates[54], achieved through miners leaving the industry 'voluntarily'.

TABLE 3.6: WASTAGE FROM NCB MINES 1957-1970

YEAR	VOLUNTARY WASTAGE ('000s)	TOTAL WASTAGE ('000s)	VOLUNTARY WASTAGE AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL WASTAGE
1957	42.9	64.6	66.4
1958	36.9	62.0	59.5
1959	44.1	73.5	60.0
1960	58.0	93.5	62.0
1961	52.3	74.4	70.3
1962	35.6	60.7	58.7
1963/4	26.0	53.6	48.5
1964/5	36.6	61.9	59.1
1965/6	46.7	72.5	64.4
1966/7	35.3	60.7	58.2
1967/8	28.8	62.3	46.2
1968/9	27.8	65.0	42.8
1969/70	23.9	46.1	51.8

Source: NCB Statistical Tables

The actual numbers involved were extremely large: in 1960, for example, no less than 58,000 men left the collieries voluntarily, and although the numbers diminished towards the late sixties the level nevertheless stood at almost 24,000 in 1969/70. A large proportion of involuntary wastage, on the other hand, was accounted for by deaths, retirements and 'medical reasons' and subsequently redundancy only affected a small minority of miners until the mid-sixties. Indeed, the NCB claimed that during the five year period prior to 1966/7 'the proportion of men made redundant was never higher than 0.8 per cent of the average

labour force employed during the year'[55]. However, the pace of closure quickened thereafter and Table 3.7 reveals that almost 43,000 miners were made redundant between 1967/8 and 1969/70.

TABLE 3.7: NCB PIT CLOSURES AND REDUNDANCIES 1959-1970

YEAR	NO. COLLIERIES CLOSED & MERGED	NO.MEN INVOLVED	NO.MEN MADE REDUNDANT	NO.MEN MADE REDUNDANT AS %AGE OF ALL WASTAGE
1959	53	1,600	1,300	1.8
1960	44	2,100	500	0.5
1961	32	1,000	100	0.1
1962	56	2,200	2,200	3.5
1963	44	1,200	970	1.7
1964	43	1,660	800	1.3
1965/6	55	2,100	1,100	1.5
1966/7	47	1,860	1,750	2.8
1967/8	62	3,430	12,998	21.7
1968/9	59	2,930	21,178	32.4
1969/70	19	1,050	8,711	18.9

Note: Individuals may have been involved in more than one pit closure over the time period covered

Source: V. Allen, op cit., Tables

Despite elaborate NCB redundancy provisions several studies demonstrated that miners who were dismissed in this manner suffered considerable hardship and stress[56]. The alternative to redundancy was often transference to another coalfield but, once again, despite a widely admired programme of transfer benefits evidence suggested that miners displaced in this way experienced substantial economic and social privation[57].

Matters were made worse by a considerable fall in miners' earnings in relation to those of other workers. Despite a rise in average weekly earnings from £15.35 in 1956 to £28.01 in

1970, the larger increase of earnings in manufacturing industries completely eroded the earlier differential which the miners had enjoyed.

TABLE 3.8: AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS IN COALMINING AND MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES 1956-1970

YEAR	AV.WKLY EARNINGS IN COALMINING £	AV.WKLY EARNINGS IN MANUFACTURING INDS. £	COALMINING AS %AGE OF MANUF.
1956	15.35	12.28	125
1957	16.32	13.06	125
1958	15.41	13.27	116
1959	15.70	14.21	111
1960	16.28	15.16	107
1961	17.16	15.89	108
1962	17.93	16.34	110
1963	18.75	17.29	108
1964	19.73	18.67	106
1965	21.21	20.16	105
1966	22.16	20.78	107
1967	22.92	21.89	105
1968	24.12	23.62	102
1969	25.10	25.54	98
1970	28.01	28.91	97

Source: Pay Board, Special Report: Relative Pay of Mineworkers, Cmnd. 5567, London, 1974, p.31

Moreover, evidence presented by the NUM at the 1972 Wilberforce Enquiry clearly demonstrated that the overall averages in the mining industry were not pulled down by the lower earnings of surface workers: by 1971 underground workers' earnings were also below those in manufacturing[58]. After a 'careful study' the Wilberforce Report later claimed that:

> ...we have been able to draw no conclusion other than that a serious fall has occurred in the relative pay position of the mine-workers, when compared to those in manufacturing industry[59].

This decline was aggravated by the gradual changeover between 1955 and 1972 in mining from a mixture of piece and day work to a purely day-wage system. A number of agreements led to the elimination of earnings differentials between pits and coalfields and a reduction in the wage gap between higher and lower paid workers[60]. In the completion of this programme many mineworkers suffered both a relative and absolute decline in earnings and this was especially the case for the traditionally well paid sections of the mining work-force in the better paid coalfields[61]. The alteration in the structure of the wage payment system was largely a response to the radical change in job tasks and requirements which resulted from the extensive mechanisation of the collieries.[62] Many of the new mechanical innovations were applied to work at the actual coalface where the proportion of mechanised (power loaded) output rose from 23 per cent in 1957 to 92 per cent by 1969/70[63]. Over the same period output per man shift (OMS) rose dramatically from 25 cwts to 43 cwts - an increase in productivity which was generally regarded as a comparatively successful return on the NCB's heavy investment[64] (see the comparisons with the Kent Coalfield presented in Tables 3.19 and 3.20).

In order to understand the implications of the post 1957 mechanisation for the work experience of colliery faceworkers some discussion of preceding techniques of coalface production is necessary[65]. The type of coal extraction which dominated British collieries throughout the nineteenth century was commonly known as the 'hand-got system'. Coal was got from the face through the use of a hand pick and then shovelled into a

tub for transport to the pit bottom and then to the surface. The work group normally consisted of two colliers - a 'hewer' and his mate - although the number sometimes stretched to four. These men would be backed by three or four 'trammers' whose job it was to provide the colliers with the requisite number of tubs[66]. The hand-got system was used in a variety of underground technical layouts including both 'pillar and stall' and 'longwall' methods of coal extraction. In each case colliers worked in small confined 'stalls' or 'places' at various points off the roadways. Each collier was an all-round workman capable of performing all the necessary tasks involved in winning the coal from the face, loading it into tubs and setting timber roof supports as work progressed. This range of skills and the responsibility of each faceworker - under piecework - for work methods and output induced a craft pride and an attitude towards work characterised by 'responsible autonomy'[67]. The members of coal-face teams were often related through kin and friendship ties and their working relationship was normally a lasting one which encouraged a strong sense of identity within the group. Although rivalries and conflicts developed between face teams - creating a 'social climate rough at times and even violent'[68] - the hand-got system provided a flexibility appropriate to the uniquely difficult working environment of the pit and thus 'contained its bad in a way that did not destroy its good'[69].

Although this type of coal-face working declined in significance during the inter-war period it is worth noting that in 1947 25 per cent of British coal output was still hand-got and

and transported by tubs or equivalent forms of non-mechanical conveyance[70]. Increasingly, however, coal cutters and mechanical conveyors were being introduced to work the longwall faces in a manner which demanded entirely new work tasks and work groups. Under this 'partially mechanised' system the coal was undercut by a machine which travelled the length of the face before an explosive felled the coal and it was loaded manually on to the conveyor belt. The production cycle was split into three main tasks - cutting, filling and ripping - and separate groups of workers were responsible for each task within a three shift cycle. The filling shift involved the largest number of men: up to 40 or 50 miners might be employed on a face which could stretch for 200 yards. For many observers this form of work organisation was entirely inappropriate to the underground environment and led to an increase in conflict between groups responsible for different parts of the production cycle and a relatively low level of productivity[71]. Small, autonomous work groups of long standing were broken up as were the actual work tasks set for the faceworker. Goldthorpe concluded that 'the introduction of cutting machines and conveyor belts saw the demise of the "almighty collier", of the multi-skilled mining craftsman... The machines took over a leading part'[72], and Branson and Heinemann suggested that 'the miner, instead of working at his own pace...had to work at a pace set by machines'[73].

By the late fifties then, with approximately 90 per cent of coal output mechanically cut and conveyed, miners were well aware of the type of change brought through mechanisation. Yet

even though machines were more important in the coal winning process the miner and his physical labour still played a significant role in blasting down the coal from above the cut and shovelling it on to the conveyor. This situation was altered by a new and altogether more intense phase of mechanisation which began to gather momentum during the mid-fifties. Machines which could simultaneously get and load coal were introduced and integrated with more sophisticated conveyance and roof support systems. The new era of power loading, armoured flexible conveyors and self-advancing hydraulic props completely altered the work environment at the face and the responsibilities of the faceworker:

> The conventional coal-face is now a revolutionary, complex unit of sophisticated machinery, apparatus and equipment - for cutting/loading, transportation, strata control and for protective and communication systems... The worker on the mechanised coalface has been largely spared the physical effort of the miner principally engaged in loading coal[74].

The size of teams was also reduced to about a dozen men (or less if self-advancing roof supports were in operation)[75] who were responsible for the various tasks at the face and far less dependent upon the efforts of face teams on other shifts.

This new division of labour altered the nature of work place relationships, training requirements, the role and extent of supervision, and the type of physical hazard faced by the miner in his daily work[76]; it was also the major impetus behind

the changeover from piecework payment systems to a day-wage principle. The intensity of these changes was matched by the rapidity of their application. Less than one-eighth of British coal output was power loaded in 1955 compared to over nine-tenths by 1969/70 (see Table 3.20); and powered supports, introduced in 1957, operated on 74 per cent of all coal-faces by 1969/70. Indeed, by the end of the sixties no coalfield produced less than 80 per cent power loaded output and some were very close to 100 per cent[77].

The disruption which these changes brought in their wake can help to explain why so many men left the industry of their own accord without being directly confronted by a closure or redundancy and this individualistic response gives some insight into the character of industrial relations during the period for the NUM made no concerted effort to oppose the closure programme and instead concerned itself with attempts to mitigate the consequences of contraction[78]. Rank and file miners on the other hand, reduced in number and in a weak market position, were unable and largely, it seemed, unwilling to mount any serious collective challenge to the orthodoxy of decline accepted in varying degrees by NUM, NCB and government[79]. However, this position began to change in the late sixties. In 1969 an unofficial strike for a 40 hour week for surface workers spread from Yorkshire to South Wales, Scotland, Derbyshire and Kent[80] and there was another stoppage the following year before the major industrial disputes which developed in 1971/2 and 1973/4 gave rise to national strikes. In both cases the miners displayed a remarkable degree of strength and solidarity and

substantial advances in wage levels were achieved, with average earnings increasing dramatically from a little over £27 in 1970/1 to £74 by 1975/6[81].

The new strength of the miners and the altered position of the coal industry was once again strongly influenced by an alteration in market conditions. Oil, which had begun to rise in price in 1970, became extremely expensive in 1973 as a result of the deliberate policy of the Arab oil producing nations and this had 'a tremendous effect on the coalmining industry; overnight almost attitudes towards the industry changed'[82]. In its Plan for Coal the NCB set out the case 'in the entirely changed energy situation' for £600 million worth of re-investment in order to stabilise and then expand total capacity by the mid-1980s when demand was expected to rise to 150 million tons[83]. To meet this demand annual recruitment targets were set at 28,000 (compared to the 20,000 average of the preceeding six years), a new coalfield was proposed in Selby, Yorkshire and considerable extensions planned for the existing coalfields of Nottinghamshire and Staffordshire[84].

These developments encouraged observers to proclaim a new era of expansion and prosperity for the coal industry and the miners and although there was considerable evidence to support this assertion the insecurities of the past were not entirely absent from the seventies. Output continued to fall until 1972/3, was severely hit by the strike in 1974 and remained more than 20 million tons below the 1970/1 level in 1975/6. The decline in numbers employed persisted until 1974/5 and in 1975/6 total recruitment was only 17,000 (compared to a wastage of

22,000). Furthermore, static productivity levels encouraged attempts to revise payment systems yet again in favour of a re-introduction of some form of payment by results and this promised, at the time of writing, to be a conflict-ridden issue with divisive consequences for the miners[85]. In the meantime there were still doubts as to the continuing competitiveness of coal with oil and, to a lesser extent, natural gas. Accordingly, the 1970s will perhaps best be described as a period when the decline of previous years was considerably slowed although not altogether halted.

(ii) The Kent Coalfield

The existence of a coal industry in Kent is, in many ways, a paradox. Visitors to the county may pass very close to the collieries on their way to Canterbury or Dover but are unlikely to see the pits or even suspect their existence. In a county perhaps best known for its agricultural produce and seaside resorts the existence of over 200 million tons of coal reserves goes largely unnoticed. Kent is Britain's newest coalfield and its smallest: there has been little time and insufficient development for a mining tradition to dominate the area. The history of the coalfield shares something of this paradoxical quality for whilst the major coalfields faltered and declined during the twenties and thirties the Kent collieries achieved a rate of expansion and level of production which has since been unequalled. Over more recent years the industry in Kent, as elsewhere, suffered a serious decline and the possibility of complete closure - yet by 1976 the Kent collieries were producing

the most valuable coal in Britain.

a) 1913-1946

The possibility that coal might be discovered in Kent was discussed during the 1820s but it was not until 1886 that deliberate borings were made to establish the existence and location of seams. Equipment originally intended for the abandoned channel tunnel scheme was used to bore at the foot of the Shakespeare Cliff in Dover and four years later in 1890 coal was struck at a depth of 1,157 feet[86]. The discovery signalled a burst of activity over the following years. Between 1896 and 1919 40 companies with a total nominal capital of £9.2 million were set up to exploit the coal resources of Kent[87]. Sinking work began at Tilmanstone and Snowdown in 1906 and by the beginning of the First War eight pitheads were established in the coalfield[88]. However, only two were actually winding coal: Snowdown and Tilmanstone having reached workable seams in 1913. In 1918 coalwinding began at a third site, Chislet, and Betteshanger began to produce in 1928. These were the only four collieries ever to produce coal in Kent[89]. Nevertheless, the proliferation of boreholes and colliery shafts across East Kent during these early years led to a host of bold predictions concerning the future of the locality. According to the Thanet Times, Kent was, in 1908, 'on the brink of an economic and industrial revolution' and this was 'a fact beyond dispute'[90]. Five years later Arthur Burr pondered:

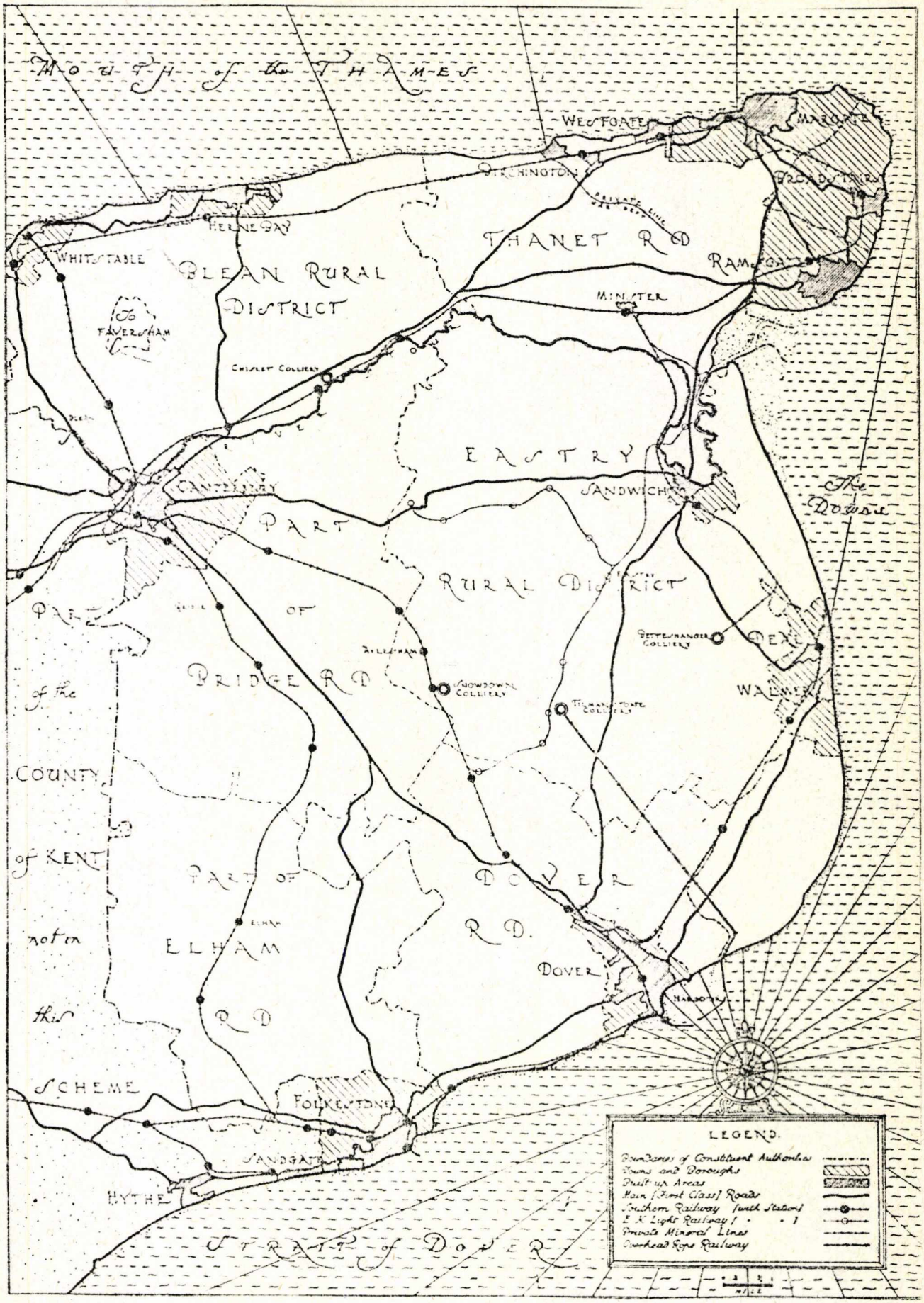
> How vast must be the impending revolutionary changes and how rapid neither I nor any other man can estimate, but nothing can now prevent the transformation of agricultural East Kent into a great manufacturing centre[91].

Burr was head of the Kent Coal Concessions Group, a company which dominated coal investment in the area until the early 1920s. However, Burr's company and its subsidiaries and competitors were characteristically small and under-capitalised[92]. These early speculators were drawn to the coalfield largely by its favourable location near the huge London market and the ports on the south coast. However, they were invariably defeated by the difficult geological conditions which they encountered in attempting to reach workable coal. Although there were 14 seams in the coalfield - and a number of these were relatively free of faulting and gas - they were deep, their width varied and they were troubled by water from overlaying sandstone strata. This made development work considerably more complicated and expensive than the pioneer companies had envisaged and several of them folded almost as quickly as they had been formed[93]. Burr's hopes were, therefore, certainly premature and the erratic development of the coalfield was aggravated by the onset of war shortly after workable coal had been reached. Thereafter the inadequacies of the smaller companies became more apparent and Johnson identified the immediate post war years as a period of relative stagnation[94]. Nevertheless, it was between the war and the General Strike that larger companies began to invest heavily in the coalfield and foremost amongst these was Pearson and Dorman Long, 'the giant which was to dominate the coalfield before nationalisation'[95]. Dorman Long, a major iron and steel company, had initially invested in the coalfield in 1917 but had combined with Pearson, a large engineering concern, in 1922 to form a company with the

explicit purpose of 'creating a great coal, iron and steel industry in Kent'[96]. By May 1924 the company controlled 60 of the 80 most valuable square miles in the coalfield and their commitment in Kent was boosted by a £2 million government loan negotiated in 1926[97].

This involvement encouraged a renewed belief that the face of Kent was about to be radically altered and to ensure that the local authorities would be prepared a Joint Town Planning Committee for East Kent was set up following a conference in Canterbury in 1922[98]. A year later it was decided to commission the architects Abercrombie and Archibald to produce a Regional Planning Scheme and in 1925 the Preliminary Survey was published[99]. At the time the Survey was written there were nine established pitheads in Kent (at Dover, Tilmanstone, Guilford, Stonehall, Snowdown, Wingham, Betteshanger, Chislet and Hammill) of which three had already produced coal (see Map 1). Nine more collieries were envisaged by Abercrombie to work an estimated 6,000 million tons over a period of 400-450 years. Given that the recently discovered iron stone beds were worked at a rate of 1,000 tons a day it was further estimated that the local ore reserves would last for a century[100]. 'With coal and iron on the spot', the Survey concluded it was 'inconceivable but that many other industries will find their way into Kent'[101] and therefore a 'series of miners' camps' was considered inappropriate[102]. Instead, seven or eight moderate sized towns (population: 12,000-35,000) were planned to house and service a broadly based industrial community. Each of the 18-20 pits were expected to attract 2,500 workers and a further 5,000-7,000

MAP 1 : THE KENT COALFIELD IN 1928



MAP 1

Note: By the mid-1970s the network of road and rail connections had altered little: Aylesham and Snowdown were directly on the Canterbury-Dover railway line but still fell within the triangle of roads running between Canterbury, Sandwich and Dover.

Source: P. ABERCROMBIE and J. ARCHIBALD, East Kent Regional Planning Scheme: Final Report, Canterbury, 1928.

men would work in the steel industry so that together with families and 'consequential population' it was estimated that within thirty years the total population of East Kent could increase from 300,000 to 677,300[103]. By the time the Final Report appeared in 1928 the architects expected 12 pits to be producing at full capacity within ten years and they expressed some concern at a rate of house building which had fallen well below the 'necessary' 2,800 dwellings per annum which they had prescribed[104].

Abercrombie and Archibald grossly exaggerated the potential of the coalfield and its ability to attract a range of other dependent industries and the only part of their scheme which was even partially implemented was the building of Aylesham which began in 1926. Prior to this the Kent Coal Concessions Group had undertaken some house construction at Woolage, Elvington and Stonehall in order to accommodate men working at Snowdown, Tilmanstone, Stonehall and Guilford - altogether 98 houses were built between 1911 and 1914[105]. Dorman Long later began work on 60 cottages near Betteshanger, 30 of which were built between 1924 and 1926[106]. That year work began at Elvington and in the following period houses were constructed at Hersden, Chislet and Mill Hill. This haphazard development resulted in a series of small, segregated mining settlements scattered across East Kent and by 1945 70 per cent of the Kent miners lived in these 'villages' which had been provided (directly or indirectly) by the colliery undertakings[107]. Each colliery had at least one new settlement nearby: at Betteshanger, Mill Hill (950 houses); at Snowdown, Aylesham (650 houses);

at Tilmanstone, Elvington (230 houses); and at Chislet, Hersden (165 houses)[108]. Other miners lived in neighbouring 'rural' villages such as Eythorne, Fredville, Nonington, Adisham, Sturry, Northbourne, Upstreet, Finglesham and Womenswold. The remainder lived in the larger coastal settlements of Deal, Dover, Ramsgate, Sandwich, Herne Bay and Folkestone, as well as at Canterbury[109].

TABLE 3.9: KENT COALFIELD OUTPUT 1913-1946

YEAR	OUTPUT (m. tons)	YEAR	OUTPUT (m. tons)
1913	0.1	1930	1.3
1914	0.1	1931	1.6
1915	0.2	1932	1.8
1916	0.2	1933	1.9
1917	0.3	1934	2.0
1918	0.2	1935	2.1
1919	0.3	1936	2.0
1920	0.4	1937	2.0
1921	0.3	1938	1.8
1922	0.4	1939	1.9
1923	0.5	1940	1.6
1924	0.3	1941	1.4
1925	0.4	1942	1.3
1926	0.2	1943	1.4
1927	0.6	1944	1.3
1928	0.9	1945	1.2
1929	1.2	1946	1.3

Source: W. Johnson, op cit., Tables 4.1, 4.5 and 4.13

Despite the lack of colliery based urban development the rate of expansion in the coalfield between 1927 and 1935 was unprecedented as the statistics in Tables 3.9 and 3.10 indicate. Total output rose from 640,000 tons to 2.1 million and employment in the collieries increased from 2,800 to 7,300.

TABLE 3.10: EMPLOYMENT IN KENT COALMINES 1913-1946

YEAR	NOS.EMPLYD	YEAR	NOS.EMPLYD
1913	1,134	1930	5,063
1914	1,111	1931	5,678
1915	965	1932	6,382
1916	1,128	1933	6,625
1917	1,098	1934	7,088
1918	1,299	1935	7,337
1919	1,954	1936	7,385
1920	2,405	1937	7,223
1921	1,977	1938	6,641
1922	1,801	1939	6,419
1923	2,116	1940	5,648
1924	2,159	1941	5,008
1925	2,044	1942	5,336
1926	2,373	1943	5,494
1927	2,795	1944	5,783
1928	3,553	1945	5,847
1929	4,357	1946	6,000

Sources: W. Johnson, op cit., Tables 4.2, 4.7 and 4.16 1913-1945
NCB Statistical Tables 1946

The men who worked in the Kent collieries were predominantly experienced mineworkers from the depressed coalfields in other parts of Britain. Under the 1926 Mining Industry Act the Kent coalowners were obliged to recruit from the other mining districts and Pearson and Dorman Long, having benefited from a £2 million Treasury loan negotiated in the same year, were bound to 'employ suitable miners who have been thrown out of work through other pits closing down'. 'This', the company claimed, 'was a continuing obligation'[110]. The complexities of the migration process are discussed fully at a later point and only three facets need be stressed here[111]. First, the Kent Coalfield attracted migrants over a fairly lengthy period from

the turn of the century until the close of the Second War. Second, many more men came to Kent than eventually settled and this was particularly true during the phase of rapid expansion after 1927. Job noted, for example, that 'there was a constant migration backwards and forwards and it was only after the Second World War that the labour force became more or less stabilised'[112]. Third, although experienced mineworkers were sought the labour force was 'diluted' by a minority group that included local agricultural labourers, Irish 'navvies' and, later on, 'Bevin boys'. Consequently the Kent mining population was constantly changing in size and composition for a period of almost fifty years and this heterogeneity and instability was particularly noticeable between 1927 and 1939.

Until 1936 the collieries were able to attract more men than they subsequently lost such that during the erratic years before 1926, and afterwards in rapid expansion, they largely met their labour requirements[113]. The colliery companies went to some lengths to ensure that miners elsewhere were aware of the Kent Coalfield and the opportunities which it presented. In this task they were aided by the Industrial Transference Scheme, the Labour Exchanges and, of course, extremely high levels of unemployment on all the major coalfields[114]. After 1936 these levels began to diminish and many miners returned from Kent to their 'home' coalfields so reducing the number of employed miners from 7,400 in 1936 to 5,000 in 1941. Thereafter a series of government measures, which called back experienced mineworkers and conscripted the inexperienced 'Bevin boys' helped to increase

numbers to 5,800 by 1945[115]. Coal production however, which had peaked at 2.1 million tons in 1935, fell to 1.9 million tons by 1939 and 1.2 million tons by 1945. According to the colliery owners the post 1936 setback was largely the result of labour shortages and the subsequent disruption of the Second War[116].

The migrants came to work in a 'new' coalfield yet in technical terms the collieries were not particularly advanced. Johnson noted that Kent was 'far more labour intensive than might have been expected'[117] in a newly developed district and that 'far from being a technically efficient new coalfield, Kent by 1926 gave the appearance of being rundown and backward'[118]. The explanation of this underdevelopment lay in the high costs incurred in sinking to the deep Kent seams and the difficult geological conditions which were encountered once there. In 1913, for example, the capital expenditure per ton produced in Kent was considerably higher than the national average but this was because of the expense of sinking rather than the application of advanced mechanical techniques in the actual winning of coal[119]. The softness of the coal and considerable variation in seam width later meant that even those companies which had sufficient capital resources were unable to successfully introduce coal cutters or loaders[120]. By 1936 only 18 per cent of coal-face output was mechanically cut by comparison to 55 per cent nationally and contrary to the national trend this figure declined rapidly during the late thirties (see Table 3.11).

TABLE 3.11: COAL OUTPUT MECHANICALLY CUT AND CONVEYED, KENT COALFIELD AND GREAT BRITAIN, 1936-1946

YEAR	%AGE CUT		%AGE CONVEYED	
	KENT	G.B.	KENT	G.B.
1936	18	55	78	48
1937	14	57	81	51
1938	10	59	78	54
1939	9	61	79	58
1940	8	64	77	61
1941	5	66	78	64
1942	3	66	78	65
1943	2	69	80	66
1944	3	72	80	69
1945	11	72	78	71
1946	17	74	92	73

Source: W. Johnson, op cit., Table 4.15

In technical terms therefore there was by Vesting Day 'considerable scope for improvement'[121]. The predominant mode of coal-getting was by hand, timber was the characteristic form of face support, underground transport of coal was through a variety of rope haulage and, with the exception of one colliery, men went on foot to the coal-faces - the majority of which were over $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the shaft[122]. Two of the four collieries had shaft diameters which limited their output of dirt and all of them were using machinery which 'was not of the modern type'[123]. Table 3.12 illustrates the consequences of this antiquated technology for levels of productivity. Throughout the thirties the coalfield failed to achieve any significant improvement on an average OMS which, at 21 cwts, fell below the national average.

TABLE 3.12: PRODUCTIVITY IN THE KENT COALFIELD AND GREAT BRITAIN 1930-1946

YEAR	OUTPUT PER MAN SHIFT (CWT) KENT	G.B.
1930	20.0	21.6
1931	20.9	21.6
1932	21.7	22.0
1933	22.3	22.4
1934	21.4	23.0
1935	21.4	23.4
1936	20.9	23.5
1937	20.6	23.4
1938	21.5	22.8
1939	22.1	22.8
1940	20.9	22.0
1941	20.7	21.4
1942	19.7	21.0
1943	20.4	20.6
1944	19.1	20.0
1945	18.1	20.0
1946	18.3	20.6

Sources: W. Johnson, op cit., Tables 4.12, 4.22; NCB, Colliery Yearbook, 1961, Table 19.

Only in terms of mechanical conveyance could the Kent collieries be described as advanced; in 1937 81 per cent of total output was mechanically conveyed from the pit compared to the national figure of 51 per cent. Three of the four collieries in fact used conveyors throughout the period of rapid development and the predominant mode of production was the longwall face[124]. On the 'hewing' longwall coal was got by pick and shovel; the major difference from the old hand-got system was the manner of its removal from the face. This type of longwall predominated in Kent during the inter-war period and was a relatively simple extension of single place working. The Kent colliers continued to work in small groups along the face

and practiced similar techniques of preparation and coal-getting, typically on two coaling shifts; on the third shift the conveyors were 'advanced' and the face prepared for the next phase of coal-getting. In sum, the hewing longwall retained much of the character and flexibility of the traditional hand-got tub stalls which had dominated coalmining before the First War[125].

Despite relatively antiquated collieries which did not prove particularly productive the Kent miners benefited from regular working and comparatively high wages. Kent collieries normally wound coal over six days a week between 1927 and 1939 and, unlike other coalfields, most mineworkers had the opportunity to work a regular five or six shift week[126]. Over the same period the number of wholly unemployed mineworkers in Kent averaged only 4 per cent of the total number of wage earners on colliery books[127] whilst earnings were consistently higher than the national figure (see Table 3.13). In 1930, for example, average earnings per man shift in Kent were 11s. $4\frac{1}{2}$d (56.9p) compared to a national figure of 9s. $8\frac{1}{4}$d (48.4p) and this advantage was maintained over the following 15 years although the differential (in terms of weekly earnings) was gradually reduced as miners in other areas began to return to more regular working[128]. Nevertheless, throughout the 1927-1939 period Kent men earned on average a weekly sum which was likely to exceed the national figure by between 4s. and 10s. a week and a skilled miner working regularly at the coal-face could keep himself and his family well above Rowntree's minimum wage.

TABLE 3.13: AVERAGE EARNINGS PER MAN SHIFT IN THE KENT COALFIELD AND GREAT BRITAIN, 1922-1946

YEAR	KENT N.P.	G.B. N.P.	YEAR	KENT N.P.	G.B. N.P.
1922	63.9	49.9	1935	53.3	48.2
1923	62.3	50.4	1936	56.3	52.1
1924	62.3	53.2	1937	59.8	55.3
1925	63.9	52.5	1938	62.2	58.3
1926	65.6	52.1	1939	65.7	60.0
1927	n.a.	50.3	1940	72.1	67.5
1928	n.a.	46.5	1941	84.6	77.1
1929	n.a.	46.1	1942	98.8	90.0
1930	56.9	48.4	1943	105.8	98.3
1931	55.9	47.8	1944	118.6	112.1
1932	55.2	47.8	1945	n.a.	119.6
1933	54.1	47.5	1946	n.a.	124.2
1934	52.7	47.6			

Note: 1922-1929 exclusive of value of allowances in kind; 1930-1946 inclusive. The Kent figures for 1940-1943 include the average value of allowances in kind for six other small districts (Cumberland, N. Wales, S. Staffs., Shropshire, Forest of Dean and Bristol and Somerset)

Source: W. Johnson, op cit., Table 7.2

The number that actually managed to work regularly was, however, significantly reduced by the exceptional underground conditions at the collieries. The depth of the coal seams (ranging between 1,300 feet and 3,000 feet) and the water bearing strata above them made underground work particularly arduous[129]; a combination of wetness and warmth made work physically exhausting and gave rise to a variety of painful skin ailments[130]. Pneumoconiosis and silicosis represented more serious occupational diseases which further incapacitated miners and their incidence was more common in Kent than elsewhere, although whether or not this was a consequence of local conditions

was a matter of some dispute[131]. Colliery accidents were also the cause of some concern. The rate of death and injury was persistently higher than the national figure, particularly during the 1930-1934 period, (see Table 3.14) and Johnson claimed that the collieries were slow in adopting adequate protective equipment and in introducing the ventilation systems necessary for such deep, hot workings[132].

TABLE 3.14: ACCIDENT RATE IN THE KENT COALFIELD AND GREAT BRITAIN 1922-1938

YEAR	NO. PERSONS KILLED OR INJURED PER 100,000 MANSHIFTS WORKED	
	KENT	GREAT BRITAIN
1922	71.8	66.3
1923	68.4	67.3
1924	83.9	62.9
1925	77.4	63.9
1926	75.4	67.3
1927	n.a.	68.9
1928	n.a.	69.4
1929	n.a.	71.4
1930	120.5	71.2
1931	116.1	67.3
1932	109.5	64.1
1933	102.6	64.1
1934	91.6	66.6
1935	89.7	67.5
1936	90.3	67.0
1937	85.5	65.6
1938	90.6	64.0

Source: W. Johnson, op cit., Table 8.1

After 1934 training and inspection arrangements were improved yet this did little to lower the incidence of accidents prior to the Second War[133]. The evidence suggests then that the Kent miners' opportunity to work regularly and earn relatively high wages was, to an extent, circumscribed by exceptionally arduous colliery conditions and high rates of physical injury

and ill-health.

The responsibility for ensuring that wages and working conditions of the Kent miners were the best possible rested with their union, The Kent Mine Workers' Association (KMWA). In 1913 Workmens' Committees were established at Tilmanstone and Snowdown and two years later the Association was formed and affiliated to the MFGB[134]. By 1936 Ebby Edwards proclaimed the KMWA as 'the strongest section' of the Federation[135] although this judgement was certainly debatable as a brief consideration of union membership, finances and policies demonstrates.

TABLE 3.15: MEMBERSHIP OF THE KENT MINE WORKERS' ASSOCIATION 1917-1939

YEAR	%AGE OF MEMBERS AT JAN 1 WHO LEFT DURING THE YEAR	%AGE OF MEMBERS AT DEC 31 WHO JOINED DURING THE YEAR	MEMBERS AS %AGE OF W. EARNERS
1917	45.8	51.5	82.4
1918	39.5	52.1	88.1
1919	-	16.5	90.8
1920	20.9	29.9	83.4
1921	22.4	8.5	86.0
1922	33.6	27.4	86.5
1923	18.1	20.3	75.6
1924	14.4	16.5	71.3
1925	28.1	21.6	76.1
1926	54.8	43.6	52.7
1927	42.8	69.4	72.9
1928	46.2	60.2	82.6
1929	28.6	43.0	81.9
1930	23.2	35.1	87.3
1931	12.7	23.0	86.2
1932	18.6	14.0	75.5
1933	11.4	26.9	86.9
1934	13.9	20.0	89.1
1935	5.2	12.5	93.8
1936	14.1	14.2	94.4
1937	11.0	10.0	94.8
1938	20.7	8.9	90.3
1939	11.9	9.6	89.3

Source: W. Johnson, op cit., Table 7.1

Judged from their annual returns KMWA membership was, with the exception of 1926, relatively high throughout the 1916- 1946 period as the data in Table 3.15 indicates. However, references in Executive Committee Minutes suggest that non-unionism was far more widespread than the official returns indicated and that, furthermore, a considerable proportion of members were 'unfinancial'[136]. In 1935, for example, the average subscription per member per week stood at 4½d yet the correct membership fee was 1s[137]; consequently the financial position of the union was relatively weak. During major stoppages and strikes (in 1921, 1924, 1926 and 1938) the Association was consistently forced back upon MFGB loans and grants and between 1920/1 and 1929 the Association's liabilities consistently exceeded its assets[138]. In its professed policies the KMWA met with little success. Attempts to discourage miners from moving to Kent and to prevent them from working in a sub-contracting system once there appeared to have little impact[139]. Moreover, in aiming for a seven hour shift and a five day week and in their campaign against overtime and weekend working the KMWA achieved 'little or no success'[140], whilst simultaneously a campaign for miners to win compensation for skin diseases contracted through pitwork was equally ineffectual[141]. Wage negotiations after 1926 failed to achieve a District Agreement until 1934 and even then the terms were relatively unfavourable for the miners[142]. Prior to this Agreement the owners had enforced wage cuts at Snowdown in 1928/9, Chislet in 1929 and Tilmanstone in 1931[143]. The flat rate additions to wages negotiated in 1936 were lower in Kent than anywhere in the country

and subsequent attempts over the following years to improve on these advances were unsuccessful[144]. It would appear therefore that the owners' need to attract labour between 1913 and 1946 and the nearness of the coalfield to the markets in the South East (which enabled favourable pithead prices and low transport costs) were factors of far greater significance in determining the advantageous wage rates which miners enjoyed during this period.

b) 1947-1976

TABLE 3.16: EMPLOYMENT IN KENT COALMINES 1947-1976

YEAR	NO. EMPLOYED	YEAR	NO. EMPLOYED
1947	6,300	1962	5,300
1948	6,300	1963/4	5,100
1949	6,000	1964/5	5,000
1950	6,000	1965/6	4,700
1951	6,300	1966/7	4,700
1952	6,400	1967/8	4,500
1953	6,500	1968/9	4,300
1954	6,600	1969/70	3,700
1955	6,900	1970/1	3,600
1956	7,100	1971/2	3,400
1957	7,300	1972/3	3,200
1958	7,100	1973/4	2,900
1959	6,600	1974/5	3,200
1960	5,800	1975/6	3,200
1961	5,600		

Source: NCB Statistical Tables

In the drive for increased production following nationalisation the number of men employed in Kent increased gradually from 6,300 in 1947 to 7,300 by 1957 and total output rose from 1.4 million tons to 1.7 million tons (see Tables 3.16 and 3.17). The NCB Plan for Coal of 1950 envisaged an output 56 per cent

greater than the 1949 level with total production averaging 2.5 million tons a year between 1961 and 1965 and the number of men employed increasing to 7,600. According to the Plan, this expansion would 'probably' require another colliery to be developed and opened in the sixties[145]. However the optimism of this phase of gradual expansion was disturbed by the radical alteration in market conditions after 1957. Locally the trend was reflected in the loss of the railway market in the late fifties and the conversion of the large power station at Richborough from coal to oil burning in the late sixties. These changes disrupted the established pattern of local demand and created considerable insecurity over the future of the coalfield[146]. Between 1957 and 1969/70 output fell from 1.7 million tons to 1.1 million and numbers employed dropped from 7,300 to 3,700 - a reduction of almost 50 per cent within the space of 13 years.

TABLE 3.17: KENT COALFIELD OUTPUT 1947-1976

YEAR	OUTPUT (m.tons)	YEAR	OUTPUT (m.tons)
1947	1.4	1962	1.5
1948	1.5	1963/4	1.6
1949	1.6	1964/5	1.5
1950	1.7	1965/6	1.5
1951	1.8	1966/7	1.5
1952	1.7	1967/8	1.4
1953	1.7	1968/9	1.4
1954	1.7	1969/70	1.1
1955	1.5	1970/1	1.0
1956	1.7	1971/2	0.8
1957	1.7	1972/3	1.0
1958	1.6	1973/4	0.7
1959	1.6	1974/5	0.8
1960	1.5	1975/6	0.8
1961	1.4		

Source: NCB Statistical Tables

As Table 3.18 indicates, this decline was accompanied by relatively heavy financial losses given the diminishing size of the coalfield's output.

TABLE 3.18: FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE OF THE KENT COALFIELD, 1947-1976

YEAR	TRADING PROFIT £m	TRADING LOSS £m	YEAR	TRADING PROFIT £m	TRADING LOSS £m
1947		0.5	1962		0.7
1948		0.2	1963/4		0.4
1949	0.004		1964/5		1.0
1950	0.2		1965/6		0.9
1951		0.03	1966/7		0.6
1952		0.06	1967/8		1.4
1953	0.002		1968/9		1.0
1954		0.3	1969/70		2.3
1955		0.8	1970/1		1.9
1956		0.3	1971/2		4.1
1957		0.4	1972/3		4.7
1958		0.4	1973/4		2.2
1959		0.3	1974/5	1.4	
1960		0.3	1975/6		2.2
1961		0.8			

Source: NCB Statistical Tables

'From the point of view of profitability', wrote Robens, 'it was a poor proposition...on purely economic grounds there was no case for keeping the pits open'[147]. As output fell and losses increased productivity in the coalfield, despite some improvement during the sixties, began to lag seriously behind the national figure. An OMS of 26.6 cwts in 1969/70 was the lowest of any coalfield in Britain and compared very poorly with the national average of 43.4 cwts; figures for the period are given below in Table 3.19.

TABLE 3.19: PRODUCTIVITY IN THE KENT COALFIELD AND NCB MINES, 1947-1976

YEAR	OVERALL OUTPUT PER MAN SHIFT(CWTS)	
	KENT	NCB MINES
1947	18.6	21.5
1948	21.0	22.3
1949	22.8	23.4
1950	24.8	24.2
1951	24.2	24.5
1952	23.6	24.2
1953	23.4	24.6
1954	22.2	24.9
1955	19.9	24.7
1956	21.0	24.8
1957	21.1	24.9
1958	21.0	25.6
1959	21.9	26.9
1960	23.3	28.0
1961	23.0	28.9
1962	24.3	31.2
1963/4	28.2	33.4
1964/5	26.7	34.8
1965/6	29.7	36.1
1966/7	30.3	36.6
1967/8	28.4	39.0
1968/9	30.6	42.5
1969/70	26.6	43.4
1970/1	27.4	44.1
1971/2	25.7	41.9
1972/3	27.4	45.8
1973/4	25.5	42.3
1974/5	24.5	45.0
1975/6	21.2	44.8

Source: NCB Statistical Tables

During these years one of the four Kent pits, Chislet, was shut and each of the remaining three suffered closure threats[148], the first of which came at the end of the fifties when the revised NCB plans were published[149]. At a special Area Council Meeting of the NUM (Kent Area) Jack Dunn, then President, remarked:

> It was quite clear from official sources and from the present economic position that unless there was a major development in the Area which would produce results in unearthing a future type of coal in suitable quantities, then this area would stand in danger[150].

The immediate threat was to Betteshanger which was reported to have lost 21s. per ton in 1958 and at which 140 men were later made redundant in 1960[151]. There were further crises at Tilmanstone between 1963 and 1965 before the colliery was officially placed in 'jeopardy' in 1967[152]; Chislet Colliery suffered a similar fate in 1968. Of the two Tilmanstone managed to win a reprieve but Chislet failed and was closed in 1969. The size of the coalfield meant that a threat to one colliery endangered the future of them all and rumours of a complete closure were rife throughout the sixties[153]; in this sense, rather than in terms of actual closures or redundancies, the Kent miners lived under conditions of considerable insecurity.

However, the coalfield survived into the 1970s as coal became more competitive and as a new and more favourable market for Kent coal was found through the discovery of a blending process which produced coking coal for the steel industry. It

was found that 10 tons of good quality coking coal could be produced by mixing one ton of low volatile Kent coal with nine tons of lower ranking coking coals from the north of England[154]. Consequently, Kent coal became the most expensive in Britain and this helped the coalfield to achieve an operating profit of £1.4 million in 1974/5[155]. Major capital projects to build new coal preparation plants were commissioned at each of the three collieries to prepare coal for the coking market and the new washery at Betteshanger began to operate in 1972[156]. By 1974 75 per cent of the coalfield's output was used as a coking blend and the future looked good:

> The prospects in the coke-oven market are also favourable. There is no satisfactory alternative to coke in blast furnace operation, so the steel industry's demand for coking coal will continue. The BSC, planning considerable future expansion of capacity, are likely to take all the coking coal that can be made available[157].

Despite this improvement the pattern of decline persisted during the seventies; the number of men employed fell from 3,700 in 1969/70 to 3,200 by 1975/6 and output diminished from 1.1 million tons to 0.8 million. Furthermore, the coalfield lost over £4 million in 1971/2 and again in 1972/3 and productivity fell dramatically from 26.6 cwts to 21.2 cwts per man shift between 1969/70 and 1975/6. Consequently, the insecurities of previous years continued and were aggravated by the major strikes of 1972 and 1974 when the NCB warned of a complete closure[158]. Some indication of the weight of this

threat is given in the following extract from an NUM (Kent Area) Executive Meeting in November 1972:

> Mr Dunn...indicated clearly the concern by headquarters of the production figures for Kent and their warning that Kent had until the end of this year (December) to produce more coal. They were not prepared to accept anything except an increase in coal production. It was pointed out that the figures for Kent 1971/2 were the worst since nationalisation; despite modernisation overall output had at times fallen below that of handgot production. Vast sums of money had been spent at all three pits but production figures had continued to decrease. Face output the previous week had dropped to 87 cwts per manshift as against 113 cwts OMS for handgot methods, and was in fact lower than many overall figures in other parts of the country. It was a disaster situation - present losses were running at the rate of £5,000,000 per annum and in October 1972 nearly £700,000 had been lost in that month alone. On the current level of productivity, the Kent coalfield was losing £3.50 per ton... If no improvement in output was obtained before Mr Lewis (NCB Area Manager) submitted his report, then there was no doubt that Hobart House would take an adverse decision and perhaps put the whole coalfield into jeopardy immediately[159].

As elsewhere, the rundown of the industry in Kent was accompanied by a programme of intensive mechanisation. During the 10 years following nationalisation the Kent collieries were subject to major reconstruction schemes which involved substantial changes in underground transport and shaft layout, however, attempts at mechanisation on the coal-faces proved to be extremely difficult:

> Results from the introduction of coal-cutters have been disappointing; loading machines have been tried, but the peculiar softness of the coal has made the preparation necessary for mechanical loading extremely difficult[160].

As a result the 'hewing' longwall represented the main method of coal-winning until the early sixties[161]. Power loaders were introduced in the mid-fifties but they did not make a significant impact upon production until 1960 when almost 11 per cent of coal was won in this fashion; even this level was way below the national figure of 38 per cent. However, from this point onwards development was extremely rapid: by 1964/5, 81 per cent of output was power loaded compared to 75 per cent nationally and by the end of the decade the Kent figure reached 90 per cent (see Table 3.20).

TABLE 3.20: POWER LOADED OUTPUT AT THE COAL-FACE IN THE KENT COALFIELD AND NCB MINES, 1955-1970

YEAR	KENT %AGE	NCB MINES %AGE
1955	1.7	11.1
1956	2.1	15.5
1957	1.7	23.0
1958	0.6	27.8
1959	1.9	31.3
1960	10.9	37.5
1961	24.1	47.7
1962	43.5	58.8
1963/4	76.8	68.4
1964/5	80.6	75.0
1965/6	84.7	80.7
1966/7	88.2	85.7
1967/8	89.1	89.7
1968/9	91.8	91.8
1969/70	92.3	92.3

Source: NCB Statistical Tables.

The introduction of powered supports was equally fast and similarly delayed as the information in Table 3.21 demonstrates.

TABLE 3.21: POWER SUPPORTS ON MAJOR LONGWALL FACES IN THE KENT COALFIELD 1966-1972

YEAR	FACES WITH POWER SUPPORTS	ALL LONGWALL FACES IN PRODUCTION IN MARCH
1966/7	-	15
1967/8	1	17
1968/9	1	14
1969/70	3	12
1970/1	6	11
1971/2	6	7

Source: NCB Statistical Tables

The pattern of mechanisation in Kent meant that coal-getting from the 1920s to the early 1960s retained many of the characteristics of pre-mechanised working despite a longwall organisation. In this context the change to power loading and powered supports was not only more sudden then elsewhere but of greater intensity since the intermediary stage of the partially mechanised cutting longwall was never fully established: Kent faceworkers lost the shovel and the pick in one fell swoop. The evidence suggests then that the insecurity and disruption of rundown and mechanisation after 1957 may have been even greater for Kent miners than for many of their fellow workers in other coalfields. Furthermore, these changes coincided with an erosion of the favourable earnings differential which the Kent men had traditionally enjoyed in relation to other coalfields. The dimensions of this decline are outlined below in Table 3.22.

TABLE 3.22: AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE EARNINGS IN THE KENT COALFIELD AND NCB MINES 1955-1971

YEAR	KENT £	NCB MINES £
1955	13.95	12.46
1960	16.08	14.70
1961	17.10	15.60
1962	17.78	16.22
1963	18.65	17.20
1964/5	19.32	17.97
1965/6	20.52	19.14
1966/7	21.55	20.15
1967/8	22.30	21.13
1968/9	23.40	22.37
1969/70	24.01	23.82
1970/1	26.22	27.07

Source: NCB Statistical Tables

By the mid-sixties the earnings gap was beginning to close rapidly and by 1970/1 earnings in Kent were considerably below the national figure. The Kent faceworkers fared worst of all. The 1966 National Power Loading Agreement aimed for complete parity for workers on power loaded faces all over the country by January 1972: in the intervening five years wage differentials were levelled by deliberately holding back the rate of wage increases in the well paid areas whilst the lower paid areas caught up. Subsequently shift rates increased from 75s. to £5 in Scotland, Durham and South Wales between 1966 and 1972 but in Kent - the best paid area in 1966 - they moved only from 89s.5d to £5[162]. Indeed, Kent NPLA workers experienced the smallest increase in shift rate and the largest decline in the real value of pay rates of all mineworkers covered by the Agreement (see Table 3.23).

TABLE 3.23: CHANGES IN NPLA SHIFT RATES 1966-1972

AREA	INCREASE IN RATE 1966-JAN 1972	DECLINE IN PAY RATE AT CONSTANT (1966) PRICES
	%	%
Scotland	33.3	-1.8
Northumberland	23.4	-9.1
Durham	33.3	-1.8
Yorkshire	21.2	-10.7
Lancashire	18.5	-12.7
Cumberland	33.3	-1.8
North Wales	33.3	-1.8
Nottinghamshire	15.3	-15.0
North Derbyshire	18.5	-12.7
Leicestershire	26.1	-7.0
Cannock Chase	25.8	-7.3
North Staffs	30.0	-4.2
South Staffs and Shrops	33.3	-1.8
Warwickshire	20.3	-11.3
South Wales	33.3	-1.8
KENT	11.7	-17.7
South Derbyshire	20.4	-11.2

Source: J. Hughes and R. Moore, (eds.), op cit., Table 4

The NPLA also reduced differentials between surface workers and underground workers and underground and faceworkers and this compression was naturally greatest in the areas where facework rates were held back. In Kent, between June 1966 and April 1973, the rate earned by faceworkers as a proportion of the lowest underground non-craftsmen grade fell from 202.5 to 134.8[163]. Accordingly, Kent coal-face workers experienced wage increases which lagged behind that of most other workers in the Kent collieries, behind all faceworkers in other coalfields, and indeed, a large proportion of manual workers in other industries[164].

Understandably, this severe deterioration in conditions of

employment provoked a strong response from the Kent miners. The nature of this response may be measured through reference to turnover, absenteeism and accident rates, all of which can be interpreted as indicators of dissatisfaction expressed, typically, in an individual and unconscious fashion. Such expressions of 'unorganised conflict' have been considered as 'more direct and to some extent more personal' than organised conflict even though they may not be 'regarded as conflict by the persons in the situation'[165]. Despite the limits to the reliability of each indicator these measures have been usefully applied to studies of the coal industry by Knowles[166], Scott[167], and Handy[168] and they are used here, with caution, to provide a background against which the first hand accounts reproduced later may be assessed.

TABLE 3.24: WASTAGE FROM THE KENT COALFIELD 1957-1970

YEAR	VOLUNTARY WASTAGE	TOTAL WASTAGE	VOLUNTARY WASTAGE AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL WASTAGE
1957	429	617	69.5
1958	499	676	73.8
1959	450	705	63.8
1960	641	1234	51.9
1961	380	546	69.6
1962/3	269	458	58.7
1963/4	223	427	52.2
1964/5	319	489	65.2
1965/6	434	705	61.6
1966/7	328	556	59.0
1967/8	340	590	57.6
1968/9	430	683	63.0
1969/70	613	987	62.1

Source: NCB Statistical Tables

The large numbers that left the coalfield voluntarily perhaps represent the starkest indicator of dissatisfaction. Table 3.24 demonstrates that voluntary wastage was particularly high during periods of exceptional insecurity, (1957-1959, 1963-1964, 1967-1970) when it accounted for an even higher percentage of total wastage than at national level (see Table 3.6). In the year that Chislet Colliery closed, for example, 613 men left the coalfield voluntarily and this represented 62 per cent of total wastage compared to the national level of 52 per cent.

TABLE 3.25: ACCIDENT RATE IN THE KENT COALFIELD AND NCB MINES, 1957-1971

YEAR	NO. PERSONS KILLED OR INJURED PER 100,000 MAN SHIFTS WORKED	
	KENT	NCB MINES
1957	145.6	116.6
1958	154.1	130.7
1959	177.1	143.8
1960	192.2	143.7
1961	177.8	148.2
1962	175.0	161.8
1963/4	202.1	180.7
1964/5	193.6	186.0
1965/6	225.7	210.3
1966/7	237.3	197.3
1967/8	238.4	191.2
1968/9	229.6	182.5
1969/70	221.4	172.9
1970/1	179.6	135.8

Source: NCB Statistical Tables

Accident and absenteeism rates are less reliable guides yet both point in a similar direction to the rising levels of voluntary wastage. Thus the accident rate, traditionally higher

in Kent, became even higher, increasing from 146 per 100,000 man shifts in 1957 to 238 in 1967/8 as Table 3.25 indicates. The subsequent decline did not match the national fall such that by 1970/1 the Kent rate was 32 per cent above that for all NCB collieries. In the same year rates of absenteeism rose above the NCB average after a pattern of steady increase from the mid-sixties onwards (see Table 3.26).

TABLE 3.26: ABSENTEEISM IN KENT COALFIELD AND NCB MINES, 1963-1971

YEAR	ABSENCE PERCENTAGE	
	KENT	NCB
1963/4	14.6	15.9
1964/5	14.7	16.0
1965/6	16.2	18.0
1966/7	16.2	17.3
1967/8	17.3	18.2
1968/9	16.4	18.1
1969/70	18.6	18.3
1970/1	19.3	19.2

Source: NCB Statistical Tables

This individualistic reaction did not preclude the possibility of an alternative collective response for in contrast to the inter-war years the post-war Kent miners' union developed into a strong and 'militant' organisation[169]. Unlike the union at national level the NUM (Kent Area) was consistently opposed to pit closures during the late fifties and prepared to put this policy into action when, in 1960, the future of Betteshanger Colliery was threatened[170]. A stay-down strike which lasted for six days and seven nights was organised and eventually a relatively favourable redundancy agreement was negotiated[171].

In 1967 the union published a persuasive document which argued the case for an integrated national fuel policy which would only involve colliery closures on the grounds of exhaustion[172], and the following year Kent proposed a resolution at Annual Conference which rejected government fuel policy and opposed all pit closures until a 'complete and exhaustive examination of Britain's fuel economy' had been undertaken[173]. The resolution was rejected and Kent's radical opposition to the colliery closure programme went largely unsupported[174]. Indeed, in 1969 local union leaders were themselves compromised over the closure of Chislet Colliery: with each of the four Kent pits seriously under-manned the union accepted the need to close one pit in order that the other three could survive with the miners that were subsequently transferred[175]. On other major issues the Kent Area took up a position which led them to become increasingly identified with the traditionally 'militant' areas of Scotland, South Wales and Yorkshire[176]. All four were involved in the important unofficial strikes in 1969 and 1970 and they were consistently in the forefront of the wages struggles of the following six years.

For the British miners the 1960s were years of relative industrial peace: the number of stoppages, workers involved in stoppages and working days lost through stoppages all declined[177]. The picture changed from 1969 onwards but in Kent the evidence suggests that compared to other coalfields the area became more prone to industrial stoppages during the period of rundown. Thus between 1949 and 1956 the annual proportion of saleable tonnage lost through disputes only exceeded the national figure

once, but between 1957 and 1970/1 the national level was surpassed in seven different years[178]. Although an admittedly crude measure this data does give some comparative indication of the character of industrial relations in the Kent Coalfield and the growing dissatisfaction with working life in a rapidly declining industry.

(iii) A note on the East Kent labour market

During the second reading of the Coal Industry Bill in 1970 David Crouch, MP for Canterbury, stated:

> The miners I know in the Kent Coalfield are disillusioned because of one closure and concerned about the rest of the pits in the coalfield. They are not ready to recommend their sons to go into the industry...because they are concerned about the life of the pits and the future of the industry as a whole[179].

If miners' sons were no longer following their fathers to the collieries, and if those that had were increasingly changing their minds and leaving, where were they going? An answer to this question must take account of the changing employment structure of East Kent between 1927 and 1976. This gives some indication of the range of opportunities available in the area although it says nothing about the differing abilities of mineworkers to take advantage of them or their differing perceptions of 'available' jobs. These issues are taken up in Chapters 6 and 7.

In their imaginary journey through eighteenth century

England Cole and Postgate stressed the continuing importance of agriculture in Kent both then and 'now' (they wrote in 1938)[180]. Certainly, in 1926 when great changes were anticipated as a result of colliery development observations were typically expressed in terms of the agriculture : industry dichotomy:

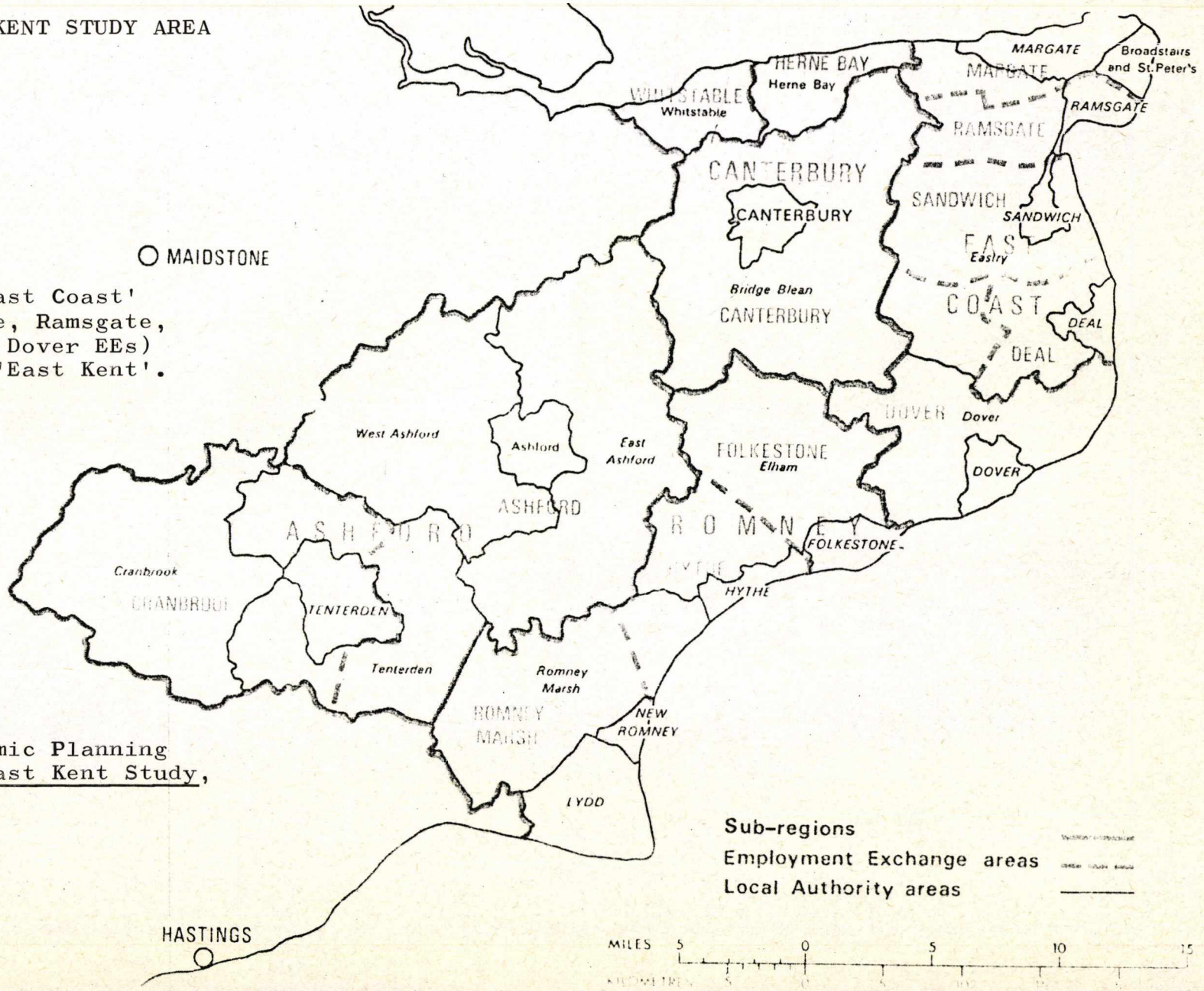
> Towns will spring up at spots where orchards, woodlands, pastures and cornfields now charm the view, and the rythym of the woodman's axe and swirl of the reaper will give way to the thud and rattle of machinery[181].

During the inter-war years agriculture represented the largest single source of employment in Kent with approximately 10 per cent of employed males working on the land. Within Eastry Rural District, where most of the mining activity was concentrated, colliery and agricultural work each accounted for one-third of male employment - beyond these sectors there were few alternatives available for local mining families[182]. In 1930 a review of local youth employment noted that no local ancillary industries had been developed for miners' sons[183] and in 1932 a survey of occupations entered by boys in the rural districts of Canterbury, Deal, Dover, Ramsgate and Sandwich revealed that 37 per cent (52 from 139) had entered agricultural occupations and that this represented the most popular single category[184]. Opportunities for miners' wives and daughters were even more limiting: almost half of all employed women in Kent in 1931 were engaged in some form of

'personal service'[185]. In practical terms the choice for many women in mining settlements lay between housework and seasonal work in the coastal holiday resorts or on the land.

This situation was largely unaltered by the close of the Second War. According to a report published in 1945 not one factory was opened in East Kent between 1932 and 1938; indeed, only one was extended[186]. The 1951 Census indicated that there were still almost one in 10 employed men in agriculture in Kent and that in Eastry just under 30 per cent of all males were thus employed. A similar proportion of women in Eastry were employed in personal service[187]. Two reports published in 1963 and 1969 revealed that there had been very little development during the fifties. The Kent Development Plan described East Kent as an area where agriculture was 'the most important land use' and industry was 'as unobtrusive as the four mines of the Kent Coalfield'[188]. Many of the larger settlements (such as Canterbury, Ashford, Faversham, Sandwich and Tenterden) were essentially market towns 'associated with the rural character of East Kent' or else coastal resorts (such as Whitstable and Herne Bay) where the incidence of retired persons was 'very high'[189]. Later, the South East Kent study noted that the area 'had prior to 1961 been the slowest growing part of the South East, both in population and employment' and that 'certain measures of prosperity' indicated the area to be 'one of the least prosperous parts of the South East'[190]. (See Map 2) Table 3.27 shows that by 1960 extractive industry still accounted for almost one-fifth of male employment in East Kent and total

MAP 2 : THE SOUTH EAST KENT STUDY AREA



Note: In the text the 'East Coast' sub-region (Margate, Ramsgate, Sandwich, Deal and Dover EEs) is referred to as 'East Kent'.

Source: South East Economic Planning Council, South East Kent Study, 1969.

employment in manufacturing, at 17 per cent, was well below the national figure of 39 per cent.

TABLE 3.27: EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY IN EAST KENT

	PERCENTAGE		
	1960	1966	1973
Extractive	13.6 (19.4)	10.5 (15.2)	8.5 (11.1)
Manufacturing	17.1 (14.6)	22.7 (21.6)	21.4 (21.6)
Construction	7.6 (11.6)	8.1 (12.6)	4.6 (7.3)
Services	61.7 (54.4)	58.7 (50.6)	65.5 (60.0)
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: East Kent: Margate, Ramsgate, Sandwich, Deal and Dover EE Areas.
Figures in brackets represent male employment only.

Source: South East Economic Planning Council, South East Kent Study, 1969, Tables 3 and 5 and Department of Employment, ER IIs.

However, after 1960 local employment began to expand rapidly particularly in those sectors which were previously under-developed. Between 1960 and 1966 the average annual rate of growth in employment in East Kent was over 250 per cent above the national figure (see Table 3.28) and the area experienced the largest absolute increase in employment within the South East region: there were 8,680 more jobs by 1966[191]. The rise was greatest in manufacturing and service industries and many of the new firms established themselves on the rapidly expanding Richborough industrial estate and in the Thanet towns of Margate and Ramsgate. 60 per cent of the expansion in manufacturing employment was said to have resulted from the influx of 87 new

firms which, by 1967, were employing almost 7,000 people[192]. Throughout the period the north east corner of Kent represented the major growth area in manufacturing and a variety of industries - ranging from scientific instruments to clothing, electrical and chemical goods - were established or expanded. In 1966 manufacturing accounted for over 50 per cent of employment in Sandwich and in the East Kent area the proportion increased from 17 per cent in 1960 to 23 per cent by 1966[193]; this represented an average annual growth rate of 7.3 per cent compared to 0.3 per cent nationally (see Table 3.28).

TABLE 3.28: EMPLOYMENT GROWTH RATES IN EAST KENT, SOUTH EAST KENT AND GREAT BRITAIN 1960-1966

	EAST KENT	S.E.KENT	G.B.
Extractive	-2.1 (-2.2)	-2.9 (-2.9)	-4.6 (-4.9)
Manufacturing	7.3 (8.7)	6.0 (5.7)	0.3 (0.5)
Construction	3.3 (3.3)	4.7 (4.5)	2.7 (2.6)
Services	1.4 (0.7)	1.6 (0.9)	1.8 (1.2)
Total	2.3 (1.9)	2.1 (1.6)	0.9 (0.6)

Note: Figures in brackets represent male employment only.

Source: South East Economic Planning Council, op cit., Tables 7 and 8.

Although this trend did not continue between 1966 and 1973, and the proportion employed in construction diminished considerably, the expansion in the service sector was substantial: 66 per cent of those in employment in East Kent were in service industries by 1973. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s service

employment grew consistently in Canterbury and Dover and was 'little affected by national cyclical influences'[194]. This observation applied, in fact, to the whole of Kent where employment grew at almost twice the national rate during periods of national economic expansion (1960-1965, 1971-1973) and continued to expand albeit at a lower rate, during the intervening recession[195]. A detailed breakdown of the distribution of employment in Dover Employment Exchange and the East Kent area at the beginning of the research in 1973 is given overleaf in Table 3.29.

To sum up: throughout the sixties a whole range of alternative occupations within daily travelling distance became available for Kent miners and their families in the industrial estates to the north, the Dungeness construction site to the south, the transport services in Dover and the light industries around Canterbury and the Thanet coast. There were, of course, persisting structural problems which were reflected in a restricted range of employment opportunities in East Kent and a comparatively high level of unemployment[196]. Nevertheless, the expansion of job opportunities, particularly in the relatively well paid manufacturing sector, and the sheer novelty of this growth in a traditional agricultural area, was likely to attract considerable local attention - especially from those men working in an industry undergoing severe and prolonged decline.

TABLE 3.29: EMPLOYMENT STRUCTURE IN DOVER EMPLOYMENT EXCHANGE, EAST KENT EMPLOYMENT DISTRICT AND GREAT BRITAIN, JUNE 1973

INDUSTRY	PERCENTAGE		
	DOVER	EAST KENT	G.B.
1. AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY, FISHING	1.3	4.1	1.9
2. MINING AND QUARRYING	8.7	2.8	1.6
3. Food, Drink and Tobacco	0.2	1.3	3.3
4. Chemicals and Petrol Products	-	-	-
5. Chemicals and Allied Industries	-	1.5	1.9
6. Metal Manufacture	1.2	0.3	2.3
7. Mechanical Engineering	0.3	1.2	4.3
8. Instrument Engineering	3.1	1.6	0.7
9. Electrical Engineering	0.3	2.2	3.6
10. Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering	0.03	0.1	0.8
11. Vehicles	-	0.7	3.6
12. Metal Goods not specified	0.5	0.9	2.5
13. Textiles	0.1	0.6	2.5
14. Leather, Leather Goods and Fur	-	0.2	0.2
15. Clothing and Footwear	0.8	1.3	1.9
16. Bricks, Pottery, Glass, Cement etc	0.1	0.6	1.3
17. Timber, Furniture etc	0.2	1.3	1.3
18. Paper, Printing and Publishing	2.5	1.7	2.6
19. Other manufacturing Industries	1.2	3.5	1.6
TOTAL MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES	10.2	19.0	34.4
20. CONSTRUCTION	4.0	5.1	6.0
21. Gas, Electricity and Water	1.7	1.7	1.5
22. Transport and Communication	28.7	10.9	6.8
23. Distributive Trades	9.1	13.6	12.1
24. Insurance, Banking and Finance	1.4	3.7	4.7
25. Professional and Scientific Services	12.3	16.8	14.3
26. Miscellaneous Services	9.7	12.9	9.5
27. Public Administration and Defence	13.0	9.5	7.0
TOTAL SERVICE INDUSTRIES	75.8	69.0	55.9
TOTAL IN EMPLOYMENT	100.0	100.0	100.0
UNEMPLOYED AS %AGE OF TOTAL INSURED POPULATION	1.3	2.5	2.4

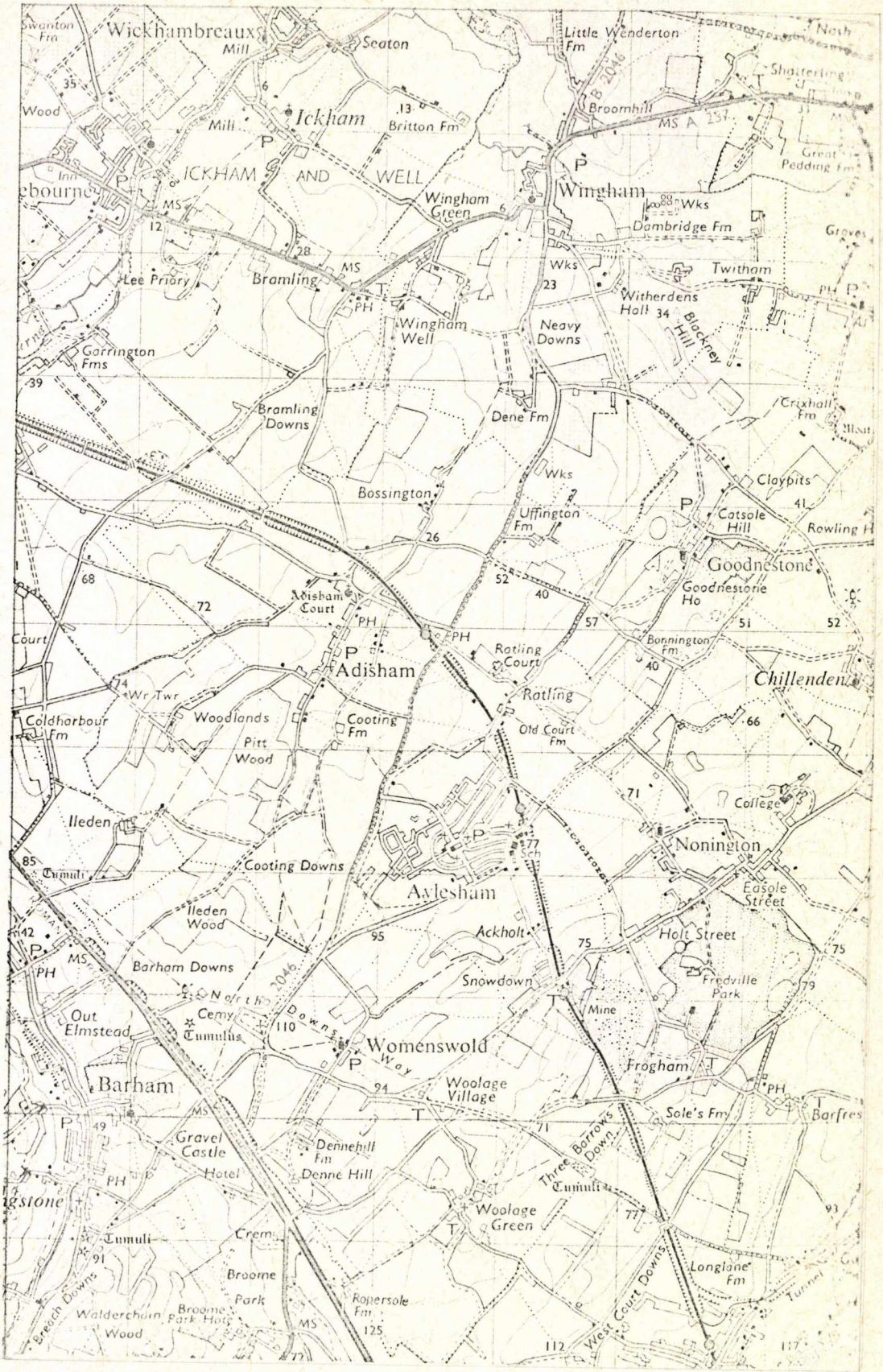
Source: Department of Employment, ER IIs.

(iv) Aylesham

Aylesham stands amidst fields and pastures some two miles from the major A2 route leading from Canterbury to Dover. Close by are the agricultural villages of Nonington and Adisham and the more recent mining settlements of Snowdown and Woolage Village (see Map 3). To the passing motorist Aylesham is likely to be something of a shock; its uniform rows of comparatively modern brick built semi-detached houses stretch out along avenues which sit incongruously in this part of rural Kent. A mile away on the brow of a neighbouring hill stands Snowdown Colliery, an equally unexpected part of the agricultural skyline and the explanation of Aylesham's existence. A walk around the 'village' of Aylesham is revealing[197]. The long roads in the older half converge onto a market square and their names tell of local history. Bell Grove, Clarendon Road, Dorman Avenue, Milner Crescent, Hyde Place, Burgess Road, Cornwallis Avenue - each are named after individuals connected with the ownership, planning and development of Aylesham in the twenties[198]. Crossing over the market square into that part of the village developed after the Second War the streets become shorter, the houses more modern in appearance and the road names bear the mark of more democratic origins. National figures in the labour movement are immortalised in Bevan Way, Attlee Avenue and Cripps Close whilst there is a place too, in Hill Crescent and Newman Road, for local personalities of some import[199].

Aylesham has its own churches, schools and shops and there are police, fire and railway stations as well as a library, welfare clinic and post office. Three working mens' clubs and

MAP 3 : AYLESHAM AND SURROUNDING VILLAGES



Source: Ordnance Survey, 1:50,000 series

a pub are in the village and there is another club at Snowdown. Sports grounds stretch away behind the Miners' Welfare Club and what was the cinema now serves as a bingo hall[200]. For a village of some 4,400 residents this may seem to be an impressive range of facilities yet Aylesham is physically incomplete[201]. The market square is anything but a busy centre; along one side of it, alone, stands the bingo hall, behind it a backdrop of fields and trees. The central area of the village between the market square and the railway station is occupied only by rough grass and this, more than anything else, is testimony to Aylesham's arrested development, for here, according to Abercrombie's original grand design, there should have been a tree-lined central boulevard. Aylesham was conceived, not as a mining village, but as a small town serving the collieries of Snowdown and Adisham. The site was designed to take between 2,000 and 3,000 houses and a maximum population of between 12,000 and 15,000[202]. Initially, Pearson and Dorman Long - the owners of Snowdown Colliery - combined with Eastry Rural District Council to form Aylesham Tenants Limited and work began on the first batch of 1,200 houses in 1926[203]. By 1928 402 houses were complete[204] but at the close of the Second War the total had only increased to 656[205]. The proposed colliery at Adisham 'nearly definite' in 1925 failed to materialise and Snowdown Colliery did not expand at the expected rate[206]. As a result, Aylesham became little more than the isolated mining village entirely dependent upon the local colliery, which Abercrombie and his associates had attempted to avoid.

This lack of development meant that from its beginnings Aylesham was defined in various quarters as a 'problem'. The Dover Express voiced doubts in 1926 about the 'segregated atmosphere' which was likely at the proposed new mining settlements and there were frequent debates in the local press about the isolation of Aylesham and its lack of facilities[207]. Hughes echoed these sentiments in her social survey of the early 1930s: there was no 'centre for social intercourse' she complained, and the mens' drinking and gambling habits were considered a consequence of the fact that they 'have nothing else to do'[208]. The reforming tone of a middle class outsider's voice is quite clear here but the basis of Hughes' argument - that a poor physical environment may give rise to a poor social environment - has ever since been at the core of much discussion (by both 'outsiders' and residents) about the village and its population[209]. The debate continues today and Aylesham has retained its 'problem' status. In their study in Yorkshire, Dennis and his colleagues state that a common local opinion of the mining town which they examined was 'Ashton? Oh, that dirty hole' and whilst it would be inaccurate to suggest that Aylesham in the 1970s might attract a similar condemnation the stigma of the inter-war years undoubtedly persists albeit in a diminished form[210].

Aylesham's 'local standing' was certainly diminished by the persistent turnover of population between 1927 and 1945 and the associated failure of an established family-based pattern of social relationships to emerge. Those who 'passed through'

Aylesham during these years gave the village an image which was akin to that of a 'wild west' frontier town: restless, unstable and, to an extent,'lawless'. It is impossible to estimate with any certainty the annual turnover of residents at Aylesham but it seems probable that more came to the village than eventually settled. What is more certain is that the migrants were looking for work at Snowdown Colliery and if they decided to stay and establish their family in the village then it was extremely likely that their sons would follow them to the colliery[211].

The post-war period was distinguished initially by a cessation of long distance migration and a subsequent decline in the local dominance of the colliery. Consequently the growth in population (see Table 3.30) came largely from the second and third generations of local mining families rather than migrants from other coalfields.

TABLE 3.30: POPULATION AT NONINGTON AND AYLESHAM 1921-1971

CIVIL PARISH	YEAR	POPULATION
NONINGTON	1921	887
	1931	4,326
AYLESHAM	1951	3,783
	1961	4,142
	1971	4,239

Source: Censuses of England and Wales: Population Tables.

Many of the young men followed their fathers to Snowdown Colliery

where employment was expanding between 1946 and 1957 but thereafter the pit became less of an 'automatic' choice for Aylesham boys and many of those that did work at the colliery later left. By 1971, one in every two employed males in the village worked outside the colliery and the growth of opportunities for women meant that miners constituted only one-third of the entire employed population[212]. This steady expansion of the population and industrial diversification was reflected physically in the construction of approximately 500 council houses which allowed an increasing proportion of local families to look beyond the pit for their means of subsistence. The economic and demographic profile of Aylesham in the mid-seventies was therefore distinct from the pre-war era; the associated social characteristics were rather more complex and their discussion is reserved for Chapters 6 and 7.

(v) Snowdown Colliery

In 1927, as miners and their families began to occupy the newly built houses at Aylesham, Snowdown Colliery re-opened for productive purposes. Sinking work began originally in 1906 and workable coal seams were reached at 1,500 feet (in 1913), 2,200 feet (in 1914) and 3,000 feet (in 1917). However, Snowdown Colliery Company - a subsidiary of the Kent Coal Concessions Group - consistently lost money between 1918 and 1922 despite these discoveries and the pit was sold to Pearson and Dorman Long in 1924 following its closure the previous year. After a programme of re-organisation coal production recommenced in 1927

from the deep 'Millyard' seam and in contrast to the past coal production expanded rapidly[213] (see Table 3.31). In the absence of precise annual colliery figures weekly totals as reported in the local press are illuminating: from 2,000 tons in January 1927 weekly output rose to 7,000 tons in February 1928, 10,000 tons in July 1929 and 12,000 tons in November 1931[214]. Judging from these figures and the combined output of the Pearson and Dorman Long collieries Snowdown probably produced over 500,000 tons per annum during the early thirties - an achievement unequalled for any consistent period thereafter.

TABLE 3.31: SNOWDOWN COLLIERY OUTPUT 1913-1976

YEAR	OUTPUT ('000s tons)
1913	28
1919	132
1923	44
1928	334
1950	446
1955	415
1957	465
1958	489
1959	498
1960	510
1961	477
1962	472
1963/4	496
1964/5	406
1965/6	379
1966/7	385
1967/8	350
1968/9	325
1969/70	287
1970/1	319
1971/2	228
1972/3	279
1973/4	209
1974/5	272
1975/6	122

Note: Separate figures for 1929-1939 are unavailable; however, combined figures for the Pearson and Dorman Long collieries are as follows:

YEAR	'000s tons	YEAR	'000s tons
1929	527	1935	1,324
1930	679	1936	1,231
1931	888	1937	1,160
1932	1,107	1938	973
1933	1,278	1939	1,032
1934	1,332		

Sources: 1913-1939: W. Johnson, op cit., Tables 4.1, 4.5, 4.13; 1950-1976: NCB (South Midlands)

By contemporary standards Snowdown ranked as a large and exceptionally deep colliery[215]. Conditions in the 'Millyard' seam - 3,000 feet below the surface - were extremely hot and humid and face workings were frequently troubled by water from overlaying strata[216]. From 1927 the characteristic mode of production was the longwall face and after 1932 all such faces were served by conveyors[217]. However, the colliery was not technically advanced: experiments with coal-cutters did not begin until the late thirties and by the close of the Second War only a small percentage of coal output was mechanically cut[218]. According to the owners the 'softness' of the coal did not 'require' cutters since it could 'easily be gotten by hand'[219]. Consequently the rapid expansion of coal production between 1927 and 1935 was based primarily on sheer growth in the quantity of manual labour as Table 3.32 demonstrates. The 'hewing' longwall predominated at Snowdown, in fact, until the application of power loading techniques transformed work organisation in the early sixties. By 1963/4 over 90 per cent of coal output was mechanically loaded[220] and this phase of technical change was completed in 1971 when powered supports and shearer loaders were introduced to all major faces[221].

After the war employment at Snowdown expanded gradually until 1956 and production briefly topped 500,000 tons in 1960. Thereafter - in sharp contrast to NCB predictions of a 1.5 million ton output - production levels declined consistently and fell below 300,000 tons in 1969/70[222]. In the face of falling output and rapid mechanical innovation the number of workmen employed at Snowdown was cut by almost one-half between 1957 and 1971/2.

Unlike Tilmanstone and Chislet, Snowdown was not directly threatened by an NCB 'jeopardy' notice but there were frequent rumours of closure in the 1960s. In 1969, for example, when the NUM (Kent Area) debated the possibility of closures in Kent Snowdown was rated as most vulnerable if Chislet was to be saved[223].

TABLE 3.32: NUMBERS EMPLOYED AT SNOWDOWN COLLIERY 1913-1976

YEAR	NOS. EMPLOYED
1913	310
1919	715
1923	242
1926	557
1927	1,020
1928	1,249
1929	1,813
1930	1,762
1931	1,845
1932	2,075
1933	2,160
1934	2,197
1935	2,246
1936	2,101
1937	1,936
1938	1,803
1945	1,876
1950	1,681
1955	1,913
1957	2,015
1958	1,959
1959	1,861
1960	1,680
1961	1,636
1962	1,536
1963/4	1,506
1964/5	1,463
1965/6	1,375
1966/7	1,272
1967/8	1,167
1968/9	1,083
1969/70	1,189
1970/1	1,126
1971/2	1,072
1972/3	991
1973/4	828
1974/5	923
1975/6	937

Sources: 1913-1945: W. Johnson, op cit.,
Tables 4.2, 4.7 and 4.16;
1950-1976: NCB (South Midlands)

The improved market position of Kent coal after 1970 eventually led to a programme of major capital investment at Snowdown which incorporated the construction of a coal preparation plant and underground drivage - but serious geological problems continued to cast doubt over the future of the colliery[224]. In 1973 the entire North District was closed and over 100 miners made redundant[225]. According to the NUM (Kent Area) the colliery had 'no future' unless coking coal could be successfully produced[226] and miners - whose apathy was reported to be 'very apparent'[227] - began to leave the pit in such numbers that it almost became necessary to halt coal production on one entire face in order that the underground development work could be properly manned[228]. Two brief excerpts from Mines Inspector's Reports give an indication of the mounting problems at the colliery:

> The Snowdown Mine had a particularly difficult year due to faulting and weak roof conditions resulting in two of the three advancing faces having to be re-developed to change their direction of advance[229].
>
> Snowdown Mine had another difficult year because of adverse geological conditions. It finished with only two longwall faces in production and development proceeding for a third[230].

The disruptive effect of these adverse conditions is, however, best illustrated in the remarkable fall in output and productivity between 1974/5 and 1975/6 (see Tables 3.31 and 3.33).

TABLE 3.33: PRODUCTIVITY AT SNOWDOWN COLLIERY 1952-1976

YEAR	OUTPUT PER MAN SHIFT (cwts.)
1952	22.0
1955	19.4
1960	27.0
1964/5	25.5
1969/70	23.7
1970/1	27.2
1971/2	21.9
1972/3	26.1
1973/4	25.5
1974/5	29.2
1975/6	13.1

Source: NCB (South Midlands)

The 1957-1976 period therefore had a unitary quality which distinguished the experience of miners employed at Snowdown from those working in more prosperous collieries elsewhere in Britain whose futures were assured following the alteration in market conditions after 1970; as such, these years of decline stood in stark contrast to the rapid growth and development which characterised the 1927-1939 period.

NOTES

1. S. POLLARD, The Development of the British Economy, 1914-1967, London, 1969, p. 110.

2. M.P. JACKSON, The Price of Coal, London, 1974, p. 5 and Table 1.

3. Ibid., p. 5; K. ALLEN, 'The Coal Industry', in G.L. REID, K. ALLEN and D.J. HARRIS, The Nationalised Fuel Industries, London, 1973, p. 9.

4. W.H.B. COURT, 'Problems of the British Coal Industry Between the Wars', Economic History Review, 15, 1945, p. 24.

5. K. ALLEN op. cit., p. 20.

6. G.C. ALLEN, British Industries and their Organisation, London, 1970, p. 41.

7. W.H.B. COURT, op. cit., p. 11. M.P. JACKSON, op. cit., provides further data on profits in the coal industry during this period, pp. 25-26, Table 3.

8. M.P. JACKSON, op. cit., p. 32.

9. N. BRANSON and M. HEINEMANN, Britain in the Nineteen Thirties, St Albans, 1973, p. 115.

10. For a critical account of social statistics see S. GLYNN and J. OXBORROW, Inter-War Britain: A Social and Economic History, London, 1976. For a comparative account of regional variations in social conditions see R. TITMUSS,

Poverty and Population: A Factual Study of Contemporary Social Waste, London, 1938.

11. N. BRANSON and M. HEINEMANN, op. cit., p. 156; see also, R.P. ARNOT, The Miners: Years of Struggle, London, 1953, p. 527; The Miners in Crisis and War, London, 1961, p. 41 for wage differences at a slightly earlier point in the inter-war period.

12. B.S. ROWNTREE, The Human Needs of Labour, London, 1937.

13. N. BRANSON and M.HEINEMANN, op. cit., pp. 227-228.

14. Ibid., p. 224. For further data from contemporary social enquiries into the related problems of unemployment, poverty, ill-health and sub-standard housing see J. STEVENSON, Social Conditions in Britain Between the Wars, Harmondsworth, 1977.

15. In both years the level was approximately 185 million tons, M.P. JACKSON, op. cit., p. 26; M. BULMER, 'Employment and Unemployment in Mining', in M. BULMER (ed.), Mining and Social Change, London, 1978, p. 152.

16. M.P. JACKSON, op. cit., p. 26; S. POLLARD, op. cit., p. 111.

17. W.H.B. COURT, op. cit.; R.P. ARNOT, (1961), op. cit., pp. 23-24.

18. M.P. JACKSON, op. cit., p. 37.

19. S. POLLARD, op. cit., p. 111.

20. W.H.B. COURT, op. cit., p. 20.

21. For an analysis of coal industry stoppages between 1926

and 1938 see H. WILSON, New Deal for Coal, London, 1945. Over the longer period between 1911 and 1945 miners represented on average 6.2% of the industrial population but they accounted for over 41.8% of the strikers. S. POLLARD, op. cit., p. 272.

22. R.P. ARNOT, (1961), op. cit., p. 33.

23. Ibid., pp. 368-369.

24. For a discussion of the Spencer Unions see A.R. GRIFFIN, The Miners of Nottinghamshire, 1914-1944, (Vol. 2), London, 1962; Mining in the East Midlands, 1550-1947, London, 1971.

25. Third Winter of Unemployment, 1923, p. 74, quoted in W.G. RUNCIMAN, Relative Deprivation and Social Justice, Harmondsworth, 1972, p. 76.

26. G. ORWELL, The Road to Wigan Pier, Harmondsworth, 1962, p. 80.

27. The Pilgrim Trust, Men Without Work, Cambridge, 1938, p. 75, quoted in W.G. RUNCIMAN, op. cit., pp. 77-78; W. PAYNTER, My Generation, London, 1972.

28. 291,000 from South Wales and 244,000 from Northumberland and Durham. Political and Economic Planning, Report on the British Coal Industry, London, 1936, p. 200.

29. Ibid., p. 200.

30. R.C. DAVISON, The Unemployed: Old Policies and New, London, 1929, pp. 260-261.

31. The Pilgrim Trust, op. cit., p. 78.

32. Ibid., p. 70 (footnote).

33. A.D.K. OWEN, 'The Social Consequences of Industrial Transference', Sociological Review, 29, 1937, p. 341.

34. Political and Economic Planning, op. cit., p. 200.

35. J.E. WILLIAMS, The Derbyshire Miners, London, 1962, p. 734.

36. For evidence of victimisation see Chapter 4.

37. For a description of housing conditions in County Durham pit villages see, for example, J. NEWSOM, Out of the Pit: A Challenge to the Comfortable, Oxford, 1936. Bulmer has sounded a cautionary note on the dangers of over-emphasising physical structure (at the expense of social structure) in M. BULMER, 'Change, Policy and Planning Since 1918', in M. BULMER (ed.) (1978), op. cit., pp. 167-201.

38. 15,000 of these were drafted in 1944 forming just over 25% of all entrants for that year. M.P. JACKSON, op. cit., p. 52.

39. Ibid., p. 67.

40. W.H.B. COURT, Coal, London, 1951, p. 391.

41. M.P. JACKSON, op. cit., p. 81; S. POLLARD, op. cit., p. 412.

42. S. POLLARD, op. cit., pp. 379, 413; W.W. HAYNES, Nationalisation in Practice: The British Coal Industry, London, 1953, p. 140.

43. See W.W. HAYNES, op. cit.; A. MOFFAT, My Life with the

Miners, London, 1965.

44. For a convincing picture of the conflicting demands exerted upon union branch officials after nationalisation see N. DENNIS, F. HENRIQUES and C. SLAUGHTER, Coal is Our Life, London, 1969.

45. See B.J. MCCORMICK, 'Strikes in the Yorkshire Coalfield, 1947-1963', Economic Studies, 4, 1969.

46. M.P. JACKSON, op. cit., p. 92.

47. Ibid., p. 102.

48. M. BULMER (1978), 'Employment and Unemployment', gives a comparative analysis of the primary fuels consumed in the UK, 1950-1976, (Table 11.3).

49. For works which make reference to these arrangements see J. SEWEL, Colliery Closure and Social Change: A Study of a South Wales Mining Valley, Cardiff, 1975; M. BULMER, 'Mining Redundancy: A Case Study of the Workings of the Redundancy Payments Act in the Durham Coalfield', Industrial Relations Journal, 2, 1971; Department of Employment and Productivity, Ryhope: A Pit Closes, A Study in Redeployment, London, 1970; R.C. TAYLOR, 'Implications of Migration from the Durham Coalfield: An Anthropological Study', unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Durham, 1966.

50. V. ALLEN, 'Ideology, Consciousness and Experience: The Case of the British Miners', paper presented to the BSA Conference on Advanced Industrial Societies, University of Kent, 1975, p. 21.

51. M. BULMER, (1978), 'Employment and Unemployment', p. 160.

52. NCB, Revised Plan for Coal, London, 1959.

53. Allen has calculated that 40% of those wage earners that left the industry between 1959 and 1971/72 did so without being directly threatened by closures or mergers, V. ALLEN, op. cit., p. 23.

54. 'Voluntary' wastage is defined by the NCB as that wastage which does not occur as a result of death, retirement, medical reasons, dismissals or redundancy. As such the distinction may be misleading: a considerable number of those that left the industry may have done so because of the impending threat of closure, redundancy or transfer and in this sense the term 'voluntary' may be considered euphemistic. The NCB usage is employed in the text with this important proviso.

55. NCB, Report and Accounts, London, 1967/68, para. 57, quoted in V. ALLEN, op. cit., p. 23.

56. M. BULMER, (1971) op. cit.; J. SEWEL, op. cit.; Department of Employment and Productivity, op. cit.; S.R. PARKER, C.G. THOMAS, N.D. ELLIS and W.E.J. McCARTHY, Effects of the Redundancy Payments Act, London, 1971.

57. R.C. TAYLOR, op. cit.; Department of Employment and Productivity, op. cit.

58. J. HUGHES and R. MOORE (eds.), A Special Case? Social Justice and the Miners, Harmondsworth, 1972, pp. 25-26.

59. Ibid., p. 129.

60. For details of the changing structure of wage payment in the British coal industry after nationalisation see K.J.W. ALEXANDER, 'Wages in Coal Mining Since Nationalisation', Oxford Economic Papers, 8, 1956; W.H. SALES and J.L. DAVIES, 'Introducing a New Wages Structure into Coalmining', Bulletin of the Oxford University Institute of Statistics, 19, 1957; H.A. CLEGG, The System of Industrial Relations in Great Britain, Oxford, 1970, pp. 326-329; D. GIDWELL, 'Wage Payment Systems in the British Coal Mining Industry: An Appraisal', Industrial Relations Journal, 8, 1977.

61. See Section (ii) b).

62. See H.A. CLEGG, op. cit.

63. The following pages deal with nechanisation at the coal-face only. These changes are sufficiently well documented to enable a detailed discussion but developments elsewhere underground and on the surface have been subject to rather less discussion. This should not detract from the impact of changes elsewhere at the colliery. Lord Robens wrote:

> Coal coming off a face at this rate often also means a complete re-organisation of the haulage system. Mechanising the industry was not just a matter of designing face machinery and putting it to work. The fact of mechanisation affected the whole organisation of the pit right up to, and including, the washery and preparation plants.

A. ROBENS, Ten Year Stint, London, 1972, p. 102. Note also that N. DENNIS et al., op. cit., assert that the greatest changes in the work of West Yorkshire miners occurred in haulage underground since geological conditions

had prevented the application of modern cutting and loading techniques at the face.

64. S. POLLARD, op. cit., pp. 413-414; M.P. JACKSON, op. cit., p. 111; J. HUGHES and R. MOORE, op. cit., p. 126.

65. It should be stressed that this discussion presents a simplified picture of the basic characteristics of three major modes of coal-face production. As Goldthorpe has wisely pointed out in his discussion, 'there were, and are, many transitional systems and many variations on the technical themes to be outlined'. J.H. GOLDTHORPE, 'Technical Organisation as a Factor in Supervisor-Worker Conflict', British Journal of Sociology, 10, 1959, p. 214. For one such variation see Section (ii).

66. For a glossary of these and other mining terms, see Appendix IV.

67. The term used by E.L. TRIST and K.W. BAMFORTH, 'Some Social and Psychological Consequences of the Longwall Method of Coal-Getting', Human Relations, 4, 1951.

68. Ibid., p. 9.

69. Ibid.

70. Ministry of Fuel and Power, Statistical Digest, London, 1963.

71. See E.L. TRIST and K.W. BAMFORTH, op. cit.; E.L. TRIST, G.W. HIGGIN, H. MURRAY and A.B. POLLOCK, Organisational Choice, London, 1963; J.H. GOLDTHORPE, op. cit.; D. DOUGLASS, 'The Durham Pitman', in R. SAMUEL (ed.) Miners

Quarrymen and Saltworkers, London, 1977.

72. J.H. GOLDTHORPE, op. cit., p. 218.

73. N. BRANSON and M. HEINEMANN, op. cit., p. 118.

74. J. HUGHES and R. MOORE, op. cit., p. 73.

75. Self-advancing supports can, alone, cut the manning of face teams by over 50%.

76. For a more detailed discussion of these changes see Chapter 6, Section (i).

77. See NCB, Statistical Tables, London, 1969/70.

78. See V. ALLEN, op. cit.; J. HUGHES and R. MOORE (eds.) op. cit.; M.P. JACKSON, op. cit., and the comments of F. Henriques in the Introduction to the Second Edition of Coal is Our Life, op. cit.

79. For a discussion of the declining pattern of strike activity in mining see V. ALLEN, op. cit.; M. SILVER, 'Recent British Strike Trends: A Factual Analysis', British Journal of Industrial Relations, 11, 1973.

80. This was the first dispute to involve an entire area since 1955 when, once again, the Yorkshire mineworkers were involved. See C. SLAUGHTER, 'The Strike of the Yorkshire Mineworkers in May 1955', Sociological Review, 6, 1958, pp. 241-259.

81. Although miners received increases on an unprecedented scale the rapid inflation of these years severely reduced the real rise in earnings. The Index of Retail Prices rose in the following manner (January 1974: 100): 1966:

60.7; 1970: 73.1; 1974: 108.5; 1975: 134.8; 1976: 157.1; 1977: 182.0. Between January 1974 and December 1976 the index rose from 100.0 to 168.0. Figures drawn from the Department of Employment Gazette.

82. M.P. JACKSON, op. cit., p. 417. The price of crude oil trebled between October 1973 and June 1974. Fuel oil prices, $2\frac{1}{2}$p per therm at the beginning of 1973 were 6-7p a therm by mid-1974. By comparison coal delivered to power stations cost on average $4\frac{1}{2}$p per therm 1974/75. NCB, Plan for Coal, London, 1974, pp. 6-7. For further details see K. ALLEN, op. cit.

83. NCB, Plan for Coal, London, 1974, pp. 3-13.

84. Ibid., pp. 11, 15.

85. There were already strong rumours in 1976 that an area or pit-based productivity scheme might be introduced.

86. NCB (Kent), 'Kent Coalfield', (undated typescript); G.V. LOVETT, 'The Development of the Kent Coalfield', Colliery Guardian, December 1975.

87. J. SHAW, 'Problems and Progress of Kent Coalfield', Iron and Coal Trades Review, 165, 1952, p. 1117.

88. Ibid., p. 1117.

89. With the exception of Shakespeare Colliery which produced 1,000 tons 1911-1912. W. JOHNSON, 'The Development of the Kent Coalfield, 1896-1946', unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Kent, 1972, p. 185.

90. Thanet Times (TT), 4 November 1908. The article went under the heading, 'Coal in Kent - Development of a gigantic enterprise'.

91. Kent Coal Concessions Limited, Periodical Circular, 5, 1, February 1913, p. 20.

92. For details of entrepreneurial activity during this period see W. JOHNSON, op. cit., Chapter 2.

93. Ministry of Fuel and Power, Regional Survey of the Coalfields: Kent, London, 1945; NCB, Coal in Kent, London, 1974.

94. W. JOHNSON, op. cit., pp. 206-225.

95. Ibid., p. 101.

96. Ibid., pp. 119-120. The words are drawn from a memo from Lord Cowdray, of S. Pearson and Son Limited, in May 1922.

97. Ibid., pp. 126, 134-143. The negotiation of this loan was opposed by a number of MPs who felt that unemployment would increase in the traditional mining areas if the government encouraged another coalfield to compete for markets which were already shrinking.

98. W. JOHNSON, op. cit., p. 414.

99. Abercrombie was Professor at the University of Liverpool and a distinguished practitioner.

100. P. ABERCROMBIE and J. ARCHIBALD, East Kent Regional Planning Scheme: Preliminary Survey , Liverpool, 1925, pp. 33-34, 38.

101. Ibid., p. 38.

102. Ibid., p. 32.

103. Ibid., p. 69. 'Consequential population' constituted those employees and their families dependent upon industries created as a result of the coal and steel expansion.

104. P. ABERCROMBIE and J. ARCHIBALD, East Kent Regional Planning Scheme: Final Report, Canterbury, 1928, pp. 47-48.

105. W. JOHNSON, op. cit., pp. 410-411.

106. Ibid., p. 421.

107. Ministry of Fuel and Power (1945), op. cit.

108. Ibid. Each of these settlements was between one quarter mile and three miles from the pitheads.

109. V. HUGHES, 'A Social Survey of the East Kent Coalfield', unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of London, 1934, pp. 10-11.

110. Kent Coal Owners' Association (KCOA) Claim submitted to Central Valuation Board, Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946. (2 Vols). (KCOA Claim), p. 6. The 1926 Mining Industry Act restricted the employment of workers over age 18 to men regularly employed in the industry before April 1926. See W. JOHNSON, op. cit., p. 236. For further details of the legislation see Political and Economic Planning, op. cit., Chapter 2.

111. See Chapter 4.

112. R. JOB, The Kent Coalfield, (Typescript) 1966, p. 27. Job was a Ruskin College student from the Kent Coalfield.

113. KCOA Claim, p. 6.

114. See Chapter 4.

115. For the account of one 'Bevin boy' who worked at Snowdown Colliery see N. HARRISON, Once a Miner, London, 1954.

116. KCOA Claim, pp. 6, 12-14. According to this source a large number of miners' families moved to South Wales following the collapse of France in 1940. Many of the miners subsequently followed. Betteshanger subsequently lost 436 men during the six weeks following the occupation of France from an original labour force of 2,226. Towards the end of 1940 a complete closure of the coalfield was only averted by the intervention of the Secretary for Mines.

117. W. JOHNSON, op. cit., p. 201.

118. Ibid., p. 212.

119. Ibid., p. 198.

120. Ministry of Fuel and Power (1945), op. cit.; J. SHAW, op. cit., p. 1120.

121. J. SHAW, op. cit., p. 1118.

122. Ibid., pp. 1118-1121.

123. Ibid., p. 1118.

124. The exception was Tilmanstone Colliery which retained tub 'tramming' until 1950 and 'pillar and stall' workings until 1960. W. JOHNSON, op. cit., p. 199. See also H. FAIRCLOUGH, 'Tilmanstone Colliery in Retrospect', Colliery Guardian, 215, August, 1967.

125. E.L. TRIST and K.W. BAMFORTH, op. cit.

126. V. HUGHES, op. cit., p. 88; W. JOHNSON, op. cit., pp. 267, 394. Coalwinding on five or six days in other coalfields was by no means a guarantee that every employed man had the opportunity to work five or six shifts.

127. The figure is based upon the June and December level of unemployment as reported in the Ministry of Labour Gazette, 1927-1939. V. HUGHES, op. cit., also makes mention of the low levels of local unemployment amongst Kent miners.

128. W. JOHNSON, op. cit., pp. 394-395.

129. In 1945 the amount of water pumped per minute from each colliery was as follows: Betteshanger 600 gallons; Snowdown 350 gallons; Chislet 500 gallons; Tilmanstone 2,000 gallons. Ministry of Fuel and Power (1945) op. cit., p. 29. In 1958 4.9 tons of water were pumped for every saleable ton of coal. This represented a higher pumping burden than any other coalfield. W. JOHNSON, op. cit., p. 192.

130. At this time, dry bulb temperatures of 85 degrees at the face and a humidity of 80 degrees were common at Snowdown. Dermatitis was one of the most frequently contracted skin diseases. See W. JOHNSON, op. cit., p. 235; R. JOB, op. cit., p. 27. The comments of Snowdown miners reproduced in Chapter 4 are also instructive.

131. W. JOHNSON, op. cit., p. 407. In relative terms the rate of pneumoconiosis in Kent declined rapidly during the post-

war period. Between 1959 and 1963 the incidence of the disease amongst 3,875 miners x-rayed in Kent was 15.5%. This rate was second only to South Wales (24.9%) and above the national average (12.1%). By 1969/73 the rate was down to 9.8% compared to the national figure of 9.9%. This possibly suggests that the incidence of the disease declined as those older members of the workforce retired and their sons - who had not worked in other coalfields - took their place. Health and Safety Executive, Digest of Pneumoconiosis Statistics 1975, London, 1977, Table 11.

132. W. JOHNSON, op. cit., pp. 403-409.

133. Ibid., p. 406.

134. Ibid., pp. 360-361. The original title was Kent Miners' Association - this was changed to Kent Mine Workers' Association in 1921.

135. Ibid., p. 358. This was a remark made by Edwards to the Royal Commission on Safety in Coalmines, 1936-1938, Minutes of Evidence, Vol. 1., p. 207.

136. See Table 5.1.

137. The rate was lowered to 6d per week that year. W. JOHNSON, op. cit., pp. 369-371.

138. Ibid., pp. 272-273. £950 was invested in Government War Loans 1917-1919 and £20 in Daily Herald 'debenture' bonds 1921-1923.

139. See Chapters 4 and 5.

140. W. JOHNSON, op. cit., p. 380.

141. Ibid., p. 384.

142. Ibid., pp. 391-392, 249-250.

143. Ibid., p. 390.

144. Ibid., pp. 392-393.

145. NCB, Plan for Coal, London, 1950, p. 9.

146. Major markets for Kent coal on the eve of the First War were: local gas and electricity undertakings; South East and Chatham Railway; Kent cement and paper industries. W. JOHNSON, op. cit. In 1945 they were: local industries (cement and paper) 40%; electricity 25%; railways 20%; gas 7%; London market 8%. Ministry of Fuel and Power, (1945) op. cit.

147. A. ROBENS, op. cit., pp. 84-85.

148. For further details on the Chislet closure see Chapter 6, Section (i).

149. NCB, (1959), Revised Plan.

150. National Union of Mineworkers (Kent Area) (NUM(KA)), Minutes, 17 January 1959.

151. Ibid., 17 January 1959; 18 March 1960.

152. For details of the threat at Tilmanstone see Kentish Gazette (KG), 5 January 1967, 14 June 1968, 17 January 1969; Kent Messenger (KM), 26 April 1968, 14 June 1968; Kentish Express (KE), 14 June 1968, 10 January 1969.

153. Already by 1964 the possibility of closure was 'no surprise to the four Kent pits. They have lived under such a threat for some years'. KG, 4 September 1964. See also

5 April 1968, 27 November 1968, 27 December 1968; KM, 10 May 1967. In 1969 Jack Dunn, General Secretary, NUM (KA), noted that 'Kent was a very small coalfield and they must remember what had happened to similar small coalfields - it must be very financially attractive to the Board to close the whole coalfield'. NUM (KA) Minutes, 9 May 1969.

154. For details of the changeover to the coke market and the subsequent capital investment in Kent see NCB, Report and Accounts, London, 1970/71, para. 72; 1971/72, para. 127; 1972/73, para. 49; Statistical Tables, 1971/72, Table 9. Also NCB, Coal in Kent, London, 1972; Colliery Guardian, September 1970.

155. The first such profit since 1953.

156. NCB, Report and Accounts, London, 1972/73, para. 49.

157. Ibid., 1973/74, para. 66.

158. KE, 14 January 1972; KM, 1 February 1974.

159. NUM (KA) Minutes, 17 November 1972. See also 31 August, 17 October, 13 November 1972.

160. J. SHAW, op. cit., p. 1119.

161. At a NUM (KA) Conference held on 27 October 1959 it was made clear that virtually the entire Kent output was still manually loaded.

162. J. HUGHES and R. MOORE, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

163. Pay Board, Special Report: Relative Pay of Mineworkers, Cmnd. 5567, London, 1974, p. 18.

164. See Table 3.8.

165. W.H. SCOTT, E. MUMFORD, I.C. McGIVERING and J.M. KIRBY, Coal and Conflict, Liverpool, 1963, p. 40. For further discussion of the distinction between 'organised' and 'unorganised' conflict see R. HYMAN, Strikes, London, 1972.

166. K.G.J.C. KNOWLES, Strikes: A Study in Industrial Conflict, Oxford, 1952.

167. W.H. SCOTT et al., op. cit.

168. L.J. HANDY, 'Absenteeism and Attendance in the British Coal Mining Industry: An Examination of Post War Trends', British Journal of Industrial Relations, 6, 1968.

169. 'Militant' is used here to describe a union which took an actively aggressive and defiant line on several important issues from the late fifties onwards. It is not - as is the case in much popular usage - a synonym for 'left wing'. However it should be said that the NUM (KA) was Communist led during this period.

170. NUM(KA) Minutes, 2 April 1958; 26 January 1959.

171. At the request of the union 140 men were made redundant on a 'last in - first out' basis. 55 were 15-17 years; 46 were 18-21 and 39 were over 21. Of these 44 were offered employment again at Betteshanger by March 1960 (16 refused). NUM(KA) Minutes, 18 March 1960. See also 31 December 1959, 22 January, 1-2 February, 29 February, 12 March and 13 June 1960. According to local union leaders the 7 day sit-in was the first such strike in Britain against pit closures.

172. NUM(KA) Government Fuel Policy: Kent Coalfield, 1967.

173. NUM, Annual Conference, 1968, p. 193, Resolution 30. The resolution conceded the necessity of closure if seams were totally exhausted.

174. The stance taken by Lawrence Daly, Secretary (Scottish Area) NUM, in The Miners and the Nation NUM(SA), 1968, represented a notable exception.

175. See Chapter 6, Section (i).

176. Edelstein and Warner refer to the joint nominations of these areas in the three union elections 1959-60 and their common support for L. Daly in the 1968 election for the position of National Secretary. See J.D. EDELSTEIN and M. WARNER, Comparative Union Democracy, London, 1975, Chapter 8.

177. See British Labour Statistics Historical Abstract, 1886-1968, London, 1968, Table 197.

178. These figures were calculated from data given in NCB, Statistical Tables.

179. Unidentified newspaper, 17 April 1970. (Housed in 'Coal' files at the Beaney Institute and Library, Canterbury.)

180. G.D.H. COLE and R. POSTGATE, The Common People, 1746-1946, London, 1968, p. 28.

181. KG, 23 January 1926. The quote is from A Saunter through Kent with Pen and Pencil, 8, by Charles Igglesden.

182. These estimates are based upon information given in the Census of England and Wales: Industry and Occupation Tables, 1931.

183. Dover Express (DE), 20 February 1931.

184. The next most popular category was that of 'shop assistants' which accounted for 12% (17/139). 75 boys were still unemployed at the time of the survey. V. HUGHES, op. cit., Table 33.

185. Census of England and Wales: Industry and Occupation Tables, 1931.

186. Ministry of Fuel and Power, (1945), op. cit.

187. Census of England and Wales: Industry and Occupation Tables, 1951.

188. Kent County Council (KCC), Kent Development Plan, Report on the Survey and Analysis: Sample Survey of Households, East Kent, Part 4, Vol. 4, Maidstone, 1966.

189. Ibid., pp. 1-2.

190. South East Economic Planning Council (SEEPC), South East Kent Study, 1961, p. 1.

191. Ibid., Table B4.

192. Ibid., p. 3.

193. Ibid., p. 47.

194. KCC, Kent County Structure Plan, Aspect Study Report on Employment, 2B, June 1975, p. 67.

195. Ibid., p. 35.

196. For an exploration of these problems see SEEPC, South East Kent Study, 1961, p. 1.

197. On the criteria of population size and shop facilities Aylesham was officially classified as a 'village' in the Kent County Structure Plan.

198. Sir Hugh Bell, Sir Clarendon G. Hyde and Sir Arthur Dorman were directors of Pearson and Dorman Long. Bell and Dorman were also members of the East Kent Development Committee as were Colonel Cornwallis and the Chairman, Viscount Milner. Guy Burgess worked with Abercrombie in the design of Aylesham.

199. Ianto Hill was the first Chairman of Aylesham Parish Council and was actively involved in local affairs for many years afterwards. Billy Newman was President of the KMWA 1924-1929, 1938-39.

200. Of these facilities those catering for the 'spiritual' needs of the population were by far the quickest to establish themselves. By the time that Hughes undertook her survey in 1932 there were already two clubs and a pub in the village and four religions were represented (Roman Catholic, Church of England, Baptist and Miners' Mission). The cinema opened in 1935.

201. This was the population of Aylesham as reported in the KG, 27 May 1977.

202. P. ABERCROMBIE and J. ARCHIBALD, (1928), op. cit., pp. 50-52.

203. W. JOHNSON, op. cit., pp. 418-421.

204. DE, 24 February 1928.

205. W. JOHNSON, op. cit., pp. 420-421. 552 were built by Aylesham Tenants Limited, and 104 by a private trust.

206. According to P. ABERCROMBIE and J. ARCHIBALD, (1925), op. cit., p. 34.

207. DE, 21 May 1926, 30 August 1929, 14 January, 21 January and 28 January 1938.

208. V. HUGHES, op. cit., p. 200.

209. For an illuminating general discussion of this theme see M. BULMER, (1978) 'Change, Policy and Planning'.

210. N. DENNIS et al., op. cit., p. 12.

211. The chances of miners' sons finding work outside the colliery were 'very slight' according to V. HUGHES, op. cit., pp. 126-127.

212. See Chapter 6, Section (ii).

213. W. JOHNSON, op. cit., pp. 60-61, 87-88, 102, 129.

214. DE, 21 January 1927, 3 February 1928, 12 July 1929, 11 December 1931.

215. The average output per mine in Kent in 1934 was 508,000 tons and this outstripped all other districts by a wide margin. (The next highest was 311,000 tons in Nottinghamshire; the British average was 104,000). With over 2,000 men employed during the mid-thirties the colliery was also a sizeable employer. To a lesser extent Snowdown and the other Kent collieries retained this distinctly large scale during the post-war period. For comparative data see, for example, NCB, Report of the

Advisory Committee on Organisation, (The 'Fleck Report'), London, 1955.

216. At Snowdown in the late fifties approximately 400,000 tons of water were pumped from the Millyard seam during the course of the year. W. JOHNSON, op. cit., p. 235. These conditions were used in explanation of low levels of production and high levels of absenteeism during the war. Snowdown Colliery Pit Production Committee, 'Investigation into the Causes for Decrease in Tonnage per Man with some Suggestions for Remedying Same', (Typescript dated 2 August 1944).

217. W. JOHNSON, op. cit., p. 229; N. HARRISON, op. cit., p. 64.

218. DE, 16 December 1938; NUM(KA), File, 'Machine Cut' Snowdown Colliery, 1949-1950.

219. KCOA Claim, p. 24.

220. According to data provided: NCB (South Midlands).

221. NCB, Coal in Kent, London, 1974.

222. See NCB Report and Accounts, London, 1947, p. 115.

223. NUM (KA), Minutes, 6 May 1969.

224. See above, Section (ii) b).

225. See W. REES, 'A Study of the Law and Practice of Redundancy Relating to British Coal Mineworkers', Paper for SSRC Centre for Socio-Legal Studies, Oxford Conference, 1976.

226. NUM (KA), Minutes, 1 June 1973.

227. Ibid., 18 July 1973.

228. Ibid., 12 June, 28 August, 27 November 1973.

229. Health and Safety Executive, Reports of H.M.Inspectors of Mines and Quarries for 1975, Southern District, 1976, p. 39.

230. Health and Safety Executive, Mines and Quarries, 1976, Southern District, Report, 1977, p. 36.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE COLLIERY EXPANDS: ASPECTS OF THE MIGRATION PROCESS

Introduction

The Kent Coalfield was not only the newest in Britain, it was also the most remote from the existing mining areas. The workings in Warwickshire, approximately 140 miles away, represented the nearest area of developed coalmining activity; coalfields in the north of France were, in fact, closer at hand. Despite this isolation the Kent collieries were manned not by local workers but predominantly by migrants from all over Britain. This chapter describes several facets of the process of migration by answering a series of (related) questions. Who went to Kent? How and why did they go? And, significantly, why did a large number subsequently leave? The answers give an indication of the selective influences which determined those who entered (and left) Snowdown Colliery and Aylesham village between 1927 and 1939; the implications of this movement are further drawn out in the following chapter.

(i) A framework for the analysis of migration

There are various types of migration and these have been studied from a number of perspectives. Thus social scientists have examined, for example, the movement of human population between nations, rural and urban areas, slums and new towns in order to speculate about 'the family', 'class', 'race relations', 'community' and so on[1]. Despite this diversity of interest and approach the migration process is commonly broken down into three stages so that the migrant is seen prior to departure, in transit and at his destination. In a memorandum published in 1938 Thomas recommended that:

> ...the behaviour of migrants must be observed before and after migration; the migrants' "own stories" must be obtained; the environmental setting and the conditions of life in the communities of origin and destination must be described[2].

More recently Rex Taylor fruitfully applied this approach in his study of migrant mining families in the early 1960s[3]. Using three 'study frameworks' (West Durham mining villages, the NCB transfer scheme and the receiving areas) Taylor set out to discover who migrated and why and to link this to subsequent patterns of adjustment and assimilation. Accordingly migrants were distinguished from non-migrants:

> ...because they aspired to a way of life which was both materially richer and more secure, and were able to realise such aspirations, because of an overall dislocation in their relationships with primary and secondary groups in the village[4].

The migrants themselves were differentiated by their motives and the largest category - the 'resultant' migrants - left reluctantly, satisfied as they were but for the threat of redundancy. As such their decision to move was characteristically hurried, less well informed and ultimately more likely to be mistaken (over 80 per cent of those who failed to settle were 'resultant' migrants). Whilst no claim is made here to present findings as comprehensive as those in the Durham study the analytical framework employed is derived from Taylor's work in the belief that although migration to the Kent Coalfield occurred in rather different circumstances a number of parallels may be fruitfully drawn.

(ii) <u>The migrants: their background and characteristics</u>

> You had people from Wales, people from Scotland, people from Ireland, Durham, Yorkshire, Cumberland, even down in the West Country...so cosmopolitan. No matter where you went there was somebody of a different language.
>
> Sam Lawrence

The Kent Coalfield drew men from the length and breadth of the British Isles. Many came from the economically depressed areas which were primarily dependent upon the declining traditional industries, and in particular, of course, coalmining. Men from literally every coalfield in Britain began to move to Kent following the discoveries around the turn of the century so that by 1932 Eddie Lawther, President of the KMWA, was able to

assure delegates at the opening of the MFGB Annual Conference in Folkestone that 'no matter where you come from, there will be some here from your very own village or district'[5].

It is difficult to estimate the extent to which certain areas or coalfields were better represented than others. A PEP report noted that, 'thousands of men from South Wales and Durham have moved to South Yorkshire and Kent'[6] and much later Branson and Heinemann pointed out that in the 'new, expanding Kent Coalfield, one pit was manned mainly by immigrants from Scotland, another from Wales'[7]. To progress beyond these approximations is a hard task. The popularity of the coalfield elsewhere varied over time and the demand for different types of labour altered as the collieries developed. The work involved, for example, in making a bore hole or sinking a colliery shaft differed significantly from the tasks associated with winning coal from the face and accordingly men with differing skills were required. The limitations of both written and oral evidence further reduce the possibility of an accurate geographical breakdown of migrants' origins. The data provided by the Industrial Transference Board and the Commissioner for the Special Areas focused upon where labour came from rather than where it went and was limited to certain areas and sections of the work-force which transferred 'officially'[8]. On the other hand estimates given by men who were interviewed varied significantly and were biased by the individuals' area of origin; men from Bolton, for example, tending to emphasize Lancastrians, those from Barnsley stressing Yorkshiremen and so

on. Even if a precise picture of the regional pattern of migration were possible this would not have adequately described the origins of the Kent labour force at any one particular time because large numbers of migrants failed to settle in the coalfield and eventually returned home.

Despite these limitations it is possible to make a number of observations which throw some light on the broad trends of migration between the turn of the century and the close of the Second War. Between 1900 and 1920 the boring and sinking operations were conducted by experienced contract gangs, many of whom were Irish[9]. On completion of their work at a particular site these gangs typically moved to another prospective colliery site either in Kent or elsewhere. If, during the course of their operations, additional unskilled labour was required then this was normally drawn from the pool of local agricultural labourers or school leavers[10]. A locally born man who was thus employed reflected:

> Well, you needn't be experienced, not for sinking. It was just hard work. No, they'd set anybody on for sinking...When they'd finished sinking the sinkers went back with this firm - they'd be sinking somewhere else, see.
>
> Arthur Fox

Where coal measures were successfully opened out, as at Snowdown, Tilmanstone and Chislet, experienced miners were recruited from the North of England, the Midlands and, particularly during the First War, from Bristol and Somerset[11].

After 1920 a more detailed picture of migrants' geographical origins may be drawn on the basis of two articles written by Brinley Thomas in the 1930s[12]. Each year between 1920 and 1932 Employment Exchanges collected the unemployment books of every insured person and deposited them at the Ministry of Labour Record Office. Each book bore the name of the Employment Exchange at which it was originally issued. Thomas analysed books from exchanges in the South East noting the number of 'foreign' books whose owners, sometime between 1920 and 1932, must have crossed the border. He then repeated the exercise in 1937, taking the story up to 1936. In the course of the two articles Thomas gave more specific information concerning regions within the South East; in particular, he quoted data for the Kent Coalfield which was based upon books exchanged at the Dover and Canterbury Employment Exchanges. The findings are summarised in Table 4.1 below.

TABLE 4.1: ORIGIN OF MIGRANTS, KENT COALFIELD 1920-1936

DIVISION OF ORIGIN	1920-1932		1920-1936	
	NO.	%AGE	NO.	%AGE
South West	228	8	207	4
Midlands	515	18	674	13
North East	989	34	2,075	40
North West	238	8	415	8
Scotland	183	6	415	8
Wales	720	25	1,348	26
N. Ireland	3	-	-	-
TOTAL	2,876	100	5,134	100

Source: B. Thomas, op. cit., (1934) p. 233; (1937) p. 334

The predominance of men from the North East and South Wales is

clear: over the 16 year period they accounted for no less than two-thirds of the Kent immigrants. Beyond this the significant number of men from coalfields in the Midlands is worthy of note, particularly in the first 12 year period. It is true that these figures tell us nothing about the 2,400 men already in the Kent Coalfield by 1920, nor do they recognise the considerable number that came and left within the period under review. However, the indication of relative numbers which they provide during the critical period of expansion between 1927 and 1935 is certainly of value, particularly as they seem to fit in with what is known of the scale of the economic depression and outward migration from the North East and South Wales and also with the recruitment drives of the colliery companies in Kent[13]. These were centred upon Wales in 1927, the Midlands in 1928 and all coal districts but for Durham in 1929[14].

The later period, between 1936 and 1945, was marked by a considerable decline in the size of the labour force caused by an accelerating drift away from Kent and a reduction in the number of men moving into the area. In answer to a question concerning transference to the Kent Coalfield, the Minister of Labour, Ernest Brown, remarked in the Commons:

> From February, 1935, which is the earliest date for which statistics are available, to January, 1939, the number of men transferred under the Industrial Transference Scheme from the depressed areas to the Kent Coalfield was 1,136, but the statistics do not show how many of these men came from the Special Areas[15].

For what amounted to almost a four year period this figure was low indeed, and certainly insufficient to outweigh movement out of the coalfield - a trend encouraged by the outbreak of hostilities and the subsequent fall of France in May 1940[16]. The situation was alleviated to some extent through an appeal by the Secretary of the Mines Department for miners in South Wales to go to Kent[17]; by the re-introduction of legislative measures which tied miners to the industry (in May 1941)[18]; and by the recruitment of 'Bevin boys' after the introduction of conscription for the mines (in December 1943)[19]. These official measures were supported, to a limited degree, by the voluntary return to the area towards the end of the war of miners and their families who had left the coalfield prior to and during the war. This was reflected locally at Aylesham, for example, in the changing occupancy rates of various streets in the village:

> See that street there - that's Milner Crescent there, and during the war there wasn't a house full up in there...we came back from the pictures one night...and we counted 25 houses empty in that one street...but (later) people started flocking back.
>
> Stan Barnett

Despite these discernible trends the essential <u>unevenness</u> of the pattern of migration, in both historical and geographical terms, cannot be denied. The flow of men to the coalfield was not at a constant rate over the years; rather, there were sporadic bursts at particular times. One man, recalling two

spells of employment at one colliery noted that:

> Most of 'em at Tilmanstone came from Staffordshire them days (c.1913), Staffs and Nottingham way...there was also quite a few men from Kent working there...I went back to Tilmanstone (in 1921) and they were practically all Somerset men.
>
> Arthur Fox

Similarly, men were not drawn equally from all towns and villages within a depressed area; instead certain settlements contributed far more than others. Union officials and local reporters drew attention at particular times to 'large numbers', or 'crowds' of men arriving 'en masse' from certain regions of the country. Thus many miners apparently came to Kent from Lancashire late in 1927; from South Wales in 1929; from Scotland in May 1935 and from Barnsley in August of the same year[20]. The first hand evidence of miners gives insight into the popularity of migration to Kent in certain specific localities:

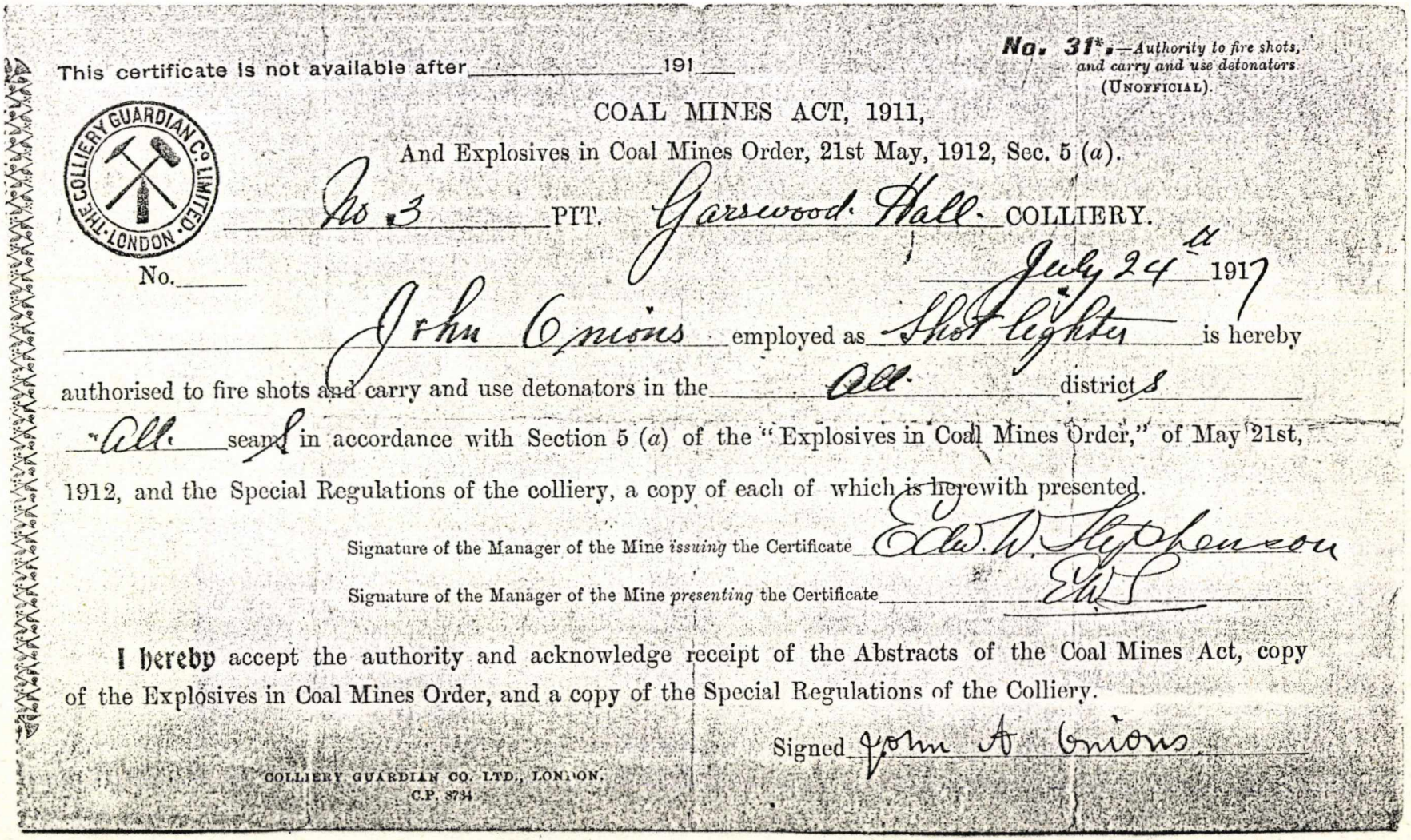
> And when I got there (the labour exchange) I just had to face this one chap, and he said ..."Well, we have an opportunity for you where there are houses to live in, and very nice I believe, in the Garden of England"...And there was half a dozen blokes waiting to go in and see him, and they were all going to be sent to Snowdown.
>
> Ernie Wright

> The Labour Exchange was advertising for men for Snowdown Colliery in Kent. So being adventurous I rounded up a few of my friends to come with me.
>
> Harold Bishop

> So Dad, with others from Askern, moved to the Kent collieries in 1926...a lot of men came down to Kent from Askern and settled in the four pits in those days.
>
> Tom Chambers

> There were quite a few come from round our road...they come down here, and there were quite a few families from the next village to me, Tibshelf, and that's how we got to know.
>
> Doug Peterson

To a considerable extent this survey of the geographical origins of the men who were working in Kent sheds light also upon occupational background. Undoubtedly, the majority were experienced miners from the established coalfields; indeed, from 1926 onwards the Kent coalowners were obliged to recruit only from this section of the working population[21]. This constraint, in fact, coincided with an era of rapid development when the owners were forced, in any case, to look elsewhere for experienced faceworkers and underground technicians[22]. The collieries had reached the stage where a high proportion of men were engaged in directly productive underground work and a small proportion were employed in the less skilled, ancillary tasks on the pit top. Table 4.2 demonstrates the increasing trend of labour deployment underground at Snowdown as the colliery was opened out.



This certificate is not available after _____ 191__

No. 31*.—*Authority to fire shots, and carry and use detonators* (UNOFFICIAL).

THE COLLIERY GUARDIAN Co. LIMITED · LONDON ·

No.____

COAL MINES ACT, 1911,

And Explosives in Coal Mines Order, 21st May, 1912, Sec. 5 (*a*).

No 3 PIT. Garswood Hall COLLIERY.

July 24th 1917

John Onions employed as Shot lighter is hereby authorised to fire shots and carry and use detonators in the All district in All seam in accordance with Section 5 (*a*) of the "Explosives in Coal Mines Order," of May 21st, 1912, and the Special Regulations of the colliery, a copy of each of which is herewith presented.

Signature of the Manager of the Mine *issuing* the Certificate Edw. W. Stephenson

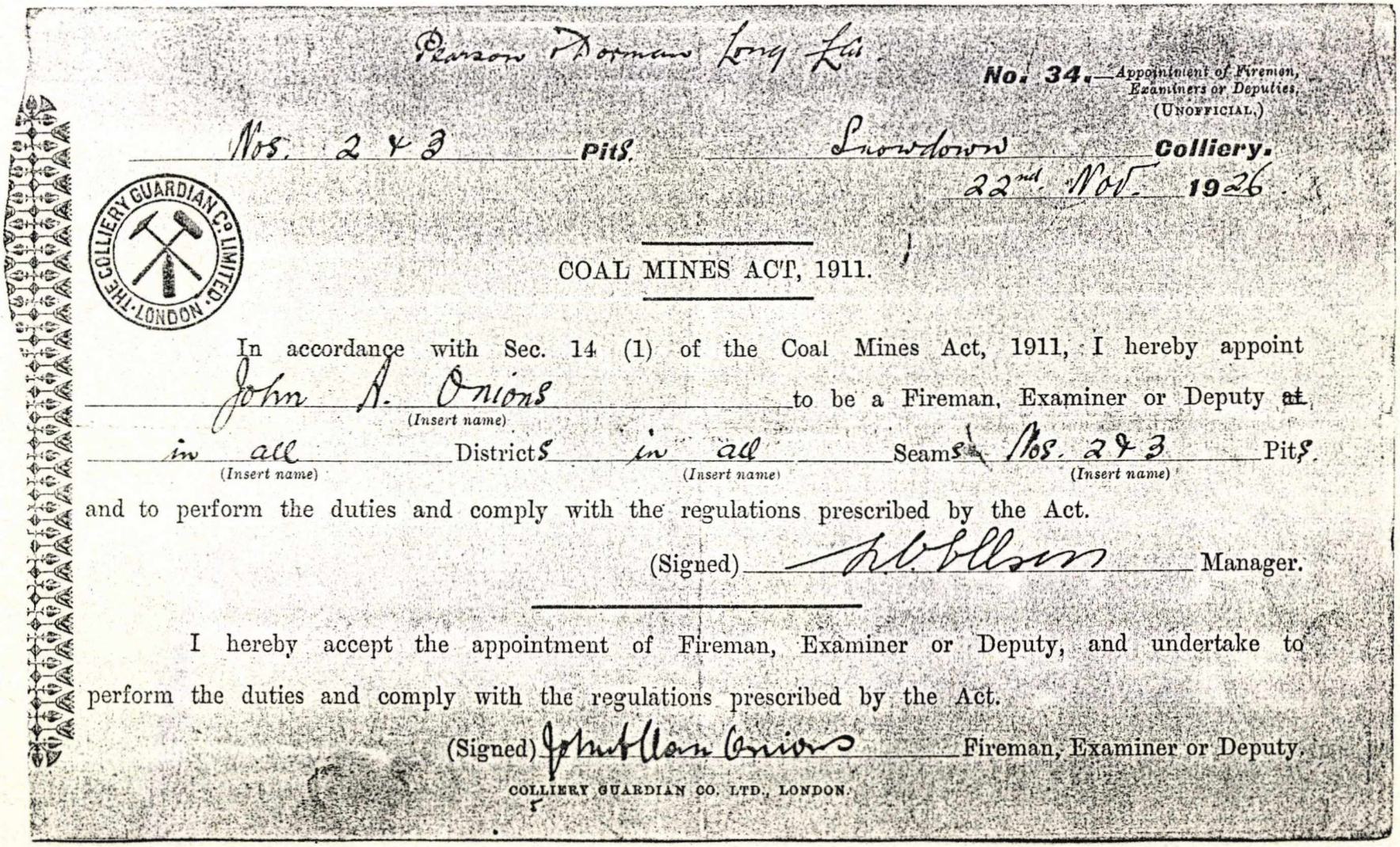
Signature of the Manager of the Mine *presenting* the Certificate Edw S

I hereby accept the authority and acknowledge receipt of the Abstracts of the Coal Mines Act, copy of the Explosives in Coal Mines Order, and a copy of the Special Regulations of the Colliery.

Signed John A Onions

COLLIERY GUARDIAN CO. LTD., LONDON.
C.P. 8734

FIGURE 1 : THE TRANSFER OF SKILLED LABOUR (I)
JOHN ONIONS' SHOTLIGHTER CERTIFICATE,
GARSWOOD HALL COLLIERY, 1917.



Pearson Dorman Long Ltd.

No. 34.—Appointment of Firemen, Examiners or Deputies. (Unofficial.)

Nos. 2 & 3 Pits. Snowdown Colliery.

22nd Nov. 1926.

THE COLLIERY GUARDIAN Co. LIMITED · LONDON ·

COAL MINES ACT, 1911.

In accordance with Sec. 14 (1) of the Coal Mines Act, 1911, I hereby appoint John A. Onions (Insert name) to be a Fireman, Examiner or Deputy ~~at~~ in all (Insert name) Districts in all (Insert name) Seams Nos. 2 & 3 (Insert name) Pits, and to perform the duties and comply with the regulations prescribed by the Act.

(Signed) R. Ellison Manager.

I hereby accept the appointment of Fireman, Examiner or Deputy, and undertake to perform the duties and comply with the regulations prescribed by the Act.

(Signed) John Allen Onions Fireman, Examiner or Deputy.

COLLIERY GUARDIAN CO. LTD., LONDON.

5

FIGURE 2 : THE TRANSFER OF SKILLED LABOUR (II)
JOHN ONIONS' DEPUTY CERTIFICATE,
SNOWDOWN COLLIERY, 1926.

TABLE 4.2: DISTRIBUTION OF THE LABOUR FORCE AT SNOWDOWN COLLIERY, 1924-1930

YEAR	UNDERGROUND		SURFACE		TOTAL
	NO.	%AGE	NO.	%AGE	
1924	53	40.8	77	59.2	130
1925	124	47.0	140	53.0	264
1926	365	65.5	192	34.5	557
1927	808	79.2	212	20.8	1,020
1928	1,020	81.7	229	18.3	1,249
1929	1,509	83.1	307	16.9	1,816
1930	1,493	84.7	269	15.3	1,762

Source: I.J. Harding, The Kent Miner, 1915-1926, University of Kent, 1971, Tables 8 and 10.

Nevertheless, the employers did not always get what they wanted: some of the men that found their way to Kent had little or no experience of work in coalmines. The popular tale of the tripe dresser quoted below (which was recounted on several occasions) is indicative of the incidence of mixed occupational background:

> There were men coming and going all the time, who'd never seen a pit or anything. There was work, so they'd come...In fact, there was one chap who came along - this is true - he came along and he lined up in the lobby to go in. And the manager, Ellson, he said, "What's thy job lad? Has thy ever worked in pit before?" He said, "No gaffer, I haven't." "Well, what's thy job?" He said, "Well, I'm a tripe dresser." He said, "Well, I've never had one of them, I'll bloody sign thee on!" And he did!
>
> Ernie Wright

> I was stood in the queue (at the colliery) ...there was a man there with a bowler hat and umbrella...there were some who'd never seen a pit in their life before, but there were that many unemployed in the depression and looking for a job - and they were starting some of them, they were, whether they'd seen the pit or not!
>
> Frank Williams

Many of the inexperienced men who found work at the collieries had not been forced to leave their homes at all; they were, to use the term employed by the experienced miners, 'cherry pickers' - local Kent men who had taken up the opportunity of alternative employment by filling some of the surface jobs. Their numbers were, by most accounts, not large, which was to be expected in view of the predominantly agricultural occupational base in Kent and the recruitment restrictions placed upon the employers[23]. A small number of men, mainly from Somerset where the traditional rural links of the coal industry had persisted, managed to combine a mixture of mining and agricultural interests:

> They brought a lot of Somerset men in. Well, them fellows had never had - they had a job in the pit and about four acres of ground or a dozen bloody ponies or something to look after. I said to one bloke, "When was you back in Somerset last?" "Well" he said, "I come down here and I went back to sell my crops." I thought, "Christ!"
>
> Jack Wilson

Local Kent men employed in the poorer paid surface jobs had the same opportunity to utilise their agricultural links and obtain part-time work on the land[24].

In general, young people tend to be more willing to move than old and this certainly held true during the inter-war period when relatively large scale population movements took place[25]. As a rule, only men under 35 years of age were considered suitable subjects for migration by the Transference Board; Singer estimated that 66 per cent of the net outward balance of migrants from South Wales (under the scheme) were below 30, and 87 per cent below 45 during the period from 1921 to 1931[26]. In Kent the colliery companies did not generally employ men over the age of 45, and preferred men to be under 40[27]. Hughes, who undertook field work in the coalfield between 1929 and 1932, presented some interesting statistics concerning the demographic profile of the Kent miners and their families. For example, of the 887 people in Nonington parish in 1921, a little over 50 per cent (449) were males but this figure had increased to almost 55 per cent (2,371) of the population of 4,326 by 1931[28]. Again, in the Medical Officer of Health's Annual Report for 1931, it was reported that in the rural district of Eastry (the area where most miners were concentrated) 53 per cent of births had occurred amongst the mining population and only 47 per cent amongst the indigenous population; these figures suggested a birth rate of 38.2 per 1,000 in the former case and 17.6 in the latter, and a death rate of 6.2 and 12.4 respectively[29]. More complete birth rate figures are given in Table 4.3 and they indicate a rapidly widening gap between Eastry and other areas after 1924.

TABLE 4.3: TOTAL POPULATION AND BIRTH RATE FOR EASTRY RURAL DISTRICT 1924-1934

YEAR	POPULATION	BIRTH RATE		
		EASTRY	KENT	ENGLAND & WALES
1924	13,410	16.2	16.6	18.8
1925	13,480	17.3	16.5	18.3
1926	n.a.	n.a.	16.2	17.8
1927	13,910	17.7	15.4	16.6
1928	15,440	19.5	15.4	16.7
1929	15,640	21.1	15.3	16.3
1930	17,220	19.5	15.2	16.3
1931	18,430	20.2	15.0	15.8
1932	18,720	18.1	14.6	15.3
1933	18,660	17.4	14.1	14.4
1934	18,700	19.0	14.5	14.8

Source: Kent County Council, Annual Reports of the Medical Officer of Health, Maidstone.

Further evidence can be derived from data collected by the Secretary for Mines which detailed the percentage of wage earners on colliery books in December of each year who were below the age of 20 years. Between 1928 and 1931, for example, approximately 25 per cent of the surface labour force were below the age of 20 compared to 17 per cent in the Midland and Southern Division; the corresponding figures for underground workers were 16 per cent and 10 per cent respectively[30]. Together these figures suggest that the migrant population exhibited a distinctive demographic profile since a higher than average proportion were young, single males. Even those that were married were predominantly young, and were likely to have temporarily left wife, and possibly children, in the area from which they had come[31].

The migrants were also distinguished by their visible poverty. The succession of strikes after the First War culminating in 1926 and long periods of unemployment or short time working left many miners with little or no personal wealth, and often, long term debts[32]. 'Hardly a day went past without someone coming to the office and complaining of being practically destitute and stranded', complained the KMWA Executive in October 1928[33]. There were, no doubt, many more whose pride forbade them to publicly reveal their desperate situation:

> A bloke from Yorkshire - he'd walked down, got digs - started on the morning shift, fainted at snap-time...now that chap was sent out of the pit and never seen no more - he wasn't restarted. And honest, I think that chap fainted through hunger, but you didn't know, they wouldn't tell you, they were very proud...you had to feed yourself for a week (before being paid), some of these buggers hadn't money to feed themselves.
>
> Frank Williams

The poverty of some men shocked even those with first hand experience of economic deprivation. A miner who had previously been unemployed in South Wales for a number of months recalled:

> A chap came from Newcastle. His shoes - honestly! We gave him a pair of shoes, night's lodge. You wanted to see the state of him, really and truly! He were only a young chap.
>
> Alf Jones

and another who came to Kent from Newcastle in 1927 recounted his

own difficulty in repaying a debt of long standing:

> During the 1926 Strike we had 26 weeks off work and the pits worked very slowly and very poorly after that. Well, during that strike I had to get money, naturally. We had soup kitchens and I had to go and get money from these people that was helping people that didn't have money and nowt like that. But you had to sign for it and say that you'd pay it back. Well, I never had a chance to pay much back because I was in and out of work and that, working short time. Eventually, I come to Kent. I was here two and a half year, nobody bothered me...they got to know there was a lot of us here, Geordies, and I was here 9 year and I was still paying that money back after 9 year. It would be about £22 or £23 ...in fact they kept a shilling off the pound off your wages at the pit. And it took me 9 year to pay it back.
>
> Paddy Hughes

The cramped and overcrowded housing conditions in some of the Kent mining villages may be interpreted as a crude index of the migrants' poverty. Hughes wrote that in Aylesham 'practically every house takes lodgers' and census data supported this observation[34]. In 1931 there were 4.92 persons per private family in Nonington Parish (which included Aylesham and Snowdown) compared to a figure of 3.64 for the whole county. In terms of persons per room, the figure of 1.15 for Nonington was the highest in Kent and compared to a county average of 0.73[35]. Furthermore, analysis of electoral registers revealed two or more distinguishable surnames in 30 of the 68 inhabited houses in Hyde Place in 1930 and 29 in 1935[36]. The corresponding figures for Kings Road were 50 from 108 and 53 from 110. Totals

and averages tend to conceal the more extreme cases of over-crowding: a coroner at an inquest on a baby's death was reported to be surprised to discover that the child's parents along with two children, aged 10 and 2, and a baby were living in one room at 86, Kings Road - for a rent of 7s.6d[37]. The men had their own examples:

> There was husband, wife, daughter - 14 years old - and two young boys in the family. Also three other lodgers.
>
> John Denney

> There was terrible lodgings...well, where I was staying there was six of us staying there - she couldn't look after one! She used to get drunk as a lord!
>
> Alf Jones

> I was in this lodge, and there were 5 of us in a bed. I don't know whether there were 14 in the house altogether, but there was only 3 rooms up and 3 rooms down.
>
> Ron Burnley

Ill health went hand in hand with poverty, in Kent as elsewhere, despite the relative youth of the migrants[38]. 'It is generally recognised', wrote Hughes, that many mining families arrive in Kent 'in a debilitated state of health'[39]. This, she felt, was normally the result of prolonged unemployment before migration to Kent; the men themselves seemed to agree:

> There were people coming with nothing at all - we were bad enough off - but when you saw some of the people that came in Aylesham...they'd been on the dole, fed on bread and dripping, what for 2 or 3 years and they weren't physically fit to live up to this pit.
>
> Harry Watling

The vicious circle of unemployment, poverty and poor health is neatly demonstrated in the following account which indicates how important it was for miners to keep themselves in the appropriate physical condition by regular work in the pit[40]:

> I was very unlucky...because I'd only worked 3 days the first week, 4 days the second week, and then I got a 'beat' hand...with them closing the mines down up the north my hands went soft, I was on the dole 10 weeks...I was off work 7 week...but thanks to the brother-in-law and wife's sister: they kept me... that was a bad time for me - we had nothing, neither in us nor on us.
>
> Paddy Hughes

These problems were undoubtedly aggravated by the manner in which the miners and their families made their way to Kent. To come by train, bus or boat was an expensive procedure for men who could ill afford it. It is true that after 1928 the Industrial Transference Scheme allowed those eligible a free journey by train to Kent and later contributed to the cost of moving family and dependents[41]. But these subsidies only applied, of course, to men unemployed and recommended to seek employment in Kent by the local labour exchange; many miners came independently using their own limited resources:

> My birthday present was signing on the dole - for my 21st birthday: 18 bob a week then, dole ...we went down on Tyne Tees shipping - 12s.6d to Gravesend by boat, all night voyage...we had 4s.7d between us (2 men) when we landed here, by the way.
>
> George Holden

Local court cases give an indication of the difficulty which some families encountered in attempting to meet the cost of furniture removal and their vain attempts to share the expense. A case reported in 1927 told of three men, their wives and children (number unspecified) and a married woman, together with a bedstead, wardrobe, couch and easy chair sharing a van from Coventry to Woolage in Kent. The journey lasted 22 hours and all the while one of the wives lay on the couch 'seriously ill'. All this was to no avail since there was not enough room for all the furniture and a further £15 had to be spent for this purpose[42]. Some men were so impoverished that the journey to Kent could only be contemplated in terms of walking, cycling or hitching:

> I was working in the mines at West Stanley, County Durham. I can tell you work and prospects were very poor, sometimes we would work one or two shifts per week. So I decided to hitch hike to Snowdown Colliery. I left Stanley in September 1935 with ten bob...I got lifts until I landed in Aylesham three days after starting out, with two bob in my pocket right at the pit gates.
>
> Ralph Harrison

> We got these four bikes rigged up and we set off,(from Fife) five o clock one morning... (at night) you just lay at the side of the road - we didn't have a bicycle lamp, you cycled and cycled till you couldn't cycle no more, and you just lay down at the side of the road...daylight you had a wash in a stream or a river or something...£2 odd - that was all the money we had between us.
>
> George Reid

Although these modes of travel may have saved money they did

little to improve the already weak physical condition of the miners; in fact, they further threatened their capability to undertake strenuous physical labour:

> I remember two men cycled down from South Shields on a Friday - they only worked half a shift...there was a lot of men who couldn't stand the heat underground.
>
> Ralph Harrison

> There was a chap - when I'd been here a month - there was a man, he'd come down, and he'd walked it from Wales, and he'd been out of work 10 years, and he'd walked between two and three hundred miles, which is a pretty exhausting process, especially if you hadn't had any grub in your belly. And he worked half a shift and he died. And the manager then, after that, said, "Well, how did you get down here lad?" "Well, I walked it." "No work for you here." If you said you'd walked it he wasn't wearing it.
>
> Ernie Wright

(iii)<u>The migrants: motives and decisions</u>

Having discussed who migrated to Kent (and how) it is now pertinent to consider <u>why</u> certain individuals decided to move to the coalfield. This is an extremely difficult question to answer satisfactorily particularly when the move under examination occurred typically between 30 and 50 years previous. There are a wide range of economic, social and psychological variables which may influence the individual decision to leave one area and move to another; the major problem for the investigator centres around the attempt to determine the 'real' or most important motives behind this decision[43]. The mechanistic

push-pull model - where declining economic conditions 'push' and prosperity 'pulls' - over-simplifies the complexity of individual motives and the intricacies of the decision-making process. A more comprehensive account of motivation must combine reference to objective structural determinants with some analysis of the migrants' own statements but this combination is not easily achieved even where it is possible to follow migrants from place of origin to their destination, as for example, Taylor did. Elsewhere, Knight's study of men leaving mining in West Cumberland, although primarily concerned with occupational rather than geographical mobility, indicated the difficulties of establishing motives for movement. It was, she concluded:

> Almost impossible to determine the actual trigger mechanism which had persuaded the men to leave mining...they seemed to prefer to speak in generalities, rather than specify the exact decision making act[44].

If sociologists have found contemporary migration a difficult phenomenon to study then it will be appreciated that an historical investigation may be even more problematical. In the present case the task was complicated by the fact that the migration occurred over a considerable time period and the migrants originated from a number of different areas. Furthermore, the oral evidence was not derived from a representative sample; indeed, the group of men interviewed was unavoidably biased in favour of those who, for one reason or another, stayed in Kent[45]. Despite these deficiencies it is possible, through

careful reference to the first hand account and other printed sources, to tentatively suggest a number of motivational factors which give insight into the values and goals of the men that made their way to Snowdown Colliery between 1927 and 1939.

The historical context in which the migration to Kent occurred suggested the following explanation of the migrants' motives. In a situation of massive unemployment, particularly on the coalfields, men moved in search of work. The Kent Coalfield offered regular work at relatively attractive rates of pay and this represented the major attraction for men who were characteristically unemployed, on short time or threatened with loss of income. Those that moved to Kent did so in order to fulfill the limited and instrumental objective of acquiring regular employment; they were not primarily concerned with obtaining a higher standard of living (than they had experienced when last employed), residing in a newly built house or enjoying the rural pleasures of the 'Garden of England'. In the aftermath of 1926 regular work was imperative and the Kent coalowners were obliged to recruit from the ranks of those experienced miners who were without such work. This argument can be supported through reference to the miners' own explanations of their decision to move:

> "Can you remember what exactly caused your decision to move to Kent in 1929?"
>
> "Oh yes, it was because, briefly - just one word - poverty. Because the pits were closing down, or they were going on short time...the unemployment figures were rising

week by week, so we heard of this Kent Coalfield almost like the people in the last century heard about the Klondike. It was a place to work. It was six days a week. It was a higher minimum wage than what it was...and we were getting 7s.9d a day in Lancashire, minimum wage ...and here the minimum wage was 10s.4d, with a chance to earn some more, and it was six days a week - six days on days, five on afternoons. We thought we were in God's pocket!"

Ernie Wright

The pit finished entirely, we were out of work again. That was at Boldon Colliery, that was in 1934. On the dole for eight weeks, and the neighbour used to live beside me, he said, "I can't stick this Sam" and I said, "Well, I'm not sticking this. Fifteen bob a bloody week is no good to me and the wife." So we decided to come to Kent.

Sam Lawrence

My reason for going was that half of the pit where I worked was to close, so lots were drawn as to who had to get the sack. I was one of those, and at the time, the world ended...the only thing I thought I was able to do was coalmining (so) I had to look elsewhere.

John Denney

My father worked at...a colliery in Staffordshire...well, this pit closed, this was during the depression, there was no other work...then he heard about the work down this end, so eventually he was uprooted and drafted down here.

Bill Loney

and the observations of locally born men who found work in the collieries:

> They walked from the North and they walked from Wales, and some of 'em had hardly got any shoes to walk on when they came here, barefooted. I'm not exaggerating, this is true...a lot of 'em came down here because there was no work up there, y'see. That's what drove 'em down here.
>
> Ron Foss

Yet how far does this explanation take us? There were many thousands of unemployed mineworkers after 1926 and we may reasonably assume that the great majority of them would have preferred to be in regular colliery employment. What then distinguished that small minority of men who were prepared to migrate in order to find work from the majority who were not? One possible explanation might be that although employment was the primary consideration of the migrants they were, nevertheless, also interested in the other associated benefits (better wages, new houses and so on) to such an extent that this precipitated their move - and marked them out, at the time, as 'better social types'. By implication those that did <u>not</u> move placed far less weight upon these secondary considerations and might therefore be considered as less 'active' or 'enterprising'.

Certainly there were miners that made mention of the relatively attractive rates of pay in Kent:

> As I say, I were working for 6s.8d up in the North of England, when we got the chance to come down here, even at 8s.2d (this was the lower loader's rate), "By Christ, that's a bloody big increase in wages."
>
> Sam Lawrence

and others noted that experienced miners may have been drawn by

the intuitive knowledge that coal, and therefore money, were easier to come by in a newly opened colliery:

> Some men had a habit: wherever a new pit was, they went there because there's always at the back of their mind: "If there's no money in a new pit, there's bugger all in an old pit", because of walking inbye and outbye in that period, you wasn't earning money like you was in the new pit.
>
> Jack Wilson

However, in general the interviews suggested that it was comparatively rare for a miner to give up full time employment elsewhere in order to take advantage of higher wages in Kent. In fact, the only group who were likely to perceive higher rates of pay as a major benefit were not migrants but locally born Kent men who frequently left poorly paid agricultural work for more lucrative jobs at the collieries. At a time when a miner's average earnings - if he worked a full week - were around £3, Hughes estimated that the income of the local agricultural labourer was approximately 32s[46]. A locally born man remembered:

> At that particular time (c 1918-1020) there were quite a lot of lads leaving the village school and electing to go to work at the colliery where the wages were roughly 100 per cent better than they were on the farm ...the thing that drove most of them was the financial reward.
>
> Joe Weston

That the migrants' objectives were strictly limited was further demonstrated in the lack of information men had about conditions

in Kent before leaving home. Their approach, as the following excerpts illustrate, could be summarised thus: 'there was work in Kent - what else did a man need to know'?

> What exactly did you know about Kent before you...
>
> We didn't know a thing!
>
> You didn't know a thing?
>
> No, we knew nothing. It was only a name to us that's all...we caught a bus to Nonington, because Nonington was the place we were looking for - we'd got a bit of misinformation...we looked for No. 1 Queens Road, Nonington, and what we were looking for really, we didn't realise it, was No. 1 Kings Road, Aylesham...one chap said to us when we arrived..."You've come for a job here?" We said, "Yes." "Oh, you want to bugger off to Chislet!" he said. Well, that was unknown to us.
>
> Ernie Wright

> I got on the train at Victoria and I asked about the stations, and they said, "Well, Snowdown's the one on the Dover line". So I said, "Oh, I'll have a ticket to Snowdown then".
>
> Stan Barnett

> We don't know where it is. We didn't! I didn't know whether you had to go to Ireland first!
>
> Ron Burnley

If migrants and 'non-migrants' could not be satisfactorily differentiated in terms of aspirations what other factors might be taken into account? Further reference to the historical era, and in particular to the industrial dispute of 1926, suggests a number of ways in which the migrants may have been distinctive.

The momentous failure of the miners' strike allowed the employers to carry out extensively policies of 'selective re-employment': victimisation during the period immediately after 1926 was widespread. As early as May 12th 1926 an official government communique made it clear that employers would not be compelled to take back workers who had participated in the strike for, it asserted, dismissals were inevitable in view of the decreased production caused by the stoppage and the obligations incurred by the employers in relation to volunteer labour[47]. A large amount of evidence exists concerning victimisation - only one example will be used here to point out that the process was often subtle and almost indetectable[48]:

> 'It's done quietly but it's done all the same', said one man who alleged that in his district almost all the committee of the Miners'Federation lodge had been stopped, one by one, while another gave what seemed a reasonable account of the process, when he said that there was little definite victimisation for political opinions, yet, 'the foremen engage men they know of who will give no trouble'[49].

Active unionists and those defined as 'troublemakers' were not the only men whose chances of re-employment were abnormally remote; they were frequently joined by men with poor work records and blacklegs who, employers felt, may have caused undue friction amongst workers had they been taken back on[50].

It seems likely that this strange amalgam of men, whose opportunities of employment were extremely limited, were more

prone to move to Kent than other miners, particularly as the coalfield began to develop rapidly immediately after the 1926 Strike. The shortage of experienced labour in Kent, and particularly at Snowdown, meant that previous work records did not prejudice chances of employment; indeed, the manager of Snowdown Colliery at this time emphasized that many of what he termed, 'big commies' turned out to be amongst the best workers[51]. The idea that Kent attracted an exceptional proportion of 'militant' miners has been voiced elsewhere and it is certainly a popular explanation, amongst both young and old, of the Kent miners' exceptional industrial history[52]. At Betteshanger Colliery, for example, Joe Burke, the President of the NUM (Kent Area), recalled that the colliery owners,

> ...made a tremendous blunder. The agent that was here at the time went up to Barnsley and brought down two or three hundred miners from Barnsley and, of course, the boys they got were on the dole. And boys who were on the dole mainly for a reason, because they had been militant during the period of the struggle from the 1926 Strike[53].

One or two of the older Snowdown men who were interviewed had stories similar to that reproduced below:

> Oh, you were pushed around. They'd say, "Have you ever worked in the pit before?" Well, if you said no, you were out anyway! And if you said yes, well, "What was your name then? What pit did you work at last?" Well, it was no good you just had to tell them. And they took down this file, the black book, and they'd say, "No work for

> you here". And, in fact, at one particular place I remember the under-manager saying, "Get out of this bloody pit yard"! Yeah, just like that...They all sent word to each other. They sent their own list of criminals to each other you see...As soon as we fixed up our accommodation (after moving to Kent) we went the next morning...to the pit and the manager says, "Right, you're signed on", because they'd sign - if you were warm you'd have a job. If you were alive!
>
> Ernie Wright

The evidence concerning migrant blacklegs is far less substantial yet a number of observations were made by miners which suggested rather more than a coincidental connection. The following example is an illustration of this. Towards the end of 1928 a strike at Snowdown was broken by a number of blacklegs. Particularly prominent amongst them was an imposing Welshman, apparently an ex-wrestler, who was remembered by a number of men, and it is of interest that one of them remarked:

> And the funny thing was, there was a bloke telling me in the 'Two Sawyers' only a few months back, that he was a blackleg - the same man - in a village in Wales.
>
> Doug Peterson

These references to what, in certain quarters, were regarded as 'undesirable' industrial and work records may be broadened to encompass more general social characteristics. Hughes, for example, asked whether,

> ...these heterogeneous conglomerations of mining families are typical representatives of the mining communities whence they came. Or are they, as has in fact been suggested, composed for the most part of the 'riff-raff' of the 'depressed' areas: the wanderers and the ne'er-do-weels; the demoralised element of the victims of prolonged unemployment[54].

Articles in the local press, particularly those concerning Aylesham, gave some support to this view. An editorial comment in the Dover Express in 1929, made reference to the 'young and irresponsible' types who were finding their way to Aylesham[55]. The following year a new police station was opened at Deal by one Colonel Locke who referred to the 'considerable trouble' caused by the influx of miners and went on to explain:

> They did not always get the best class of people coming into a new area of that kind, and there were some who, if His Worship the Mayor happened to take a walk late at night around Aylesham way, might take a fancy to the fine chain he was wearing! (Laughter)[56]

References such as this were common in the press and received support from those local Kent residents who were interviewed:

> Well Aylesham then, in those days, wasn't civilised was it?...They used to do the most outrageous things...we used to go to bed of a night, and it was all quiet, and they used to come home from the pub and pull all the flowers up from the front garden. Kick all the lilies and everything. Oh, they were an awful crowd! Terrible! I used to curse them to high heaven! But after a little while all the riff-raff went.
>
> Mrs Ron Foss

> A lot of genuine people came down here as a last resort, they just hadn't got anything at home, no prospect of getting anything...but I think they were rather offset by a lot of people who - how shall I put it - found it 'politic' to move. And carried on down here precisely as they did up there, with disastrous consequences.
>
> Joe Weston

It might be argued that this sort of evidence tells us more about local prejudices than it does about the migrants were it not for the fact that the miners and their families themselves held similar opinions:

> The dole sent men from all parts of the country. Some good, some very bad. The worst, in that day, took over. We also had wife deserters and people who wanted to get lost.
>
> G. Robson

> People on the run, come out of Leeds, the different big jails, you'd be surprised who met each other outside Snowdown gates on a Friday. And the police were taking one away every bloody week at that period.
>
> Jack Wilson

> One of my brothers went wrong, and he'd got so concerned that he was...like a crime he'd committed...not wilfully, but it had happened, and he was frightened and he had to get out of the road - so what he did, he come down to Kent.
>
> Ron Burnley

To summarise, it would appear that for the majority of miners the most important motive for migration was to find employment; higher wage rates were viewed, more often than not,

as no more than an additional bonus. For a significant number (it is impossible to be any more precise than this) the move to Kent represented an escape - from victimisation or from obligations to individuals and organisations that ranged from wives and mistresses to shopkeepers, employers and police. In this sense, rather than in terms of aspirations of a higher standard of living, some of the migrants were distinctive. The pressures for these individuals to move may have been greater than that experienced by more 'respectable' miners whereas the restraints may have been less. Certainly 'wanderers and ne'er-do-weels' might be classified sociologically as 'dislocated' in the sense that they would be less bound by the ties of long established social relationships in the area from which they had migrated; that a higher than average proportion of migrants were young and single further confirms this argument.

Finally, a brief analysis of certain aspects of the decision making process - how men resolved to make the move - gives further insight into the values and objectives which miners brought with them to the coalfield. First, it would seem reasonable to assume that most men would not have left their area of origin but for the lack of employment opportunities: their decision was characterised by reluctance. 'They did not come there', remarked an MP at the May Day Meeting in Dover 1931, 'because they chose', and Elks (KMWA Secretary) later elaborated from the same platform, explaining that 'the cosmopolitan crowd' had 'had to come through economic stress'[57]. At the same meeting two years previous, Elks remarked that a

considerable number of men in Lancashire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Northumberland had been informed by their employment exchanges of the opportunities in Kent and thereafter their benefit was stopped whether they came or not[58]. Several first hand accounts affirmed this practice for these and other areas and indicated the strength of the miners' disinclination to move.

> People wouldn't move from A to B at that time of day, I think I was the only bugger that worked away. In that village they thought they lived in A and B was the work, and always was the work, and they wouldn't move to C, the work should be at B to their idea, and if there was no work there, they were on the dole, they wouldn't move out... Even some of them that were sent by the dole wouldn't come - they got their dole stopped even...they were frightened, they'd never moved away from there. They'd been brought up - their mothers lived there, their fathers lived there, and they thought that's where they lived and they couldn't move out, they just wouldn't.
>
> Frank Williams

Whether 'forced' down in this manner or not, the evidence of almost all of the men, and women particularly, suggests that given the choice, they would not have come to Kent:

> But for unemployment you probably wouldn't have thought about moving at all?
>
> Oh no! No! No, because all my family and friends were all there in Bolton, and...it was in desperation that we came down to Kent.
>
> So you were probably a bit reluctant to go were you?
>
> Oh sure, I were leaving loads of girlfriends - you know how it is!
>
> Ernie Wright

Thus, with the exception perhaps, of those who were 'escaping', the men and their families suffered a personal conflict: the home town offered security through familiarity with people and places at the cost of the insecurity of limited employment opportunities; the Kent Coalfield offered the reverse - jobs, along with an unfamiliar, even hostile, environment[59]. This leads on to a second aspect of the decision making process, which was characterised not only by reluctance but also an impulsiveness, so that a chance occurrence - a chat in a club, a spare place on a motor coach, a letter from a friend - could 'trigger' a snap decision:

> So you hadn't really thought about moving to Kent for a very long time at all, you just suddenly heard?
>
> Oh no! We suddenly heard about it, and we were beginning to feel a bit desperate...I was out of a job and it's - to be on the dole - absolutely soul destroying, and that was only a month or two with me, was that. I'd had enough.
>
> Ernie Wright

> We were at the dole office...he (the manager) said..."I've heard of a colliery in Kent where they're setting men on". We asked him the why's and wherefor's and Bob and I, we had a talk outside, discussed the matter, and decided we'd have a bash.
>
> George Holden

> I was on the dole for two months...I had a friend up here - I didn't know there were pits in Kent at that time - a chap who used to work by me, he wrote to me. I used to talk to his parents, they lived just by us and they must have told him that I was off work - and he said there was plenty of work here...so I decided to come here. I came by train...I had no idea where it was.
>
> Alf Jones

Thirdly, what little information miners had - and upon which a positive decision may have rested - was likely to be distorted and inaccurate. Employment exchanges and newspaper articles and advertisements frequently made exaggerated claims concerning opportunities and developments in the coalfield and the KMWA campaigned vigorously against this practice during the late twenties and early thirties[60]. Elks felt the exchanges were 'grossly misrepresenting' the facts and giving men the impression that Kent was 'a land flowing with milk and honey'[61]. He later remarked in The Miner that men were being promised shift rates of 11s.6d at a time when rates were 10s.4d or less[62]. An earlier issue indicated that the Kent union was prepared to reduce the flow by denying altogether the availability of employment in the coalfield:

> Kent - a warning. We renew our warning to unemployed miners not to tramp to Kent in the hope of securing work, for there is none available[63].

There is no doubt, however, that many men heard of Kent via more informal channels and normally through the network of friends, family, neighbours and workmates. In a discussion of colliery advertisements in other coalfields at a meeting of the Dover Employment Committee in 1933 the Chairman noted that many of the Kent miners, in fact, came on the invitation of friends[64]. A number of more contemporary studies have demonstrated the importance of these channels in the manual workers' job search and the evidence of Alf Jones quoted above and Ernie Wright cited

below illustrate the applicability of this analysis to the Kent migrants[65].

> And how did you find out about (Kent)?
>
> It was someone who went from that pit that I was at, Parsonage pit in Leigh, who wrote to another bloke, who again sort of mentioned it to somebody else, it came all the way round, about this new coalfield...so the three of us wrote and asked and we got favourable answers back...one chap...he lived in the same street as me. Another chap... lived a couple of streets away.
>
> Ernie Wright

As this information 'came all the way round' new distortions were likely to be introduced which made this type of source as questionable as the more official ones:

> Some of the chaps would come and work about a month and went back to tell how deep it was, how hot it was, how rotten the conditions were - so this must have got rumoured round about.
>
> Frank Williams

> I used to save up for 'Lanc' every Christmas. I used to go up there, used to go to 'Lanc' - new suit, new shirt, plenty money. "Cor!" them 'Lancs' used to say, "Cor, there must be some bloody money in Kent. Wilson's here, he's got plenty. Oh, he looks well!" They didn't think I'd been working Saturday night and Sunday night to get up there - saved my bloody heart up - they never deamt of that!
>
> Jack Wilson

(iv) <u>The migrants in Kent: some consequences of a selective process</u>

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the Kent migration was

that so many of those that moved to the coalfield failed to settle and subsequently left, often returning to the area from which they had come. This pattern of migration into and out of Kent continued until the end of the Second War and was remarkable both in terms of volume and rapidity of turnover. Referring to the period between 1919 and 1939, a representative of the Kent District Coal Owners' Association remarked that 'well over 50%' of those that came to Kent failed to settle[66]. Union membership statistics provide a crude indicator of turnover on a yearly basis. In 1927, for example, 43 per cent of members at January 1st left during the year and of those members at December 31st, 69 per cent joined during the year. Admittedly, this type of turnover fell considerably by 1935 but it began to rise again prior to the Second War[67]. At Snowdown Colliery, in particular, there was an 'abnormal' amount of men starting and leaving according to KMWA officials and the first hand accounts of miners vividly confirmed this observation[68].

> They were coming and going, coming and going all the time. Hundreds of them. I wish I had a penny today for every name that's on Snowdown list - Jesus Christ, I'd be worth more than Rothschild. They were coming in shift loads.
>
> Jack Wilson

> I've seen men come in here - this is true - when I came here, and big, strong - stronger men than me you know...work about an hour, two hours and away they go! Every Monday and Thursday when I come up that pit there'd be about sixty men there waiting to sign on.
>
> Alf Jones

> I was standing in the queue waiting for my dole (in Bolton) and there was a big loud mouthed bugger talking about him and his mates, they were going to Kent (Snowdown Colliery) and they'd heard what it was like, and they were going to 'Bloody well sort it out' and they were going to 'Turn the pit inside out' and so on and so forth...Well, the next week I'm signing on the dole and this chap's there with his mates. I said, "I thought you were going to Kent?" He said, "We've been!" Aye, they weren't having it!
>
> Ernie Wright

> I should think that this pit - there was more men at this pit than was lost in the war. There was thousands came here and never stopped. Some worked half a day, some a day, some two days. Some never even stopped for their money - they went away again.
>
> Paddy Hughes

As a result, of all the mining settlements population turnover was greatest at Aylesham where, according to Hughes, 700 individuals came and left between 1929 and 1931[69]. Earlier, the local headmaster estimated from pupil turnover that 300 families left the village between 1928 and 1929[70]. An analysis of electoral registers for two streets in Aylesham over a period of several years revealed, despite certain limitations, the dimensions of the two-way migratory flow[71]. In Hyde Place in 1930, for example, there were 182 registered voters living in 68 houses. Between 1930 and 1939 there were only 4 houses in which at least one of the original voters remained, whilst between 1930 and 1935 only 50 of the original 182 remained at the same address[72]. In Kings Road in 1930 there were 301

registered voters living in 108 houses but only 58 were at the same address by 1935. Of the 326 voters in the road in 1935, 140 left during the following year; 121 left between 1937 and 1938.

Why did so many miners and their families leave again so quickly? When this question was put to the men who were interviewed their reaction was virtually unanimous: the conditions in the collieries, particularly Snowdown, were so bad that men were driven away. The coal seams at Snowdown Colliery, for example, were, at 3,000 feet, amongst the deepest in Britain; they were also extremely hot and liable to flooding. Coal-getting in this type of environment was exceptionally arduous and exhausting work and resulted in peculiarly painful afflictions and occupational diseases[73]. Even for experienced miners these conditions were shocking and regular working in such surroundings proved to be beyond the capabilities of many:

> The first day of starting work we were put on the coal face. It was so damned hot that we had to wear ladies knickers, because they were more suitable for work. We also had to drink 16 pints of water a day. Our throats were parched. I hadn't worked half an hour before I was soaked to the skin with sweat. It was just as if I had fell in the river, and apart from that my head felt as if it was going to burst any minute. I didn't think I could stick the week out...being really fed up with the heat and one thing and another, we decided to go back home to Wales.
>
> Harold Bishop

The conditions in the pit were terrible. Hot as hell and lots of water. We had 10 pint tin bottles of water and a tank of water came in for snap time when we put our empty bottles on the belt to be returned full. I soon developed a heat rash to be followed by boils...many men just managed one shift then off back home next day. Some came away after an hour. I saw one poor chap with blood running from his nose and ears. We never saw him no more although I heard he died before he got out of the pit.

John Denney

My first few months at the pit were the worst ones, in fact, it nearly broke my heart...the pit at that time was very hot and dusty. Also, due to some bad airways the ventilation system had a very high water gauge...the Kent chalk water caused me to have boils and sceptic sores. One week I worked with seven boils in different places on my body. My landlord was good at bread poultices and this kept me going...water was sent in the pit at snap time...the men then not used to the heat would get stomach cramp.

G. Robson

They used to come and go down and work one day, "I'm not going, I'm not bloody well going down that bloody lot". That was the conditions we was working under - oh, tremendous.

Sam Lawrence

Jesus Christ (other pits) weren't like Snowdown! They were working in temperatures then, 100 degrees easy! 102 degrees in places. Red hot it was...and the bloody ventilation wouldn't - the fan was powerful but it had so much to do! ...Boils was terrible down here at that period. Oh, some of them lads, it'd be pitiful to see 'em...and then again, they used to break out in a rash. If you went in the pictures and got warmed up you'd start scratching and itching and twitching as if you was lousy...Snowdown, oh, it was pitiful to see some of them lads - carbuncles and boils - some were pitted, just like they'd been shot, when they were stripped in the baths.

Jack Wilson

> If I hadn't been a married man I would have gone back, I'm sure I would have, I'd have never worked there myself, I wouldn't -
>
> (wife) They was working half a shift, and brought out on stretchers with exhaustion and heat...and then they'd go the next day and stay a little bit longer before they were carried out...No pit baths, they had to bath in the house. I've seen him flopping out with cramp, then I've had to undress him and bath him, put him to bed - couldn't speak to you even!
>
> Mr and Mrs Norman Cook

These accounts came from experienced, life-long miners and are quoted at length in order to convey the vividness of the memories and the huge impact which the colliery had upon the men. For the minority of inexperienced men who attempted underground work, the conditions were intolerable and chances of remaining there were minimal:

> There were men coming and going all the time who'd never seen a pit or anything. There was work so they'd come. And of course, men who weren't used to it, no idea of it, were damn well horrified and they used to hop it.
>
> Ernie Wright

Some men also mentioned, although far less frequently, other physical discomforts associated with living conditions in Aylesham which may have encouraged men to leave. Certainly Aylesham was an unpleasant surprise to many of the migrants:

> I loved the old town where I came from, and here there was nothing in Aylesham except the pub, there was no clubs or anything. Nothing but the pub. And there was no bright lights ...you couldn't go to the pictures - you had to go to Canterbury or Dover.
>
> Ernie Wright

> (wife) There was no station, no shops, nothing at all! Nothing at all!
>
> Talk about Wild West, we had it! There used to be farmers coming round with greengrocery and bread and everything like that. When I landed here, I thought, "By God, this is a dump!"
>
> Mr and Mrs Alf Jones

> They were just busy building this place - it was in a terrible mess: no roads, no footpaths, everything chalk.
>
> Paddy Hughes

The isolation and lack of facilities also attracted comment from 'outsiders'[74]. In 1928 Elks referred to the difficulty experienced in filling the newly built houses at Aylesham and felt that men preferred the 'more closely and highly organised' urban life of Dover[75]. The following year, the Archdeacon of Canterbury bemoaned the lack of a cinema, institute, co-op, bakers, linendrapers, dairy, fish and chip shop or post office and by 1931 even the architect, Abercrombie, began to express concern[76]. Aylesham's remote site, he noted,

> ...required rapidity of increase to produce the satisfactions of urban existence...they come from dense, crowded towns, from a jolly, social, if slumish, existence, to a neat, bare, isolated, hygenic garden village with no amusements except perhaps a village hall, and a big, bare garden to take the place of the teeming street[77].

During the 1930s a cinema, clubs and shops were built, but more needed to be done - according to Reverend Anderson, writing in 1938. 'If you add all this up', he said, (referring to the lack

of facilities in the village):

> You can see why the population is constantly changing. In my first 9 months here 19 people connected with St Peters have moved away. In the last 2 months we have lost 5 more families[78].

Two weeks later Reverend Carter joined the debate adding his own statistics; 'in the past one and a half to two years' he noted, 'we have had 1 in every 10 houses empty, or between 70 to 100 houses empty'[79]. In Kings Road alone 23 houses were unoccupied in 1937[80].

The advent of war further prevented any stabilisation of the population after 1939. Men were called away to the forces and then called back to the pit; families evacuated and 'Bevin' boys called in:

> An awful lot of men left and went away from here you know. Their wives were so scared - well, some of the men were bloody scared! I couldn't blame them ...it was an awful situation with them air raids...There were tons of houses (in Aylesham c 1940) - people had gone away, the chance of invasion and so forth, which there was. I expect some of them got scared and felt they were better off moving up to Lancashire, Yorkshire or Wales - wherever they come from. There were quite a few left - this street was nearly empty! I cycled round the village, windows were all boarded up. Oh, there were tons of houses, you could have your pick...I applied for a permit and got the missus back down (from Scotland).
>
> Frank Williams

Beyond the physical discomforts of pit and village and the disruption of war, one other factor may have been instrumental in causing a high turnover. The attitudes of the indigenous Kent population towards the migrants were markedly hostile[81]. Lawther remarked at the MFGB Annual Conference that local people 'thought the miners were some form of animal' and the evidence suggests that miners were discriminated against by traders who charged higher prices, landlords who would not accommodate them and employers who refused them jobs[82]. Nor were the police, it seems, absolutely impartial:

> I landed in Canterbury first, I got off at Canterbury East. Every time I pass that bastard Cathedral I always think of it. There was a bloody big Scotch copper stood by that archway (by) the Cathedral. I said to this big cop, "Eyup." I said ..."Can you tell me where I could find some miners?" Cos I was thinking about my kip - I'd only 38 bob. "Woh," he said, "Get yourself to Dover" he said, "We don't encourage 'em here." I thought, "Well, you're a bright bastard" and he was on the door of the Cathedral - I thought, "Thank Christ for Christendom, here we are!"
>
> Jack Wilson

In 1929 a miner, who had been in Kent for three weeks, was sentenced to fourteen days imprisonment for stealing apples from an orchard in Nonington to the value of one shilling. Even during the twenties this was harsh punishment indeed and after widespread criticism, particularly in the London press, the Home Secretary intervened to release the man after three days[83]. Although admitting that 'there has grown up a feeling of

hostility between the miners and surrounding agriculturalists', the Dover Express attempted to pinpoint the trouble at Aylesham where 'it is well known that everything has not been happy', but hostility was apparent all over the coalfield[84]. Miners frequently spoke of poor cuts of bacon being sold as 'miners' bacon', or flats where 'no miners need apply' in, for example, Dover and Deal[85].

The fact was that miners represented a new and different culture which was 'thrust into the midst of an old established, conservative community of opposed culture, ideas and mode of life'[86]. Furthermore, many miners earned approximately twice as much as local labourers and this caused considerable resentment. In her survey of local opinions Hughes found that mining families were described as 'unstable', 'superficial' and 'temperamental'; moreover they were 'intellectually lazy' and concerned only with 'immediate pleasure'. 'Kentish folk' felt them to be 'very immoral and (were) horrified at their low standards'[87]. Kent born men admitted these discriminatory attitudes:

> That was the thing in Dover. If you went for a job and they asked you where you been working and you said you was a miner, they didn't want to know. They reckoned you was the scum of the earth...y'see it was the character the miner had got. They thought, "Oh, he's a miner, he's a rough bugger" - this sort of thing, see?
>
> Arthur Fox

How far do these 'explanations' of population turnover

adequately account for the pattern of migration from the Kent Coalfield? The disturbance of the Second War, of course, only affected men at the end of the period under review, whilst the discomforts of Snowdown pit and Aylesham village could merely explain why turnover was exceptionally high there. A comprehensive analysis of turnover in the coalfield generally requires reference to social factors rather than the predominantly physical influences outlined so far. A brief review of the selective processes described above demonstrates that these factors may not only explain who migrated and why but also who subsequently left and their reasons for so doing.

First, as a large proportion of migrants were young and unmarried they were less burdened with social ties and responsibilities; they did not have to account for their actions to a hungry wife and children. This would apply, of course, to both the decision to move to Kent and any subsequent resolution to move away - provided that insufficient time had elapsed for the individual to become 'enmeshed' through marriage in the local social structure in Kent. A local newspaper referred to Aylesham residents as 'young', 'irresponsible' and 'rootless'[88] and in this sense Welbourne's dictum on the Northumberland and Durham miners in the nineteenth century may well apply to many of the Kent men: 'They had lately come, they were as ready to go'[89]. Two brief quotes illustrate the young miners' frame of mind:

> I was out of a job...I'd had enough. I was a young chap - 22 years old. Ready to push a bus over, but there was no jobs pushing buses over! God's truth!
>
> Ernie Wright

> I was a big young chap, I used to move from pit to pit, getting pit experience...then I read about these Kent pits. Well, I was in a pit yard three weeks before I came to Kent. I said, "Well, I'm going to Kent, I don't care whether you give me a job or not!"[90]
>
> Jack Wilson

Second, those older miners with stronger 'home' ties may have felt unsettled by their separation not only from wider kin and friendship links but also from the nuclear family. The insecurity and expense of the move to Kent made it advisable for one or two men to go in advance of their families[91]. As a result, a husband might be separated from wife and children or a son cut off from parents, brothers and sisters for several months until job and accommodation were settled and sufficient funds were available for the family and possessions to make the move to Kent. This dislocation placed strains upon the family and sometimes precipitated an early return home:

> If they had a wife and children - to come down here and pay board and keep a wife and children were a big job you know. I were lucky when I left, (my wife) were expecting but she hadn't had the child.
>
> Frank Williams

> I started work - we got lodgings in the village - the first pay I sent home, I sent the wife five shillings. Worked five days, that's the wages she got: five shillings. So I said, "That's not good enough."
>
> Sam Lawrence

> My first wages for five days on the coal-face was £2.10.6d. I paid £1.5s board and sent 15s home to my family.
>
> Ralph Harrison

> (My wife) was expecting our first child, but I found keeping two homes going was pretty tough going so...I packed up and went home on to the dole again.
>
> Harold Bishop

A government investigator reported:

> The Cumberland miner has been a failure in Kent, partly because of his independence, but partly also because of the deep roots which he has struck in his native village... Many Cumberland miners left jobs in Kent even though they had to walk home[92].

The Kent Coal Owners' Association agreed: they referred to men migrating without their families and 'domestic reasons' as significant explanatory factors in their failure to settle[93]. Even those men that held on until their wives joined them were sometimes subsequently defeated by her experiencing a sense of social dislocation in an even more acute fashion than her husband:

> You'd pulled up your roots, see? And especially, there was a lot of wives felt unsettled. They were away from their friends and so on and so forth, and quite a number of chaps went back to Wales and Scotland and what have you, because the wife couldn't settle.
>
> Ernie Wright

If the young and 'footloose' were therefore able to leave easily through <u>lack</u> of resonsibility, the older men often left because the manner in which they had moved to Kent had made it difficult to <u>fulfill</u> their responsibilities.

Third, men who had been reluctantly 'triggered' down to Kent could swiftly be 'triggered' home again. Owen observed that inter-war transferees were prone to return home at 'the first breath of trouble', and gave illness or unemployment as examples of the sort of 'trouble' they might encounter[95]. At Snowdown the exceptional colliery conditions invariably provided the first such 'breath' and it was often sufficient for men to make a snap decision to leave: this helps to explain why so many men left within days or even hours of arrival after long and arduous journeys and confirms two of the points already made. First, many of the miners might have coped with problems at the colliery had they had the 'social supports' of the more established mining localities from which they had migrated. Second, if the overriding objective was to obtain regular work, as we have suggested, then a colliery which prevented this could understandably hasten departure.

Fourth, the miners' poverty and ill health could further reduce chances of managing to work regularly at the pit. Long spells of unemployment and poor diet were not the best preparation for physically demanding underground work in the hot and damp Snowdown seams. A weak miner was more likely to be forced to stay away from work through exhaustion or disease and yet less likely to be able to support himself financially through even short periods of unemployment. One miner appearing in court for rent arrears in 1931 pointed out that he could only manage three or four shifts a week because 'a man could not work six shifts at Snowdown unless he was fit'[95]. These problems

may well have forced already desperate men home even if this meant certain unemployment.

Fifth, even those that overcame adversity might decide to return home when employment opportunities improved there. For these men the Kent Coalfield was never more than a place which they had, through circumstance, been forced to 'visit', albeit for a period of four or five years. Hughes placed strong emphasis on the original reluctance of men to move to the coalfield and remarked that the characteristic attitude of families at Aylesham seemed to be:

> ...we are not here for long, so why take trouble about the garden, or the enamel on the bath or the paintwork on the doors and window sills[96]?

The colliery owners also felt that some men 'never intended to settle permanently' and those men who were interviewed stressed that some of their workmates were constantly 'looking over their shoulders' to assess the possibilities of employment 'back home'[97]. If men were driven away essentially through unemployment then it was not surprising that they should return if and when chances of obtaining a job improved, as they did from the mid-thirties onwards. Thus at Aylesham, for example, scores of families left the village upon developments at Askern Colliery in Yorkshire after 1934[98].

Sixth, the miners incomplete knowledge of conditions in the coalfield may have encouraged false expectations which when unfulfilled, led to their departure. Certainly the press and

employment exchanges exaggerated the potential and future development of the coalfield perhaps because they had also been misled by the 'propaganda' of the colliery companies and the local planning schemes[99]. A miner who had been to Kent and returned home to Lancashire found himself correcting the misguided impressions of a local employment official who had begun to tell him of opportunities in the 'Garden of England'.

> I said, "Wait, I'm going to tell you the name of the pit, I'm going to tell you where it is, I'm going to tell you all about it." "Oh!" and he was a bit taken aback. I said, "The pit is called Snowdown." He said, "Yes, that's right." I said, "Now, let me tell you a few things about it. First of all, it's 3,000 feet deep." He said, "What!" And his eyebrows were going up over the back of his head. And I told him about the conditions here, and about the heat and so on, and he said, "Well, look, could you give me some more of these figures again? Let me write them down...I'll give these figures to the committee. They're not aware of these things."
>
> Ernie Wright

Those men who found out about Kent more informally through friends and family may also have received a distorted picture. The following quote from the Somerset Guardian concerns a man who apparently heard of Kent through a brother who was farming there:

> EARNINGS TOO SMALL - SOMERSET MINER MIGRATES WITH HIS FAMILY TO KENT
>
> A correspondent writes: I met a Somerset miner on Whit-Monday, who, with his family of sons, are leaving tomorrow for Kent. I asked if he thought the chances of coalgetting in Kent were good. "Well" said he, "The Government have

> lent ten millions for it, 40,000 houses have been built, coal can be got and conveyed by a light railway of about 3 miles to the shipside, to say nothing of iron smelting...so we are off, as our earnings since the lockout have been too small for us to stay on[100].

Finally, it is possible that some of those who were 'escaping' may have been 'caught up' and therefore forced once again to move on. The earlier references to the police waiting at Snowdown gates are instructive here, as are the remarks of the colliery owners who referred to 'some men (who) could not settle in any district or job for long'[101]. Frequently, on leaving, these men were not empty handed: a miner by the name of George LeRoy, for example, was eventually arrested in Doncaster after breaking and entering a shop in Ramsgate; whilst 'doing a moonlight' was not an uncommon occurrence in Aylesham[102]:

> It was nothing to come here, pass a house one night full of furniture, next time you pass it they've gone! All the furniture on hire purchase, they've gone, cleared off with it, done a moonlight...I know one chap named Pincher, he took a house, he had four pianos delivered...and disappeared! It was done!
>
> George Holden

To conclude, the types of men who migrated to Kent during this period and their motives and objectives tended to pre-determine a considerable amount of further movement, typically back to the areas from which they had come. This considerably delayed the formation of an established colliery based social

structure between 1927 and 1939 and in villages like Aylesham social relationships were characteristically transient. The migrants' distinctive profile and the extended period of flux after 1926 had significant implications for the nature of social life at Snowdown and Aylesham; these issues are pursued in the following chapter through a detailed examination of a form of subcontracting, common in Kent at this time, known as the 'butty system'.

NOTES

1. For a useful review of the literature see J.A. JACKSON (ed.), Migration, Cambridge, 1969; R. WELCH, Migration Research and Migration in Britain: A Selected Bibliography, Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, Occasional Paper No. 14, University of Birmingham, 1970.

2. D.S. THOMAS, Research Memorandum on Migration Differentials, New York, 1938, p. 141.

3. R.C. TAYLOR, 'Implications of Migration from the Durham Coalfield', unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Durham, 1966; 'Migration and Motivation', in J.A. JACKSON (ed.), op. cit. See also Chapter 1, Section (iv).

4. Ibid., (1969), p. 116.

5. Miners' Federation of Great Britain, Annual Proceedings, Annual Conference, 11 July 1932.

6. Political and Economic Planning, Report on the British Coal Industry, London, 1936, p. 200.

7. N. BRANSON and M. HEINEMANN, Britain in the Nineteen Thirties St. Albans, 1973, p. 76. The collieries in question were presumably Betteshanger (Scottish) and Chislet (Welsh).

8. For a detailed analysis see D.E. PITFIELD, 'Labour Migration and the Regional Problem in Great Britain, 1920-1939', unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Stirling, 1973.

9. See N. HARRISON, Once a Miner, London, 1954, pp. 179-180.

10. R. JOB, The Kent Coalfield, (Typescript), 1966.

11. W. JOHNSON, 'The Development of the Kent Coalfield, 1896-1946', unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Kent, 1972.

12. B. THOMAS, 'The Movement of Labour into South East England, 1920-1932', Economica, 1, 1934; 'The Influx of Labour into London and the South-East, 1920-1936', Economica, 4, 1937.

13. See Chapter 3.

14. W. JOHNSON, op. cit., p. 236.

15. Hansard, House of Commons Debates, Vol. 344, col. 1411, (Oral Answers, 2 March 1939).

16. There was a national decline in numbers using the transference scheme after 1936. See D.E. PITFIELD, op. cit., p. 205; and the Report of the Commissioner for the Special Areas in England and Wales, (year ended 30 September 1938), Cmnd. 5896, London, 1938, p. 22.

17. Kent Mine Workers' Association (KMWA), Minutes, 19 November 1940, 16 January 1941; Dover Express (DE), 15 November 1940.

18. Essential Work (Coalmining Industry) Order, 1941.

19. So called after the then Minister of Labour.

20. DE, 16 December 1927, 31 May, 1935, 2 August 1935; KMWA, Minutes, 19 December 1929.

21. See Chapter 3.

22. Claim of the Kent District Coal Owners' Association (To the Central Valuation Board), Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946. (2 Vols). (KCOA Claim).

23. Job claims that 'at least 70%' of the Kent Miners were Kent born although it is unclear which period he is referring to (he began his research in 1948 but did not complete a final report until 1966). Certainly for the inter-war years this estimate represents a gross exaggeration. R. JOB, op. cit., p. 27.

24. Prior to the mid-sixteenth century coalmining could be considered as a subsidiary of agriculture; Griffin described the colliers as 'a minority group in the rural community...(remaining) close to the soil'. A.R. GRIFFIN, The British Coalmining Industry: Retrospect and Prospect, Hartington, 1977, p. 156. The links between agriculture and coalmining persisted in a variety of forms thereafter. See E. WELBOURNE, The Miners' Unions of Northumberland and Durham, Cambridge, 1923, p. 13; C. STORM-CLARK, 'The Miners: The Relevance of Oral Evidence', Oral History, 1, 4,pp. 79-80; S.W. TOWN, Problems Resulting from Industrial Decline in a Welsh Mining Valley, Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, University College of Swansea, 1975, p. 24; A.R. GRIFFIN, Coalmining, London, 1971, pp. 35, 51, 130-132.

25. 'The one generalisation about migration differentials which can be considered definitely established...is the following: there is an excess of adolescents and young adults among

migrants...compared with the non-migrating or general population'. D.S. THOMAS, op. cit., p. 11.

26. H.W. SINGER, Transference and the Age Structure of the Population, Pilgrim Trust Unemployment Enquiry, referred to in A.D.K. OWEN, 'The Social Consequences of Industrial Transference', Sociological Review, 29, 1937, p. 340.

27. KCOA Claim, p. 6.

28. V. HUGHES, 'A Social Survey of the East Kent Coalfield', unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of London, 1934, p. 36.

29. Ibid., pp. 27-28.

30. Extracted from V. HUGHES, op. cit., Table 20.

31. See Section (iv).

32. See Chapter 3.

33. KMWA, Minutes, 23 October 1928.

34. V. HUGHES, op. cit., p. 198.

35. Ibid., p. 41 and Table VII, p. 42.

36. Register of Electors, Dover Parliamentary Division of the County of Kent, Parish of Nonington, Polling District of Nonington (o), 1930 and 1935. The figures exclude, of course, residents under 21 years of age. For comparative purposes the figure for Hyde Place in 1972 was 8.

37. DE, 11 May 1934.

38. See Chapter 3.

39. V. HUGHES, op. cit., p. 109.

40. The KMWA Executive referred to 'many' miners being rejected on medical grounds after arrival in Kent. KMWA, Minutes, 23 August 1934. Several questions concerning the health of the Kent migrants were put by the MP for Whitehaven, Anderson, to the Minister of Labour, Ernest Brown, in Parliament in 1936. From his answers it transpired that 35 men had been transferred from Whitehaven to Kent during the three month period ended 31 January 1936 and that 30 had returned (including 7 who had transferred before this period). Of the 30, 22 had returned through sickness or inability to withstand colliery conditions and the remainder through sickness at home or other domestic circumstances. Hansard, House of Commons Debates, Vol. 308, cols. 1104-1105, (Oral Answers, 13 February 1936).

41. For details of the legislation see R.C. DAVISON, The Unemployed: Old Policies and New, London, 1929; W. HANNINGTON, The Problem of the Distressed Areas, London, 1937.

42. DE, 24 June 1927.

43. For a summary of relevant studies see G. GERMANI, Migration and Acculturation, in Handbook for Social Research in Urban Areas, by P. HAUSER (ed.), Paris, 1964.

44. E.M. KNIGHT, Men Leaving Mining, Newcastle, 1968, p. 20.

45. However, two of the men interviewed did return to their 'home' areas for spells during the inter-war years and some

evidence from those who returned 'permanently' was drawn from various letters received. See Appendix II.

46. V. HUGHES, op. cit., p. 185.

47. C. FARMAN, The General Strike: May 1926, St. Albans, 1974, p. 289; R.P. ARNOT, The Miners: Years of Struggle, London, 1953, p. 453.

48. See, for example, W. PAYNTER, My Generation, London, 1972, p. 35; J.E. WILLIAMS, The Derbyshire Miners, London, 1962 pp. 735-6.

49. The Pilgrim Trust, Men Without Work, Cambridge, 1938, p. 69.

50. See, for example, W. PAYNTER, op. cit., p. 35.

51. Untaped interview with Mr. Ellson, 1974.

52. N. BRANSON and M. HEINEMANN, op. cit., pp. 74-76; A.R. GRIFFIN, (1977), op. cit., p. 168.

53. Extracted from interview in Word of Mouth: The New Men of Kent, first broadcast on BBC TV on 9.9.76. The following extract from a Yorkshire newspaper confirms this oral testimony:

> Under the Government scheme for the transference of labour from deprived areas...74 miners from Barnsley and district have been transferred during the past six weeks to...Betteshanger Colliery...It is expected that there will be further requests from Kent for Barnsley miners and that another contingent will arrive in Kent in due course.

Quoted in DE, 2 August 1935.

54. V. HUGHES, op. cit., p. 219.

55. DE, 12 July 1929.

56. DE, 15 August 1930.

57. DE, 8 May 1931.

58. DE, 10 May 1929.

59. The 'hostility' of the local population to the migrants is outlined later in Section (iv).

60. Several letters and deputations were sent by the KMWA to the Ministry of Labour. See KMWA, Minutes, 27 March, 19 December 1929, 9 April, 29 May 1930.

61. Ibid., 23 October 1928.

62. Quoted in DE, 30 November 1928.

63. Quoted in DE, 11 May 1928.

64. DE, 14 July 1933.

65. See, for example, W.W. DANIEL, Whatever Happened to the Workers in Woolwich, London, 1972; R. MARTIN and R.H. FRYER, Redundancy and Paternalist Capitalism, London, 1973; A. SINFIELD, 'Poor and Out of Work in Shields', in P. TOWNSEND (ed.), The Concept of Poverty, London, 1970.

66. KCOA Claim, p. 6.

67. See Table 3.15.

68. KMWA, Minutes, 25 February 1929.

69. V. HUGHES, op. cit., p. 197.

70. DE, 25 October 1929.

71. Part of the movement indicated by these statistics may only have been over extremely short distances - for example, a

lodger moving round the corner to occupy his own house and prepare to bring his family down would be counted as having moved just as another man who had packed up and returned to Yorkshire. An attempt was made to check for this by searching through the names in all the streets in Aylesham. This was only partially successful since similar surnames and initials could confuse enumeration. Nevertheless, of the 182 voters in Hyde Place in 1930, 37 could be traced to another address in Aylesham in 1935. Of the 140 that left an address in Kings Road between 1936 and 1937, 35 could definitely be traced elsewhere in Aylesham in 1937. This would suggest that the figures quoted are exaggerated, but the fact that large numbers of men under 21 could not register, and many over 21 were not in the area long enough to register more than outweighs this bias and suggests that the figures are, if anything, underestimates.

72. For comparative purposes there were 14 such houses in Hyde Place between 1939 and 1949 and 16 between 1949 and 1972.

73. For a first hand account of working conditions at Snowdown Colliery see N. HARRISON, op. cit.; also Chapter 3, Section (v).

74. See, for example, F. ZWEIG, Men in the Pits, London, 1948, p. 46.

75. East Kent Town Planning Committee, Minutes, 18 January 1928.

76. DE, 19 July 1929.

77. DE, 27 March 1931.

78. DE, 14 January 1938.

79. DE, 28 January 1938.

80. Figures derived from electoral register analysis.

81. See, for example, F. ZWEIG, op. cit., p. 4; R. JOB, op. cit., p. 29.

82. MFGB, Annual Proceedings, Annual Conference, 1932.

83. DE, 16 August 1929.

84. DE, 30 August 1929.

85. A Deal woman recently interviewed on television admitted 'they had to live somewhere but I weren't taking them... I didn't want them...I lived on my own and I couldn't cope with them - because they're very rough people!' For further evidence see Word of Mouth: The New Men of Kent.

86. V. HUGHES, op. cit., p. 5.

87. Ibid., p. 186.

88. DE, 30 August 1929.

89. E. WELBOURNE, op. cit., p. 47, quoted in R.L. DAVIS and J. COUSINS, 'The "New Working Class" and the Old', in M. BULMER (ed.), Working Class Images of Society, London, 1975, p. 202.

90. It would be false to assume on the basis of these excerpts that the migrants had a 'care-free' attitude; in an era of

high unemployment the reverse was true, men moved in desperation. This is well portrayed in the following recollection of a Betteshanger miner: 'When I come to Kent I got a job. That's my last move. When I wrote the first letter to the wife, I said, "You've only got one more jump, lass - and that's in the channel" '. Word of Mouth: The New Men of Kent.

91. This 'staged' pattern of family migration was not unusual for miners judging by Lawson's comments. See J. LAWSON, A Man's Life, London, 1932, p. 43.

92. J.C.C. DAVIDSON, Report on West Cumberland, Cmnd. 4278, 1934; quoted in N. BRANSON and M. HEINEMANN, op. cit., p. 74.

93. KCOA Claim, p. 6.

94. A.D.K. OWEN, op. cit., p. 348.

95. DE, 4 September 1931.

96. V. HUGHES, op. cit., pp. 225-6.

97. KCOA Claim, p. 6.

98. This point was mentioned in both interviews and letters.

99. For details see Chapter 3.

100. Somerset Guardian, 10 June 1927, quoted in DE, 24 June 1927.

101. KCOA Claim, p. 6.

102. DE, 20 January 1939.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE COLLIERY EXPANDS: AN ANALYSIS OF THE 'BUTTY SYSTEM'

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate how particular forms of work and non-work social relationships and behaviour were related to the rapid development of the coalfield between 1927 and 1939. To show this connection attention is focused upon a subcontracting system which is interpreted as a form of work organisation that reflected the instability of a developing coalfield still some way short of maturity. The persistence of the system was indicative of the nature of social relationships during the period and illustrated the type of constraints which prevented the development of effective, collective organisation at Snowdown and the formation of solidaristic ties in and beyond the colliery.

(i) Subcontracting: some introductory comments

Subcontracting, of one form or another, represented a common method of organising work in many sectors of the British economy during the industrial revolution. The system operated, for example, in the iron and steel, engineering, cotton, pottery and printing industries during the nineteenth century and persisted in the present century not only in coalmining, but notably in the ship-building and construction industries. However, this method of hiring out contracts or sub-letting work - which is what the term essentially implies - is frequently dismissed as a relic from a 'pre-capitalist' era and insufficient attention is paid to the manner in which this mode of industrial organisation has survived and adapted within developed capitalist economies[1].

In the coal industry a form of subcontracting has operated at different times on every major British coalfield yet its existence is frequently taken for granted and accordingly given little attention. References to subcontracting - or the 'butty system', as it was generally known - are infrequent and rarely of sufficient length to enable anything more than a rudimentary understanding of its workings[2]. To some extent this ignorance is an unfortunate consequence of the historians' tendency to 'simplify the issues and paper over the cracks' to which reference has already been made[3]. So often the butty system is presented as a type of work organisation which was entirely antipathetic to the tradition and culture of miners and mining communities; an anomaly which arose through exceptional circumstances, and often with the active encouragement of the

employers, but which was inevitably eliminated through the concerted opposition of the men and their unions. Even Williams[4], who devotes more attention than most to operation of the butty system in Derbyshire, ultimately adopts this line of interpretation, as do Dennis and his colleagues when they say that the butty-men who worked in Yorkshire during the 1920s represented an extreme version of the 'arse creepers', 'bosses men' and 'tale tellers' whom they describe in contemporary Featherstone[5]. The implication is quite clear: the butty system was the unfortunate result of a scheming (and generally hated) minority whose dominance was inevitably temporary. But this sort of approach begs a number of important questions concerning the origins of subcontracting, the reasons for its remarkable persistence in particular coalfields and the factors which finally contributed to its decline.

Only Taylor's discussion of subcontracting in the Northumberland and Durham and Staffordshire Coalfields makes any direct attempt at answering these questions[6]. Taylor notes that under the butty system workmen became servants of a contractor who engaged the proprietor of a mine to deliver coal at a certain rate per ton; the butty-man himself hired and paid his workmen and provided the necessary equipment. The men were paid by the piece on the face or by the day on haulage. Despite the contrasting conditions of the two coalfields Taylor distinguishes three characteristic responsibilities of the butty-man: the first concerned his responsibility for the production, but not distribution, of coal; the second, the provision of working, but not fixed, capital; and the third, the maintenance,

but not necessarily the initial recruitment, of the labour force. Despite these common features Taylor recognises that the system was applied in a variety of ways, particularly in the North East, and that it could also be successfully adapted even after the appointment of a salaried manager with responsibility for overall direction of a colliery. In this case collective piecework at the face was frequently maintained through the 'little butty system' where one or a pair of butty-men contracted for a small stall and employed approximately six to eight men.

Because of the flexibility of the system Taylor acknowledges that 'no simple explanation can be given' concerning its growth although he does identify 'certain common forces' which operated in both Staffordshire and the North East[7]. These included the strains imposed by fiercely competitive market conditions, the difficulties of controlling a turbulent, undisciplined labour force and the general instability associated with rapid development of a coalfield. In these conditions subcontracting, in the context of an immature industrial economy, offered a short term solution to pressing managerial and labour problems; a means whereby output could be immediately maximised and costs minimised. The system died, according to Taylor, with the gradual adoption of new and more demanding managerial and technological standards in the coal industry which reflected the advent of a mature industrial society.

Although Taylor's argument is directly concerned with the

'big butty system' it can also contribute towards an understanding of smaller subcontracting systems which operated in the context of a relatively developed managerial structure. The 'common forces' to which Taylor refers are characteristic of the earlier stages of growth of a coalfield and may therefore be understood in terms of the industrial cycle of coal extraction. Even in a mature industrial economy, with an organised and professional class of managers, the utilisation of a 'little butty system' can, perhaps, be regarded as an indicator of an 'immature' colliery or coalfield. Before pursuing this argument further something more should be said of the variety of subcontracting arrangements which became identified as butty systems.

The dictionary definitions of the term 'butty' represent an appropriate starting point for this discussion for they demonstrate the tension and ambiguity which resides in the word itself. The use of equivalents such as 'chum' or 'companion' suggests friendship, and further references to 'mate', 'comrade', 'workfellow' and 'partner' imply that this friendship normally derives from a workplace relationship or type of collaborative enterprise. But in mining the word refers specifically to 'middle-man between mine proprietor and miners'[8] or 'one who takes a contract for work in a coalmine'[9]. Again, this is a workplace situation but the relationship which it engenders does not indicate that the butty and the other miners are on an equal footing or regard one another as friends.

Whether or not the butty and his men on the coalfields of Britain considered themselves as workmates depended largely upon

the manner in which earnings derived from the contract were shared. According to Ashton and Sykes both income and responsibility were originally shared equally by men who combined to negotiate contracts with the colliery owners. These collective contracts eventually came to be led by men with greater experience who nonetheless worked alongside the other men and took no more of the earnings than they did. Gradually this type of arrangement altered:

> The more powerful personalities amongst the workers, having acquired a little capital, ceased to be simply leaders and became masters, intervening between the men of property and the working colliers. The more or less democratic co-partnery of earlier times, it would seem, had as its degenerate off-spring the hated butty system of the nineteenth century[10].

Despite this development the word 'butty' is still used today in mining communities 'to mean workmate, and implying friend' and this suggests a circular progression in the manner in which the term has been used[11]. First of all it implied a working relationship characterised by friendship and equality; the subsequent development of subcontracting altered the meaning of the word because of its association with inequality, exploitation and antagonism; finally it is now used in the original sense although devoid of any direct connection with current working arrangements in the coal industry.

The etymology of the word 'butty' is further complicated by certain regional variations. Ashton and Sykes, writing in 1929, note that:

> In Shropshire 'butty' conveyed the idea of a partner, whilst in South Wales and elsewhere the word is still used as a synonym for 'companion'[12].

That differences of this sort did occur became clear at an early stage in the present research. The older Kent miners from different areas of Britain had differing conceptions of what was (and what was not) a 'butty system' and this led to disputes over its existence in particular coalfields. The following reference was typical of those made during the course of the interviews:

> It applied in Derbyshire. It applied - they (Scotsmen) said it didn't...but it applied in Scotland. I know a Scotch mate of mine, he said he used to go and set men on himself - he had lips, ripping lips.
>
> Harry Watling

The example of South Wales is illuminating: the traditional work arrangement in anthracite areas was for man and boy to share the work of a stall on a coal-face; upon becoming a man the boy had a right to his own stall but until then he was dependent on the man with whom he worked for his wages and these were considerably less than those of the man himself. Miners in Kent of Welsh origin explained that although the term 'butty' was used - by both man and boy to denote 'workmate' - this was not a butty system as they knew it in Kent since the differences in earnings were temporary and anyway justified in terms of reward for experience. Miners from Staffordshire disputed this

interpretation: if, they said, one man negotiated a contract with management, was responsible for the provision of pick and shovel and for the wages paid to another on the contract then he was a butty-man and this was a butty system. Moreover, as in Staffordshire and Kent, the man in South Wales, as a butty, had the opportunity to gain financially from the arrangement. If this was the case then certainly these arrangements came very close to the 'hated butty system' which Ashton and Sykes depicted. Supporting evidence comes from two Welshmen, the first interviewed by George Ewart Evans and the second by a member of the South Wales Coalfield History Project team:

> Some of the boys who worked for bad colliers, they'd have to wait for their pay...sometimes you'd work on a Saturday...but your butty, the collier, wouldn't be in...but you'd have to mark your coal up on your collier's number; and the chap was still in bed!..But if he was a decent chap - which most of them were - they'd just give you the money. But some wouldn't! They saw it as a day's profit. Capitalism isn't confined to the stock-market, you see![13]

> Even reaching the age of twenty-one, these boys, as they called them then, couldn't get a stall-road of their own because they were being utilised by the older men, for instance the older men would have a heading or a portion of a district where the work was going on and they would be sub-employed by him, do you see. And they, the collier, would then be paying them a sort of standard wage...and he, then as a consequence, would be reaping the benefit off that[14].

The word 'butty' and the term 'butty system' should therefore be

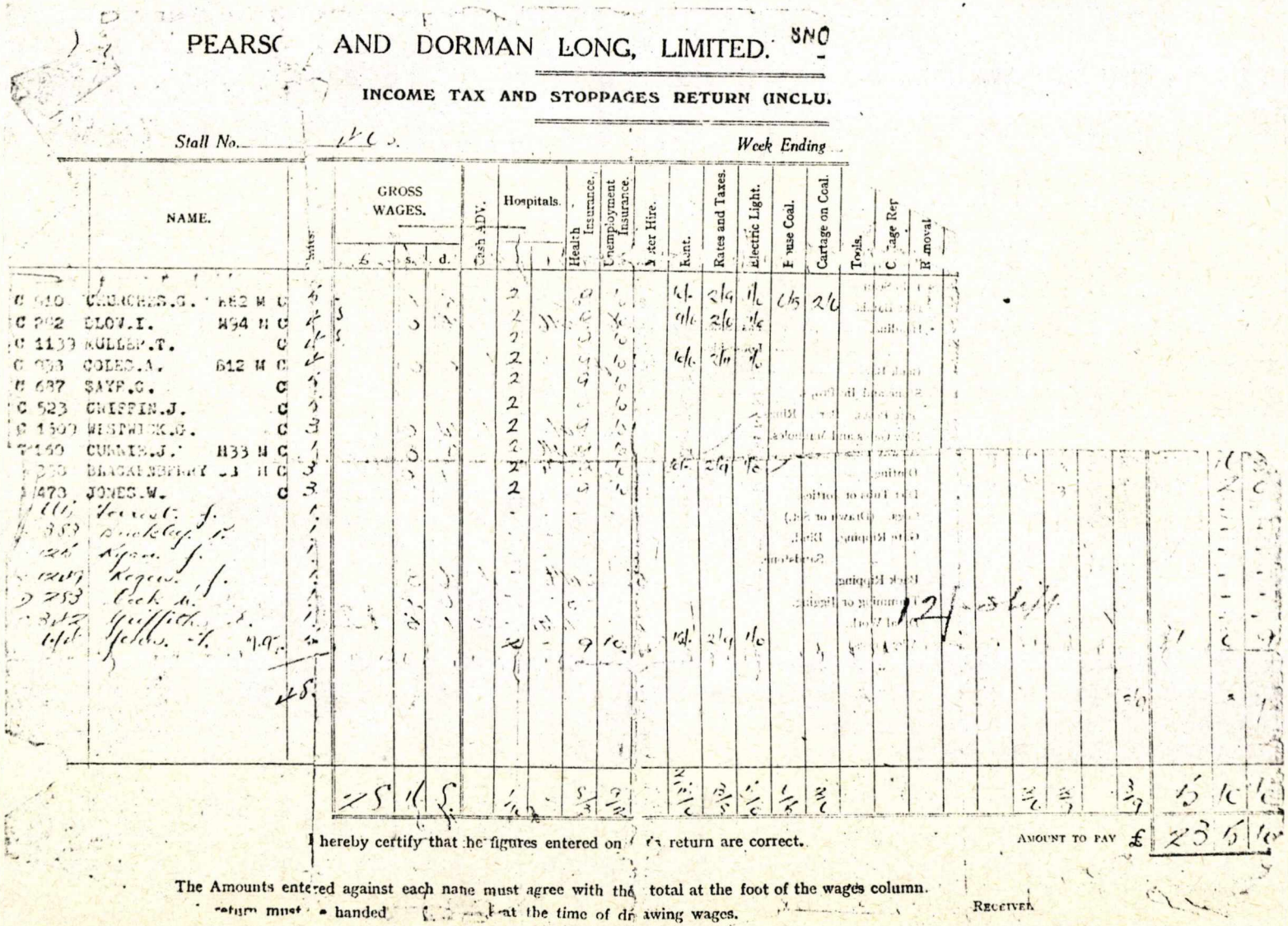
used with some caution: there were a whole range of sub-contracting arrangements in the British coal industry and miners attach different meanings to the common term used for their description. Clearly, the workings of the butty system in Kent and the attitudes of the diverse collection of men that worked under it must be discussed in some detail in order to gain some understanding of its significance.

(ii) The operation of the butty system at Snowdown Colliery

A type of butty system operated at each of the four Kent collieries during the period from the beginning of the First War to the eve of the Second. KMWA Minutes indicate that a system operated at Tilmanstone Colliery between 1916 and 1919 and re-appeared there in 1930; at Chislet Colliery on its opening in 1918 and again in 1931; at Betteshanger Colliery during a two year period after its opening in 1929; and at Snowdown Colliery for a six year period after its re-opening in 1927[15]. That the system is not mentioned in union minutes for a considerable part of the inter-war period is no guarantee that it had ceased to function; three years after the system had been 'abolished' at Snowdown, for example, the Dover Express reported a case at the County Magistrates Occasional Court of a dispute between a butty-man and his workers and so these dates may only define periods when the system had attracted some attention[16]. Most of the remainder of this chapter is concerned with an analysis of the butty system at Snowdown Colliery where it persisted in a modified form until the late thirties. This

was almost certainly later than the other three collieries - nevertheless a detailed analysis of arrangements at the colliery may give insight into conditions throughout the coalfield and suggest explanations which have an applicability beyond this particular example.

Butty-men at Snowdown were engaged on coal-face and heading work but not on haulage or other underground operations or on any work on the surface; these tasks were paid at minimum day-wage rates[17]. The butties provided the working capital - basically pick and shovel - and chose who and how many men would work with or for them on the contract. Most butties aimed to regularly hire a core of men whom they knew to be good workers and this number was expanded as day to day conditions dictated. The additional workers were normally 'market men' drawn from the pool of miners without a regular place of work who gathered at the pit bottom at the beginning of each shift. The entire earnings from each contract was paid from the colliery offices on one large docket which was collected by the butty-man at the end of each week. The fragment of such a docket which is reproduced in Figures 3 and 4 concerns a stall controlled by three butty-men: Messrs Churches, Blow and Coles[18]. Clearly, the other seven men whose names are typed on the docket were the workers regularly employed by the butty-men as the number of shifts worked indicates (column 3). The remaining seven men whose names are handwritten were the 'market men', only one of whom worked more than a single shift during this particular week in 1929.



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C 1133 MULLER.T.	C				2													
C 953 COLES.A.	B12 M C				2						6/6	2/6	9					
C 687 SAYE.C.	C				2													
C 523 GRIFFIN.J.	C				2													
C 1507 WESTWICK.G.	C				2													
7169 CUMMIN.J.	H33 M C				2													
[illegible]	[illegible]				2													
1473 JONES.W.	C				2													
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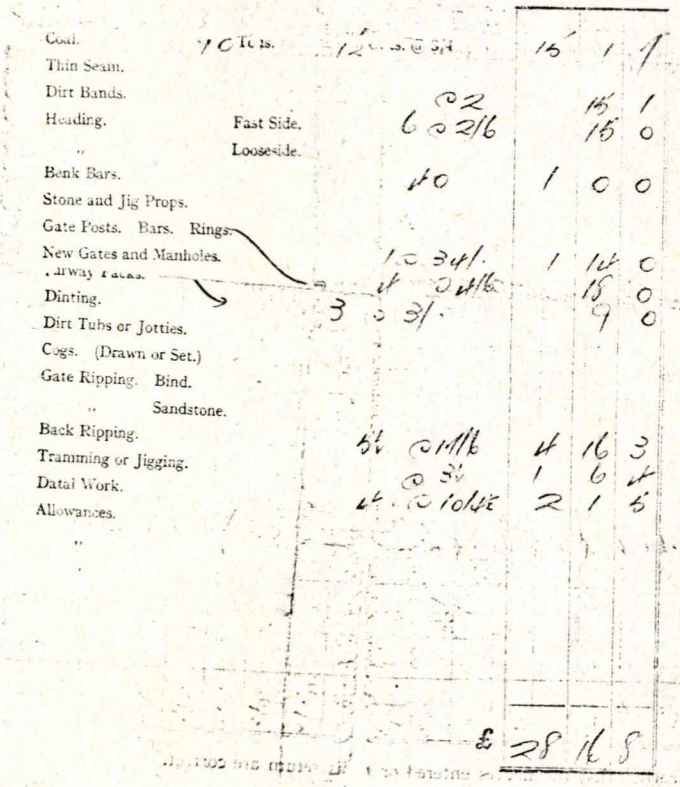
FIGURE 4 : CONTRACT DOCKET, SNOWDOWN COLLIERY, c. 1929 (REVERSE SIDE).



Coal.	10 Tubs.	12 [illegible] @ 5½	15	1	1
Thin Seam.					
Dirt Bands.		@2		15	1
Heading. Fast Side.		6 @ 2/6		15	0
" Looseside.					
Bank Bars.		40	1	0	0
Stone and Jig Props.					
Gate Posts. Bars. Rings.					
New Gates and Manholes.		10 @ 3½/.	1	14	0
Tramway Packs.		4 @ 3½/6		18	0
Dinting.		3 @ 3/.		9	0
Dirt Tubs or Jotties.					
Cogs. (Drawn or Set.)					
Gate Ripping. Bind.					
" Sandstone.					
Back Ripping.		54 @ 1½/6	4	16	3
Tramming or Jigging.		@ 5½	1	6	4
Datal Work.		4 @ 10½	2	1	5
Allowances.					
"					
			£	28	16	8

Beyond these common components of the system there were considerable variations between contracts, work teams and butty-men. The power of individual butty-men, for example, and their autonomy in relation to the official management structure of the colliery differed markedly. Some butty-men were able to exercise a considerable influence over the employment prospects of the other men. Those butties who controlled a number of contracts and who were on good terms with the colliery manager were able to influence whether or not a man was signed on by the colliery company by, for example, putting in 'a good word'. Similarly, by consistently refusing to employ a man on any of their contracts butty-men could ensure that particular men were confined to less well paid jobs or even dismissed. According to Ivor Blow a butty-man could refuse to take on a market man 'even if it meant that man getting the sack - that's how it was: dog eat dog'. Another Snowdown miner had similar recollections:

> Coal-face work was on the butty system where one man would be in charge of the face, and if you didn't work you were chucked out. His favourite cry was, "Come on. Coal or dole."
>
> Ralph Harrison

Nevertheless, formal authority to hire and fire and allocate men to workplaces in the colliery resided with the manager and his overmen and deputies. In some cases this authority was exercised and butty-men, particularly the less influential, were forced to accept arrangements which they may have wished to avoid:

> The deputy would say, "Take that man - take that man with you, your place." "I'm not taking him, bugger, he can't do no work. We're not taking him, we had him yesterday - he's not coming again." Well, there used to be a squabble down at the board - pit bottom, like - he were going to have this man, they weren't going to have him, and the deputy would have to assert his authority and say, "You <u>are</u> having him - <u>I'm</u> sending him!"
>
> Harry Watling

The ratio of butty-men to workers also varied from contract to contract, as did the sum total of men employed (i.e. butties plus wage-earners). A heading might provide work for 5 men or perhaps 20; 40 men may have worked on the 2 coaling shifts of a face served by a conveyor but a small stall served by tubs might employ only half a dozen men. The number of men on each contract that could be classified as butty-men was related to certain technical conditions, and in particular, the manner in which coal was transported from the face. Where a conveyor was working there would normally be approximately 12 to 20 men on each coaling shift and 5 or 6 men on the remaining night shift. One head butty-man would be present on each shift and beneath him a chargeman for every 3 or 4 workers. A contract in this situation might involve 3 butty-men and 35 workers but half a dozen chargemen would also be employed and could be ranked as intermediaries between the butties and the ordinary workers. The arrangements in the stalls were simpler although equally subject to variation. Nevertheless, it appears that most stalls employed four men per coaling shift, one or perhaps

two, of whom would be butties and 2 men for the ripping shift, one of whom would also be a butty. This would produce a ratio of 3-4 butties to 7-10 workers. However, by 1932 almost all the coal produced at Snowdown was conveyor loaded as a consequence of a deliberate programme of mechanisation[19].

These geological and technical influences make the task of estimating an overall butty : men ratio extremely difficult, yet there are other factors which complicate the issue still further. The size of the labour force at Snowdown more than doubled between 1927 and 1939 and an increasing proportion of these men were employed underground, but there is no evidence to indicate whether the numbers of butty-men increased at a similar rate. Moreover, the elimination of the butty system was a gradual process extending from 1932 to 1939 as fewer and fewer contracts were allocated to subcontractors. Nevertheless, during the period between 1927 and 1932 when the incidence of the system was at its peak the estimate of one butty to every 5 underground workers is probably a reasonable one and serves to indicate that the number of butty-men was not inconsiderable[20].

The degree to which individual butty-men involved themselves in the day to day tasks of manual labour at the coal-face or heading depended upon temperament and power; certainly, the limited number of butty-men who controlled a number of contracts were not obliged to engage themselves in strenuous physical effort in order to earn a comfortable living. The smaller butty-men were more likely to work along with the men on the contract since this had a large and direct influence over their own earnings, but they did not always use a pick or shovel:

> There'd be one man on each shift that would be the butty and he'd have three or four with him who worked for him. Now he might not, from one weekend to another, put a shovel of coal in the tub: he'd be out running around looking for empties - get some empties (tubs) in the place, see, keep you going.
>
> Ernie Wright

Whatever particular job the butty-men did they always held a supervisory role controlling the pace, co-ordinating operations and ultimately taking responsibility for the productive output of the team. To fulfill these duties the butties required skill and experience:

> They would be skilled miners and the management would pay accord to them because they were good skilled miners and they could take charge of a working place, you see.
>
> Ernie Wright

> You had to come as a fully fledged miner from, say, no younger than thirty - say about thirty years of age...you were entitled to it through seniority, y'know, that's how you got to be a butty-man.
>
> Harry Watling

At the end of each week the butty-men collected the earnings for the contract(s) for which he was responsible and was then liable to pay the other men on the contract minimum rates of pay whatever the work performance; thus he stood to lose if the performance had been disappointing and gain if it had been good. Total earnings varied according to the nature of the contract,

physical conditions, numbers employed, the skill of the butty-men and so on. The earnings of the butty men also depended, of course, upon the manner in which the money was shared with the other men, for beyond payment on minimum rates the butty-men had complete discretion over the distribution of additional payments. Except in abnormal circumstances the other men employed on the contract did not have access to the docket so they never knew precisely the total amount earned or the manner in which it was distributed[21]:

> No, you didn't know (how earnings were shared)...As I say, it (the differential between butty and worker) might have been a couple of quid, I don't know, because you <u>didn't</u> know, because they paid you according to what they valued you at as workmen.
>
> Harry Watling

> They would pay you out according to what they thought was good enough at the end of the week. The minimum wage was 10s.4d and they'd very likely give you 10s.6d for a day's wage. That was 2d - and you might be earning a pound! A pound's worth of coal and they'd give you 10s.6d! That were a 2d packet of Woodbines!
>
> Ernie Wright

It was generally not in the interests of the butty-men to enlighten their fellow workers on the particular details of the docket. Nevertheless, 'good' workers were known to be better rewarded than most for this was effectively the only way to attract and hold a regular core of men; equally, the 'poor' workers - who were usually the habitual market men - were deterred from regularly working on the contract by the admin-

istration of wages scarcely above the minimum rates:

> If you were no good as a workman...they'd pay you off with 10s.4d, which they were obliged to pay you, and tell you not to come again...now if they said, "Oh, we've got a good man, aye, I'll keep that man, he's working bloody hard, we'll keep him," they'd say to you in the face, "Oh, you come in here tomorrow and we'll pay you - 11s.6d a shift." "Fair enough, I'll come again tomorrow." Well, that were it - that were an incentive for the workman to come again 'cos they were going to get a bob - 1s.2d over the minimum, which were a lot of money then, of course, so he'd go again, and that's how they built their teams. They'd pay a good man - what they thought a good man - they wouldn't pay a man that were lagging behind a bit.
>
> Harry Watling

Just how much of the contract earnings the butty-men themselves retained is debatable although individually they invariably kept a larger amount than that of any other single worker. Those who were radically opposed to the system suggested the differential between butties and market men could have been as much as 10s to £1 per shift so that at the end of the week the former took home between £5 and £10, and the latter between £2.10s and £3. Those more favourably disposed to the subcontracting system indicated that the differences were smaller: market men earned the minimum or perhaps a little more, perhaps 10s.6d, regular men earned between 11s and 12s and the butty-men kept 12s.6d to 13s each[22]. Nevertheless, <u>both</u> groups normally acknowledged a variation between differing contractors and contracts - the distribution being more equal for some than for others - and this is not surprising considering the wide range of physical, technical, economic and social conditions in which the system operated.

Given the limitations of the present research it was not possible to make any estimate of the relative numbers of contracts where the gap between earnings was large or otherwise. For this sort of quantitative estimate a far larger number of men would need to be consulted, but even if these men were alive and able to discuss the system their evidence would need to be treated with some caution. The secrecy that surrounded the details of the docket meant that at best men could only make educated guesses as to the distribution of earnings. Such guesswork was likely to be strongly influenced by the general attitude which men had towards the system, so how far could it be used to build an objective description of earnings differentials? Only the butty-men had direct access to the docket, but equally, how far could their accounts be trusted? In this situation could documentary evidence represent a more satisfactory source for the social historian?

Reference to two examples of written evidence encountered in the course of the research indicates that such material is not necessarily any more revealing or reliable than oral evidence. The docket reproduced earlier (see Figures 3 and 4) certainly yields useful information concerning the total amount earned, stoppages which were deducted from earnings, the number of workers employed and so on, but nothing concerning the distribution of earnings - the column headed 'Gross Wages' being empty[23]. Handwritten on the docket to the right are the words '12s shift' which is the figure obtained by dividing the total number of shifts worked (48) into the total gross wages (£28.16.8d). So perhaps on this contract earnings were shared

on an entirely equal basis? Not according to Ivor Blow, one of the three butty-men responsible for the contract. He told me that the market men had received the least (10s.4d - 11s.), the butty-men the most (over 12s.) and the regular workers had been paid at a level somewhere between the two (about 11s.6d). One can only assume that the figure of 12s was used as a guiding average when it came to the calculation of each man's earnings.

The second example also concerns a contract for a stall at the coal-face in Snowdown Colliery in 1929. In November of that year a butty-man by the name of Rogers absconded with the whole earnings of the stall for the week and from remaining correspondence the distribution of earnings can be calculated[24]:

The 'Rogers Butty Case' at Snowdown Colliery, November 1929

In the stall:
3 butty-men (Rogers and 2 others)
4 day-wage men
Total sum paid for stall: £14.6.8d

Amount due to day-wage men:

A	£2. 1.0d	14.3%
B	£1.19.3d	13.7%
C	£1.19.3d	13.7%
D	£1.19.3d	13.7%
TOTAL:	£7.18.9d	55.4%

Amount due to butty-men:

Rogers	£1.17.8d	12.9%
X	£2. 5.5d	15.8%
Y	£2. 5.5d	15.8%
TOTAL:	£6. 7.11d	44.5%

The first point to note is that Rogers himself earned less than any of the day-wage men and considerably less than the other two butty-men. Secondly, although the two anonymous butty-men earned more than those they employed the difference is a relatively narrow one. But how typical was this type of situation?

The relatively low amount attributed to Rogers may have been exceptional and may, indeed, have provoked his subsequent actions. Moreover, the two remaining butty-men may have 'cooked the books' and made the distribution of earnings fairer than it would have been had there been no exposure. Finally, without knowledge of the number of shifts which each man worked or the number of stalls for which the butty-men were responsible a realistic assessment of individual earnings is impossible.

Despite these methodological difficulties enough has been said, hopefully, to suggest the complexity and variation of subcontracting arrangements at one colliery over a limited number of years. In terms of the number and selection of men, the division of labour and power, and the size and distribution of earnings contracts at Snowdown varied enormously. In view of this diversity of actual arrangements it is not surprising that the attitude of the Kent miners towards the butty system and its implication for social relationships - both in pit and community - were also many-sided.

(iii) The implications of the butty system

a) At Snowdown Colliery

The orthodox interpretation of subcontracting in coalmining tends to deny the different ways in which it might be organised; the monolithic explanation of the system and its effects typically runs along the following lines: "The 'butty system' was an unfair type of work organisation and the great majority of miners recognised this and were broadly opposed to it. This

reaction was translated into the policies and actions of the union and the system was eventually abolished". In the Kent Coalfield a considerable quantity of documentary evidence actually lends support to this type of analysis. In their 1921 Rule Book, for example, the KMWA made the abolition of the butty system one of their specific objectives[25]. Later, in 1928, the Executive officials voiced their opposition in a strongly worded minute:

> The Constitution and Rules of the Association are against the butty system and therefore all the powers of the Association must be directed against this pernicious system[26].

Activities at the branch level indicated that this policy had popular support. In 1929 a ballot taken at Betteshanger Colliery revealed that 235 men were against the system and only 29 were in favour[27]. A year later Tilmanstone Colliery branch proposed 'that no butty man be allowed to be a member of the Association'[28], and in 1931 the re-introduction of the system at Chislet was firmly resisted by the branch[29]. Finally, in 1932 the KMWA Executive congratulated the Snowdown branch for organising a ballot which resulted in 777 men voting against the butty system and only 124 for[30]. According to union minutes this ballot marked the end of a long and protracted struggle by the men and their branch to eliminate the system at Snowdown Colliery[31]. But was the elimination of the system as simple as this? Other evidence suggests a more complex reality. In October 1916 the KMWA advised men complaining of

the system at Tilmanstone Colliery only to make bargains as to payment before starting work[32], whilst in August 1918 the KMWA Executive was 'of the opinion that private contracts should not be taken without the sanction of the Association' at Chislet Colliery[33]. Neither recommendation directly attacked the system itself; the aim, instead, was to monitor or control its operation. Similarly, a closer examination of the arrangements introduced at Snowdown Colliery following the 1932 ballot reveals that the butty system was not abolished; instead a man was given the right to share equally in the earnings of a contract provided he had worked for at least three days in any one working week on that particular contract[34]. Because the butty-men had considerable power in terms of selecting which men worked and where, this arrangement offered ample room for manipulation. A number of men included in their accounts descriptions similar to the following:

> Well, the deputy may send you into one place today - tomorrow that fellow didn't want you, he'd send you somewhere else. You maybe worked the six shifts different bloody places, and you had to remember where these fellows paid out, 'cos if you didn't you'd be minus your wages! Aye, that's how the butty system went on here!
>
> Bill White

> If you were on different faces you had to see each butty for your pay. In my case I worked on five different faces the first week. I saw two butties in the pit yard, I had to go to the Greyhound pub to see the other and the last one I found at his home on the Friday night.
>
> Ralph Harrison

The aim, of course, was to avoid the obligation of sharing earnings equally:

> You had to work three days on the one face before you got...to share the wages. Now what they did do - practically all men's alike: all greedy - they used to let you work two days on the face and then they wouldn't have you on the third day because you'd have to share the docket and then they'd have to pay you a wage then.
>
> Stan Barnett

There are no references to these practices in KMWA Minutes although an entry in August 1930 suggests that a similar type of manipulation may have occurred at Betteshanger Colliery after the 1929 ballot:

> A man named McIntyre was charged with not sharing his earnings with his mates. The local committee had dealt with the matter with the manager. The branch intended to submit the matter to the Executive Committee if this form of Buttyism was not stopped[35].

How can these discrepancies be adequately explained? The discovery, from oral evidence, that branch representatives at Snowdown were themselves butty-men represented a startling insight into the operation of the system at this particular colliery[36]:

> But it took years and years to knock out. (Why was that?) Well, quite often, the people who were elected to the union would be butty-men, so there was absolutely no argument...(It was official union policy to get rid of the system?) It was supposed to be but it was winked at.
>
> Ernie Wright

> Honest to God, I've never...I've worked in the pit for fifty two bloody years and never come across such a bloody union as we had here. No - nothing else but bloody butty-men. And they was union men mind! Secretary, chairman, treasurer...but they'd rob you bareface - they did! They robbed the men bareface with this butty system - 'cos they were all butty-men, see?
>
> Bill White

> I suppose the union were against the butty system in Kent?
>
> They were all against it, but er...I think it was mostly union men that had the butties (laughs). Yeah, they were the biggest butties of the lot...I think the union was bought with the management...y'know it gave you that impression.
>
> Stan Barnett

This link between subcontractors and union officials discounted the possibility of 'grass roots' opposition being expressed through the union branch. Indeed, it questioned the existence of any form of resistance from the majority of miners, for how else did butty-men manage to occupy elected positions on the Snowdown branch committee? Perhaps the elections had been manipulated just as the KMWA Minutes most surely had. If this was the case then the interviews would uncover a wealth of suppressed discontent amongst men opposed to the system yet unable to express themselves adequately through the normal channels. Without doubt, for many men the butty system was abhorrent: the butty-men were considered workshy; they were 'bosses men'; they paid their workers insufficient wages whilst keeping the major share of earnings for themselves. Butty-men were seen to be part of a closed network of privilege based upon

deceit and exploitation, and, in extreme cases they ceased to be identified as working men and instead were associated with employers and capitalists:

> It's the most awful thing to do, to work like that. And those men (the butty-men) had to sink soft jobs in because they couldn't work - they'd always watched other men, you see.
>
> Ron Burnley

> They didn't earn nothing! They were there just to see how the work went. That's the butty system! A lot of them left here and went away - some are still here. You find me a man that goes in a pub, rough and ready, and tell me he's a butty-man and I'll call thee a liar. They's all got top hats on - top hats and spats - them's the butty-men. But not a <u>miner</u>! You'd never find a <u>miner</u> a butty-man. The miner hates it. He hates to talk about it same as I am to you now. I hate the thing! I hate the men that did it! Same as I hate the bloody rotten royalty - and the landowners - I hate the sight of them!
>
> Sid Carleigh

> You did not get anything like a fair return for your labour because the butty system was in operation then...It was new to me...and you could be pushed around, especially if you were like me - if you'd a long tongue, if you grumbled...Quite a number of us were against it in principle, we wouldn't have it anyway - and we managed after a number of years to do that (abolish it) too.
>
> Ernie Wright

For many years however this opposition was not expressed through the union branch:

> Well, it was their system, it was something that they were used to. It was something that I never knew nothing about until I got here. I thought it was a most inhumane system, I did. But we had no union - just a small one, fighting to get going - and we just simply...outnumbered, couldn't get it, couldn't get it stopped.
>
> Paddy Hughes

> A lot of them left...got their own businesses - made fortunes, some of them, taking just what they wanted, until we cracked down on it: we got a union. We had a union then, but it were a butty union, it were butty men as were on the union.
>
> Sid Carleigh

and subsequently men were sometimes forced to take direct action themselves in order to make their feelings known:

> Well, when he came to pay you - pay day - they was roping in the money, not you, yet you was doing the bloody work! They'd pay you ten and bloody fourpence and, them days, they was going home with £4 and £5 a shift. That was good money in them days, you know. 'Cos I went on a conveyor where we wouldn't have the butty system - I knew how they used to do it! 'Cos they didn't used to give the men dockets you know! No!...In the end I had to go and see the bloody manager..."Why don't you have the bloody butty system?" he said. I said, "Look, to me you can stick the fucking butty system...we're all of the same mind: when a man works for it he should have his fucking money - not some that don't work for it getting the benefit and the other poor fuckers getting fuck all."
>
> Bill White

These considerations suggest that at Snowdown Colliery the situation did not conform to the accepted 'union + men versus "butty system" ' interpretation; instead a 'men versus "butty

system" + union' formula seems more appropriate. Yet this too is a simplification for not all the rank and file miners were opposed to the system of subcontracting which operated at the colliery, and even amongst those that viewed the system with distaste there were men who were prepared to adapt themselves. One of the first men with whom I spoke - an 81 year old man from South Wales - told me that he had always regarded the butty system as unfair but having been exploited himself and faced with an ineffectual union he felt justified in becoming a butty-man since it represented an immediate solution to his own problems. This point of view was echoed in the words of a miner from Scotland:

> Looking back now, you could see - it might seem terrible to you. You might say the same as some of my sons say: "Well, nobody would have done it." But you had no alternative. You had to do it and you didn't think anything about it, because them next door was the same as you, and them next door to them was the same. You were all the same...you'd to live on your wits and dog eat dog sort of thing, like, y'know what I mean - within the law, of course.
>
> George Reid

These examples indicate the possibility of mobility between the wage earning colliers and the fully fledged subcontractors. Very little capital was needed to pay for tools and a man could begin in a small stall employing perhaps two or three men. The major prerequisites appeared to be experience and a good working relationship with both the colliery manager and those colliers

who would be employed on the contract. As such, this movement could ease some of the tensions generated by the inequalities of the butty system (whilst weakening the possibility of collective opposition)[37].

Other men learned to live with the system without themselves becoming subcontractors. Some worked on contracts where there was an informal agreement to share earnings equally:

> You had to fight for your wages in the yard. I never did...I got in wi' a group - three Lancs and a Kent lad - and we all worked together, no-one had more than the other.
>
> Sid Carleigh

Others worked regularly for a particular butty-man who, they considered, rewarded them well for their efforts. For these men the system may have been 'unfair' but their own particular situation was perfectly satisfactory:

> Well, as I say, I always got a fair deal. It were - it were an unfair system in a way, they took, they took the - but it were the system of the day. So I mean, that were it as far as I was concerned, it were the system of the day.
>
> Harry Watling

> There was a lot of discontent...they were a few swines those butties...very often the butties were the men that were sitting on their backsides three parts of the shift...I was getting about £4 a week - that was good money them days...but I was in a slightly different position...he guaranteed me £4 a week with stoppages paid, that's all I wanted...which as far as I was concerned was fair going. The

> butty-man and I were so friendly when he used to come in on a Thursday night he used to throw the docket over to me. I used to read the docket. I used to know exactly what he had...I've seen him bring £2 in...I've also seen him bring £12 in...They kicked it out eventually. The men refused to have it at all - which was a good thing. You see, I didn't mind from my point of view...
>
> George Holden

Many of these men saw positive advantages in subcontracting. If, they argued, butty-men took a larger share of the earnings then they had earned it through their superior skill and expertise; contract work required leadership and men prepared to accept responsibility and those that accepted these roles deserved a reward. This may have led to inequalities but these were justifiable by comparison to other types of work arrangement which rewarded men equally irrespective of effort:

> I were used to that system all my life, but of course, the trouble was with that, some blokes are decent, but others...y'know, no matter how much a shift they got, they still keep you on that day-wage, which was say 10s.4d ...They may have had enough money to pay out twelve bob, see, but there were some of them - they were that mean - they'd just give you 10s.4d. That's what made - caused the butty system to stink. It did. But that were the system up in Derbyshire - although I worked on what they call the 'all throw-in' system. That were Yorkshire, and I worked on it here. But 'all throw-in' it means to say, every penny that's earned in that place was shared - every man equal that's on the shift. But there again, you get some miners take advantage of that. As you know, every man isn't equal as regards work - can't be. And some of 'em would skipshank it, but they still want the same money as you. And you've always got to have someone in charge - brains of the job, you might call it. I mean to say, as a rule the butty - the headman - he's got to be a good man. He's got to know all his work, and if he's faced with anything bad - big roof fall or anything like that - he's got to know what he's doing or he'll soon get bloody killed!
>
> Doug Peterson

> The butty system - as it was - were abolished, so everybody got the same, but it didn't make much improvement in the tonnage or owt else. In fact, it worsened it because when the butties were in charge they saw that a man did a fair day's work - or tried to make him do, anyway. If they thought he wouldn't, they wouldn't have him again.
>
> Harry Watling

> Working with a man who's been twenty years longer than I have at a job, he'd do it better than me - for his knowledge...he's bound to know more than you do so consequently he's worth a little bit more for his excess knowledge.
>
> George Holden

These attitudes indicate that the ethos of piecework, the idea of a 'fair day's wage for a fair day's work' and the popular notion of a 'good collier' may contain within them the seeds of the butty system. As Taylor remarks, piecework foremanship is in many ways a natural accompaniment of piecework labour and this was a view shared, it seems, by a considerable number of the miners at Snowdown Colliery[38]. The potential for internal division and conflict which this type of work arrangement could create has been noted elsewhere. Ashton and Sykes pointed out that when a subcontractor began to take more of the earnings than other members of the workgang then,

> ...The principle line of cleavage in the (coal) industry was between labour and the contractor... when strikes occurred, as in Staffordshire in 1896, they were directed not against the owners of the collieries, but against the intermediary charter-masters[39].

In their study of shipbuilding workers Cousins and Brown hinted that this internal cleavage could take the form of multiple fissures within the labour force:

> But even in (these) 'one-class' communities intermediate social formations can exist. The declining industries where mass and batch production technologies are absent are typically managed on a craft administration basis. The supervisors are recruited from amongst the workers. But in the absence of a professional management structure these supervisors often control job allocation and recruitment as well. They become powerful figures in their own right. Precisely because status systems are 'interactional' and not 'attributional' particularistic relationships with the 'gaffers' can become an important source of favour, security and reward. In addition, the traditional industries of mining, dockwork and shipbuilding are, or were, strongholds of piece-work. This payments system focuses industrial conflict on the relationship between 'gaffer' and worker in the day-to-day struggle for good jobs, better prices, concessions for special difficulties... by the recognition of dependence on the employer and his agents, sectionalism, internal competition, and particularistic conflict, the solidarity of the traditional community may be broken down[40].

At Snowdown the 'rank and file' miners were clearly <u>not</u> united in active opposition to the butty system and those representatives on the union branch that had condoned it. Instead, the system evoked a variety of responses ranging from energetic opposition to passive support[41]. The range of subcontracting arrangements and the differing impact of the system, even amongst men on the same contract, made a common response unlikely since there was no foundation of common

experience. Certainly the men were divided, but not into two, or even three mutually antagonistic groups; instead the butty system helped produce a fragmented work-force split into small, competing sects[42]. In one sense subcontracting represented an intricate network of corruption which permeated the work-force and left only a small number of men with their principles intact[43]. Initially at least, this latter group did not include those who occupied positions of power on the union branch. This state of affairs had serious implications for the development of solidaristic ties amongst the men and the possibilities of effective collective action.

The traditional explanation of the origins of the solidarity displayed by miners places strong emphasis upon the sense of involvement, pride and attachment which miners share in the primary work group and the development of a fund of common occupational experience[44]. Yet how far does this type of analysis apply to the workers at Snowdown? How far did the butty system encourage group involvement or enable men to take satisfaction in the completion of their tasks? The evidence suggests that where tightly knit work groups were formed this often gave rise to conflict and friction between workers on the same contract as well as workers on different contracts. When butty-men attempted to build up regular teams of workers through the allocation of differential monetary rewards this satisfied those favourably recompensed but only served to increase the sense of injustice of those who were less favoured. How far those most exploited by the system felt a craftsmanlike pride

in their work is questionable; on the other hand, those who were 'well in' with the butty-men were likely to justify the inequalities of the system in terms of the 'good collier' argument outlined above. For these men identification with the job served to inhibit rather than encourage a solidaristic response to the injustices of subcontracting[45].

In the absence of effective union opposition men had to seek individual or small group solutions to their problems by taking contracts themselves, by working for a 'fair' subcontractor, by protesting to the manager, by threatening the contractor with physical violence or, indeed, by leaving the colliery altogether. In this context industrial relations at Snowdown were characteristically unsettled and punctuated by small scale disputes of short duration which frequently were the result of internal grievances and disagreements. The following references to the situation at Snowdown are typical of those in the KMWA Executive Minutes during the period between 1927 and 1935:

...matters were not very good...	23 October 1928
At Snowdown there was the usual amount of local trouble.	24 October 1929
At Snowdown matters were, as usual, very bad or indifferent	13 March 1930
...matters were very unsettled...	22 December 1932

This 'trouble' was normally related to a variety of issues ranging from the incidence of accidents, dismissals and overtime

working to the negotiation of contracts and price lists and levels of union membership[46]. Unfortunately the entries in the minutes are often exceedingly brief and make it difficult to judge whether these issues constituted a problem for the union, the management or both. However, continual references to non-unionism and the recognition, in 1933, that the colliery management had grown 'tired' of the continual threat of strike action imply that both sides had their problems and that these stemmed from a common source: men expressing grievances and attempting to solve them either individually or in small groups[47]. A miner from Lancashire who eventually left the colliery wrote:

> My reason for leaving Kent was due to having to go back home due to industrial disputes caused by people who would not have work. If one agitator was to stand on the bath wall, get a few men round him, and he could then disrupt the normal working day. One week I had to return home three times in the week for this reason. This was no good to me.
>
> G. Robson

In 1936 Ebby Edwards described the Kent miners as 'better organised as a trade union...than in any other section (of the MFGB)' yet the applicability of this judgement to Snowdown Colliery, particularly during the nine years prior to 1936, must be open to doubt[48]. Certainly the men at Snowdown gave a rather different description of the strength of their union:

> Union? There was no union. Geoff Thorpe
>
> The union in Kent was a union only in name. Tommy Jeffries

> The union had no more power at the pit than what a newborn baby had.
>
> Ernie Wright

> They had no union when Ellson (the manager, 1924-36) was here. He used to say, "I'm the union."
>
> Alf Jones

A branch dominated by butty-men meant that many of the aims and policies of the KMWA, particularly in relation to wages, price lists and contracts, meant nothing - they were 'winked at'[49]. Moreover, any genuine attempts by the branch to carry out union policy were seriously hindered by the low level of union membership at the colliery. In May 1928 A.J. Cook addressed a meeting of over 2,000 men outside the Greyhound pub in Aylesham in which he deplored the incidence of non-unionism at both Snowdown and Betteshanger yet four years after this speech a despairing KMWA minute reads[50]:

> No matter what is done for the men at these two pits (Snowdown and Betteshanger) they will not become trade unionists[51].

Many of the men themselves made observations similar to that quoted below:

> Then again, the union wasn't very strong, you see. It was not a condition of employment then - there was no such thing as a closed shop. And there'd probably only be about 50 per cent of the men in the union anyhow - and they wouldn't come to the meetings.
>
> Ernie Wright

and this type of estimate is supported by a survey of membership

which the KMWA had undertaken at Snowdown in September 1929 when there were approximately 1,800 men working at the colliery (see Table 5.1).

TABLE 5.1: MEMBERSHIP OF KMWA AT SNOWDOWN COLLIERY SEPTEMBER 1929

	HALF MEMBERS	FULL MEMBERS	TOTAL
Financial	59	715	774
Unfinancial	11	311	322
All	70	1,026	1,096

Note: Half members were those below 16 years of age. Unfinancial members were those whose contributions were over six weeks in arrears.

Source: KMWA, Minutes, 23 September 1929

It is hardly surprising that the union branch recommended (unsuccessfully) that weekly (full) membership fees should be reduced from 1s to 6d when they saw the results of the survey[52]. Throughout the period in question only one pit-wide strike occurred at the colliery and an examination of this stoppage and another attempted stoppage six years later reveals the difficulties which the men at Snowdown encountered in attempting to organise collective action which would effectively achieve the desired goals.

In November 1928 a dispute arose at the colliery concerning an alleged violation of the price list by the management. Men working in abnormal face conditions had been refused payment of the minimum day-wage and between 1,200 and 1,300 men struck work in their support[53]:

> It was caused through not paying the minimum wage in one stall...Ellson, the manager, wouldn't pay it...he said they weren't trying hard enough or something. It were only about two foot six thick, see? The abnormal conditions - and he wouldn't have that. And then they wanted..shilling a shift water (money), and that's what started it.
>
> Doug Peterson

After the strike had lasted for approximately one week the KMWA Executive congratulated the Snowdown men on their solidarity[54], but only a matter of days later the colliery company announced that it would re-open at the beginning of the following week and promptly 650 men signed on[55]. However, following a weekend circular issued by Snowdown branch the number that actually worked on the Monday was reduced to 96 and by Tuesday the figure had fallen to 40. During the strike the colliery had announced an intention to reduce the percentage addition to standard wage from 46.6 per cent to 37 per cent and 32 per cent - the rates which applied at Tilmanstone and Chislet Collieries[56]. For men at the coal-face this would mean a reduction in the minimum day-wage from 11s.6d to 10s.4d a shift. However, during the third week of the strike the colliery management agreed to take the men back on at pre-strike rates of pay, but only until January when, failing a district settlement, wages would fall into line with the two other operative collieries[57]. To this the union branch agreed and the men returned to work at the beginning of December. By January a district settlement had not been reached (indeed, it took six more long years before one was) and the men's wages were duly reduced, despite empty

threats of further strike action by the branch[58]. To sum up: the only notable strike at Snowdown was founded upon a precarious unity, promptly called off on the strength of a vague promise and ultimately entirely unsuccessful:

> We had to go back to work - we lost over a shilling a shift. Instead of being 11s.6d we had to go back to 10s.4d. That were it. So I'd say it were an Irishman's rise.
>
> Doug Peterson

A later dispute in 1931 tells a similar story. This too had arisen in the first instance through the non-payment of water money yet, as in the 1928 dispute, this particular issue appeared to serve as a focus for a wide range of other grievances[59]. After refusing a management offer the branch decided to ballot its members on the possibility of strike action in order to secure the full payment of the water money and also to rectify 'other grievances such as loaders or fillers being signed on as colliers, travelling time, tools, overtime, and the three day clause re sharing in on a docket'[60]. Although it is difficult to judge which particular problems were associated with 'travelling time' and 'tools', the issues of 'overtime' was a familiar one: for years some men had persisted in regularly working overtime despite the opposition of the KMWA Executive[61]. The first mentioned grievance related to the manager's practice of signing on men who were experienced colliers as loaders or fillers which meant that in effect, they did the work of a collier but did not receive the full collier's rate and the last

mentioned problem concerned the now familiar butty system[62]. Each of these issues were potentially extremely divisive - they could set one man against another as vested interests became threatened by change - and the fact that the subsequent ballot showed a majority against strike action would perhaps indicate that this potential had been realised and the possibility of effective collective action remained limited[63].

The nature of the work environment at Snowdown undoubtedly created dissatisfaction and caused considerable conflict. Yet this conflict was invariably unorganised: miners reacted individually or in small groups in an impulsive and non-calculative manner[64]. Solidarity at the pit level was lacking and this seriously inhibited the development of strong collective organisation; instead, the behaviour of the Snowdown miners, both at the pit and in the community, came close to Rimlinger's notion of 'aggressive individuality'. Although the sociological value of this behavioural description is questionable Rimlinger's suggestions as to the manner in which 'aggressive individuality' may manifest itself bear a remarkably close resemblance to the character of social life at Snowdown and Aylesham between 1927 and 1939[65]. It is to the nature of non-work social relationships that attention is now directed.

b) At Aylesham village

Where the majority of employees at any particular workplace also live together in a small and isolated community there is clearly a potential for 'overlap' in social relationships and

the creation of an 'occupational community'. In this context, Dennis and his colleagues (and many others besides) argued that social relationships developed at the colliery - in particular, solidarity - were reaffirmed and reinforced by social relationships in the community[66]. The connections between relationships at Snowdown and Aylesham were manifold and expressed in many diverse and sometimes subtle ways. Nevertheless, two examples will serve to demonstrate the concrete reality of these linkages. First, Snowdown union branch meetings were frequently held at local clubs, or at the pub or even at the local cinema. Second, butty-men often paid their workers at the end of the week at their home or in the club rather than in the pit yard. However, the social relationships of miners and their families at Aylesham did not approximate the solidarity or communal sociability which social historians have normally associated with traditional working class communities. The internal cleavage, conflict and differentiation which was apparent at the colliery had its counterpart in the local community.

In her local survey Hughes noted discontent and instability in the new Kent mining settlements and, in particular, Aylesham[67]. Contemporary newspaper articles lend some support to this interpretation; the Dover Express frequently carried stories of theft, vandalism, drunkenness and assault which had occurred in Aylesham[68]. A selection of cases heard at Wingham Petty Sessions in April 1930 illustrates the type of offence which were regularly reported in the local press. Those who appeared

included a lodger who had stolen money from his landlady, a man who had assaulted the landlord of the Greyhound pub, another fined for poaching in a local field, two others fined for street fighting and two women bound over to keep the peace for 'quarrelling'[69]. It is important to note that crimes were not only committed against those who managed or owned private premises or land but also against fellow wage earners; just as shop was burgled and hare poached, so too private gas meters were looted and garden fences chopped up for firewood. And in Aylesham, at least, miners were as likely to vent their aggression on one another as much as on the local publican, policeman or colliery manager[70].

Now it could be argued that a modicum of aggressive behaviour and lawlessness is common to all mining or working class communities and may indeed co-exist with relationships characterised by communal sociability. Whether or not this is so, the incidence and character of the offences which were regularly committed in Aylesham during the first 10 or 15 years led Snowdown miners and their families to distinguish between the character of the place 'then' (c 1927-1939) and 'now' (c 1974-1976).

> The house that I got had been empty for six months. Bloody windows was all broken in - the floor, the house was like a pigsty...it took us three weeks to clean it out.
>
> What was Aylesham like in those days?
>
> Like the Wild West! (laughs) You daren't walk down the bloody street. The Ratling Club then was called the 'Blood Pit' - there used to be a fight every night - there was a fight and

all, you know! You daren't go up the streets, not like you can now. Oh, it's heaven now compared to what it used to be. They'd go round pinching stuff out your bloody garden - anything! Nothing to see a brick come through your bloody window! We had force of eight policemen there on duty regular - they used to walk round the street in two's!

Sam Lawrence

There were some rotten ones here mind. Don't kid yourself that this was a namby-pamby place - it wasn't! It was a right rough place for a while. It's a lot easier now. In those days there was only one pub - The Greyhound - the policemen used to go and stand beside the Rescue Station (opposite) on a Saturday night. There would be a hell of a row - chaps killing each other - and when it had quietened down they used to walk down. "Who won? Oh, you didn't, you didn't. Who won? Oh yeah, you. Come on, I want you." There were some funny tricks pulled here in those days - it's been a funny place altogether...there was always a little bit of clannishness among them - now they've all inter-married and the rest of it - but in those days there was always a certain amount of clannishness.

George Holden

There used to be battles here, there and everywhere. But they're all inter-married now and it's different altogether.

Frank Williams

Aylesham was also frequently contrasted with the communities from which the migrants had originated:

Well, I mean to me, coming down here was totally strange. I'd been used to town life, you see...you're uprooted as a boy and you're

> brought down here - it was totally different...they were a wild lot down here at that time - they were all just milling and weaving about...my mother ...couldn't settle, I mean she wasn't used to all this rowdyism which used to go on on a Saturday night...my side of the family, they're all churchgoers... and they come down to this lawless town - as it was then (laughs) - it was totally different, you see?
>
> Bill Loney

For local mining families the passing of time and the development of friendship and kinship networks has enabled Aylesham to complete the transition from 'a rough place' characterised by internal conflict and cleavage to a more settled community where 'everybody knows (and helps) one another'[71].

Although it would be inaccurate to ascribe the pre-war behaviour of Aylesham residents entirely to work relationships engendered at the colliery there can be no doubt that much of the fighting and ill-feeling that occurred did stem from the friction which existed between miners at Snowdown. When, for example, in 1930 one Gladys Brunt of Queens Road, Aylesham summoned two other women from the same road to Wingham Petty Sessions, both she and a police superintendant testified that there had been a large amount of local 'trouble' and that it had originated in the 1928 strike at Snowdown[72]. Moreover, the operation of the butty system certainly accounted for a substantial proportion of what might euphemistically be termed 'community disagreements':

> They used to have some battles, especially with that butty system. "Eyup, isn't that that bastard out of 32's (face)?" "Oh, it's our turn: bump him!" They used to get hammered! I know one - Geordie bloke - they left him, well it was rumoured he was dead. Some Scotchmen got hold of him outside The Moor's Head at Adisham - waited till closing time and catched him. He'd been paying bad. They didn't half belt his earhole!
>
> Jack Wilson

Denied the possibility of a long term solution the opportunity to smash a pint glass over a butty-man's head represented for some a satisfactory shortterm solution to the evils of subcontracting. No doubt this practice deterred some of the more ruthless subcontractors yet the reckless and desperate character of these acts is indicative of the notable absence of more effective social penalties which could have prevented the abuses of the butty system. A butty-man resonsible for an 'unfair' dismissal or payment did not suffer the social ostracism which may have been inflicted upon him and his family through the extended social networks of a more united and stable community. As it was the resentment and antagonism caused by the butty system permeated social life in the village but these feelings were often privately expressed rather than publicly stated:

> There used to be a man there, when we lived in this house...(my wife) says, "Ron - there's a man over there got a car!" I says, "I worked for him!" I says, "I bought that car!" And I did y'know! And his son-in-law now keeps that hut over there...he's rigged hisself up in betting.
>
> Ron Burnley

Clearly, the sphere of work and non-work were interlocked in a reciprocal relationship: a divided community, therefore, served to further encourage a divided work-force.

(iv) 'Miners divided': an explanation of the origins (and elimination) of the butty system

The divided, fragmentary character of the miners' social relationships, particularly as exemplified and encouraged by the butty system, and the resulting internal strains and conflicts which prevented pit-wide solidarity or collective action were, to a large extent, a consequence of the economic and social immaturity of the coalfield. The behaviour of the Snowdown miners can be explained by reference to the type of constraints which operated during the opening out of a newly developing coal district and which have significant consequences for employers and employees.

The dimensions of the migratory flow both into and out of the developing coalfield, outlined in Chapter 4, showed how the character of the migrants and their motives and objectives tended to predetermine further movement. As a result, social relationships were characteristically unstable and this seriously undermined the ability of the men to organise themselves in a coherent and lasting fashion. A large number of miners at Snowdown simply were not in the area long enough to involve themselves in work, union or community ties[73]. Even those that stayed for a number of years may have maintained an instrumental orientation to their working lives in Kent since

they intended to remain in the area only until employment conditions improved in the coalfields from which they had migrated. This instrumentality could have inhibited their commitment to the collective achievement of long term goals and may therefore explain the relatively low levels of KMWA membership at Snowdown. These may, for example, have been the men referred to in this (typically) exasperated union minute:

> ...certain numbers of them (non-unionists) would seem to want assistance only in times of stress and trouble[74].

Those who were committed to spending the rest of their working lives in the Kent collieries had to contend with the considerable problems which arose through the geographical and occupational differentiation of their fellow workers. Even those with a common experience in mining brought with them widely differing customs and traditions relating to hours of work, methods of coal extraction, teamwork, types of pit tools, method and rates of payment - and even the way in which these were linguistically labelled:

> That was mostly the trouble: you had people from Wales, people from Scotland, people from Ireland, Durham, Yorkshire, Cumberland - even down in the West Country...so cosmopolitan. No matter where you went there was somebody of a different language. And you had to master all that when you went down the bloody pit - because they had the terms that they used to use in their coalfield and you had the terms that you used to use in your coalfield. So you didn't know what to do.
>
> Sam Lawrence

These differences heightened the insecurity of a new and unsettling environment and led to tension and dispute both between groups of men and between the men and the management[75]. A Scotsman explained how friction might arise:

> I came to the board: there was the day shift deputy. And he used to walk up, get your headlamp, try it, and then he used to walk into your place of work. I was beginning to learn the English system then - because in Scotland you don't doff your cap to the manager or anything. You address him as 'Sir' but you talk man to man...but down here, when I first came, the deputy was a great 'I am' to everybody else. But to me - I just couldn't get it out of my system - he was only a man, same as me.
>
> Frank Williams

Although disputes could be caused through a whole variety of factors those which were directly related to the wage packet created considerable friction and for this reason Welshmen frequently bore the brunt of public disfavour[76]:

> People didn't like the Welsh - they were the chief ones who everybody seemed to go against ...Wales was one of the lowest paid...they'd only been paid six bob a day in Wales. You offer them eight bob for a job that a Derby man wouldn't do for eight bob...he'd bite his bloody hand off for it! But he were price cutting all the time, see? Wherever he went! So the Welshmen were utterly disliked...they thought they were doing well...but they were killing the price lists...oh, there was nobody liked a Welshman.
>
> Harry Watling

The tendency for friction to develop between migrants from

differing backgrounds has been noted in numerous social contexts. In a more contemporary study of the coal industry and the migration of miners Smith noted that 'the egalitarian Durham miner could not understand - indeed, he actively disliked - the authoritarianism he found in North Staffordshire' and that 'mixing workers with differing industrial backgrounds often leads to disturbed industrial relations'[77]. Earlier, Owen pointed out the 'acute social friction', over wage issues and employment opportunities, which developed between men who had taken advantage of the inter-war transfer schemes[78].

The miners at Snowdown found support in this hostile environment by working with men who had originated from similar areas. Thus the cliques which were formed in the migration process itself were maintained and strengthened in Kent through the selection of workmates and the exclusivity of contract teams. For example, the stall to which the docket reproduced above refers was the resonsibility of Messrs Churches, Blow and Coles, all of whom were Welshmen and had known each other in Wales. Teams of men from one particular area did not take kindly to the introduction of outsiders and could apply a variety of sanctions to prevent this happening too often. A miner accused of assaulting a deputy at Snowdown claimed his action had been caused by his direction to a stall worked exclusively by men from Derbyshire 'who gave him (being Welsh) a terrible time'[79]. The perpetuation of these cliques meant that the men remained fundamentally divided at work and that the attempts to achieve any effective broader organisation continued to encounter formidable barriers.

That these divisions were carried over into social relationships in the community has already been hinted in earlier oral accounts where the unity and coherence of contemporary Aylesham was contrasted with the 'clannish' character of the village during the pre-war era. Two more excerpts put a similar point in stronger fashion:

> There were Scotch gangs walking about the street and Welsh gangs - and woe betide you if you went wrong one way or the other! You were for it!
>
> Bill Loney

> About the time I came here, they could never agree, the people - the Welsh, the Geordies and the Scotch. They were always fighting y'know (laughs). But of course, they've had the children and they've married different - through and through - and it's all different y'know. Oh aye, they used to be terrible here.
>
> Alf Jones

Just as, for example, Scotsmen might work together at the colliery so, from the very beginning, they tended to live together in the community[80]:

> I met the district nurse at the school there and I said, "Excuse me lady, could you tell me where I could get pit lodgings?" She says, "You're Scotch aren't you?" I says, "Yes." "Well" she says, "There's some Scotch people live just down the road there. Go and see them." I lived there until I brought the missus down.
>
> Stan Barnett

This pattern was actively encouraged by the colliery company which frequently persuaded men who had established themselves at Snowdown to bring down family and friends. Their aim, of course, was to attract good, experienced mineworkers and to lower the very high turnover both at the pit and in the houses which they also managed:

> The manager's spoken to him and said "Have you any more brothers up in Yorkshire like yourself?" - 'Cos he were a good worker... He said "They're only working three days a week." He said, "Well, tell them if they come down here they can have a job and they can work seven days a week and I'll find 'em all a house a piece!" ...this manager, he'd have given anything for workmen in those days, he couldn't get them.
>
> Ron Burnley

> One of the reasons why the old man got a job here...over 40 you wouldn't have a job. Well ...as soon as he wrote...he'd got two sons to work they'd give him a job because...they wanted people with sons that knows pitwork.
>
> Harry Watling

The 'problems' of the migrant community were often noted by people other than the miners and their families; in particular local religious dignitaries referred to the potential for discord when those from different areas were suddenly brought together. Upon opening Aylesham Church Hall in 1928 Dr. Bell, the Dean of Canterbury, remarked:

> The people here come from all parts of England, Scotland and Wales. Therefore, naturally, they are strangers to one another, and, though a common occupation has now brought them together, they may find it at times difficult to be sociable between their families and with another. The place is strange, they are new to it. There are difficulties connected with the work...with leisure and play; difficulties due to uncertainties[81].

and almost 10 years later the remarks of Reverend Anderson suggest that the internal divisions and conflicts were just as strong:

> The miners come from Scotland, Northumberland, Cumberland, Durham, Yorkshire, Staffordshire, Somerset, Ireland and Wales. Given the best conditions it takes some time for people with such diverse backgrounds to become welded together into a new community with anything like the strength of tradition they have left behind. In Aylesham we have none[82].

The divisions created by differing backgrounds were not easily overcome and moreover, the task of uniting the various factions was made more difficult by the youth and poverty of the migrants[83]. From the union viewpoint a young work-force has traditionally proved to be more difficult to organise, particularly in the absence of the restraining influences of extended kinship networks. The particular problems of the inter-war era were well described by Hannington:

> ...we must remember that many of the young men who are moving away from these areas today have never had the chance of becoming trade unionists

> because they have never been able to obtain regular employment and settle down to a trade. They have passed into manhood without personal experience of trade unionism and consequently have never enjoyed the pride of combination with fellow workers and the feeling of dignity and respect for hard won standards which is engendered by trade union association.
> In the main it is this section of workers which is transferring to other districts, and, unless the trade union movement faces the problem with a constructive policy, many of these workers will develop an individualistic outlook and become sour against the trade unionism which they feel is ostracising them[84].

Although no data on the age structure of union members was available several of the older miners suggested that failure to join the union or maintain a regular subscription was more common amongst the young.

In a different way poverty could stunt the growth of collective organisation amongst workers by intensifying their dependence upon the employer, for both employment and housing, as Jack Elks explained at the 1928 MFGB Conference:

> The point here is this: they have to get their homes down into Kent. They go to the colliery company and the colliery company generously advance the necessary money to get their homes down, anything from £10 to £20 advanced. They are put into the company's houses and immediately become bondsmen of the colliery company, because they cannot take a stand or do certain things because they are in the hands of the colliery company owing to these advances and being in company's houses[85].

In sum, a migrant labour force characteristically young, socially dislocated, from differing mining and non-mining environments and unusually dependent on the employer did not lend itself easily to organisation such that problems could be collectively tackled. In this context the butty system thrived and indeed, encouraged further internal division and cleavage. Moreover, the system was an integral part of the migration process for although men from various coalfields could - and did - become subcontractors, the butty system was generally regarded as 'a Derbyshire system':

> It was a most cosmopolitan crowd down here ...we had men from all over the British Isles ...but it was really the Derbyshire-Staffordshire system that we worked at. It was their system - it was something they were used to.
>
> Paddy Hughes

> It was a Derbyshire system...because the manager was a Derbyshire men y'know...it was also his system.
>
> Alf Jones

Ellson, the colliery manager, did indeed come from Derbyshire and after arriving at Snowdown in 1924 he deliberately 'imported' skilled labour (overmen, deputies and subcontractors) from that particular area. His own estimate was that these men numbered approximately 200[86]; certainly the existence of Snowdown Colliery was well known in Derbyshire:

> The manager, Ellson, came from Derbyshire. And the overmen and deputies - there were quite a few come from round our road...and there were quite a few families from the next village to me - Tibshelf. That's how we got to know.
>
> Doug Peterson

In a fragmented and constantly changing labour force those who were opposed to subcontracting could not rely upon widespread or constant support and so were easily intimidated by the pervading influence - at the coal-face, in the union and with the management - of the all-powerful butty-men.

> You'd grumble if after you'd done a day's work, each day, and when you came to the weekend you held your hand out and you got the bare minimum. And you couldn't say anything. Why couldn't you say anything? Because if you were sent there next week and he'd got to know that you'd complained he'd say, "We've no room for you, go back." And they perhaps wouldn't send you home but they'd find you a boy's job and that would be very said because you'd have a wife and some kiddies and your rent to pay and all that... made you think a bit.
>
> Ron Burnley

If the migratory flux associated with the development of a new coalfield had influenced the character of social relationships and created conditions favourable for subcontracting, why had the colliery manager taken the trouble to encourage the system by, for example, deliberately importing Derbyshire butty-men? What were the managerial advantages of maintaining a subcontracting system? From a cynical viewpoint it could be

suggested that the internal divisions which the butty system encouraged were sufficient reason for the employers to favour its perpetuation. But there were more direct economic motives which were related to the financial situation in the coalfield. Colliery operations in Kent, and Snowdown was no exception, had required high levels of expenditure due to the costs of sinking to the deeper more lucrative seams which were 3,000 feet below the surface and the very difficult geological conditions that were encountered, mainly through seam variation and flooding[87]. In these conditions it was difficult, once a seam had been reached and opened out, to install any technically advanced equipment and in any case, the colliery companies were more interested, in the short term at least, in producing as much coal as possible at a minimum extra cost. By employing buttymen who had knowledge, experience and working capital, and who made supervision largely unnecessary, these short term aims were realised and the sizeable amounts of capital which had been invested in development were shown to be producing real returns.

The drive for the immediate maximisation of output was most noticeable at Snowdown Colliery during the nine year period after the re-opening in 1927. Although individual colliery figures are unavailable the output of Pearson and Dorman Long, the owners of Snowdown and Betteshanger Collieries, rose from under 200,000 tons in 1927 to over 1.3 million tons by 1935. During the same period the Snowdown labour force more than doubled from 1,020 to 2,246 and increasingly these men were deployed in more directly productive underground work - the figure rising from 79 per cent in 1927 to 85 per cent by 1930[88].

Men who worked at the colliery during this period complained bitterly of the manager's excessive concern with winning coal at the expense of the miners' safety and general working conditions:

> Jesus Christ, other collieries weren't like Snowdown. They were working in temperatures then, 100 degrees easy! 102 degrees in places! Red hot it was! 'Cos this here manager came and he went north, east, south and west to get his coal and the bloody ventilation wouldn't - the fan was powerful but it had so much to do! And he was after his coal. Mind, they had 14,000 tons a week at one period there.
>
> Jack Wilson

Thus particular types of work (and non-work) relationships may be directly associated with the developmental stage of the colliery and the coalfield; the failure of the miners' attempts at collective action and the lack of pit-wide solidarity were related to the cycle of coal extraction. This analysis is lent further support by a brief examination of the manner in which the butty system was eventually eliminated. Evidence from union minutes would suggest that subcontracting was finally abolished after a long struggle by officials to organise the rank and file miners into opposition[89]. The falsity of this 'version' has already been demonstrated; the truth appears to be rather more complex. Certainly the growing strength of the opposition expressed through the KMWA played a part in the demise of the system. But how did this change of attitude come about at branch level? In the absence of union

branch records at Snowdown Colliery or the survival of any member of the Branch Executive this is an extremely difficult question to answer. It is unclear whether there was a complete change in branch personnel or attitudes (or both). Given that there was a shift in branch policy - and that this policy actually had some effect - what caused this alteration in the balance of power? The first hand explanations offered by miners shed some light upon the processes whereby subcontracting was eliminated:

> It was the accepted thing. You got men coming from Wales, from Lancashire, from Yorkshire, from Scotland, Geordieland, everywhere...as they came down and got together a bit and then analysed this butty system all together, that's when...a point came that they decided it had got to go... after a few years, when men had digested it...'cos previous to that there were men coming and going - there was no settled community.
>
> Harry Watling

> Well, there was nothing else here then, see? There was nothing else here. When you were starting in this pit it was all butty, y'see, the butty system. But it was - the men gradually got wiser and wiser and wiser. Then we had a ballot on it...and we fucking well beat 'em easy...fucking busted it up.
>
> Bill White

> It was something that I never knew nothing about till I got here. I thought it was a most inhumane system I did. But we had no union - just a small one fighting to get going and we were just simply outnumbered...couldn't get it stopped - but eventually it was stopped.
>
> Paddy Hughes

These accounts make reference to two related developments. First, men began to understand the intricacies of the butty system - they 'digested it' and became 'wiser and wiser' - as their experience of it grew. This more comprehensive knowledge fully exposed the inequalities of the system and made the attempt to oppose it better informed and directed. Second, the miners' ability to oppose the butty system was increased by the diminishing pace of migration towards the late thirties. By 1935 the output of the coalfield had reached a peak of almost 2.1 million tons and the number of men employed was over 7,300. The phase of rapid development was now over: by 1939 1.9 million tons were produced by just over 6,400 men. At Snowdown, between the end of 1935 and 1938, the labour force fell by over 400 to 1,803[90]. At the same time conditions in other traditional coalmining areas improved and this slowed the migratory flow into Kent whilst encouraging some of those already there to return home[91]. The resulting labour shortage at Snowdown meant that men were less intimidated by the wide-ranging powers of the butty-men and, in a more settled environment, better placed to organise themselves more effectively.

Yet the abolition of the system was not solely the work of the men; as was the case in other coalfields, managerial and technological change played an important part[92].

> The lads got wise to it (the butty system) in the end. And it come that way that there was no coal coming - so he (the manager) had to do something about it.
>
> Jack Wilson

At Snowdown, falling output in the context of a labour shortage forced the owners, Pearson and Dorman Long, to take action to ensure that the labour which they had was effectively deployed. To do this they were compelled to introduce changes which gave a more positive day to day role for the 'official' managers (deputies, overmen and so on) rather than the butty-men. As a result, the manager of Snowdown Colliery - who, as an individual was very favourably disposed towards the butty system - was replaced[93]; for some men it was this dismissal which effectively marked the end of the system:

> When did the butty system, when did that disappear then?
>
> Well, after he was sacked here...the manager was a Derbyshire man y'know...it was also his system. I think he got the sack the end of 1936 or 1937
>
> Alf Jones

Perhaps of greater significance was the subsequent introduction of a yardage rather than tonnage system of payment on the conveyor coal-faces during 1938 and 1939[94]. This effectively pre-determined the minimum workload and output of each collier during the course of a shift and represented a tighter form of control than measurement by weight which had allowed butty-men the opportunity to 'skim off' the surplus earnings of a contract.

> I think it eventually died out about 1936 when they took on the conveyors on what they called the yardage system instead of tonnage...each full day's (days and afternoons) work was to take off a whole coal-face 4 foot 6 in depth...this was

> divided into stints...12 yards long by 4 foot 6 deep y'see. And there would be four men on that: two men on afternoons, two men on days.
>
> Ernie Wright

> The management tried to break it as well because they sent deputies down the pit to start the stint work...they sent the deputies - two or three on a face - to see how much coal they could get off on a shift and also how much a yard they were going to pay.
>
> Harry Watling

The butty system, at least as outlined above, finally disappeared from Snowdown Colliery between 1936 and 1939. However, the structure of inequality and privilege upon which it was based continued to affect workplace relationships, albeit in a more subtle manner, for many years afterwards. In fact, as long as piecework persisted there were opportunities for a privileged minority to consistently acquire the more lucrative contracts. In one sense, then, the miners were not free of the butty system until the introduction of the NPLA in 1966, as the current President of the NUM (Kent Area) has publicly admitted:

> The (butty) system was in practice when I first went into the pit (in Scotland)...in 1927 and I was involved in fighting against it all my life - until we got rid of it...when we introduced the new wages system that took us away from contract work as we described it - productivity work, incentive work as other people described it...in 1965, when we first got away from that system. In my opinion (this) was the one real benefit that the miners have achieved[95].

The lingering influence of the butty system has been noted elsewhere. Barratt Brown, for example, pointed out that 'in some pits the union has held on to a historic control over hiring and firing and manning up of faces that originates from the earlier 'butty' system of subcontracting'[96]. Smith observed a similar pattern in North Staffordshire during the mid-fifties. 'The Butty System' he noted, 'is still here. The contractors have favourites. Their drinking mates come first, local men second, and the transferred men last'[97]. Clearly, the butty system in the coal industry is deserving of more attention; hopefully, this chapter has indicated the direction which a more thorough analysis should take. Following Taylor, it may be possible to link the system, and the actions and attitudes of colliery owners, management and miners, to the flux and instability which characterise the rapid development of collieries and coalfields.

NOTES

1. For historical surveys of the range of subcontracting arrangements in British industry see, E.J. HOBSBAWN, Labouring Men, London, 1964; S. POLLARD, The Genesis of Modern Management, Harmondsworth, 1968; A.L. FRIEDMAN, Class Struggle at Work and Monopoly Capitalism, London, 1977.

2. See, for example, the brief references in E.W. EVANS, The Miners of South Wales, Cardiff, 1961, p. 6; F. MACHIN, The Yorkshire Miners: A History Vol. 1., Barnsley, 1958, p. 6.

3. See Chapter 1, Section (i).

4. J.E. WILLIAMS, The Derbyshire Miners, London, 1962.

5. N. DENNIS, F. HENRIQUES and C. SLAUGHTER, Coal is Our Life, London, 1969, pp. 48-50, 58, 62.

6. A.J. TAYLOR, 'The Subcontract System in the British Coal Industry', in L.S. PRESSNELL(ed.), Studies in the Industrial Revolution, London, 1960.

7. Ibid., p. 233.

8. Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1968 (5th Edition), Oxford.

9. Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary, 1972, Edinburgh.

10. T.S. ASHTON and J. SYKES, The Coal Industry of the Eighteenth Century, Manchester, 1929, pp. 113-114.

11. For a discussion of this development see 'Another Language', New Society, 17, 445, 1971.

12. T.S. ASHTON and J. SYKES, op. cit., p. 113. Trinder claims that in Staffordshire the term 'butty' was often the equivalent of 'great belly'. See B. TRINDER, The Industrial Revolution in Shropshire, Chichester, 1973, p. 344.

13. G.E. EVANS, The Days That we have Seen, London, 1975, p. 165.

14. W.A. COLE and G. WILLIAMS, South Wales Coalfield History Project: A Research Report, (SSRC, London), 1974, p. 189.

15. Kent Mine Workers' Association (KMWA) Minutes, 14 October 1916, 31 August 1918, 11 September 1918, 28 September 1918, 1 October 1918, 2 October 1918, 13 October 1918, 19 December 1928, 31 January 1929, 25 February 1929, 19 December 1929, 28 August 1930, 20 October 1930, 5 January 1931, 11 February 1931, 4 March 1931, 25 August 1932, 24 September 1932, 1 October 1932, 20 October 1932.

16. Dover Express (DE), 22 March, 5 April 1935.

17. Except where otherwise indicated, this and the following information concerning the organisation of the butty system is based solely upon oral evidence.

18. During the course of the research this was the only contract docket located despite extensive enquiries. This may have been because few were actually retained over such a long time period. Nevertheless, it did appear as if the secrecy and intrigue which pervaded the subcontracting system continued to exercise its influence over thirty years

after the demise of the system. As a result, more dockets may have survived but their owners were, perhaps, reluctant to make them public.

19. See Chapter 3.

20. The task of estimating the butty : men ratio is made even more difficult by the remarkable lack of documentary evidence. A rare reference was made at a meeting of the East Kent Development Committee (EKDC) by Jack Elks, the KMWA Secretary. Whilst one man could retain a contract docket, he claimed, 'anything from two to twenty names could be involved'. EKDC Minutes, 9 July 1929.

21. For an example of such 'abnormal circumstances' see the oral evidence presented, pp. 15-16.

22. The manager of Snowdown Colliery (1924-1937), Mr. L.C. Ellson, asserted that some butty men could earn as much as £10 a week and could therefore pay their workers as much as £1 a shift.

23. This omission of individual wages may well have been a common practice, for if the docket had 'fallen into the wrong hands' it may have constituted 'incriminating evidence'!

24. Correspondence kept at NUM Offices (Kent Area), Dover. Also see KMWA, Minutes, 19 December 1929, 6 February 1930.

25. W. JOHNSON, 'The Development of the Kent Coalfield, 1896-1946', unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Kent, 1972, p. 382.

26. KMWA Minutes, 19 December 192.

27. Ibid., 25 February 1929.

28. Ibid., 15 April 1930.

29. Ibid., 5 January 1931, 11 February 1931.

30. Ibid., 24 September 1932, 1 October 1932. Also DE, 2 September 1932, 23 September 1932, 7 October 1932.

31. This was apparently the third ballot taken at Snowdown; the other two taking place in 1928 and 1929. In the first ballot 326 men had voted for the abolition of the system and 175 for its retention. There are no figures available for the 1929 ballot. See W. JOHNSON, op. cit., p. 382; DE, 3 August 1928.

32. KMWA Minutes, 14 October 1916.

33. Ibid., 31 August 1918.

34. DE, 7 October 1932.

35. KMWA, Minutes, 28 August 1930.

36. Butty men were also known to be union representatives in areas of the East Midlands. See A.R. GRIFFIN, Mining in the East Midlands, 1550-1947, London, 1971, p. 89.

37. For an elaboration of the 'safety valve' effect of social mobility see F. PARKIN, Class Inequality and Political Order, London, 1971, Chapter 2.

38. A.J. TAYLOR, op. cit., p. 234.

39. T.S. ASHTON and J. SYKES, op. cit., p. 63. See also

J.E. WILLIAMS, op. cit., p. 63.

40. J.M. COUSINS and R.K. BROWN, 'Patterns of Paradox: Shipbuilding Workers' Images of Society', in M. BULMER (ed.), Working Class Images of Society, London, 1975, p. 56.

41. Moreover, something like this range of response was sometimes evident within individual accounts of the system. The ambivalent and often contradictory nature of some descriptions reflected the complexity of subcontracting arrangements. But it would be wrong to expect perfectly clear, concise and logical responses; we all have what have been termed 'loose ends' in our thinking. See T. NICHOLS and P. ARMSTRONG, Workers Divided, Glasgow, 1976; also the discussion in Chapter 3.

42. Some indication that this process of fragmentation occurred in Nottinghamshire during the same period is given in Griffin's account. See A.R. GRIFFIN, The Miners of Nottinghamshire, London, 1962, pp. 53-54.

43. The use of the word 'corruption' may appear too strong yet it should be pointed out that the butty system has frequently been linked with various forms of bribery and, in earlier days, the ill dealings associated with the truck system. See J.E. WILLIAMS, op. cit; K. BURGESS, The Origins of British Industrial Relations, London, 1975.

44. See Chapter 1.

45. This contradiction between ties with the job and ties with fellow workers is elaborated in J.M. COUSINS and R.K. BROWN, op. cit.

46. See Chapter 3.

47. KMWA, Minutes, 21 January 1933. Ellson, the colliery manager, in reference to these small scale disputes described the Snowdown men as 'a rum and rough lot... the roughest I've ever seen'. This interview was not taped.

48. W. JOHNSON, op. cit., p. 358. The remark was made in evidence to the Royal Commission on Safety in Coalmines, 1936-38, Minutes of Evidence, Vol.1, p. 207.

49. This helps explain the ineffectual Snowdown ballots. For a similar account in a different coalfield see A.R. GRIFFIN, (1971), op. cit., p. 192.

50. DE, 11 May 1928, 18 May 1928.

51. KMWA, Minutes, 11 February 1932. This is but one of a number of observations concerning the problem of non-unionism at Snowdown. See also KMWA, Minutes, 25 February 1929, 23 September 1929, 19 December 1929, 13 March 1930, 24 July 1930, 28 August 1930, 20 October 1930, 4 March 1931, 31 August 1931, 11 February 1932, 20 October 1932, 19 January 1933, 15 March 1939. And DE, 21 May 1926, 10 October 1930, 31 October 1930, 6 February 1930, 6 March 1931, 24 April 1931, 22 April 1932, 10 June 1932, 15 July 1932, 17 November 1933, 21 April 1939, 15 September 1939.

52. KMWA, Minutes, 23 September 1929. For further details concerning union membership, levels of subscription etc, see Chapter 2.

53. DE, 16 November 1928.

54. Ibid., 23 November 1928.

55. Ibid., 30 November 1928.

56. See documents relating to the employers' proposals held at NUM (Kent Area), Dover.

57. DE, 7 December 1928. The agreement, dated 1 December 1928, was made in the following terms:

> 1. The workmen agree to resume work at the said colliery forthwith...the company agree to pay during the period up to and including December 31, 1928, wages on exactly the same terms as were in force prior to the stoppage of work on November 14.
>
> 2. If no general district wages agreement has been arrived at by the Kent District Coal Mining Board prior to January 1 next, the workmen agree to continue work on and after that date, and that the percentage payable on basic rate shall on and after the last mentioned date be 32% and 37%, as now applied at Tilmanstone Colliery.

The strike had lasted from 14 November to 3 December. Colliery Guardian, 7 December 1928.

58. DE, 11 January 1929, 18 January 1929, 25 January 1929. KMWA, Minutes, 31 January 1929.

59. DE, 16 November 1928.

60. KMWA, Minutes, 26 September 1934.

61. See resolution forwarded by KMWA at the MFGB Annual Conference, 11 July 1932, and comments of W. JOHNSON, op. cit., p. 380.

62. One ex-miner told me:

> We went upstairs (to see the manager)...and the first thing he says: 'What have you been doing?'...I said, 'I've been putting and hewing.' 'Lets have a look at your hands. Alright,' he says, '...you're a loader.'... The main job that we had was that we would go to work on the coal face with the colliers - do exactly the same work as they were doing - but we were on 8/2d and they were on 10/6d, minimum wage.
>
> Sam Lawrence

63. 740 men voted for strike action and 844 against. DE, 5 October 1934.

64. For a discussion of organised and unorganised conflict see Chapter 3.

65. Rimlinger suggests the following manifestations of 'aggressive individuality':

    1. 'friction between workers'.
    2. 'refusals to co-operate'.
    3. 'heavy absenteeism'.
    4. 'the rise of informal or secret organisations'.
    5. 'mutual recriminations and acts of violence'.

    Much of this chapter is concerned with outlining the dimensions of (1) by discussing in some detail (4), that is, the butty system. The 'refusal of men to co-operate' (2) either with the union or management has already been noted and 'mutual recriminations and acts of violence' (5) are acknowledged later on. Whilst little is known about absenteeism (3) the very high level of turnover at the colliery could be considered as an extreme form of absenteeism. G.V. RIMLINGER, 'International Differences in the Strike Propensity of Coal Miners: Experience in Four Countries', Industrial and Labour Relations Review, 12, 1959.

66. See Chapter 1.

67. V. HUGHES, 'A Social Survey of the East Kent Coalfield', unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of London, 1934.

68. See for example, DE, 4 September 1931, 16 June 1933, 7 July 1933, 20 March 1936, 27 March 1936, 20 January 1939, 17 November 1939.

69. Ibid., 2 May 1930.

70. When outside Aylesham miners were more likely to team up against 'local opposition' which frequently included members of the armed forces:

> It was a bit 'rubby'. There were marines there, there were young miners, and of course, the marines were jealous of the young miners. There were a battle or two over girlfriends.
>
> Frank Williams

> You had a hell of a lot of troops down here then...it was keeping 'em apart! Saturday night was hell, especially around Dover market...Canterbury had a cavalry depot, well of course, colliers used to mix in with them...there were battles.
>
> Jack Wilson

The Saturday night visits of miners to Dover caused some concern amongst certain sections of the local population. The Kent County Temperance Federation, noting the increasing incidence of arrests for drunkenness in Dover (1924: 11, 1925: 20, 1926: 38, 1927: 35 and 1928: 45) noted that this was 'mostly due to visitors from the colliery districts, especially Aylesham, who come into the town in large numbers on Saturdays'. DE, 10 January 1930.

71. For an elaboration of these ideas see Chapters 6 and 7.

72. DE, 7 March 1930.

73. A point acknowledged by the union leaders themselves in explaining the weakness of organisation at Snowdown. KMWA, Minutes, 23 September 1929.

74. KMWA, Minutes, 25 February 1929.

75. These difficulties of dialect were elaborated in the BBC 2 programme Word of Mouth: The New Men of Kent, first broadcast on 9.9.76, where the focus was upon Betteshanger Colliery. That the situation there resembled that at Snowdown is revealed in the following exchange between miner and interviewer:

> Miner: When I came here...they had the Welshmen and the Scotchmen, all individuals, and they daren't apeak to each other.
>
> Inter.: What do you mean, they daren't speak to each other?
>
> Miner: In case they take the story back to the gaffer!

76. In explaining the weakness of trade unionism in areas to which industrial transferees migrated Daly makes a similar point. The Welsh, he says, did not make good trade unionists because they had been unemployed for longer than most. This led to a diminished respect for trade unionism and a lowering of expectations in terms of working conditions, wage levels and general standards of living. M. DALY, ' A Reply', Sociological Review, 29, 1937, pp. 259-261.

77. C.S. SMITH, 'Planned Transfer of Labour, with Special Reference to the Coal Industry', unpublished Ph.D thesis, Bedford College, University of London, 1960, pp. 83, 115.

78. A.D.K. OWEN, 'The Social Consequences of Industrial Transference', Sociological Review, 29, 1937, p. 348.

79. DE, 2 August 1929.

80. The first weddings to take place in Aylesham concerned four people who had all previously lived at Ashenden, Northumberland. DE, 11 November 1927. The pattern was repeated elsewhere in Kent; at Mill Hill in Deal, for example, there were reported to be 500 members of the 'Yorkshire Club' in 1934. DE, 21 December 1934.

81. Ibid., 6 July 1928.

82. Ibid., 14 January 1938.

83. See Chapter 4.

84. W. HANNINGTON, The Problem of the Distressed Areas, London, 1937, p. 164.

85. MFGB Annual Conference, 17 July 1928. If miners left the employ of the colliery company they became liable to pay approximately 3 to 4 shillings a week extra in rent. Elks felt this was one reason why the newly constructed houses at Aylesham proved difficult to fill. EKDC Minutes, 18 January 1928. Some indication of the power which the manager had is indicated by the practice of signing experienced colliers on as loaders as soon as they arrived in the district. This was the point when they were most vulnerable: after a long journey yet before they had joined the union or accumulated enough money to afford to leave:

> I would never have come as a loader. I couldn't afford to come, not with my wife and family to live on loader's money. So when I got here I had to sign on as a loader or go back home. Well, I was on the dole back home...so I stopped here.
>
> Paddy Hughes

> There was men who'd been colliers all their life...they had to take what was given: they were loaders. It's only a refined way of saying, well, you're there to do as you're told, you've got to prove yourself, more or less.
>
> George Holden

86. Untaped interview.

87. See Chapter 3; H.S. JEVONS, The British Coal Trade, London, 1915, Chapter 6.

88. See Tables 3.31, 3.32 and 4.2. Also W. JOHNSON, op. cit., Table 4.5.

89. KMWA, Minutes, 25 August 1932, 24 September 1932, 1 October 1932, 20 October 1932.

90. See Tables 3.9, 3.10, 3.32.

91. See Chapter 4.

92. See A.J. TAYLOR, op. cit; A.R. GRIFFIN, (1971), op. cit; J.E. WILLIAMS, op. cit.

93. Mr. Ellson's personal enthusiasm for the butty system and contracting in general is captured in the following exchange:

> Elks: There must be some sorts of work at a pit where you cannot apply contract.
>
> Ellson: You can always put a man on contract, I do not care whatever kind of work it is.

Kent District Coal Mining Board, Minutes, 21 March 1936.

94. KMWA, Minutes, 13 February 1939, 15 March 1939; DE, 16 December 1938, 13 January 1939, 3 March 1939, 21 April 1939. This was not an entirely smooth transition; many of the men appeared suspicious that the changeover might mean more effort for less pay.

95. J. Burke, 'The Kent NUM after 1945', a talk delivered to the first Kent History Workshop on The Labour Movement in Kent, at the University of Kent, 26-27 November 1977.

96. M. BARRATT-BROWN, 'Coal as a Nationalised Industry', Economic Studies, 4, 1969, pp. 108-9.

97. C.S. SMITH, op. cit., p. 97. See also C. STORM-CLARK, 'The Miners: The Relevance of Oral Evidence', Oral History, 1, 4.

CHAPTER SIX

THE COLLIERY DECLINES: ASPECTS OF CHANGE IN WORK AND COMMUNITY

Introduction

The purpose of Chapter 6 is to discuss in some detail the implications of the declining market position of the coal industry and the increasing mechanisation of colliery work. The national and local dimensions of these developments were sketched out in Chapter 3 where it was suggested that the costs borne by the Kent miners were possibly more severe than in many other coalfields and that rising levels of voluntary wastage, accidents, absenteeism and disputes were indicative of the dissatisfaction which this insecurity and disruption created. At the same time as the attractions of NCB employment diminished the range of alternative occupations which were available in the local labour market of East Kent increased. How did these post-war developments in and beyond the coal industry affect the way men felt about their work, both at the colliery and elsewhere, and influence the character of non-work relationships? In this chapter we examine the foci of dissatisfaction at the colliery and the changing patterns of employment, housing and leisure activities in the community. These changes are documented through extensive reference to first hand accounts and the chapter concludes by outlining a

set of attitudes which linked these developments to a perceived erosion of established norms and values and the demise of the mining community. The applicability of these attitudes to the realities of contemporary life in Aylesham are examined extensively in Chapter 7.

(i) Change at work

Case studies of rundown, plant closure and redundancy situations have invariably demonstrated a considerable degree of confusion, uncertainty and doubt amongst those employees who are directly affected by the changes. Employers, the unions, the press and sometimes the government frequently present radically different 'explanations' of the same events and, in turn, encourage alternative accounts based largely upon rumour and speculation. In effect, the threat which these situations present tends to be exacerbated by a widespread ignorance of the attendant causes and consequences[1]. In this respect the position in the coal industry in general, and the Kent Coalfield in particular, was not exceptional[2]. If there was a rationale to the NCB pit closure programme which could explain the specific threats to collieries in Kent then these were not properly understood by the miners or their union representatives[3]. Surveying the proposed closures in other NCB Areas in 1973 the NUM (Kent Area) Executive expressed, with some concern, the opinion that 'no clear pattern has yet emerged', and, in different words, the men who were interviewed expressed similar sentiments when discussing the recent troubled history of the Kent collieries[4].

A brief consideration of the manner in which Chislet Colliery was eventually closed is illuminating. The colliery received a jeopardy notice in December 1968 which warned of closure in June 1969 unless production averaged 8,000 tons or more in the following three months[5]. According to NCB

statements Chislet was in jeopardy because of its financial record: it had lost £800,000 over the previous year. When the production target was not reached the NCB announced, in April 1969, that it was serving notice to close the colliery in order that financial losses could be cut and to provide manpower for the remaining three collieries which were short of men[6]. The subsequent appeal of the NUM was based upon the substantial improvement in output and productivity at the colliery over an eleven week period from mid-February such that the NCB targets had been exceeded. According to the men's representatives this improvement had been due to the establishment of a new longwall retreat method of working and freedom from interruptions through breakdowns and holidays[7]. The NCB turned down this appeal and announced on June 11th that the colliery would close on the 25th of July. Significantly, in this final statement the NCB congratulated the men on their efforts and stressed that it had been the difficult geological conditions in the pit which had ultimately caused its closure[8]. Rather than appeasing the men this statement only served to make them more angry as the following statement by the Chislet branch chairman illustrates:

> We feel we have been sold down the river by the Coal Board. We have been treated in a despicable manner and we are extremely bitter about it...the Coal Board has been completely dishonest in its approach[9].

In effect, miners could justifiably have held any one or combination of a number of different viewpoints concerning the closure of Chislet Colliery[10]. These are summarised below:

Version One: The closure enabled experienced and skilled labour to be transferred to the three other Kent pits. This was vital for the continuing viability of the whole coalfield since the industry was failing to attract sufficient recruits and suffering from excessively high levels of voluntary wastage.

Version Two: The closure was the result of the poor output and profitability record of the colliery.

Version Three: The closure was necessary because of the overwhelming geological problems encountered at the colliery.

Version Four: The closure was merely the first step towards the total closure of the coalfield.

It was precisely because two of these four explanations did not involve any specific criticism of Chislet Colliery itself that the eventual closure caused considerable internal conflict within the NUM (Kent Area) and in particular, acrimony between the Area Executive and the Chislet branch. A significant proportion of the resulting redundancies were contested at tribunal level but the potentially useful involvement of the Area Executive was, in fact, extremely limited[11].

The years prior to and after the Chislet closure were critical for the whole coalfield and the insecurity which this

generated was keenly felt by the men at Snowdown[12]:

> It worried me once before when they closed Chislet. Jeopardy was talked about at all four Kent pits...seven or eight years ago now...I had two kiddies when they shut Chislet and, of course, being young with kids and young married couple, you know, you worry about things like that.
>
> Colin Williams

> Well I look back now, I think I wasted seven years because there's no future - there's nothing...I left the pit because at the time there was a lot of talk about it, you know, on the brink of shutting. And I thought to myself, 'Well, you've got to make the break', and I made the break.
>
> Steven Foster

At Snowdown Colliery the closure of the North District in 1973 resulted in the largest single redundancy after the closure of Chislet and at this time the Area Executive was of the opinion that 'economic viability must be achieved during the next three years' if the colliery - and the coalfield - was to survive[13]. However, the poor productive performance at Snowdown during the following three year period led men to speculate in an almost superstitious manner upon the possible parallels with the position at Chislet:

> They've sent them over...a lot of the Chislet lads are working at Snowdown now...As soon as you see new notices going up around the pit they say, "Oh, they did that at Chislet before they shut it!"
>
> Robert Hughes

Indeed, the fear of closure was such that even the major new capital project which involved several million pounds was regarded in sceptical fashion[14]:

> Snowdown'll be closed shortly I think. I think my job's threatened at the moment. There's not a lot of coal coming out and things just seem to be going against the pit. They have a lot of failures - electrical failures, mechanical failures. And what they want is just a real good run at the coal, but they're just not getting it. It's all the talk at the pit - about this colliery and where people are going to go. That's the talking point...They've got a new drivage for a new airway that's costing thousands of pounds on another face...it's when they're pumping in money to a pit, spares and all that, you're going to close...because that's what they did at Chislet: they put thousands of pounds worth of machinery in, and everything like that, and then they suddenly said, "You're closed!" And that was it! That's everybody's idea anyway.
>
> Ian Carleigh

In the Kent Coalfield, as elsewhere, the younger miners, who had less to lose and more to gain through their greater potential for re-employment elsewhere, were more likely to leave the industry on a 'voluntary' basis than their older workmates. A survey in West Cumberland between 1966 and 1967 found that 67 per cent of the sample of those leaving the industry voluntarily were under 35[15], whilst a study of a pit closure in Durham showed that over an 18 month period '50% of the voluntary leavers were in the 21-40 age range compared with 23% for the labour force as a whole[16]. Although statistics giving the age profile of men leaving the Kent collieries were not available statements

made by both the NUM (Kent Area) and the NCB, together with average age statistics, suggest that the Kent Coalfield was not only losing young men but also failing to attract any.

TABLE 6.1: AVERAGE AGE OF WAGE EARNERS ON COLLIERY BOOKS IN KENT COALFIELD

YEAR	AVERAGE AGE
1956	39.7
1957	40.1
1958	40.0
1959	41.4
1960	42.0
1961	42.5
1962	43.2
1963	43.3
1964	43.4
1965	43.5
1966	43.2
1967	42.8
1968	43.8
1969	43.8
1970	44.8

Source: NCB Statistical Tables, London

Table 6.1 shows that the average age of miners in Kent was under 40 in 1956 but by 1970 it was almost 45. NCB records further indicate that whereas in 1956 17 per cent of the work-force were between the age of 51 and 61, 28 per cent were between 50 and 60 by 1970. Indeed, by the later date 42 per cent of the work-force were over 50 and only 11 per cent were under 25[17]. An aging work-force was likely to be less capable, less adaptable and more prone to involuntary absenteeism - it could also create an environment which was conducive to strong feelings of demoralisation amongst the men. The redundancies

at Snowdown and the high level of voluntary wastage undoubtedly contributed to the apathy of the miners which was reported in July 1973[18]. The ex-miner quoted below seemed to be alluding to this feeling of despondency when he complained:

> How can you put it - it's a dead end...I can come to work here and meet different people every day, you know. There(at the colliery) you see the same faces, you do the same job, day in day out. It's dead end...it's still a dead end. It's boring...you meet the same people every day.
>
> Steven Foster

The insecurity and dissatisfaction caused by the feeling that there was 'no future' at Snowdown was exacerbated by the decline in miners' earnings, the disruption of established work groups, tasks and skills (together with associated methods of supervision and training) and the introduction of unfamiliar underground hazards as collieries were extensively mechanised. The dimensions of the Kent miners' falling earnings have been sketched earlier through reference to published statistics[19]; the first hand evidence of Snowdown miners provide insight into the personal reality of this decline. At the Wilberforce Enquiry in 1972 a miner from Snowdown Colliery was called to give evidence and he remarked drily:

> In 1963 I was receiving £5.10s. a shift for working at the coal-face and I am now getting £5 a shift, ten years later, and in view of that you can probably see the feeling of the miners[20].

Many of the men interviewed had a similar story to tell:

> When the PLA first came out in 1967 two good friends of mine - they were front rippers - they could earn anything, £10 or £11 a shift. And they worked hard for it: instead of four men they had three - three brothers...and they were earning on average £9 a shift every week. They were on a very good conveyor. One week they're on £45 a week - plus their bonus shift, £50 odd a week - next week they're down to 89s.5d a shift! They said, "No, we're not having it," and away they went.
>
> Richard East

Even craftsmen, who had experienced a sizeable wage increase in relation to faceworkers and ranked among the best paid workers in the colliery were leaving the industry to take up more lucrative employment at a rate which caused both Coal Board and Union some concern[21]. A craftsman who eventually left for work on the nearby cross-channel ferries explained his decision:

> At the time we weren't very well paid. My wage at that time, in 1967, was 58s.1d a shift as a grade one fitter. And colliers at that time could earn £7 or £8 a shift. It got me a bit then, and then the NPLA came out...and so I went from 58 bob to 89s.5d which was first rate under the PLA in Kent. And even then, you know, thinking of the work we was doing...and for the money that was being offered on the boats...I thought I'll have a go at this.
>
> Richard East

There were, of course, other mineworkers at Snowdown who did not have personal experience of the decline in wage rates but

like so many of their younger workmates they could draw upon the memory of their fathers:

> I never seemed to get any more than £22 a week...and I used to mention this to my father, and I used to say to him, "You were getting more than this, Dad, a few years ago on the face weren't you?" And he said, "Twenty years ago I was earning more money than that!" That's £22 a week - and he was! ...and this made me leave the pit as well.
>
> Duncan Schofield

To be sure the establishment of uniform national day-wage rates was 'a concept alien to the traditions of mining communities' for it eliminated piecework and, in turn, greatly reduced the scope and importance of local bargaining at the colliery level[22]. The fact that face conditions, amount of coal won or stone ripped and degree of effort, experience and skill no longer directly influenced the size of the wage packet at the end of the week meant an end to the individualistic and competitive notion of the 'good collier' or 'big hitter', as the Snowdown miners had previously understood these terms. Some insight into the competitive reality of working life on the coal-face, and the manner in which this was undermined by the introduction of the day-wage, is given in the following account which describes work arrangements on a 160 yard hewing longwall face at Snowdown Colliery in 1958. The face was divided into eight yard stints and there were two coaling shifts on which 4 feet 6 inches of advance was made - 2 feet 3 inches

per collier per shift. This type of face arrangement was fairly typical at Snowdown prior to the introduction of power loaders[23]:

> I can remember when I was working with my brother, a good collier, Bill. And he would go in and he would all but bar it up on his own on the day shift. And it was regular that I would go in on the afternoon shift and I would clean out as much coal as I could on half a shift and I had a standing order with my deputy that I would have the other half a shift somewhere else...It worked out that whoever was working on days, he would get five shifts booked on to the docket, and whoever was working on afternoons would get two and a half - three shifts on other people's dockets. So you'd have a good week on days and then a fair week...not quite such a good week on afters. This was the way we used to work it...You might get people working together who didn't get on and they would go out of their way to cross each other off (the pay docket). This was a little bit of the competitiveness of it. You'd have the bloke on dayshift and he would clear the stint and leave the other man as market man. So he would have to stand at the board with all the rest of the market men in the hope that the overman could find him a job. If he couldn't find him a job he might have to go cleaning up...So the following week he would get his own back...he would go in and he would cross a stint off...you used to get a bit of nastiness about it...If you could get in with a good worker you would do that. I was lucky: I hadn't been on the market too long (after the completion of face training) when an older collier that my brother was working with wanted light work...so I went with my brother. And, of course, he was a good collier. I was just a learner so he had to help me for a little while - but it worked out alright. But it was always best if you could get with a friend or somebody that you knew pretty well or somebody that you seen every night in the club because you could tell them about any problems that you had, and you never had any of this bad feeling come in...Lads used to kill themselves to earn a few shillings more than the bloke in the next stint, or a few bob more than his brother. Then everybody got the same so it just dropped out, you know, there wasn't the hustle or the chase...they used to chase in to be first there

> (the coal-face) to get the best of the materials and this sort of thing. And we wouldn't leave till last because we didn't want anyone taking anything from our stint...props or anything. The good miner was the bloke that could earn the money, that could earn the respect of his fellow colliers. The bloke that, week in week out, always had more money to draw than anybody else... he didn't have to care about anybody, he could go and earn his money, he was respected for it... he never had to snivvle or beg to anybody. He could go to work, do his work, and earn his money. ..Before, you worked hard to get more money. Now, no matter what you do, you get paid the same money and that's what you talked about...you'd heard a rumour that somebody had earned £7 or £8...but now nobody's interested...you're not earning anything, nobody's interested in how you're doing and what your stint's like...couldn't care less.[24]
>
> Robert Hughes

The upheaval caused by the changeover to day-wage rates was made worse for the Snowdown miners because of its association with rapidly declining real wage rates; these two developments were invariably perceived to be inextricably linked:

> Mechanisation came in and probably the biggest thing of all, PLA came in. Attitudes changed, of course, this is the big thing: the competitiveness went out of it. Of course, all the money went out of it in this area because we had been doing well, getting the best money of all the coalfields...the Kent lads definitely had the best agreement at that time and for it to be parity they had to hold the Kent lads back. And they lost interest, probably more than anything, competitiveness went out of it.
>
> Robert Hughes

Although this account seemed to accurately represent the views of most miners with first hand experience of this type of

facework and payment system the introduction of the day-wage was not considered to be totally without merit. The 'hustle and the chase' was not entirely a pleasant memory; miners were not unaware that this encouraged them to work in 'unsafe' conditions and confine their disputes to conflict with each other rather than their employer. Nevertheless, all miners seemed to agree that the loss of incentive was regrettable; even a strong supporter of the day-wage principle still complained:

> There's just no scope. There's no incentive actually to do some real work, to get stuck in and say, "Look, I'm gonna do this job"... When I finished the apprenticeship I was really keen...wanted to see belts running all the time, wanted to see coal coming off... but now, after a while, you come to learn that nobody's bothered when it comes to the crunch.
>
> Steven Schofield

The removal of the piecework incentive had a number of other repercussions. The hewing longwall relied largely upon traditional pick and shovel skills and encouraged father and son, brothers or friends to work together: people that knew each other and their respective capabilities such that a feasible pieceworking relationship could be maintained[25]. In Aylesham there were several well known mining families that had largely built their reputation upon their ability to consistently acquire favourable coal-face, ripping and heading contracts[26]. The day-wage altered this: it was no longer important for a man to

work with a certain family group or alongside an experienced and skilled collier. A young NPLA faceworker explained:

> I work in a ripping team of four. I know one vaguely, he's a lot older than me, he's in his thirties...but the other two, they live at Margate, I don't know them, but they're older blokes...I suppose if I'd have really pushed it I could have gone with who I wanted, but I wasn't really bothered. I don't think many of them are. They used to pick their men at the boards, but now it's all done from pit top, and like I say, you're a number: Gillow 331, you'll go there today, you know, and it doesn't matter, it's just like a cattle market now. The chargehand used to pick the men, the market men that he had. If you weren't any good you never got nowhere, then you never made no money. That was it. That was before PLA came out.
>
> Dennis Gillow

For many men the loss of piecework was an important cause of what was considered to be a more impersonal atmosphere at the pit. The quality of a man's relationship with his workmates, deputy and manager were seen as less important and opportunities to develop meaningful ties were felt to be diminishing. For its part the NCB appeared to be little concerned about the individual miner or colliery:

> They're not interested in individuals. Probably this is one of the complaints that I would have against them. They don't take into account ability or anything like this - you're just a number - because I don't suppose they can really put themselves out to take this sort of interest in you. And everybody wants them to take this sort of interest in them you know, even the tea boy on the surface...The pat on the head - in the old days when I was on the coal - came when you could

> show your docket to your mate...this was everything that you worked for...when he looked at his docket and he said, "Oh, I've only got such and such! You've got more than me this week," that was the thing that incensed you and kept you on. Now you don't get none of this. You're insignificant, you're just a number.
>
> Robert Hughes

> It's just the attitude the Coal Board has got towards the men. You're not a man, you're a number and they couldn't care less about you. They couldn't! They couldn't care less about you...and it's got worse since the PLA system was fetched in. It's got worse altogether...This pit is on its last legs, to my mind, and they know it and they're not bothered about it.
>
> Colin Williams

The introduction of power loading machinery meant that faceworkers had to learn a whole new range of technical skills appropriate to their radically changed work environment and, as a result, training programmes became more elaborate and increasingly divorced from the actual place of coal production[27]. The more informal 'on the job' type of preparation described in the account below disappeared and the tremendous drive 'to get to the face' which sustained the trainees diminished considerably - a victim of declining wage differentials and lack of piecework incentive:

> From there I progressed to timber, supplying the colliers on the face with timber. As timber lads we had quite a lot of time on our hands and we used to go and help the old boys on the face. We used to give 'em maybe half a shift, filling with them, working with them, which was good in a way. Kept us occupied - kept us out of trouble. They might give you

ten bob at the end of the week...because we used to work hard with them...we was enjoying it. Well, it was a novelty to us...you'd get knocking away at that end and they'd carry on at their end...Not officially we weren't allowed to do it... they used to turn a blind eye to it... At that time it was the thing to get on the coal and start earning the money... this was the thing, because it was £6 a week we was getting in them days as a boy (c 1958) and you know, colliers was earning maybe £5 a shift, which them days was really good money. You had to work for it, but we realised this.

Richard East

It was important to me that I got inbye, and I could get on the coal...They took you cleaning up belt conveyors, shovelling, learning to use the shovel to get your hands hard...At 18, as soon as the opportunity arose, I did my face training...withpeople who'd been colliers...It was a one to one thing, you was sent with a man, he had a stint and you went with him...I was sent with George Drayton...We had a good time, he was a good boy...he used to work 'em hard, let them know what it was about... but I stuck it out. When I first started on the coal I went about six or seven weeks and then I was off work with a 'beat' hand... they put it down to me holding a pick too hard, gripping it too tight, getting blisters. But it was just keenness really, you know, you didn't want to give up, you wanted to prove that you could do things!

Robert Hughes

These accounts contrast strongly with the negative and detached tone of the two young men, both in their early twenties, who recalled their training at the special NCB centre at Betteshanger Colliery:

> That training over at Betteshanger, even now I still wouldn't class myself as fully trained...you don't get into the job over there like you have to do over here (at Snowdown). You've got to get up and do it here...but over there you weren't learning anything...I was put straight on a rip - well I'd never been on a rip and I was counted as a fourth man! Well really, that was three and what a man could do as a trainee...I'm an instructor as well by the way! I have a trainee - I mean I don't consider myself fully trained but they picked me as an instructor! It's like mass production - 100 days: collier, that's it!
>
> Dennis Gillow

> The first year was reasonably cushy...I had to be 16 before I went to Snowdown, so I spent a year at Betteshanger at the training centre, which was just messing about looking at films, digging out of the coalwaggons. I stuck it for a year.
>
> Steven Schofield

This 'gap' in attitude between the middle aged and the young could in turn lead to difficulties and friction at the face.

> I'm training blokes where I'm working now. They've all gone into the (training) face to train, away from the face men where we're working to get the coal...They're having six months in the pit, and they're coming in the face with us. They've never even seen a face, and it's unbelievable the things they do! A normal miner would never think of doing it! You know, as a lad, when I went inbye, I was a year inbye, so at least I'd seen a face... and got a general idea of how things go on. These lads, they just haven't got a clue, and consequently they come in and they just couldn't care less. Their whole attitude to mining is not there.
>
> Colin Williams

The removal of the self-operating element implicit in piecework encouraged a closer supervision of coal production at the face. Deputies, for example, whose main concern had previously been safety and health became more involved with work rate and production levels and their numbers increased[28]. Table 6.2 demonstrates that this development was by no means confined to the coal-face during the period of intensive mechanisation in Kent; the technical progress made in transport and haulage arrangements underground and on the surface encouraged an even greater alteration in worker : supervisor ratios.

TABLE 6.2: RATIO OF SUPERVISORS TO WORKERS IN KENT COLLIERIES, 1958-1968

YEAR	UNDER-OFFICIALS TO FACEWORKERS	UNDER-OFFICIALS TO UNDERGROUND WORKERS	FOREMEN & OTHER WEEKLY PAID TO SURFACE WORKERS
1958	1:7	1:17	1:21
1959	1:7	1:16	1:19
1960	1:7	1:15	1:17
1961	1:6	1:13	1:15
1962	1:6	1:13	1:15
1963	1:6	1:13	1:15
1964	1:5	1:12	1:16
1965	1:6	1:12	1:13
1966	1:6	1:12	1:12
1967	1:6	1:12	1:13
1968	1:5	1:11	1:12

Source: NCB Statistical Tables.

The imposition of closer supervision did not go unnoticed; Douglass recently noted:

> The Coal Board would like to introduce more and more supervision into the miner's work, and to reduce all miners, and all classes of their work, to a single status. They would like the mines to work like factories...The new face systems push more and more officials onto our backs[29].

A number of sociological studies have demonstrated the resentment and opposition which the attempt to impose formal systems of organisational control can create, particularly in those work situations governed by custom and tradition. Gouldner, for example, documented a series of disputes and an unofficial strike at the gypsum factory which he studied and related these directly to the attempt to tighten up methods of supervision and reduce worker autonomy[30]. In the coal industry the proliferation of deputies, overmen and managers and their more imposing functions seriously infringed the widely valued independence of the faceworker and, indeed, mineworkers elsewhere in the colliery[31]. In an industry which had been managed largely through the wages system rather than direct executive control these changes were particularly noticeable and provoked a positively antagonistic response amongst the Snowdown miners:

> You know it's getting top heavy. There's too many chiefs, too many chiefs in the bloody pit and not enough indians, and it's getting steadily worse. That's something I've got my views on, you know, strong views. I don't think it's right...When I go to work now I've got the manager, the under-manager ...then I've got the electrical engineer, the assistant electrical engineer, the shift chargehand, then I've got the overman of the district, the deputy. How many's that? There's one poor little bloody worker and about fourteen bosses chasing him all round the pit!
>
> Duncan Schofield

> Now you've got an overman, two gate deputies, shotfirers...you know we've got outnumbered down there! And there's still more deputies going through! It's highly overmanned on management side...they're just giving them jobs to keep them happy.
>
> Richard East

The process of mechanisation did not immediately reduce the hazards of mining; instead, new risks and dangers were introduced which sometimes proved extremely difficult to avoid. In their evidence to the Wilberforce Enquiry the NUM pointed out that,

> the simple fact is that the miner, with his very considerable physical and technical skills, must challenge the dangers inherent in the mining process and also those introduced by mechanisation, electrification and explosives. And the sad fact is that the task is so formidable and complicated that he cannot always succeed[32].

The changing nature of underground hazards were well appreciated by the Snowdown miners:

> The dangers are different now, that's the thing there. Whereas the dangers was falls of roof and this sort of thing on pick and shovel, the dangers there now are that you're going to be hurt by the machinery that you're using...you still have accidents down the pit like they always did.
>
> Robert Hughes

Allen has catalogued the changing rates of particular types of accident which resulted from the introduction of machinery into

the spatially constricted and changeable environment of the coal-face and underground roadways. Thus accidents caused by machines increased from 2.7 per cent to 5.5 per cent; those attributed to the use of tools and appliances rose from 14.8 per cent to 21.8 per cent; whilst accidents caused by stumbling and falling increased from 25.4 per cent to 45.9 per cent[33]. In the present research it became clear - in interviews and conversations - that what troubled the mineworkers most about the mechanically related dangers was their own personal inability to control them:

> I dreaded going on to it (the first mechanised faces) I did. I'd seen the conditions the machines used to leave the roof in. Oh, it was atrocious conditions when the plough was first introduced - because you weren't sure of yourself, you weren't sure what was going to happen 'cos you'd not been used to steel supports; you'd been used to wooden and you could hear the props creek
>
> John Butcher

> You've got more machinery in the pit - and there's nothing more dangerous than something you can't stop. You can't stop a piece of machinery very easily...we've got the shearer and that can rip you to pieces any time, no trouble. And if that hits a girder the girder can fly out, and things like this. The more machinery they've brought in it's got dangerous...Blokes that are still on the coal now, that are of an age, that have worked on the handgot with a pick and shovel...they'll say, "It was dangerous in one way, but look at that now, the shearer!"
>
> Dennis Gillow

The risk of immediate physical injury was accompanied by

an equally undesirable, although less dramatic danger of inhaling dust particles kicked up by machinery and carried along the face and roadways by ventilation systems which, because of their 'efficiency' kept the particles in the air for a longer period of time[34]. According to the Chief Inspector of Mines and Quarries, measures to suppress dust did not keep pace with production techniques such that 'widespread mechanisation' had actually 'slowed down the decline in pneumoconiosis'[35]. Once again, the Snowdown miners expressed a sense of helplessness and lack of power to reduce the real threat of this increasingly significant danger:

> I think it's more dusty now than what it ever was when I first went on the coal. When I was on pick and shovel work you created your own dust...but that's the only dust that you had ...Well, now you go in, the machine's cutting the dust, you're advancing the supports, the gobs are falling in, all on the same shift... On handgot, if you felt it was a bit dusty, you'd tell the bloke below, "Ey up, you're causing some dust - can you work the other end for ten minutes?" You know, give you a break. You never thought no more about it...But now, you just can't walk away and forget about it: when it's dusty, it's there - you can see it and you can feel it in your throat. Dust is one of the biggest problems underground at the moment.
>
> Robert Hughes

The mineworkers quoted above made reference to their subordinate relationship to the machine with which they worked: 'you can't stop a piece of machinery very easily', 'you just can't walk away and forget about it'. Why was this the case? Why could machinery not be stopped? The answer lay primarily

in the increasing interdependence between workers resulting from mechanisation which, in turn, put pressure on the individual to continue to work, despite hazards, in order to avoid wide-ranging disruption. Jack Dunn, Secretary of the NUM (Kent Area) made reference to these pressures - and the manner in which they were aggravated by closer supervision - in a speech in 1964:

> We are passing and have been passing from a method of production - the old conventional method - where our members were working between the conveyor and the coalface, and there was the provision that any of our colliers on the coalface under the conventional system of working encountering temporary difficulties could stop work and attend to his problem. He did not have to stop the rest of the production operation. Now there is one simple difference between this and the prop-free system, the ploughing operation of production, that if a faceworker on a plough has a problem that would require him to stop the plough, he stops the whole operation, not only for him, but for the dozen or 14 or 15 other men who are on the face, and generally speaking - and this is our experience - you may have two or three officials, shotfirers, deputies, overmen, on the face, who are up and down the face protesting, "Who has got the face stood? Who has got the conveyor stood?" There is an immediate resistance on the part of the men, when they ought to stop the conveyor to do something that would give greater safety. They feel, "Ah, well, if I stop it, I stop the job. There will be an official up here," and very, very often, they allow the job to continue. They try and do the work in a very unsafe manner, with unsafe practice, and as a result they or someone else gets hurt. This is a very simple but nevertheless clear demonstration of the difference between the forms of production[36].

There was, of course, an alternative strategy to that of 'making the best of things' in the changing environment of the

colliery: to leave the industry altogether - and this was a course which old, as well as young, mineworkers followed:

> The older miners used to be scared stiff - y'know, the big changeover from handgot... there was a lot of men, older men, ploughs was a nightmare to them and they wouldn't have it (they left)...you never had control over them like the older miners did with the facework...conditions were a lot more frightening than the handgot was...I know my father, he hated the ploughs, he didn't want to go near 'em. I think a lot of men took that view. The plough was a nightmare to me, right! I weren't a very good ploughman, you know. Didn't come very easy. In fact, I ended up leaving because of that after a while.
>
> Duncan Schofield

To sum up: the measures taken to rationalise the coal industry by closure and mechanisation during the period after 1957 created insecurity and disruption for the miners. In Kent one colliery was closed and the other three threatened whilst they embarked upon the difficult transition to fully mechanised power loading. In the course of this transition the technological environment of the colliery and systems of wage payment were radically altered and these, in turn, brought changes in the miners' work orientations and relationships. The evidence of Snowdown miners suggested that these developments were perceived in a largely negative fashion and were frequentlyreferred to in explaining why so many men had decided to leave the industry. Indeed, ex-mineworkers, and miners who had interrupted their service in the industry,

themselves referred to these changes in their own accounts of their decision to leave.

(ii) Change in the community

As men left the colliery and the colliery employed fewer men the significance of mining, in terms of its influence beyond the colliery gates, diminished; the cyclical development of the colliery began to reflect itself in that of the community. Many of those interviewed maintained that the character of Aylesham and the families that lived there was distinct 'today' from what it had been in the 'past'. Often, men - and women, if they were present - paused and reflected upon the jobs friends were doing, who their neighbours were or how people in Aylesham used their spare time and concluded that 'things had changed' in both a quantitative and qualitative sense. In the remainder of this chapter some of the 'objective' changes in the profile of Aylesham will be sketched out before outlining some of the less quantifiable assertions which were made concerning the changing character of social relationships and social values.

The number of men working at Snowdown Colliery frequently attracted comment, and invariably in terms of how few men were actually employed there by comparison to 'the old days'. Employment figures do, in fact, reveal a marked downward trend in both absolute and relative terms. Whereas almost 1,700 men were working at the colliery in 1950 this figure had fallen to a little over 800 by 1973/4[37]. As the importance of the colliery diminished men in Aylesham were more likely to find work elsewhere:

in 1961 72 per cent of local men in employment were working in the coal industry, by 1966 the figure was 61 per cent and this fell to 53 per cent by 1971[38]. With women increasingly finding employment during this period, men working in the coal industry formed only a little over a third of the total occupied population by 1971, as Table 6.3 indicates.

TABLE 6.3: INDUSTRIAL DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYED PERSONS IN AYLESHAM, 1961-1971

YEAR	INDUSTRY (%AGE)		
	AGRICULTURE	MINING	MANUF. & SERVICES
1961	3.8	52.5	43.7
1966	6.0	43.0	50.9
1971	3.6	35.4	60.9

Note: There are no comparable figures for 1931 and those which were collected for the 1951 Census did not include a breakdown by industry of those persons in employment.

Source: Census (Small Area Statistics)

Nevertheless, mining continued to be by far the most important single source of employment in the locality during the 1960s and through to the period of interviewing. In 1966, Snowdown Colliery dominated the range of employment opportunities available in Aylesham (see Table 6.4).

Naturally, a substantial proportion of the men employed at Snowdown Colliery came to work there from other areas in Kent - for example, Dover and Canterbury - nevertheless, a survey of the addresses of mineworkers on Snowdown Colliery books in July 1975 revealed that almost half of the workmen

lived in Aylesham (43 per cent) and the neighbouring villages of Snowdown and Woolage (6 per cent)[39]. Taken together with 1971 Census data these figures suggest that throughout the 1970s approximately one half of the active male population of Aylesham found employment at Snowdown.

TABLE 6.4: EMPLOYMENT IN AYLESHAM 1966

INDUSTRY	NOS. EMPLOYED
Mining	1,430
Clothing & Footwear	110
Service Industries	140
TOTAL	1,680

Source: Kent County Council, Kent County Structure Plan, Aspect Study Report 6B, 'Villages', Maidstone, 1975 Table 18.

The development of a small industrial estate at Aylesham after 1968 widened these limited local opportunities. Indeed, Eastry Council undertook the project with the explicit purpose of providing alternative employment for miners and their families, particularly the young who were 'experiencing difficulty in obtaining employment within reasonable distance of their homes' such that some were having to make return journeys of between 80 and 100 miles each day[40]. By 1973 10 establishments were operating on the site, ranging from beer and chemical depots to engineering, meat canning and plastic factories. Although individual plant size was small and jobs

limited to unskilled and semi-skilled manual labour the estate was often referred to as the new focus of employment for the area and an initial survey undertaken by Eastry Council found that of 337 persons employed on the site 261 (77 per cent) lived in Aylesham. However, 204 (61 per cent) of the 337 were women; alternative opportunities for miners remained limited[41].

Nevertheless, as more women went out to work the families in Aylesham became less dependent upon the colliery as a source of income. As in most isolated mining communities employment opportunities for the wives and daughters of Aylesham miners had traditionally been extremely limited. In 1931 two-thirds of the women in employment in Eastry Rural District (where the majority of the mining settlements were located) were working in 'personal service' and although the proportion had fallen to one-third by 1951 this represented by far the most important single occupation for women[42]. At Aylesham the only practical alternative to domestic service, normally at a coastal resort, was seasonal agricultural work and although a clothing factory was established in the village in 1948 this was later closed down. In this context the industrial estate represented a major advance. By 1971 46 per cent of women of working age in Aylesham were in employment compared to 40 per cent in 1966 and 34 per cent in 1961[43]. More women at work not only made miners a less significant proportion of the active population, it also encouraged some men to leave mining. Wives in employment made it possible for husbands in the industry to contemplate a period of unemployment whilst looking for another

job and to accept certain disadvantages - for example, expense of travelling or loss of overtime - once one had been found. These considerations appeared to be of some importance in the accounts men gave of their decision to leave the colliery.

Certainly, more residents were leaving Aylesham in order to find work. Of those in employment in 1966 37.6 per cent were working outside the local authority area and this figure had increased to 39.6 per cent by 1971[44]. An earlier survey in 1969 (see Table 6.5) demonstrated that this process was two-way: 831 workers left Aylesham daily to go to work, whilst 644 came into the area[45].

TABLE 6.5: WORK-TRIP MOVEMENTS INTO AND OUT OF AYLESHAM 1969

PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT	WORKERS RESIDENT IN AYLESHAM		WORKERS RESIDENT OUTSIDE AYLESHAM (BUT IN KENT)
	NOS.	%AGE	NOS.
Aylesham	919	52.5	644
Specified areas in Kent	434	24.8	-
Other areas	397	22.7	-
TOTAL	1,750	100.0	644

Source: Kent County Council, op cit., Table 22.

As the occupational distribution of the population and the geographical distribution of work altered so too did housing

arrangements within Aylesham[46]. After the war the leases on most of the dwellings in the village were transferred from Aylesham Tenants Limited, a subsidiary of Pearson and Dorman Long, to the NCB. Table 6.6 shows that these represented approximately 84 per cent of the total number of dwellings in Aylesham, the rest being leased by a private trust. As was the case under private ownerhip, NCB householders had employment experience in the industry; it was not possible to occupy a house without this qualification. However, soon after the war Eastry Council launched a programme of house building and on their completion these houses were leased by the council and not by the NCB. By 1960 just over 30 per cent of leases were controlled by the council. Later on, between April 1969 and March 1971, 548 dwellings were transferred from the NCB so that 91 per cent of all dwellings were then controlled by Eastry Council. More recently, in April 1974, as part of local government re-organisation, Aylesham became part of the larger Dover District Council so the council house leases were once again transferred to a new authority. These developments both reflected and re-inforced the occupational changes outlined above. In effect, a wider range of accommodation became available for those who wished to live in Aylesham but did not want to work in the coal industry. The reverse was also true: those wanting to work in the industry were no longer confined to Aylesham as a wider range of council properties became available. In either case these changes were conducive to a diminution in the significance of the colliery as a place of employment and a

'dilution' of the mining community in Aylesham.

TABLE 6.6: THE CONTROL OF DWELLING LEASES IN AYLESHAM 1945-1974

YEAR	HOUSES LEASED BY:							
	COLLIERY CO./NCB		COUNCIL		TRUST		TOTAL	
	NO.	%AGE	NO.	%AGE	NO.	%AGE	NO.	%AGE
1945	548	84	4	1	104	16	656	100
1950	548	77	57	8	104	15	709	100
1955	548	65	187	22	104	12	839	100
1960	548	58	283	30	104	11	935	100
1965	548	57	309	32	104	11	961	100
1970	50	4	977	86	104	9	1,131	100
1974	-	-	1,057	91	104	9	1,161	100

Source: Unpublished housing files made available by Dover District Council.

Statistics relating to the changing use of leisure or 'non-work' time are, unfortunately, not available to the extent that occupational and housing data are. This appears to be an area of social life where it is both difficult to gather information - to a large extent, because of its 'private' nature - and often impracticable to quantify in any meaningful sense[47]. However, some data will be quoted here in order to point up the issues concerning the increasing mobility - or potential for mobility - of the men and women living in Aylesham. Firstly, non-work time spent outside Aylesham was likely to increase with the rising levels of car ownership. During the inter-war period not more than a handful of men in Aylesham ever possessed a car[48]. By 1966 32 per cent of all households owned a car and

by 1971 just over 40 per cent possessed a least one car[49]. Car ownership facilitated regular visits to neighbouring towns which offered a wider range of amenities. In a survey undertaken in 1973 well over 90 per cent of the 124 respondents, all of whom lived in Aylesham, stated that they most frequently shopped for clothing and household goods in either Canterbury or Dover, and a substantial proportion used their cars in order to go there[50]. Secondly, just as residents could leave more easily due to improved transport facilities, so visitors could come in. The clientele of the working men's clubs in Aylesham provides a useful illustration here. Although no statistics were available for the earlier years it was clear that the 'raison d'etre' of the clubs was the coal industry and the miners who worked within it; these men had created the initial demand for the clubs and they dominated them from committee room to bar. However, this situation altered during the post-war period as the coal industry declined. An analysis of the membership books of the Snowdown Working Men's Club, for example, revealed that almost 40 per cent of members lived outside Aylesham and the surrounding villages of Snowdown and Woolage. The occupational profile of these members was unavailable but it is of interest that, at the time of the analysis in 1976, of 83 fresh membership applications only a third came from men employed in the coal industry[51].

To some extent, these statistics relating to employment, housing and leisure activities substantiate the claims made by those who were interviewed about their neighbours and what they

were doing for a living and how they were spending their spare time. They go some way towards providing a factual basis for generalisations which were frequently proffered during the research. However, statements referring to the changes in Aylesham were rarely limited to these (partially) quantifiable areas; judgements were also made about the developing character of social values and social relationships and it is to these more qualitative matters that we now turn our attention. Two major themes running through a substantial number of the first hand accounts will be examined. The first concerns the manner in which some of the changes outlined above were related to a perceived alteration in the character of social networks. An ex-miner working as a postman at the time of interview made some revealing observations:

> The community is being split up now...with it going under the Dover and Deal District everybody can go everywhere in these districts, whereas before Aylesham people could get houses in Aylesham...Well, I, as the postman, can see clearly all the different people that are coming here, so they ain't relatives of anybody here in the village...there's quite a few families now who've got no relatives in Aylesham, but it used to be people of Aylesham's children getting the houses...Every week there's a different family coming into Aylesham now...I ain't got nothing against these people coming here, right. But, looking at them, a lot of them seem to be problem families, know what I mean?
>
> Duncan Schofield

Here, the 1974 changeover in the control of the majority of houses in Aylesham was directly related to the 'splitting up'

of the community because of the diminishing range of kinship links which previously spanned the village. This point of view could, some might argue, be dismissed as 'nostalgic reminiscence'; a prime example of oral history as the collection of the sentimentalised accounts of aged individuals yearning for a mythical 'past'[52]. However, the account quoted above came from a 29 year old and all the interview selections used in this section have been deliberately drawn from the 16 to 35 age group. In another instance, one young mineworker took up a similar theme to the postman and directed his comments particularly towards that part of Aylesham which was developed during the post-war period.

> It's got bigger and it's got a bit colder - people's attitudes - that's how it's got a bit colder, I think. The running down of the pit, and the factories and that. There's an area of Aylesham, that side of the market square, they're the new houses - they're not new, half of them, they're nowhere near new, but they're called new houses anyway...but round here (in the older section) is what I would call the mining village.
>
> Dennis Gillow

These observations on the 'new' part of the village (where the houses had no direct tie to the colliery) were re-inforced by the comments of a miner and his wife who were living there when interviewed:

> A lot of people know each other and they visit each other's houses...that was before all this was built. But now I don't know whether that happens so much - not at this end of the village. I don't think they all know each other as much as they did in the old days. They're more individualist.
> (wife) If somebody was ill or somebody died, there was always people there. But not now. People just don't want to know you any more.
>
> I think it's because a lot of strangers have come into the village. And they're not miners. They work elsewhere, and that's probably the reason. They're splitting up the community. At one time, when we were kids, it used to be very close. Everybody knew each other.
> (wife) Down that end of the village people have lived there for about 30 years...but it's different up this end. They're always swopping and changing, different people coming ...from outside the village now...from Dover and all over since we've been under the Dover Council.
>
> Mr and Mrs Ian Carleigh

Essentially these remarks implied that social networks were diminishing in terms of their range and degree of 'connectedness', and that because of the resulting divisions Aylesham had become a 'colder' place where relationships were less stable and people were less willing to help one another. Thus ideas concerning changing social relationships were frequently associated with an alteration in social values and this leads on to the second major theme. Many of those interviewed expounded at some length on the changing values of the 'contemporary world' but the bulk of these statements could not be usefully considered here. Instead, attention is confined to a consideration of the differing goals of younger people by comparison with their parents, and in particular, the belief that

the son of a miner no longer wished to follow in his father's footsteps to the colliery and remain there for his entire working life.

> I don't think the same climate exists now for kids as it did then. You talk to young lads, about 14 or 15, 'Pit? Never touch it!' You know. We was, 'Wor! Let's get down that pit!' It's completely different now. There's lads now leaving school, out of work, they won't go down the pit. They just won't have it. I don't think my son'll want to go down the pit.
>
> Richard East

The erosion of traditional occupational values in contemporary Aylesham was often noted, particularly in discussions of whether or not the label of 'mining village' was appropriate. This was hardly surprising since the high incidence of occupational inheritance has customarily been identified as an important defining characteristic of such communities[53]. Some indication of the strength of the belief that a set of core values was waning is given in the excerpt used below. 'Young lads, about 14 or 15' were not interviewed during the research but the following extract has been taken from a school project submitted by a 15 year old Aylesham boy[54]. Three years later, in 1975, this individual was completing an apprenticeship as a fitter at Snowdown Colliery, yet this did not prevent him from expressing a common attitude in fairly explicit terms.

> Four generations of my family have worked down Snowdown Colliery, and up until a few years ago it would have been natural to follow your father and his father in going down the pit, but now all this has changed because of several reasons.
>
> 1. The pit is dangerous (accidents, diseases etc).
> 2. Kent collieries hold no future.
> 3. People want to get away from the pit for social reasons.

In sum, these two strands of thought relating to social networks and the father-son relationship formed the basis of the belief that Aylesham was no longer a 'mining village'. Those that lived there increasingly found different ways of making a living and of spending spare time that had less to do with the pit or those that still worked there. The subsequent changes in the character of the community resulted in previously established traditions being challenged and ultimately rejected.

(iii) The constraints of the colliery and the colliery village

If this was the case, why did miners from Aylesham continue to work at Snowdown Colliery and why did some of their sons, at least, choose work at the pit rather than elsewhere? An answer which upheld the idea that a fundamental change in values had occurred revolved around the notion that miners were held to the colliery and their sons forced into it by a set of negative factors which severely limited their mobility. In other words, though these men may have wished to find employment elsewhere they were obliged to work at the colliery because of

the difficulty of realising alternatives. In the interviews, this situation was typically explained by reference to three influential factors.

Firstly, it was argued that many men stayed at the colliery during the period of rundown because the exceptional skills which they had developed as mineworkers were inapplicable to most other skilled manual occupations. As such, leaving the industry involved contemplating jobs which required less skill, paid less money and demanded longer hours. The possession of skills which were largely non-transferable encouraged the belief amongst miners - particularly those with some years service - that they were unable to contemplate other occupations. This was revealed in discussions about the possibility of the closure of Snowdown:

> I would really feel it hard (closure of Snowdown)...the pit has always given me a good living and if it's shut now I shall be very sorry. I'm not prepared to go anywhere else. I'm quite happy here...as a miner. It's the job I know. It's the job I'm natural at, and that's it.
>
> Colin Williams

Such fears were also verbalised when men discussed the possibility of their own sons entering the coal industry. The possession of an apprenticed craft trade was frequently regarded as the only feasible way of ensuring some degree of security by allowing the possibility of transfer to occupations in other industries which offered similar status and economic reward:

> I've still got no qualifications with me. I've got no papers. What I've learnt, I've learnt at the pit...I'd make sure he (son) went on a craft apprentices' scheme ...once that's done it's always something behind you. You get your papers and there you are.
>
> Richard East

Secondly, many miners, it was said, could not leave the industry because they were physically incapable of performing anything other than the very light jobs which had been allotted them at the colliery. A number of enquiries have noted the policy of the NCB to give light surface jobs to those men who, after working underground, have been disabled through injury or ill-health and would otherwise find it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to find work elsewhere[55]. The difficulties actually experienced by those leaving the colliery for health reasons were illustrated in the accounts of two of the ex-mineworkers who were interviewed. The first man had been an under-official at the colliery - a deputy - and as such, filled a supervisory position which required experience and knowledge in minework and conferred considerable status. He had left the colliery a little over a year before the interview, at the age of 47, following a serious back injury.

> I finished in the August and it wasn't until the February of this year that I got a job. It was a difficult time, I'd been used to work ...and my wife, I tell you, used to get a bit irritable at times...It was difficult getting a job because of my back...I tried one or two other jobs...well, I didn't actually work in them but I went to see about them - and as soon as I explained my position: if it entails bending and lifting...well, this was entirely out.
>
> Stuart Jeffries

This man eventually found a relatively low paid job as a hospital nurse, but another man, who left the colliery with 20 per cent pneumoconiosis, had been unemployed for almost two years when interviewed.

> I tried the rubber factory up there (on Aylesham industrial estate). I lasted six weeks - you know, the fumes was no good...I've got 20 per cent pneumoconiosis and I've also got arthritis in both arms, I can't straighten my arms...I didn't think about it at the time (being unemployed) ...but it's, you know, laid off like, and you're sitting about at first, it's a novelty, you know. I used to potter about in the garden and go and have a pint...I went down to the hovercraft - well, there's two or three lads in the village on this type of work...it's nights regular, but it's a cushy number compared to pitwork, y'know. They advised me to go down there but I've had no reply...I think it's 55 like, you know, or 56 I am now...they don't want to know do they? If they'd give you a trial it would be something, because a job like that, you'd be able to walk it, you know.
>
> When you look back, 41 years in mining, do you regret it?
>
> I bloody do! I detested every day I went down. I detested and yet I hadn't the guts to pull out.
>
> Jim Gillow

The continuing isolation of Aylesham represented the third factor which held men to the colliery and inhibited their job choice. Living in Aylesham, a man leaving the pit - or his son contemplating alternatives - had to travel at least seven or eight miles to the nearest major centres of employment (see Map 1). Of the surrounding towns of Sandwich, Deal, Dover and

Canterbury only the latter two could be reached directly by rail, whilst the main Canterbury-Dover and Canterbury-Sandwich roads were, respectively, two and three miles distant[56]. A recent employment report demonstrated that Aylesham lay on or around the edges of several labour markets but near the centre of none[57]. These conditions could make it difficult for young school leavers, particularly those who were members of mining families, to find work elsewhere despite their determination to avoid the pit. A 16 year old son of a retired miner explained his failure to find alternative employment despite his firm intention to break with family tradition:

> Your older brothers are at the pit, did you never think that you'd work there too?
>
> No, not at all. I just wanted to get out of the pit. Break away - be one of the ones that break away. 'Cos everyone's started at the pit in our family...I never thought about it. Whenever anybody used to ask, "No, I'm not going to the pit"...I sent 28 letters off, got 14 replies - two which said 'Yes, we can offer you a job'. One was for Dover District Council at Deal, and I never had a reference from school. And it's a long way to travel, and they said 'You're not the kind of person we want because you're far away and you'd have to go down to Folkestone for the college'.
>
> Peter Williams

Those that did secure jobs sometimes found that commuting to work from Aylesham was difficult, expensive and time consuming. Moreover, the longer shifts which many men worked were often, in effect, compulsory because of the constraints of travel

arrangements. Two mineworkers with experience outside the coal industry explained:

> Then I went to the box factory, doing a 12 hour day compulsory...I mean a van went there a certain time in the morning and came home whether you wanted to do it or not... you were there unless you wanted to walk!
>
> Dennis Gillow

> I worked a 12 hour shift there (factory in Maidstone). With overtime, 13 or 14 hours a day...a bus load used to go in the morning, a bus load used to go in the afternoon... they were the highest paid (jobs) you could get to. Why did I leave there? I think I was getting a bit fed up with the hours!
>
> Ian Carleigh

There can be no doubt that these considerations were of some importance in explaining the failure of many miners to successfully hold jobs outside the colliery and, indeed, the refusal of others to even consider the move. The individuals quoted above bear direct witness to this. Nevertheless, the influence of these restraints should not be exaggerated. The transferability of miners' skills, for example, was normally considered by reference to the specialist tasks of the face-worker which were without parallel elsewhere. Now it is true that facework represented the goal of many younger mineworkers and that a substantial proportion of the older men working away from the coal, either underground or on the surface, were ex-faceworkers. In this sense, facework took on an added

significance but it should be remembered that at Snowdown, during the period of research, less than 30 per cent of wage earners at the colliery worked at the face at any particular time. Many of the day to day tasks of the other men, in fact, resembled the activities of manual workers in other industries. The routine operation of machinery, the checking and maintenance of buildings and equipment, the transport of materials and the handling and grading of the product were all tasks which were by no means confined to the coal industry. The physical conditions under which some of these operations occurred were, however, exceptional although, again, it should be remembered that over 20 per cent of the Snowdown men worked on the surface and that some of those underground worked at, or nearby, the shafts where space and lighting were in plentiful supply and conditions were relatively stable. Finally, those men at Snowdown who were skilled craftsmen - for example, the electricians and fitters - did possess a skill which could be directly applied in other industries and often for greater financial reward. Indeed, it was the greater propensity for these men to leave the industry in Kent during the late 1960s and early 1970s which largely contributed to the creation of critical labour shortages at Snowdown[58].

To sum up, in terms of skill and the ability to successfully adapt to other types of work, the difficulties facing mineworkers, at Snowdown as elsewhere, have probably been over-estimated. The DEP study of Ryhope, for example, found no evidence of mineworkers experiencing any major problems

of adaption to new types of work task, indeed, 'the overwhelming majority of men seemed to have grasped the new processes remarkably quickly and well'[59]. This was a view confirmed by local employers[60]. Other studies have reached similar conclusions: Kelly, for example, found 'nothing to suggest that miners as a group are unsuited for retraining'[61], and Snaith noted that 'it would appear that miners are both willing and able to move from the industry on a voluntary basis so long as job opportunities exist'[62]. Finally, Bulmer's study of ex-mineworkers in a textile factory in Durham 'suggested that the problems of retraining mineworkers in other industries are much exaggerated'[63].

The significance of disabilities caused by diseases or accidents sustained in the course of colliery work should never be underestimated, particularly in view of the fact that such disability often goes unregistered[64]. 12 per cent of the unemployed men in the Ryhope study, for example, felt they were not fit for work even though they were registered at the employment exchanges[65]. However, the frequent coincidence of disability with old age made it difficult to determine which variable represented the most important factor in restricting employment opportunities. The unemployed ex-mineworker quoted above gave some indication of the way in which these elements were inextricably inter-woven and although no conclusive statement can be made it should be pointed out that a large number of redeployment studies have confirmed that, above all else, age represents the crucial variable determining patterns

of behaviour in the labour market[66]. In this respect, the major disadvantage faced by mineworkers at Snowdown may have centred around the comparatively large numbers who were in their mid-forties or over rather than their peculiar physical disabilities.

Finally, there is the question of geographical isolation and inadequate transport facilities. To pursue this point in any depth would have required systematic research of a comparative nature beyond the scope of this study which, to a large extent, was primarily concerned with social perceptions of, in this case, distance and time, rather than their objective measurement. Certainly, those living in isolated communities are not the only workers who find it necessary to travel daily in order to reach their place of employment. A national travel survey in 1972 demonstrated that 42 per cent of journeys to and from work involved distances of between three and nine miles and 14 per cent were ten miles and over[67]. In this context the precise measurement of mileage travelled, time involved and so on may not be as important as the way in which these factors are evaluated and compared. To do this the individual's frame of reference - his habits and expectations - and its relation to social context must be fully explored.

This brings the argument back to the question of social values. If, as has been suggested, the restraining influences of job specific skills, ill health and geographical isolation could not adequately explain the continuing influences of the colliery, then this would suggest that those observations concerning the demise of the 'mining community' were premature.

The following chapter presents evidence which confirms this interpretation by illustrating the persistence and strength of certain values and patterns of social behaviour traditionally associated with mining families and the communities in which they live.

NOTES

1. There are numerous studies of individual closure and redundancy situations and their impact upon manual workers. See, for example, H.R. KAHN, Repercussions of Redundancy, London, 1964; D. WEDDERBURN, Redundancy and the Railwaymen, Cambridge, 1965; J.E.T. ELDRIDGE, 'Redundancy Conflict in an Isolated Steel Community', in his book, Industrial Disputes: Essays in the Sociology of Industrial Relations, London, 1968; W.W. DANIEL, Whatever Happened to the Workers in Woolwich, London, 1972; R. MARTIN and R.H. FRYER, Redundancy and Paternalist Capitalism, London, 1973.

2. In an investigation of a pit closure in Durham it was remarked that: 'In the event, a third of the men said that they were surprised by the decision, a fifth said they did not know the Board's reasons, and over half of those who said they knew, did not accept them'. Department of Employment and Productivity, Ryhope: A Pit Closes, A Study in Redeployment, London, 1970, p. 91. See also the discussion in Chapter 3.

3. See Eldridge's comments on 'competing rationalities' in J.E.T. ELDRIDGE, op. cit.

4. National Union of Mineworkers (Kent Area) (NUM(KA)), Minutes, 1 June 1973.

5. Kentish Gazette (KG), 13 December 1968, 20 December 1968, 27 December 1968; Kent Messenger (KM), 20 December 1968.

6. The full statement was as follows:

> At a series of meetings held today the Board advised representatives of the Unions concerned that Chislet would close in July 1969, at the start of the annual holiday. On December 10, 1968 the Colliery was placed in jeopardy because of high losses which were running at an annual rate in excess of £1 million. The unions were informed that in order to secure the future for the pit it had to be proved that adverse geological conditions could be overcome consistently and that an average saleable output of 8,000 tons per week must be achieved throughout the jeopardy period. Despite tremendous efforts of both management and men during March when the weekly target was exceeded, the average weekly output was appreciably below target. In addition to reducing some of the heavy losses incurred in the coalfield because of difficulties which have been encountered at Chislet Colliery, it is necessary to provide additional manpower urgently at the other three collieries in order that they can be retained on an economic basis. It is not intended that any workmen in the coalfield will be made compulsorily redundant. Workmen over 60 in the coalfield will be offered early retirement. The remainder of the workmen at Chislet, apart from those required for the recovery operations, will be transferred to the three remaining collieries. The increased manpower at the remaining collieries will enable the challenge facing the mining industry in the 1970s to be met by concentrating resources, manpower and capital and ensure a continuing viable coalfield.

KG, 18 April 1969.

7. KG, 2 May 1969.

8. KG, 13 June 1969.

9. Ibid.

10. For evidence of the Chislet miners' confusion at the time of the closure see the letters published in KG, 27 June 1969.

11. For a detailed discussion of this episode see W.M. REES, 'A Study of the Law and Practice of Redundancy Relating to

British Coal Mineworkers', Paper for SSRC Centre for Socio-Legal Studies, Oxford Conference, 1976.

12. A range of newspaper cuttings which give considerable insight into the uncertainty of this period are available in the 'Coal' files housed at the Beaney Institute and Library, Canterbury.

13. NUM (KA), Minutes, 1 June 1973. See also the discussion in Chapter 3.

14. For details see Chapter 3.

15. E.M. KNIGHT, Men Leaving Mining, Newcastle, 1968.

16. Department of Employment and Productivity, op. cit., p. 52.

17. NCB, Statistical Tables, 1970/71.

18. NUM (KA), Minutes, 18 July 1973. See also Chapter 3.

19. See Chapter 3.

20. J. HUGHES and R. MOORE (eds.), A Special Case? Social Justice and the Miners, Harmondsworth, 1972, pp. 75-6.

21. NUM (KA), Minutes, 28 August, 27 November 1973.

22. J. HUGHES and R. MOORE (eds.), op. cit., p. 16.

23. For further details see Chapter 3.

24. For further information on the competitive nature of underground work at Snowdown see N. HARRISON, Once a Miner, London, 1954, and, in particular, pp. 137-149 for an example of the conflict which arose between colliers over the possession of timber for face props.

25. See Chapter 3.

26. A number of these families were established during the era of the butty system.

27. Details of college course requirements for surface, underground and coal-face workers and craft apprentices are given in 'Policy and Associated Documents on Industrial Training', NCB, 1973. As an example, the juvenile requirement for underground work at that time involved 20 days (out of a minimum of 50) at a technical college.

28. The changing role of the deputy under more highly mechanised day-wage systems has been widely commented upon. See, for example, J.H. GOLDTHORPE, 'Technical Organisation as a Factor in Supervisor-Worker Conflict', British Journal of Sociology, 10, 1959; E.L. TRIST, G.W. HIGGIN, H. MURRAY and A.B. POLLOCK, Organisational Choice, London, 1963; V. ALLEN, 'Ideology, Consciousness and Experience: The Case of the British Miners', paper presented to the BSA Conference on Advanced Industrial Societies, University of Kent, 1975; D. GIDWELL, 'Wage Payment Systems in the British Coal Mining Industry: An Appraisal', Industrial Relations Journal, 8, 1977.

29. D. DOUGLASS, 'The Durham Pitmen', in R. SAMUEL (ed.), Miners, Quarrymen and Saltworkers, London, 1977, p. 215.

30. A.W. GOULDNER, Wildcat Strike, London, 1955; Patterns of Industrial Bureaucracy, London, 1955.

31. See D. DOUGLASS, op. cit.

32. J. HUGHES and R. MOORE (eds.), op. cit., p. 41.

33. V. ALLEN, op. cit., p. 22.

34. The advantage of higher ventilating velocities lies in the reduction of underground heat and humidity and the dilution of potentially dangerous gases.

35. Report for 1969 and 1970, cited in J. HUGHES and R. MOORE (eds.) op. cit., p. 41.

36. NUM, Annual Conference, July 1964, p. 135.

37. See Table 3.32.

38. These figures are drawn from the 1961, 1966 and 1971 Censuses (Small Area Statistics). For the 1966 Census Aylesham was 'split' into two zones: (i) one covering the great majority of the village and including Snowdown and (ii) the other covering a minor section of the village and a sizeable rural area beyond. For the purposes of the comparisons used here and elsewhere in this thesis the first area is used.

39. Based on an analysis of data made available by the NCB at Snowdown Colliery.

40. Eastry Rural District Council, 'A Brief History of Aylesham Industrial Estate', (Typescript), dated 5 February 1973, p. 1. See also R.H. RUSTON, 'New Life for a Rural Coal Mining Community', District Councils Review, December 1973.

41. Unpublished data made available by Eastry Rural District Council.

42. Information derived from the Occupation and Industry Tables of the 1931 and 1951 Censuses.

43. Small Area Census Statistics, 1961, 1966, 1971.

44. Ibid., 1966, 1971.

45. Kent County Council (KCC), Kent County Structure Plan, Aspect Study Report 6B, 'Villages', Maidstone, 1975, Table, 22.

46. The information in the following paragraph is based upon the consultation of records kindly made available by Dover District Council (DDC) and discussions with local housing officials.

47. See the discussion in S.R. PARKER, The Future of Work and Leisure, London, 1972.

48. By the early 1930s there were one million private cars on British roads (by comparison to ten million in the mid-1960s). Thus despite the emergence of smaller, cheaper cars less than one family in ten actually owned one and motoring was predominantly a middle class activity. See N. BRANSON and M. HEINEMANN, Britain in the Nineteen Thirties, St. Albans, 1973, Chapter 6; J. RYDER and H. SILVER, Modern English Society, London, 1970, Chapter 5.

49. Small Area Statistics, 1966, 1971 Censuses.

50. This survey was undertaken by Mrs. M. Briggs as part of a teacher training qualification; she kindly allowed me access to her findings prior to writing up.

51. I am grateful to members of the Committee of Snowdown Working Men's Club for allowing me access to their membership books and files upon which this information is based. The role of the clubs in contemporary Aylesham is dealt with more fully in Chapter 7.

52. See the discussion in Chapters 1 and 8.

53. See Chapters 1 and 2.

54. The omission of young men in this age category was the result of practical considerations: the constraints of time and limited resources prevented the possibility of detailed interviews with young school leavers. The implications of this strategy are further discussed in Chapter 7.

55. See, for example, J. SEWEL, Colliery Closure and Social Change: A Study of a South Wales Mining Valley, Cardiff, 1975.

56. See Map 1.

57. KCC, Kent County Structure Plan, Aspect Study Report on Employment, 2B, Maidstone, 1975, p. 30, figure 7.

58. This point was repeatedly stressed by Jack Dunn, Secretary of the NUM (KA) and several NCB officials. See also the evidence presented in Chapter 3.

59. Department of Employment and Productivity, op. cit., p. 80.

60. Ibid., pp. 79-83.

61. P.M. KELLY, 'Contraction of the Coal Industry: Some Aspects of the Effects on Manpower', Economic Studies, 4,

1969, p. 208.

62. W. SNAITH, 'The Adjustment of the Labour Force on the Durham Coalfield: A Study of Redundancy', Economic Studies, 4, 1969, p. 251.

63. M. BULMER, 'Mining Redundancy: A Case Study of the Workings of the Redundancy Payments Act in the Durham Coalfield', Industrial Relations Journal, 2, 1971, p. 17, (footnote 31). This study is more fully reported in M. BULMER, 'The Growth of Factory Industry: Miners become Textile Operatives', in M. BULMER (ed.), Mining and Social Change, London, 1978.

64. See R.W. GRAINGER and J.W. HURST, A Report on the Incidence of Disability among Durham Miners, Department of Economics, University of Durham, (mimeo), 1969.

65. Department of Employment and Productivity, op. cit., p. 73.

66. See, for example, W.W. DANIEL, op. cit.; A. SINFIELD, 'Poor and Out of Work in Shields', in P. TOWNSEND (ed.), The Concept of Poverty, London, 1970; The Long Term Unemployed, Paris, 1968.

67. Department of Transport, Transport Statistics, Great Britain, 1965-1975, London, 1977, Table 13.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE COLLIERY PERSISTS: ASPECTS OF CONTINUITY IN WORK AND COMMUNITY

Introduction

During the course of interviewing one miner remarked that whatever the implications of employment figures - which clearly demonstrated the diminished importance of the colliery, in a strictly economic sense, for the people of Aylesham - everybody in the village 'had fell into the way of miners'. This chapter, whilst recognising the changes outlined in Chapter 6, represents an attempt to investigate this claim by illustrating the manner in which the patterns of behaviour and social values associated with a particular occupational community may persist despite a serious diminution of their economic base. This process may be understood in terms of the cyclical model used in this thesis. As the colliery entered the stages of decline, the settlement of miners and their families which it had originally called into existence began to coagulate and exhibit the acknowledged characteristics of a mature community in the middle phase of its own related cycle. As such a mining community took shape, whilst the colliery which created it declined. Moreover, the emergence of established social formations meant that despite its apparent decline the pit persisted - in a symbolic sense - as a powerful determinant of attitudes and behaviour beyond the colliery gates.

(i) The evolution of a community

The first task of the present chapter is to demonstrate how and why Aylesham could be said to have developed into a 'mature' community during the post-war period. The existence of this community must be explained and demonstrated before there can be any discussion of the persistence of particular forms of social behaviour in the face of the industrial decline of the industry which had originally brought the settlement into existence. The term 'mature' is used here to distinguish the social formations and patterns of behaviour which developed during the post-war years from those which had predominated during the earlier period. Briefly, the aim is to demonstrate that social relationships - which had previously been characterised by fragmentation and transience - were gradually transformed after 1945 so that the distinctive features were those of cohesion, continuity and stability. These are the features which are normally associated with the 'traditional' type of working class community or district, and here Goldthorpe and his colleagues have provided a concise statement which sums up this type of approach:

> The salient characteristics of the 'traditional' type of working class district could be said to derive from the relative stability and social homogeneity of its population. The tightly knit network of kinship and the close ties of familiarity between neighbours are the products of successive generations of families living out their lives alongside each other; the strong sense of communal solidarity and the various forms of mutual help and collective action reflect the absence of any wide economic, cultural or status differences[1].

When did the population of Aylesham begin to stabilise? No reasonable claim could suggest any extensive settlement prior to 1945. The two-way migration pattern of the inter-war years continued during the war when a considerable number of miners' families were removed to evacuation areas. For many miners this withdrawal heralded their own departure from Kent for frequently the 'reception' areas were the very regions from which they had originally migrated. Johnson, noting the war-time migration to South Wales, remarked that 'a large number of men either went with their families or followed soon afterwards'[2]. This loss was later made good, to some extent, by the compulsory transference of 'Bevin boys' to the Kent collieries - a development which served to heighten the heterogeneous character of an already diverse population. The emergence of any settled pattern of communal life was further delayed by the physical and social disruption caused by enemy activity. The Kent Coalfield suffered these attacks more than most, largely because of its location in the South East and its position between the strategically significant centres of London and Dover. As a result, miners and their families were exposed to the dangers of heavy calibre guns positioned on the French coast as well as air raids[3].

By comparison to this uncertainty and disruption, the post-war forties and fifties were years of stability, prosperity and consolidation. The country - and thus the collieries - needed miners desperately as demand for coal persistently exceeded the supply. The work-force at Snowdown Colliery expanded steadily

to approximately 2,000 by 1957 and this growth allowed the sons of miners at Aylesham to follow their fathers and benefit from the greater security and improved levels of remuneration which the industry offered[4]. Moreover, the post-war housing programme gave these younger men the opportunity to set up home and raise a family without leaving the village[5]. A range of statistics demonstrate that these economic and social conditions were conducive to the stabilisation of the population. The results of a local sample survey in Aylesham are summarised in Table 7.1. They reveal that of the 92 households surveyed over 77 per cent originated from the pre-1950 period while less than 11 per cent arrived between 1951 and 1960. In relation to other villages which were covered Aylesham ranked very highly in terms of the 'pre-1950' proportion and absolute lowest in terms of intake during the most recent periods (1961-1968). This suggests comparatively low levels of migration either into or out of the village.

TABLE 7.1: DATE OF ORIGIN OF HOUSEHOLDS IN AYLESHAM 1968

	ALWAYS LIVED HERE	PRE-1939	1939-50	1951-57	1958-60	1961-65	1965 on
%AGE	26.1	26.1	25.0	7.6	3.3	6.5	5.4
RANK	(3rd)	(1st)	(1st)	(13th)	(7th)	(15th)	(15th)

Note: Rank position denotes comparison with 15 other sample areas included in survey. 'Aylesham' covered only Aylesham and Snowdown but several of the other areas included a considerable number of villages so that the area figure represented an average. In all there were 105 villages in the 15 sample areas which covered the whole of Kent.

Source: Kent County Council, Kent County Structure Plan, Aspect Study Report 6B, 'Villages', Maidstone, 1975, Table 5.

Census statistics confirm those quoted above: of 401 inhabitants included in the 1961 sample only 10 (2.4 per cent) had moved into the area during the previous year[6], and of 394 inhabitants in 1971 only 18 (4.6 per cent) had entered over the preceding five years[7]. Finally, the analysis of registered voters resident in one road in Aylesham presented in Table 7.2 indicates the contrast in pre and post-war conditions[8]. During a six year period in the 1930s (1930-1935) less than 20 per cent of voters remained at their original address, but between 1947 and 1952 the equivalent proportion was over 54 per cent and for the ten year period between 1952 and 1962 the figure was 53 per cent. The analysis by household is equally striking: there were only 33 houses (30 per cent) where at least one voter registered in 1935 could be found in 1938, but between 1947 and 1952 - a longer period - the number of like houses rose to 91 (82.7 per cent).

TABLE 7.2: AN ANALYSIS OF REGISTERED VOTERS ON KINGS ROAD, AYLESHAM, 1930-1962

PERIOD	NO. RESIDENTS AT 1ST DATE	RESIDENTS AT 1ST DATE STILL PRESENT AT 2ND DATE		NO. HOUSES OCCUPIED AT 1ST DATE	HOUSES WHERE 1 + VOTERS AT 1ST DATE STILL PRESENT AT 2ND DATE	
		No.	%age		No.	%age
1930-1935	301	58	19.3	108	24	22.2
1935-1938	323	71	22.0	110	33	30.0
1947-1952	330	179	54.2	110	91	82.7
1952-1962	268	142	53.0	111	77	69.4

Note: The density of resident voters was considerably higher during the 1930s than in the later periods so that the probability of one or more voters remaining at any particular address were also higher (see column 5).

Source: Register of Electors, Dover Parliamentary Division, Parishes of Nonington and Aylesham.

As the population at Aylesham stabilised the village began to acquire a distinct social and political identity and social relationships - which were compared, during the inter-war period, to the normless and unordered settlements of the American 'Wild West' - were gradually institutionalised[9]. In 1948 the village was promoted from a hamlet to a ward in the parish of Nonington and three years later Aylesham Parish Council was formed. There were other significant post-war landmarks: the opening of a shirt factory in 1948, the establishment of a Community Centre Building Fund in 1951, the building of a fire station in 1954 and a police station in 1955. A local newspaper article published in 1957 paid tribute to the new-found stability and maturity of Aylesham. It began:

> The story of Aylesham is that of a Cinderella mining village - without the Fairy Godmother. The real life Cinerella has had to make her own way in the difficult world. Her growth from coal black obscurity to a thriving community is a rugged romance of hard work in the Snowdown pits, and an unceasing fight for recognition[10].

After 1957 the fortunes of the British coal industry declined and at Aylesham the significance of Snowdown Colliery as a source of local employment diminished. However, this did

not lead to a renewal of the pre-war migration pattern, as the data in Table 7.1 indicate. Miners and their families did not return to the more established coalfields; instead, they increasingly began to look beyond the colliery, and therefore the immediate locality, for alternative forms of employment. Consequently, the pattern of population stability was maintained after 1957 but how far did the expanding scope of occupational choice lessen the homogeneous character of the local inhabitants? An answer to this question must, first of all, acknowledge the diversity of experience displayed by those who had initially migrated to Aylesham. Most of these men, it is true, had known colliery work and were united in their common appreciation of the dangers involved, the variable conditions encountered, the need for exceptional skills and so on. But the variety of economic, social, physical and cultural factors which have influenced the histories of the British coalfields are sufficiently well documented to allow an appreciation of the differing backgrounds of the Kent mineworkers. The implications of these differences have been sketched out in earlier chapters[11]; all that need be added here is that given a relatively stable population the passing of time may, in itself, contribute to a diminution in sources of diversity through the creation of a fund of common experience and memory. In this sense, the residents of Aylesham during the 1960s and 1970s shared a common past despite their experience of an occupationally diverse present.

Two further points should be made. First, the fact that

more men were working outside the coal industry after 1957 did not automatically imply a radical alteration in the socio-economic profile of Aylesham employees. Those who did not work at the colliery were employed mainly in manual occupations. The data presented in Table 7.3 clearly illustrate the persisting insignificance of the professional, managerial and employer groups within the village between 1961 and 1971.

TABLE 7.3: ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE AND RETIRED MALES IN AYLESHAM BY SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROUP

SOCIO-ECONOMIC GROUP	1961		1966		1971	
	No.	%age	No.	%age	No.	%age
Professional workers	1	1	-	-	2	2
Employers and Managers	3	2	1	1	1	1
Foremen, Skilled Manual workers, Own Account workers (other than prof. workers)	68	52	70	53	84	69
Non-Manual workers	8	6	6	5	8	7
Personnel Service workers, Semi-skilled Manual workers and Agriculture workers	42	32	41	31	17	14
Unskilled Manual workers, Armed Forces and persons in inadequately described occupations	9	7	14	11	10	8
TOTAL	131	100	132	100	122	100

Source: Census (Small Area Statistics)

As such, the working people at Aylesham continued to experience the common constraints of manual labour and these served to bind the population in the manner outlined elsewhere by Jackson:

> Working-class community rests on the division of labour in society. The working-class family has few, if any, financial assets. The man has nothing to live from except his labour and his skill. His job is unlikely ever to give him enough money to build up capital, let alone employ others. His earnings probably reach their peak in his early twenties, and thereafter - except for trade booms - they will hold still or decline. His chances of promotion from the shop floor are negligible. And though he may earn more or earn less than his neighbours, the range of income in a working-class area is very tiny compared with the range and forms of income amongst a middle-class group...This single economic division, whatever else it does, pulls the working-class together as a group; and as a self-conscious group[12].

Because those outside the coal industry experienced similar insecurities, limitations and levels of financial reward the diminishing number of mineworkers did not alter basic economic and social realities. Even those who stressed the mixed character of the contemporary working population acknowledged these fundamental equalities:

> You say that the community is more mixed now - would you also say that there are varying standards of living?
>
> I think everybody's about equal.
> (wife) Nobody's well off, are they?
>
> No, I think everybody's about on an equal footing...everybody's about equal on a wage scale.
>
> Mr and Mrs John Butcher

Second, the links between Aylesham and the colliery were certainly stronger than crude occupational statistics implied. Many of those working in other occupations were themselves ex-miners, and even those without personal experience of colliery work would know mineworkers through kin, neighbourhood and friendship ties. Similarly, a very high proportion of the retired population were men who had spent a lifetime in mining or their wives who had survived them. These individuals made up the 'hidden'mining community - a social phenomenon which has been noted in other studies of mining localities[13].

In view of these comments concerning the post-war stability and homogeneity of the Aylesham population we might expect to find evidence of the 'salient characteristics' of the traditional working class district which include the 'tightly knit network of kinship', 'close ties of familiarity between neighbours', 'the strong sense of communal solidarity' and 'mutual help and collective action'[14]. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to an analysis of these characteristics as they applied to Aylesham during the early 1970s. After a discussion of the nature of social networks certain aspects of the attitudes, values and behaviour of miners and non-miners will be examined in order to demonstrate the overriding influence of the colliery in determining the character of the community. This approach does not imply a simplistic technological or industrial determinism; in fact, the aim is to throw light upon the autonomy of local social collectivities and their ability to maintain patterns of behaviour despite the erosion of the industrial forces which initially moulded them[15].

(ii) Social networks

The immense difficulties associated with the use of the social network as a practical tool of analysis in the research context have been indicated earlier in this thesis[16]. Collecting data on the scope of social networks, the degree to which they are 'close' or 'loose' knit and the extent to which contacts are regularly activated has frequently proved to be difficult. Even if this enumeration exercise is successfully completed the question of the significance of these social contacts must be tackled, and this, in turn, requires an investigation of the meanings which individual actors attribute to their social activities and relationships[17]. The systematic investigation of the nature of social networks thus represented a major enterprise in itself of a sort which was clearly beyond the scope of the present study. As a result, much of what follows is based upon what people said about social relationships rather than any 'objective' mapping of social ties in the immediate locality.

Social groups at Aylesham encompassed friends, workmates, neighbours and kin, and frequently these categories overlapped. Approximately 350 of the Snowdown miners also lived at Aylesham and were therefore extremely likely to interact as neighbours, friends and relatives[18]. Moreover, it was clear - from the interviews and other conversations - that those inhabitants of Aylesham who did not have at least one close relative (parent, child or sibling) resident in the village beyond the domestic unit were exceptional, and were regarded as such. A local

reporter noted that, 'there are now many families with three generations in the village' and, indeed, the locality bound extended family network represented the norm at Aylesham during the 1970s[19]. On a number of occasions I asked respondents to enumerate the number of their relatives who were currently living in Aylesham. This was frequently a lengthy process which normally required the knowledgeable aid of a wife or mother. Often men would joke about their suspicion of being 'related to half the population of Aylesham' and one or two mentioned that they had only discovered by chance that they were related to someone previously regarded solely as 'friend', 'workmate' or 'neighbour'. This illustrated clearly the complex, overlapping linkages which characterised social relationships in the village.

When asked how they might describe Aylesham to a stranger a common set of phrases were repeatedly employed:

> It's still a mining village - it's not really a town.
> Everybody's connected and interconnected.
> Quite a close-knit community.
> Everyone's married and inter-married.

These descriptions were used to compare Aylesham not only to other contemporary settlements but also to contrast the present with the past. Normally, this 'past' referred to the difficult years after 1927 when 'clans' and 'cliques' displayed aggression towards each other rather than friendship and individual rather

than collective goals were paramount[20]. The passing of time served to reduce differences and bring individuals and families together:

> (wife) It used to be a rowdy place, you know. Most people were strangers till we started to grow up together - because all our age group now all grew up together in the village, you know.
>
> Mr and Mrs John Butcher

Comments such as this served to underline Stacey's observation in the original Banbury study that:

> ...a group of people living together in the same place over a period of two or three generations without major upheavals will develop a customary way of life connected with and upheld by a network of face to face relations in which kin plays its part[21].

In fact, the occasions on which individuals spoke of the community at Aylesham being 'split up' or becoming 'colder' were invariably marked by a comparison with the immediate past shortly before the control of the council houses passed from Eastry Rural District Council to Dover District Council in 1974. This changeover had inspired the suspicion that the village was being over-run by 'outsiders' who were not 'the relatives of anybody here in the village'[22]. However, although the alteration in housing arrangements did make it possible for 'outsiders' to come in the available evidence suggests that this

opportunity was largely ignored; Aylesham houses continued to be allocated to 'Aylesham people'[23]. In sum, the very visibility of those few 'outsiders' who were resident and the strength of the reaction against the possible increase in their numbers indicated, above all, the continuing strength and pervasiveness of social networks rather than their imminent disintegration. A newspaper article celebrating 50 years at Aylesham confirmed this interpretation:

> The pits and the industrial estate have provided enough employment to keep the families of most of the original settlers in the village. The result is that even though it has grown enormously Aylesham still retains its old feel of a tightly knit community. Everyone may no longer know everyone, but they still know almost everyone. There are now many families with three generations in the village. Grown-up children still pop round to see their parents and grandparents see their grandchildren on a nearly daily basis. Old friendships formed in the 1920's still survive. Children who went to school together now work together...Aylesham can boast a stable community where families stay close together[24].

In the context of a relatively stable population, the existence of overlapping social ties and the (almost unavoidable) frequency of social contact meant that residents displayed a high degree of familiarity with one another. On several occasions individuals were able to give the names, occupations and other details of most of the residents in their street. One man even offered to go through an electoral list which I had in order to point out those in the village who were currently working at the colliery. That these networks and ties of

familiarity served to bind people together and encourage mutual aid, foster collective rather than individual solutions and engender feelings of communal solidarity was clearly demonstrated in numerous first hand accounts[25]. There were many examples similar to those brought up in the discussion between man and wife - both of whom had, for several years, worked in Canterbury - which is reproduced below:

> (wife) No, I wouldn't leave. No, it's nice living here - nice and friendly.
>
> What keeps you here?
>
> Well, everybody knows each other, neighbours - (wife) Everybody helps one another. I would only have to run next door right now and say, "John's (husband) took bad", or "His mother's took bad" and everybody's all out to help you. In towns they don't want to know you...they're really good here.
>
> You can go in people's homes just like that, you know.
> (wife) And when you go away on holiday they'll go and get your shopping in for you for when you come back. They're not like other people.
>
> Everybody helps each other more than in the towns because they're all knitted together.
>
> Mr and Mrs John Butcher

The analysis of these patterns of behaviour is taken up later in this chapter in the context of the concrete issues of wages, working conditions and strikes. For the present, it will be sufficient to conclude this discussion by reiterating Pahl's observation that kinship and neighbourhood ties may represent for the working class what property does for the middle class: 'an importance source of economic security and

support'[26]. As such, in periods of industrial decline these ties may be strengthened in order to combat greater insecurity. Although, therefore, the decline of Snowdown Colliery after 1957 and its threatened closure in the late sixties and early seventies called for an increase in labour mobility, it seems likely that these events actually re-inforced the closely knit social networks of miners and their families at Aylesham. In this way, it was possible for the values and social behaviour characteristic of a 'mature' mining community to persist despite the diminution of their economic base. The first hand accounts of miners and non-miners suggested that this was the case.

(iii)Miners and their sons

A tendency for a high proportion of new recruits to a particular industry to be the sons of those already (or previously) employed there represents a distinctive feature of most occupational communities[27]. In the coal industry the pattern of son following father to the colliery is central to the notion of 'mining families' and normally forms a significant part of any description of mining communities. Thus in delineating the features of his ideal-type traditional mining community Bulmer states:

> Family continuity in mining work is the norm. Sons follow their fathers into the mine, and the daughters of miners become the wives of miners[28].

Elsewhere, Sid Chaplin - himself the son of a miner and a one-

time miner - has confirmed the strength of this pattern of occupational inheritance in his graphic description of childhood in a mining community:

> Coal soaked into your being, if only from the interminable coal talk...from your older brothers...we learned names of seams, districts, variations...everywhere you carried your rank or your father's rank with you[29].

The persistence of this pattern of family continuity and anticipatory socialisation may diminish, however, when a colliery or coalfield appears to be entering the final stages of decline and closure - particularly when these developments coincide with far-reaching alterations in the traditional forms of technical and social organisation at the workplace. In this context, how far did the sons of miners at Aylesham continue to profess traditional occupational values and follow their fathers to the colliery?

A comprehensive answer to this question would ideally incorporate a statistical analysis of the occupational destination of the sons of Snowdown miners between the ages of, say, 16 and 21 during the mid-seventies. However, practical considerations aside, the weight of the present research was upon the individual account for purposes of illustration and it is felt that the following analysis does provide at least a partial insight into this problem. Thus although the occupational biographies of most of those younger men who were interviewed refer to schooldays and job hunting in the sixties rather than

seventies it should be remembered that at this time the decline of the coal industry was well advanced and, indeed, the threat of closure in the Kent Coalfield was probably greater[30]. Beyond this, the more general observations of the younger men - to which reference is made below - do, in fact, give an indication of prevailing attitudes and values at the time of the research.

Initial enquiries cast some doubt on the existence of any pervasive mining tradition at Aylesham. Several of the younger miners asserted that they had 'no idea' of what Snowdown Colliery might be like before they actually entered and on one or two occasions discussions of mining and the coal industry were illustrated not by reference to the experience of the father but to 'the things (serials and documentaries) on TV' which 'seemed to be true to life'[31]. One mineworker, who occupied a prominent position on the NUM branch at Snowdown and whose identification with colliery work was obviously high, made the following comments:

> But actually talking about the pit or going to the pit - I knew absolutely nothing about the pit. All I could remember is the smell of the dust all over his (father) clothes...There was four of us - four sons. We've all been to the pit. They're all older than me. I can't even remember discussing the pit with any of them before I went down either.
>
> Steven Schofield

These statements were a little surprising in view of the clear pattern of family continuity which had set in at Aylesham

from the very beginning. A local juvenile employment review noted, in 1927, that 'preference...is given to the sons of colliers'[32] at Snowdown, and other references to the lack of alternative employment for young men in the mining districts were made throughout the inter-war years and were repeated during the post-war period[33]. Even where miners' sons did take up alternative employment there was a tendency to return to the colliery - if only for the financial advantages. The 1935 Review noted that:

> ...though coal mining appears an unattractive occupation to the outsider, boys from mining families who are placed in other work away from home, almost invariably drift back to the mines later owing to the relatively higher wages of the younger age groups[34].

Traditionally, the East Kent area was widely regarded as a difficult one for the employment of school leavers, yet, as an experienced local careers officer noted, there was rarely a time 'when employment in mining was not...immediately available'[35]. Were the sons of miners who were themselves employed at Snowdown Colliery therefore reluctantly trapped in their fathers' occupation? Most of the evidence suggested that this was an inaccurate interpretation; men expressed a desire to emulate the achievements of their fathers, a continuing belief that miners were 'born and bred' and a limited conception of employment beyond the colliery. In sum, notwithstanding a characteristic ambivalence to pitwork which generations of

miners have displayed - these young men demonstrated a commitment to mining and an ignorance of alternatives similar to that of their fathers before them[36].

The persistence of the hewing longwall system of coal extraction at Snowdown, which retained many of the traditional skills and work arrangements associated with the hand-got method, can help to explain the continuing strength of the younger miners' desire to rank alongside their father and older brothers as established mineworkers[37]. In a diminished form, Goldthorpe's 'almighty collier' was still working at the colliery in the early 1960s and continued to prove his worth through the size of his piecework earnings[38]:

> I'd heard the lads saying what they'd earned and what they thought of the job...I wanted to be a miner because I'd heard my brothers on about it...mining was everything I wanted to do. I wanted to go and compete with my brothers - just as they all seemed to be competing at the time, earning money, proving that they were men ...this was the big thing: if you was a miner, you was a 'big hitter'...you could swing the shovel. They thought you was great. This was probably what mining families aimed at: to have a good name in the industry - to be thought of highly by your fellow workmen
>
> Robert Hughes

The miner above entered the colliery in 1958 and began work at the coal-face in 1961. During the years that followed the introduction of power loading and the abolition of piecework in favour of the day-wage undermined the independence and skill of the collier; he was transformed into a 'faceworker' whose

pace and style of work was now predominantly dictated by machinery. Nevertheless, the image of the collier lived on and continued to exert a powerful influence in the seventies. The man quoted below entered Snowdown in 1970:

> I used to think it was good with my Dad down the pit...I don't know whether anybody else has said, but I was proud that my Dad was a miner, I really was - and that's what made me go down the pit.
>
> Dennis Gillow

In many cases, fathers of men eager to enter the colliery assured me that they had discouraged such a course of action and this was verified by their sons[39]. However, in virtually every case the wishes of the father had been overridden - and frequently without any great difficulty.

> Father discouraged me completely. In fact, he said I couldn't go down the pit. But...it was the thing...everybody went down the pit in Aylesham - that was it, all the lads went down there.
>
> Richard East

> My Dad put me off more than anything. All the time, "You're bloody stupid," and arguments all the time about it. But I said, "That's what I want to do."
>
> Dennis Gillow

> My father...he didn't want me to go down the pit, actually. But I had a lot of mates at school and they were all going to the pit - and that was it. That influenced me more than anything.
>
> Colin Williams

> Dad always said he would never let me go down the pit, you know what they're like. He said he'd never let me go down the pit. But he did in the end because I was out of a job, see?
>
> Geoff Peterson

To some extent, this pattern indicated the strength of the sons' enthusiasm although it often seemed that the fathers' resistance was predominantly 'token' and that both father and son ultimately recognised the inevitability of pitwork. This may be explained by reference to the characteristically double edged attitude of the miner towards his work which has been widely documented. To give one local example: John Haddon, an NUM branch official at Tilmanstone Colliery, told an investigator, 'No man ought to have to go down a hole like that to earn his living, but once you're down, it sort of gets you'[40]. There were numerous verbal manifestations of this type of feeling in the interviews. One man, after expressing considerable pride in the fact that he and his father were miners, continued:

> The sun and the moon were put on earth for everybody to look at. And so was the fresh air. And why should the toffs send their sons to Eton and we send our own sons to the colliery...why should our own sons, at the age of 40, have silicosis?
>
> Dai Evans

Another miner reflected:

> You get a lot of them say, "Oh, close the bloody place." You know, "We're fed up with it." But really, deep down, they love it!
>
> Charlie Reid

Parental discouragement appeared to be primarily based upon a reluctance to allow sons to be exposed to the difficult and dangerous conditions of colliery work. The reality of ill-health and disability caused through pitwork was plainly in evidence at Aylesham in the tired and disfigured bodies of some of the older, retired mineworkers[41]. Yet younger members of families with disastrous medical records were determined to start work at the colliery:

> My grandfather (a miner) died when he was 52 and my Uncle Tom, he died through the pit. My Uncle Henry died through silicosis. My Uncle Bill's got 100 per cent silicosis and he's had TB. And my Dad, he's got 25 per cent silicosis and he's been in hospital with his chest off and on - that's what made him finish at the pit...The training officer at the pit, he said, "Knowing your family's history about your chest trouble" and that...but I said, "That's what I want to do."
>
> Dennis Gillow

Judging from individual accounts it seemed that neither school nor youth employment facilities had any substantial influence in terms of offering alternative values and goals. Those families particularly keen on persuading their sons out of 'the rut of the pit' often went to some trouble to ensure that they went to a secondary school outside the village. For those that remained, ideas and ambitions formed outside the classroom appeared to only be confirmed within. In Aylesham 'all the lads went down there', even those who stayed on for exams, and neither teacher nor careers officer could alter this 'inevitable' pattern[43].

> I went straight into mining at 15. I should think maybe 50 to 60 per cent of the boys in the class went straight into mining...it was the thing...everybody went down the pit in Aylesham. That was it - all the lads went down there...I just wanted to go down and get a job...The careers officer came. He said, "What do you want to do?" I said I wanted to go down the pit, and that was it. I wasn't with him more than two or three minutes. He said, "Fair enough" put my name down and that was it. As far as he was concerned I was heading for the pit.
>
> Richard East

> A few friends carried on at Aylesham Secondary - two - and they're at the pit now. I think that the school conditions you for the pit... you just seem to come out, get on the bus, and go down the pit - that's what it seems.
>
> Dennis Gillow

> Well, just before we left school we had this person come round from the 'Employment', asking you what sort of work you'd like to do. And I can remember distinctly telling him I wanted to be a lorry driver's mate...I was waiting to hear from them...but nothing was said so I went to the pit.
>
> Duncan Schofield

During the course of the interviewing the competitive position and prospects of the coal industry improved dramatically and the miners won a number of substantial wage increases. By contrast, opportunities for employment in the wider economy declined[44]. As a result, the level of recruitment at Snowdown rose and the intake included men with and without previous mining experience. The reaction of the younger members of mining families to both these sets of men confirmed the

persisting strength of the ideology of family continuity. Men coming to the colliery 'just for the money' were not regarded as 'miners'; like the newcomers to the village, they were 'outsiders':

> Majority of them that are coming in are lads without mining traditions, you know. Probably never been down the pit. Father's never been down the pit. I believe there is certain mining traditions. The whole thing about, 'it's got to be in your blood to do it', I believe that in some cases that's true.
>
> Steven Schofield

> I think it's something that's born into people. Now you've got a lot of lads coming down the pit, you know, just for the money. They've got no contacts in mining, through their life, and they haven't got what you call 'pit sense' ...they do silly things, whereas lads have heard their Dads say, "Watch this, watch that."
>
> Dennis Gillow

> There's a big difference...I knew one of these rippers that I looked up to - I sort of idolised him because he was a real big, good strong worker...Once, in the pit bottom, waiting to go up the pit, he said to me, "Do you know, Duncan, there's no miners here any more. It's tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor." That's what he said - and that's just what all these men were that were coming into the pits...They seemed to be all mouth and they couldn't do the bloody work! They never had that - the thing that the pit gives you - the skill and the know-how...You definitely need to be the son of a miner to be a good miner...in the case of my father, old men who'd worked with him would talk with you and say, "Your father was a brilliant collier"...this seems to then make you want to be like your father.
>
> Duncan Schofield

On the other hand, the return of experienced miners from mining families was regarded as a natural progression; their attempts to leave the pit being perceived as futile - no more than temporary breaks which were inevitably unsuccessful.

> You'll find there's a lot of old people now that worked in the pit about three or four years ago - gone to where the money was, the rubber factory or Pfizers - they're <u>all</u> drifting back. Every one of them. There were about six miners at the rubber factory and they've all drifted back[45].
>
> Charlie Reid

Both these sets of attitudes reflected the firm belief that miners were 'born and bred'. The good miner was the son of a miner and his natural place was at the colliery.

> To me it's just something I've been brought up with - a family of miners is just something that's bred into you. That's the way I look at it...you've got to have it in the family to be a miner. You've got to have generations and generations of miners and then you make a good miner yourself...it's something that's handed down to you...it's just something you follow on.
>
> Geoff Peterson

This was confirmed time and again in the manner in which men with some experience beyond the colliery recounted their occupational biography:

> Why did you leave this time?
>
> Oh, fed up. You know, change. I think once you've been a miner that long that's all you

would leave for, is a change...a lot of people did. They're all back now though.

Charlie Reid

I'd come back to Aylesham (from the army) ...I done a little spell of work driving - three or four months. From there I worked on Dungeness Power Station - I was driving a 'dozer over there...and then the travelling got hold of me and I thought, "Well, the pit's just down the road. Go down the pit"...I done about three or four years as a fitter. I left again in 1969. I went on the cross-channel boats then... after two years I got caught in the end of season lay-offs...so from there I went down the pit again and I've been there ever since ...First, I wanted to go back to Aylesham, but I wanted to give the pit a miss...I had a good run outside: I was doing quite well at Dungeness but the travelling got me down ...I thought, "Oh, I'll go back down the pit"...point is, when you're out of the industry you're always wondering what it's like down the pit - I always have...and always you end up going back down...knowing in yourself there's no changes. It's as if you've left the pit for the weekend.

Richard East

By describing periods away from the colliery as a 'good run outside' and a 'change' these men were acknowledging the continuing pull of minework which they had not escaped through taking another job because this influence extended far beyond the colliery gates into their homes and leisure time activities and relationships. It is hardly surprising that a man might 'wonder what it's like down the pit' when so many of those in his immediate social environment - family, friends, neighbours - were directly connected to the industry. One miner, who had previously left the colliery twice, offered the following

explanation for his return:

> I don't know. There must be some attraction. I don't know. Perhaps because 70 per cent of my mates are there. People I play football with. People I go to the club with.
>
> Ian Carleigh

Some men, of course, had never seriously considered work elsewhere; for them, as for their fathers, 'job' was automatically equated with 'pit' because - quite simply - there was 'nothing else'.

> I never really thought about doing anything else, you know. I was born into mining, really. We decided I was going into mining at an early age.
>
> Robert Hughes

> Of course, there was only the pit - and that's what I went into...there was no other jobs. Just getting like the present situation today: there's no work outside. So there was only the pit.
>
> Colin Williams

> You see, with you all being young lads together, it's a bit of a lark. That's all it is. You don't have any serious views on it when you first go there. You've got to have a job, so you go there, and there's no serious views...it's just the thing to do.
>
> Duncan Schofield

This limited perception of opportunities in the local labour market was highlighted by the popularity amongst miners' sons of two alternatives: the armed forces (and merchant navy)

and emigration[46]. The appeal of the forces has been mentioned in a number of studies and it is worth exploring this theme in some detail[47]. The decision to join up was frequently explained in terms similar to those used in accounting for entry to the pit:

> It was a thing that happened. A lot of the young lads the same age as me, we all joined the army. I should think that at one time there must have been 30 or 40 Aylesham lads all in the army at the same time...Of the lads I knock around with...three of us joined up at the same time.
>
> Richard East

This mass attraction can be partially explained by the fact that the forces were a relatively easy way of acquiring experience for men whose social contacts were largely bound within a small geographical area. A move could be made yet the need to find accommodation was eliminated: a bed with a roof over it were guaranteed. Two other points are relevant. First, the forces represented the chance of a 'spell away' or 'break' from the restrictions of the mining community; they offered a chance of 'seeing the world' before marrying and settling down. As such, they resembled the other occupations referred to above for they were not perceived as permanent alternatives to the colliery[48]. Second, life in the armed forces or merchant navy exhibited a number of characteristics which were similar to those of colliery work. In opening an article about the Kent Coalfield, Gretton remarked that, 'there is something military about mining', and certainly a number of parallels may be drawn[49]. Both

involve a considerable degree of geographical and social isolation; entail work in dangerous and adverse conditions which may be conducive to feelings of pride and satisfaction in its completion; and both encourage feelings of involvement and group attachment in male dominated work and leisure activities[50]. Each of these points suggested a severely limited notion of other jobs which may have been available locally - although beyond the confines of Aylesham.

The incidence of emigration confirms this interpretation. During the late sixties and early seventies the number of mining families leaving to work in South African and Australian gold and nickel mines began to attract attention in the local press and it was noticeable that a number of families contacted had relatives now living in these countries[51]. Why was it that miners and their families considered moves of this scale before those which involved a limited degree of mobility in the local East Kent area? Basically, the answer to this question hinges upon the ignorance of possible alternatives in the vicinity. With so little experience or knowledge of other types of occupation and so few everyday contacts or links with the surrounding broader based towns other types of occupation were less 'visible' than mining. Numerous studies of job search behaviour have indicated the crucial role of informal social networks as devices for gathering information, locating available jobs, influencing employers' attitudes and so on[52]. At Aylesham there were developed social networks but in occupational and spatial terms the range of experience of those

enmeshed in them was severely constricted. This not only acted as a constraint upon the individual's chances of acquiring other jobs, it also reduced his capability of even 'seeing' them as potential alternatives. In this context, we can begin to understand why leaving Aylesham - be it with the forces or by emigration - was equated with international mobility, for where else was there to live and what else was there to do within this country[53]?

(iv) 'Non-miners' in Aylesham

Approximately half the working men in Aylesham did not work at the colliery. In particular contexts this led some residents to pronounce the demise of the mining community at Aylesham. The logic of this argument was clear: if the majority of the male residents of the village were no longer members of the same occupation and did not work together then the basis of an occupational community which spanned Aylesham as it had done in the past, was missing. However, some mention has already been made of the high probability that resident non-miners might have indirect contemporary links with the coal industry through family, friendship and neighbourhood ties. Moreover, many of those of working age and the majority of the retired would have direct personal experience of colliery work. Given these connections, how far would the attitudes and behaviour of non-miners diverge from the miners? How far would the past - dominated by coal - continue to influence the present? If mining still represented, for non-miners, an important source

of identity, values and beliefs and a significant determinant of non-work activities then we may justifiably acknowledge the persistence of an occupational community which included men who were not employed at the colliery[54].

The national miners' strikes of 1972 and 1974 will serve as concrete events around which the discussion of these issues can be based. Both these strikes raised a number of significant political and social issues, not the least of which was that which gave rise to the ensuing debate on the differential allocation of economic rewards. This open discussion of the manner in which the 'national cake' was distributed - and the claims of particular groups to alter that distribution - could have led to internal conflict and division at Aylesham if the pattern of occupational mobility had been accompanied by any marked change in ideas and values held by those outside the coal industry. However, the evidence suggests a remarkable degree of 'co-operation between unlike individuals and...groups' as demanded by the exigencies of the strikes[55].

> During the strikes it came out time after time. People looking after each other - and how they could muck in and get by without any difficulty. This village could have gone on forever!
>
> Robert Hughes

This pattern of mutual aid, this pulling together during periods of adversity, fits in with the established picture of working class community as delineated in a number of

sociological studies[56]. However, at Aylesham, the manner in which this process appeared to encapsulate almost everyone was remarkable. A newspaper report during the 1974 strike noted that although,

> ...more and more boys leaving school in Aylesham are looking for jobs outside the mines you still cannot get away from the connection with the pits. Almost everyone has either worked at the mine or has close relatives who have. Aylesham backs the miners as a matter of course, the rightness of the strike is taken for granted[57].

First hand accounts confirmed this interpretation:

> This is a good thing - as a community. We was going up there (Miners' Welfare Club) with coppers in our pockets. Chuck it in the middle: get a round of drinks in. And pound notes were tossed over and we could drink there all day - with the non-miners in, ex-miners and even the pensioners ...they couldn't do enough for us. We survived very well through the strikes through this. Being a community, as we are, where everyone knows everyone else.
>
> Richard East

> I've never known anything like it...there's a meat factory up there. You had lads coming from the meat factory and giving you big lumps of meat - and other unions sending down food parcels. So there was a sort of community atmosphere. More so than it has been for years - I believe, anyway. But you had lads at that meat factory, pinching meat and chucking it over the wire!
>
> Steven Schofield

Quite clearly, the interlocking networks of neighbourhood, kin, friendship and acquaintance formed the basis of solidaristic action by both men and women in support of the miners' cause[58]. These ties, which spanned the entire village, had been notably absent during the inter-war period despite the fact that all the working male residents shared a common dependence on the colliery as a source of income and employment. Then, the few strikes which were attempted had fallen into disarray and ultimate failure and, because of the far greater significance of local strength during this period, the lines of cleavage and conflict which characterised non-work relationships were contributory factors to their collapse[59]. By the 1970s, the majority of families at Aylesham were no longer dependent on the colliery yet the level of communal solidarity was far higher than before. In other words, while individuals had become, in one sense, more 'unlike' one another, due to the dispersal of occupational dependence, co-operation had actually increased. Of course, the strikes of 1972 and 1974 were also remarkable for the solidarity which was displayed on a national scale and no doubt the miners at Aylesham drew considerable strength from this[60]. Nevertheless, this does not detract from the fact that the identity of interests displayed by the local population - a minority of which were miners - was greater than when miners dominated the male work-force.

This identity of interests was revealed when discussing, for example, miners' wages and working conditions. The case for the miners was often put as strongly by men outside the industry

as those within. Even men who had been employed elsewhere for several years and were determined never to return expressed considerable indignation at those who questioned the miners' worth:

> Mining's a very dangerous job. If you see my father...when he lifts his shirt, the scars and cuts he's got on his back! Very dangerous. They don't get enough money - I told you that! They talk about £100 a week - they're worth every penny of £100 a week. When you go and live like a rat for eight hours a day. They're worth every penny! They don't get enough!
>
> Steven Foster

> (wife) They do still begrudge the miner what he gets. And I always say this: "You've got to live with a miner before you realise." It's alright actually talking about the pit - but you've actually got to live in the same house as a pitman - Before anybody starts shouting about certain people getting too much for what they're doing, they should see the jobs they are doing before they shout!
>
> Mr and Mrs John Butcher

Living in Aylesham the costs and consequences of minework were inescapable; those who lived there shared the separate world of miners - their knowledge, their assumptions and their history. The men quoted above (and their wives), the workers at the meat factory and the members of the Welfare Club shared a common set of values and beliefs with the miners. Only they were capable of judging their work, understanding their problems and appreciating their worth[61]. Individual and family experience had taught them this much and employment elsewhere did not allow a man to forget these lessons or divorce himself from contemporary problems in the industry:

> I do think that the miners' union - when I was working there, and even now - could push their pension up. My father's a pensioner - he's been retired nine years. He's one of the lucky ones. There's been men leave that pit - done exactly the same time as what my father's done - and they don't go two years. So he's been a lucky one. But what does he get? £3 a week pension. That's for 51 years service! That's the only thing I got against the union.
>
> Steven Foster

Moreover, for the retired men in Aylesham, most of whom had spent the bulk of their working lives in the colliery, and the men who had left the colliery to work elsewhere, the prior occupational role of mineworker continued to represent a primary element in the construction of a self-image. To a large extent, these men still saw themselves as miners. Thus although some of the retired miners were often critical of the skill and effort displayed by their younger counterparts they continued to give them general support for to do otherwise might have implied self-criticism:

> It was harder work then. It's more mechanised now. Mind you, there's some good lads in the pits under mechanisation. There's some very good men down there. To see them working these machines - it's really good. There's some very good chaps...I think they're the finest class of men out.
>
> Stan Barnett

The continuing identification of the older men was frequently revealed in their use of the term 'we' when discussing events in the coal industry and the demands of mineworkers which had arisen since their retirement:

> As miners we're pretty easy-going...we like doing things that we like doing and we're not really interested in...things that we should be. But we've always got somebody that's kicking up a stink and fighting for something ...Now, I've just received a lump sum for my pneumoconiosis - it's something I never dreamt I'd get. I never expected it. But through this handful of men fighting and arguing over the years, taking records, they're getting this. Holidays with pay. Shorter hours. More money...When I look at what they're asking for and what they want and what they fight for...it's the same thing as I want...One time, we were paid reasonably well and we were about third or fourth at the top of the ladder for wages. But this last 30 year we've been falling behind...Now, when I go to Canterbury or Dover and I hear tell about the miners striking...it really rankles me...it's strange how people seem to be down on 'em... (I'm) a man that's spent his life in the mines. I think of the terrible hard life that it's been...when people argue and they create about having to pay for coal, they never think of the widows and the men that's died.
>
> Paddy Hughes

On the other hand, many of the ex-miners who were employed elsewhere were, in their own terms, 'taking a break' or waiting for an improvement in wages or conditions in the coal industry. The relative decline in miners' earnings prior to 1972 drew a considerable number of miners 'out for the money' and this encouraged an instrumental attitude to alternative forms of employment. One miner recalled:

> I came to the pit in 1971...I spent six months there and left...the money was about £15 a week ...I had an offer of a job at Marley Foam at Maidstone, and the money there was marvellous - about £50 a week...I just couldn't survive on the money (at the pit) - not when you're trying

> to build a house together. And Marley Foam at the time was the 'in thing' for the Aylesham people. There was a lot working there. A bus load used to go in the morning; a bus load used to go in the afternoon. It was the 'in thing' to go up there and get some money...Another boring job - but it was always boring good money!
>
> Ian Carleigh

These attitudes were conducive to a transitory orientation to alternative employment and in this context the earlier self-image which had been based upon mining tended to overshadow more recent potential sources of occupational identity. Thus it was entirely rational, for example, for an 'ex-miner' to take an active part in strike marches:

> I used to battle for the miners as well. We went on marches, didn't we? (Turns to wife) Up to London where they was on strike - 1972. I wasn't working at the pit but I was up there marching with them. Because if they got the rise, I'd go back in the pit. And they got the rise - so I went back.
>
> Ian Carleigh

Another man, who had been working elsewhere during the time of the strikes but was back at the colliery at the time of interview, was asked if he felt himself to be in an awkward position during the disputes. He replied:

> No, I felt in a great way. I felt great about it because at that time I was able to help a few of my friends that were miners. I had something that would help them during the struggle and I thought I was doing a little bit towards it. I felt good about it. You see,

> to understand that one you've got to go back a few years. Before, whenever we wanted anything - the minute the union suggested a strike - well, they used to hit back at the union by saying, "Well, strike and we'll close the pit"...and this always prevented the strikes... (this strike) paid off and I think they should have done this years ago... Somebody's got to do the job and they ought to be paid!
>
> Charlie Reid

This miner later elaborated at great length upon the close knit character of Aylesham and the manner in which this gave rise to a closeness and friendship between residents which was a distinctive feature of the village. There were, he agreed, one or two individuals and families who were 'out on their own' and it is of interest to note the manner in which he identified these residents:

> There's one or two up the new end. They've never been miners. They never want to be miners. They shouldn't be a member of a mining community really, because they're just people that don't want to - you know. They feel they're a cut above everyone else.
>
> Charlie Reid

To sum up, a large proportion of non-miners and their dependents at Aylesham shared a common set of values, viewpoints and attitudes with the miners. The stabilisation of the population after the war meant that the majority of those employed outside the colliery retained links with the industry

through their relationships with kin, neighbours, friends and acquaintances who were working at the colliery or were dependent on someone who was. Beyond these ongoing connections, the weight of the past - a shared history of common experience - was deeply ingrained and continued to influence the way men thought about themselves and those 'significiant others' in their immediate social environment. With the younger miners continuing to stress the traditional occupational values of their fathers and those outside the industry maintaining allegiance in social values and behaviour it is possible to grasp the manner in which a local social structure may sustain a set of attitudes, relationships and activities in spite of the deterioration of their industrial base. This maintenance of 'a common life together' encompassing miners and non-miners was apparent in the nature of the dominant non-work activities and interests of residents, and it is to a discussion of leisure pursuits that we now turn our attention.

(v) Leisure in Aylesham

The pattern of leisure activities traditionally associated with mining communities has been sketched elsewhere in this thesis[62]. At Ashton, for example, 'leisure' was something occuring outside the home, was male dominated and based around drink, talk and sport. The centre of this activity was the Miners' Welfare, the 'males' tended to be other mineworkers and much of the 'talk' focused upon the colliery[63]. The overlap between work and non-work interests, activities and relationships was therefore considerable[64]. The unfortunate caricature which

this analysis encouraged tended to exaggerate the significance of particular spheres of leisure activity and under-estimate the importance of others. A number of examples from Aylesham - past and present - will serve to illustrate this point.

By the time Hughes wrote her social survey of the Kent mining areas in 1934 Aylesham could already boast one pub, two clubs and another club at nearby Snowdown[65]. However, it is of interest to note that by this time no less than four religious bodies had also physically established themselves in the village - three of which were founded by mid-1929. Despite the rapid development of the clubs at Aylesham, it is worth considering the extent to which they were regularly used by miners. Many of the older men recalled that during the week they were either too tired or too short of money to make frequent use of the clubs:

> During the week - to tell you the truth - a miner didn't bother much. Because he used to come home and have his dinner and 99 times out of 100 - biggest majority - got to sleep. It's true! He'd get on a sofa or go to bed. Sometimes he'd get up 8 or 9 o'clock at night. If he could afford it he might go for a pint. Or some would do...a bit of football or some would go for bits of walks. But there were no money - he couldn't afford to go in a pub week time.
>
> Cyril Foster

These accounts were backed up by the knowledgeable evidence of the owner/manager of the local cinema:

> (The colliery owners) were pleased to see it (the cinema) because they thought it'd keep the people in the village - y'know, the miners. But they'd no need to worry about that because the poor buggers had no money to go out. Things were bad...When I came here (1935) they were getting 50 bob to £3 a week. They had a few dogs...when I was walking across the downs I used to meet these blokes and they were always happy as bloody sandboys walking their dogs out - training, walks. Doing a bit of poaching on the quiet. Of course, as the wages got better - they got more money - greyhounds and whippets fell out.
>
> Arthur Chipper

The popularity of 'walking' as a leisure pursuit also meant that when miners did have some money to spend they were not necessarily confined to the immediate locality; several men mentioned walking to pubs in Canterbury or Dover and local village dance halls on weekends[66].

Just as this type of evidence led to a re-assessment of the nature of leisure activities at Aylesham during the early years, so aspects of social life in the seventies appeared to diverge from the traditional image. Thus although physically the clubs were unchanged (and unchallenged by rival centres in Aylesham) their social function had altered. The regular clientele was no longer confined to Aylesham miners and the growing importance of weekend entertainments and 'bingo' had made the clubs more popular as centres of leisure activity for the whole family. On the other hand, television and the fashion for home improvements encouraged some miners to spend more time at home rather than club:

> I like my gardening and I like messing about in the house...It's got to be a special occasion to go out. A lot of the lads - they're great darts players. They're out every night having a drink. That doesn't appeal to me. I don't like going out just for the sake of a drink.
>
> Charlie Reid

These initial points concerning the nature of leisure activities at Aylesham have been made in order to avoid an over-simplified, 'timeless' portrayal of social life in the village. Nevertheless, the most striking finding of this aspect of the research was that the most popular and regular leisure activities - throughout the period under review - revolved around sport, drink and the clubs; were locality bound and involved predominantly residents of Aylesham. Time spent outside of the village in the company of people living elsewhere was still, in the mid-seventies, regarded as exceptional. Moreover, these leisure pursuits continued to be strongly influenced by the colliery, as one young miner observed:

> More often than not you'll find a lot of us in the club - sniffing smoke and poisoning ourselves. But that's just how it is. You fit into the pit, y'know, and you can't make the pit - a lot of blokes will say, "The pit doesn't rule me", but it does!
>
> Dennis Gillow

The working men's clubs, each of which had strong traditional connections with the colliery, continued to represent the central focus of communal leisure activities and were extremely popular[67]:

> There's three working men's clubs and one pub...here, everybody goes to these places. I mean, I've been to several working men's clubs - like in Dover and the one in Canterbury - and they're useless compared to these here. The membership isn't so high and they haven't got the activities going on in them that we've got here...In Aylesham they're the only places you can go to, so they're all well attended...there's always plenty of people in them.
>
> Duncan Schofield

The persistence of activities and relationships which were based around the clubs and the continuing influence of a leisure culture dominated by mining are well illustrated in the two extended accounts - both from young miners - which are reproduced below:

> Let me take it in days. Now Saturday I go football, so I'm with the lads from work - a lot of the lads are from work. And Saturday evening we generally end up with my Dad (retired miner) and Brian (miner) - all of us having a drink together. And Sunday lunchtime. So it's split really, between my workmates and my family. I would say more of it's spent with my family than it is with my workmates - when we're out for a drink. In the week I don't go out of the house much ...Some nights we'll have a run out in the country and we'll have a drink. When I'm playing football, of course, I'm out when we're away, and in the village when we're at home...It's just a case of going to the clubs, going to the pubs, and having a drink. I've got the football, of course, and the fire brigade is another spare time thing that's cropped up. But...most of it is going to the clubs and the pubs and having a drink. Or in the summer - Sunday - we'll go to the beach with the kids...if it's nice. That's just about as far as you could say our leisure goes.
>
> Colin Williams

I've changed quite a deal since I've been deputying, funnily enough. As a collier, whatever money I earned for myself I used to consider it to be mine. If I had a good week the missus always had the same and I would have what was left over. And if I had a good week everything was smashing, and if I had a bad week I used to stop in. And I used to spend it! Used to go down the pub and have a drink with the boys. Darts, bat and trap, bowls, football - everything that was going off, I would be in it...I've cut down on drinking almost completely now. Just go out at weekends. Football's really the main thing in my life. I look forward to every Saturday to get out to the football... When I got married life didn't change that much really - I still knocked about with the same mates, I still drank as much as I did previous, still did the same things...Gambling - that's one of the things I can't get rid of ...this was part of pitwork - part of pit anyway. All your mates used to gamble and talk about horses when you was underground...The normal thing was that they went out - they went down the club. But I think these times have changed as well. Because at the club I was using women weren't allowed at the bar, but they've changed that...The only people I regularly see outside of Aylesham are the people that I meet when I go to (NCB training) school, and different people that I've associated with through the football. But I never go out drinking with anybody other than the people of this village. I can't remember the last time I had a drink with anybody outside this village...I've got very few associates outside...My wife has got a relative over Deal - I don't even know him. I think that's the lot. I never see anybody than the lads in the village...When we go in a pub - in town or anywhere, there might be three or four of you - just out of the blue, "Eyup mate, you gonna have a game of dominoes?" They'd probably shun you. Drink their beer and away they go. They feel that they've been interfered with. But it's just a friendliness...In the village, he'd plonk his pint down and he'd be playing. It's as simple as that. Very casual place. Nobody attends meetings or anything. If the council runs something they're lucky to get more than a dozen to attend any sort of meeting. We don't make very good use of our facilities either. They run night-schools down at the school here. A lot of people would like to go

> but they've grown used to saying "Oh, I can't be bothered," and they don't bother ...You go in the pub or the clubs, you see the same people night after night after night...the same faces.
>
> Robert Hughes

These accounts came from men who were still employed at the colliery, so it is worth examining how far this pattern of interests and activities was distinguishable from those of non-miners. Here is an extract from an interview with a man who had been working elsewhere for eight years:

> My leisure time's taken up by football now. Well, Monday nights I'm at the gym. Tuesday nights I'm free - but invariably there might be a meeting. Wednesday nights I'm at the gym. Thursday nights I've got to see the secretary with the team sheet. It's all the week, you know. It's all full up with football...Nearly all the committee's from Aylesham...four are miners. There's not many from Aylesham work at the University (current place of employment). The only people I spend my spare time with is the kids at home and the wife, and my mother-in-law and family. That's all. Apart from that, all my time's taken up with football now. Sunday morning's my morning out with my father. Always go out for a drink Sunday morning. Saturday night I probably go out for a drink myself - but there again, I'm always with the lads that play football - in the pub...
>
> Do you spend any time with your workmates at the University?
>
> Only when the University's playing bat and trap ...I spend my time the same way as when I was at the pit...football crazy!
>
> Steven Foster

This account bears a remarkable resemblance to the two quoted earlier and suggests that the set of leisure preferences originally formulated in the context of a mining family

background and confirmed through direct personal experience of pitwork were unaffected by the alteration in the nature and location of the individual's occupation[68]. By following the same leisure activities in the same clubs, non-miners inevitably came into close social contact with miners and other ex-miners. Moreover, the evidence suggests that this was the result of a deliberate selection procedure, as the following replies from another ex-miner at the University indicates:

> Do you spend your spare time in Aylesham?
>
> In the club at Snowdown, yes. We go in there every night except Thursdays or Tuesdays. Tuesdays we go to the Ratling (club). Sometimes we go to the pub. Maybe we have a meal if we save up a few bob...or sometimes we go down The Bull at Adisham. Makes a break sometimes. But the majority of time we spend at the clubs.
>
> Who do you sit with?
>
> We sit with a committee man - my mate - and his wife...Phil and Ruby...also Bill (ex-miner), he sits with us.
>
> How do you know Phil?
>
> I worked with him in the pits. He was chargehand in the ploughface when I was down there...
>
> Do you ever spend any of your time with your new workmates?
>
> No. No. We have students over here at times...
>
> Do you feel more cut off from people you know now that you both work outside of the village?
>
> Oh no. No.
>
> (wife) It makes no difference where you work. There's a lot work all over, you know - Canterbury and so on.
>
> Mr and Mrs John Butcher

Finally, one more account - this time from a miner - re-affirms

the significance of the criterion of colliery experience as an influential factor in determining non-work social relationships and attitudes:

> The crowd I mix with in Aylesham, only one of them's a miner...they're all ex-miners. Like the two lads that left when the PLA came in. Another old boy who finished a long time ago. Another lad who works on the coal lorries - he's employed by the NCB. But most of them have been miners and left. These are the people I mix with regular. Then there's the ones I might see down the club - and I sit with them. You find a higher percentage of miners within a certain group. But normally, the usual half dozen or so, there's only one miner amongst them. They all talk about the pit, you know, because they're all ex-pitmen ...I get into some very interesting conversations up there. A friend of mine, he's in the NUR - he's an official - and we have some quite good arguments...I can sit there and talk all night... we have some good discussions - especially during the strikes.
>
> Richard East

Salaman, following Blauner[69], has argued that members of occupational communities, 'carry work activities and interests into their non-work lives' and that this represents a distinctive feature of this type of social formation[70]. He continues:

> Members of such communities manifest strong convergence of work and non-work life generally, and the most importance feature of this is that they prefer to be friends with people who do the same work[71].

Younger miners at Aylesham continued to demonstrate this preference in their patterns of social interaction outside work. Like

their fathers, they joined clubs which were connected to the workplace, and thought and talked about work in their spare time. As such, they shared a common culture, a work-based system of knowledge and meaning clearly symbolised in the exclusive 'private' language of what has been termed 'pit talk'[72]. What was remarkable at Aylesham was the extent to which this culture encompassed non-miners; the 'private' language did not exclude all those who were not still employed at the colliery. Those with mining experience who were retired or working elsewhere tended to maintain the non-work interests ('They all talk about the pit you know, because they're all ex-pitmen') and activities which had originally developed during their days in mining. As a result, the occupational community of 'miners' incorporated not only those, 'who <u>do</u> the same work' (my emphasis), but also those who <u>did</u>[73]. These ties of the past and the present were so powerful, in fact, that even those without any personal colliery experience could draw upon a fund of common knowledge which resided in the family and neighbourhood - indeed, there was little alternative. In doing so, they too were able to partially share a leisure culture deeply imbued with mining customs.

(vi) <u>Conclusion</u>

> Aylesham is no longer a real mining village. Less than half work at the pits. Other industries have moved in, offering alternative

> work - something that many of the older ones would be glad to see their children and grandchildren going into. So what of the future as the ties that bind all mining communities together weaken? Will a change to mixed industry leave the people of Aylesham with too little in common to remain so close to each other? Happily, the signs so far are that it will not. Those born in the village, but not working down the pit, are still as approachable and talkative as their parents and grandparents. Walk into the Greyhound pub on a quiet lunchtime and someone is bound to start up a conversation[74].

In a revealing discussion of mining communities, Bulmer has pointed out that although their origin may lie in 'technological' and 'economic' organisation, their maintenance and persistence may be due to other sociological factors - the development of an occupational identity, of non-work social relationships, kinship, residence and friendship ties - which, 'help to bond an ongoing local pattern of social interaction which may in time even become relatively autonomous in relation to the dominant local economic activity'[75] (my emphasis). Evidently, something like the process to which Bulmer referred occurred in Aylesham during the sixties and seventies. As the colliery began to decline the population dependent upon it matured into a relatively stable, close knit community which owed its character - indeed, its very existence - to coalmining. Once a set of norms, values and relationships had become firmly implanted they did not suddenly disappear when the economic base which had moulded them began to crumble. This persistence of the 'subjective' mining community despite its 'objective' decline; this continuity in 'feeling' regardless of 'hard facts' was always apparent in the first hand

accounts of those who stayed in the village (and worked at the colliery) as well as those who had left to find work elsewhere:

> I've always described it as a mining village. Always did describe it that way. But now it's not a mining village - the miners are in a minority now in Aylesham, to what they used to be. At one time it used to be all pitmen worked, lived in Aylesham. 90 per cent of blokes that worked locally was pitmen. Now they've left and it's all over - they work all over. There's factories up here now. We're definitely in the minority here in Aylesham. But that's how I've always described it - as a mining village.
>
> Colin Williams

> It's a mining village...they've set up various factories up Spinney Lane but it's mostly for the womenfolk and girls of mining families... We can go back and everyone knows my father - everybody knows my name...It's growing up in the same community and the fathers all working at the same pit...there's a certain bond there ...everybody's connected and interconnected with the work.
>
> Dennis Burnley

> You still think of the place as a mining community?
>
> I still - yes. And it's wrong really because it isn't any longer...at least 70 per cent are not miners now. But then again, you've got to cut that percentage down...if you're going to say they never have been. They <u>have</u> been, and you <u>know</u> what they are. I mean, they <u>know</u> what miners are...There's people that have left and stayed out, but they <u>know</u> what mining is. They <u>know</u> the mining community. They <u>know</u> the people.
>
> Charlie Reid

In sum, the autonomous elements in a mature local social structure

upheld a pattern of values and social behaviour which defied the decline of the colliery and maintained the essence of a mining community.

> It's still a mining village in my eyes - very much so...it's a tradition...Miners have been in the village so long that everybody's fell into the way of miners.
>
> Robert Hughes

NOTES

1. J.H. GOLDTHORPE, D. LOCKWOOD, F. BECHHOFER and J. PLATT, The Affluent Worker in the Class Structure, Cambridge, 1969, p. 86.

2. W. JOHNSON, 'The Development of the Kent Coalfield, 1896-1946', unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Kent, 1972, p. 258.

3. Ibid., pp. 259-260. See also the discussion in Chapter 4.

4. See Chapter 3.

5. See Chapter 6.

6. Small Area Statistics, 1961 Census.

7. Ibid., 1971 Census.

8. The limitations of the use of electoral registers as an indicator of geographical mobility are outlined in Chapter 4.

9. See Chapter 5.

10. Kentish Gazette (KG), 20 September 1957.

11. See Chapters 1, 4 and 5.

12. B. JACKSON, Working Class Community, Harmondsworth, 1972, pp. 164-165.

13. Employed persons without any occupational experience in the mining industry constituted only 19% of a recent sample in the Dulais Valley. See J. SEWEL, Colliery

Closure and Social Change: A Study of a South Wales Mining Valley, Cardiff, 1975, pp. 6-7, 29-30. Also S.W. TOWN, Problems Resulting from Industrial Decline in a Welsh Mining Valley, Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, University College of Swansea, 1975, pp. 71-73, 223.

14. J.H. GOLDTHORPE et al., op. cit., p. 86.

15. See M. BULMER (ed.), Working Class Images of Society, London, 1975 and the discussion in Chapter 1.

16. See Chapter 3.

17. See R. PAHL, Patterns of Urban Life, London, 1970, p. 105.

18. This figure was derived from an analysis of personnel data for Snowdown Colliery, July 1975, made available by the NCB.

19. KG, 27 May 1977.

20. See Chapter 5.

21. M. STACEY, Tradition and Change: A Study of Banbury, Oxford, 1960, p. 182.

22. See Chapter 6.

23. Detailed statistics were unavailable but this evaluation was based upon interviews with a number of housing officials in Dover District Council (DDC). For evidence of a similar divergence between the perceptions of residents in mining areas of the number of 'outsiders' entering and the objective statistics see J. SEWEL, op. cit.

24. KG, 27 May 1977.

25. There is a price to be paid for the benefits of this type of social environment particularly in terms of loss of privacy and certain individual freedoms. See Appendix III.

26. R. PAHL, op. cit., p. 76.

27. See D.H. ALLCORN and C.M. MARSH, 'Occupational Communities - Communities of What?', in M. BULMER (ed.), op. cit.

28. M. BULMER, 'Sociological Models of the Mining Community', Sociological Review, 23, 1975, p. 87.

29. S. CHAPLIN, Durham Mining Villages, University of Durham Department of Sociology and Social Administration, Working Papers in Sociology No. 3, 1972.

30. See Chapter 3.

31. References to some of these programmes are given in Chapter 1.

32. Kent County Council (KCC), Kent Education Committee (KEC), Review of the Work of Vocational Guidance and Juvenile Welfare, 1927, p. 18.

33. Ibid., 1928 pp. 4, 19-20; 1930 pp. 10-12; 1931 p. 4; 1935 p. 5; and the later Reports of the Youth Employment Service, 1958 p. 5; 1959 p. 3; 1960 p. 4; 1961 p. 4; 1962 p. 4; 1970 p. 2.

34. KEC, Review, 1935, p. 5.

35. Letter from E.J. Young, a retired local careers officer with responsibility for areas of Kent incorporating the

mining districts, dated 7 December 1976.

36. Almost without exception, the older miners and retired men explained that they had, as young boys, entered mining because 'there was nothing else'. My question, 'Why did you go into mining?' was normally greeted with a raised eyebrow or a chuckle, for it presumed an element of choice which, in fact, did not exist. Hence:

> My father was a miner. And his father was a miner. And his father was a miner. Because there was no other work in them days. It was all mining.
>
> Dai Evans

37. See the discussions in Chapters 3 and 6.

38. J.H. GOLDTHORPE, 'Technical Organisation as a factor in Supervisor-Worker Conflict', British Journal of Sociology, 10, 1959.

39. For observations of a similar pattern of parental discouragement see N. DENNIS, F. HENRIQUES and C. SLAUGHTER, Coal is Our Life, London, 1956.

40. J. GRETTON, 'Pitfalls', New Society, 16, 1970, p. 441.

41. Older and retired miners suffering from lung and chest diseases were particularly 'visible' in the village as many found it difficult to walk any distance without pausing at a gate post or bench. Between 1959 and 1968 the incidence of pneumoconiosis in the Kent Coalfield was second only to that of South Wales. See Health and Safety Executive, Digest of Pneumoconiosis Statistics, 1975, London, 1977, Table 11.

42. Uncle Bill died some months after this interview.

43. An attempt to check these statements with records held by Aylesham Secondary School proved inconclusive. Their register of first occupation entered after leaving school was incomplete and, after all, only a record of the first job. Given evidence suggesting considerable job mobility during these early years this record may have been misleading. Nevertheless, it is worth stating that approximately 10% of male school leavers between 1966 and 1976 went straight into NCB employment and that a larger proportion were so directed in the mid-seventies than in the mid-sixties. The school, which was the only post-primary educational establishment in the village, also arranged a visit to Snowdown Colliery every year as part of their careers programme.

44. See Chapter 3.

45. This trend was confirmed by NCB personnel at Snowdown Colliery. The tendency for ex-mineworkers to return to colliery work has been noted in other research. Of 23,000 NCB recruits in 1969-70, 13,000 were ex-miners according to J. GRETTON, op. cit., p. 442. During a six week period in 1973, 80% of 324 men recruited in NCB (South Wales) were ex-miners according to S.W. TOWN, op. cit., p. 103. The combination after 1974 of high levels of voluntary wastage and substantial recruitment meant that the number of men and boys entering the industry without any prior experience increased. See NCB Report and Accounts, 1975/76, p. 13.

46. For a description of contemporary developments in the East Kent labour market see Chapter 3.

47. See, for example, E.M. KNIGHT, Men Leaving Mining, Newcastle, 1968; J. SEWEL, op. cit.

48. Sigal's observations in 'Dinlock' are instructive:

> Like so many other miners in Dinlock Bolton has seen something of the world; in West Club I am to meet man after man who has been a long service soldier or seaman in the merchant navy; but always they come back to Dinlock. Why? Dunno, they say. Mining's in a man's blood, they say.

See C. SIGAL, Weekend in Dinlock, Harmondsworth, 1962, p. 35.

49. J. GRETTON, op. cit., p. 441.

50. Gretton wrote that 'the analogy with the army is most apparent in the Kamaradschaft! Ibid., p. 441.

51. See, for example, Kent Messenger, (KM), 10 April 1970.

52. R. MARTIN and R.H. FRYER, Redundancy and Paternalist Capitalism, London, 1973; A. SINFIELD, 'Poor and Out of Work in Shields', in P. TOWNSEND (ed.), The Concept of Poverty, London, 1970.

53. Sigal's main character ponders:

> If Ah don't get out of village it'll strangle me. Lahk it does them. But where to? Where?...But where can Ah go? What can Ah do? Ah'm a coal face worker. Ah know no other trade. It's been my lahf, lad.

See C. SIGAL, op. cit., p. 123.

54. The arguments forwarded in this section and the next are based upon the 'defining components' of occupational

communities as identified by Salaman:

> First, members of occupational communities see themselves in terms of their occupational role: their self image is centred on their occupational role in such a way that they see themselves as printers, policemen, army officers or whatever, and as people with specific qualities, interests and abilities. Secondly, members of occupational communities share a reference group composed of members of the occupational community. Thirdly, members of occupational communities associate with, and make friends of, other members of their occupation in preference to having friends who are outsiders, and they carry work activities and interests into their non-work lives.

G. SALAMAN, Community and Occupation, Cambridge, 1974, p. 21.

55. D.H. ALLCORN and C.M. MARSH, op. cit., p. 212.

56. Summaries of the relevant studies are given in J. KLEIN, Samples From English Cultures, Vol. 1, London, 1965; G. ROSE, The Working Class, London, 1968; R. PAHL, op. cit.

57. KG, 15 February 1974.

58. During the sixth week of the 1972 strike a Women's Section of the Snowdown Mineworkers Social Committee was established, which later developed into the Aylesham Ladies Action Group (Friends of Mineworkers) - a change in title which itself is indicative of the work/non-work ties which were operative. Minutes of the Group's meetings show that their activities included collections, food parcel distribution, aid with social security claims, children's outings and social evenings. This led to the extensive involvement of other wives and families in Aylesham, the NUM, the churches, the industrial estate and even the local

bakers (over credit facilities). The success of the organisation was such that it continued beyond the strike and was active in the dispute which followed in 1974.

59. See Chapter 5.

60. These strikes were the first national stoppages since 1926. The absence of solidaristic activity beyond the locality of colliery or coalfield has convinced many observers that the consciousness of the miners was parochial in nature and dominated by market interests. See, for example, J.H. WESTERGAARD, 'Sociology: The Myth of Classlessness', in R. BLACKBURN (ed.), Ideology in Social Science, London, 1972; R. MOORE, 'Religion as a Source of Variation in Working-Class Images of Society', in M. BULMER (ed.), (1975), Working Class Images.

61. This aspect of an occupational community has been well documented in a number of studies. See, for example, H.S. BECKER, Outsiders, London, 1963.

62. See Chapter 1.

63. N. DENNIS et al., op. cit.

64. For a comprehensive sociological discussion of the relationship between work and leisure, see S. PARKER, The Future of Work and Leisure, London, 1972.

65. V. HUGHES, 'A Social Survey of the East Kent Coalfield', unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of London, 1934.

66. Walking was, in itself, a popular leisure pursuit for miners during the inter-war years. See W.H.B. COURT,

Coal, London, 1951, Chapter 17.

67. Bulmer discusses the continuing popularity of the working men's club in M. BULMER, 'Social Structure and Social Change in the Twentieth Century', in M. BULMER (ed.), Mining and Social Change, London, 1978. The atmosphere of the working men's club in a mining village is well portrayed in R.C. TAYLOR, 'Implications of Migration from the Durham Coalfield: An Anthropological Study', unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Durham, 1966. For a more general history of the club movement see J. TAYLOR, From Self-Help to Glamour, Oxford, 1972.

68. Griffin noted that 'people in other occupations who use the welfare develop bonds of sympathy with the miners and to an extent are drawn into the mining community' (my emphasis). A.R. GRIFFIN, The British Coalmining Industry: Retrospect and Prospect, Hartington, 1977, p. 167.

69. R. BLAUNER, 'Work Satisfaction and Industrial Trends in Modern Society', in W. GALENSON and S.M. LIPSET (eds.), Labor and Trade Unionism, New York, 1960.

70. G. SALAMAN, op. cit., p. 21.

71. Ibid., p. 25.

72. See Appendix IV.

73. G. SALAMAN, op. cit., p. 25. It is of interest to note that in his study in South Wales, Town points out that although miners were a minority of the working population 'the importance of mining as a source of identity is

widespread'. S.W. TOWN, op. cit., p. 71.

74. KG, 27 May 1977.

75. M. BULMER, (1975), 'Sociological Models', p. 84.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

This thesis opened in Chapter 1 with a selective review of the treatment of miners and mining communities by sociologists and historians. It was suggested that in terms of approach, source material and theoretical framework some of the better known studies were deficient and their cumulative impact had led to a caricature of the miner at the workplace and beyond. More recent work had, however, indicated that the miners' experience was altogether more changeable, differentiated and fragmented than the popular notion implied. This discovery was partially attributable to two changes in emphasis. First, 'rank and file' miners were given an opportunity to voice their personal experiences and these revealed something of the richness and diversity of life beyond the hitherto over-exposed social world of the union committee room. Second, more attention was paid to the necessary movement of capital and labour between different collieries, districts and coalfields as coal measures were discovered, worked and exhausted. This rather neglected aspect of the miners' life had far-reaching implications for social relationships and behaviour at each stage in the process of coal extraction; nowhere was this more immediately apparent than in the consequences of colliery decline in Britain after 1957.

The present research endeavoured to follow up the leads suggested in more recent work through a small study of miners and their sons in the Kent Coalfield. This appeared to be an appropriate locale as the coalfield had been discovered and developed during the first part of the century and had thereafter experienced stagnation and decline. Attention could therefore be focused upon the comparatively neglected phases of expansion and contraction - the implications of which might be illuminated by the first hand experiences of those individuals who were directly involved. In Chapter 2 an account was given of the influences which shaped the approach and design of the study. On a general level the ongoing attempt to break down the unnecessary barriers which stood between history and sociology was of considerable importance; more specifically, a major stimulus was derived from the critical contemporary interest in the historical development of working class communities. In this context it was felt that a contribution might be made through an historical study which incorporated a methodology (community study) and technique (interviews) long established in sociological research. This was an approach favoured by Hobsbawm, for example, when he recommended that social historians should utilise

> ...the techniques for observation and analysis in depth of specific individuals, small groups, and situations, which have...been pioneered outside history...for example, the participant observation of the social anthropologists, the interview in depth...[1].

The application of such techniques and methods proved to be a lesson in itself and hopefully an insight into the problems of this style of research - of doing oral history - has been provided. Several points emerging from this experiment may be of practical use to future investigators and these are briefly summarised below.

First of all, 'life history' type interviews which allow the respondent considerable freedom of expression may provide extremely interesting and useful data but the length and sometimes rambling quality of these accounts can make them difficult to handle (in analysis and presentation) if they are collected in large numbers. Consequently, loosely structured open-ended interviews may be particularly appropriate in the small scale study of distinctive local cultures where the need for a representative sample is less important and it is easier to supplement interview data with meaningful participant observation[2]. This reduces the problems of 'numbers' but by no means eliminates it. Larger samples provide a more sound basis for generalisation but they undermine the investigator's ability to reproduce the authentic first hand account which is increasingly subordinated to the goal of quantification. This is the dilemma faced by the oral historian and it may invite an uneasy compromise. In the present case more detailed individual portraits of the men who were interviewed would, ideally, have been desirable - yet the same could also have been said of an opportunity to numerically substantiate some of the personal insights provided by individual biographies.

Ultimately a choice must be made between, on the one hand, the documentation of range and variety in individual experience and, on the other, the identification of quantifiable patterns of uniformity.

The present experience also suggests that a flexible approach to interviewing allows the opportunity to follow up ideas and leads which emerge from the research itself. It is unlikely that the full significance of the butty system, for example, could have been disclosed had a predetermined set of questions been rigidly administered; rather, the picture of subcontracting was pieced together 'jig-saw' fashion and consequently the questions posed towards the close of the interviewing period were more informed than those put earlier - and, to some extent, directed towards freshly perceived problems. The frustrating end result of this process was that closely defined hypotheses amenable to systematic testing only began to take shape as the fieldwork concluded. No doubt this is an experience familiar to many who undertake empirical research; nevertheless, those contemplating this particular style of exploratory fieldwork should be especially prepared.

The compensations for allowing men to 'speak for themselves' lie not only in the discovery of new 'problems' for further investigation but also in the insights gained into the way men see their social world. This concern with subjective experience - the actor's 'definition of the situation' - is familiar to those sociologists who regard the meanings which people attach to their particular situations as of primary

importance in assessing social behaviour. Historians too have drawn upon the individual's interpretation of his world but characteristically through the indirect means of biographies, letters, newspapers and government enquiries. The interview, however, offers the historian direct access and it is to be hoped that this comparatively novel opportunity will not be wasted. Two recommendations are worth reiterating here in the light of experience acquired in the present enquiry. First, the oral historian must realise that he plays a part in shaping the evidence upon which he draws; this distinguishes the interview as a source from all others. More than usual, therefore, he must be aware of the underlying theories - however vaguely defined - which shape his definition and construction of particular historical problems. Second, oral evidence should not be evaluated solely on the grounds of how close it is to 'what <u>really</u> happened'; the 'best' evidence being that which most closely approximates <u>the</u> truth. The individual interpretation is, in itself, historical data; the oral historian does not therefore receive absolute facts but '<u>social meaning</u>, and it is this which must be evaluated'[3]. It would also be a mistake to assume from this that all the interview reveals is evidence on individual 'attitudes'; to the contrary, the interview may serve as a useful source of information on the social relationships and behaviour of the respondent and those who co-habit his social world[4].

If it is still necessary to voice these warnings how far

can it be said that the historian and the sociologist may usefully travel in each others' company? The optimistic mood of convergence during the 1960s has, to some extent, been replaced recently by a cautionary pessimism borne out of the real difficulties involved in bringing together one discipline still largely concerned with reconstructing 'how it happened' in individual cases and another where priorities lie in the discussion of uniformities and theoretical constructs. My own view is that our understanding of the unique and the general (in the past and in the present) necessarily evolves from a single enterprise. Furthermore, the writing of history involves a selection from fragments of the past according to interests in the present; in this sense, 'history, like any other "social science", is an entirely intellectual operation which takes place in the present and in the head'[5]. Whether those who see history as a social science may be said to write 'historical sociology', 'sociological history' or even the 'history of society' is a matter of nomenclature worthy of discussion at a certain level - although undoubtedly complicated by the variety of activities which are subsumed under each label. However, whilst the grand debate continues there is a place for modest, small-scale empirical enquiries designed to utilise and test social science concepts and theories through research into specific historical phenomena[6].

This particular enquiry examined two contrasting phases in the development of one colliery and compared the experiences of

a group of miners and their sons who were associated with the pit. It was found that social relationships and behaviour at and beyond the colliery differed significantly between the two periods under review. To put the matter briefly: whilst both eraswere characterised by a considerable flux associated with the rapid development and decline of Snowdown Colliery the transient, fragmented quality of social relationships during the 1927-1939 period contrasted strongly with the stable, close-knit community which persisted between 1957 and 1976. Paradoxically, the collectivist values traditionally associated with the miner in his work and non-work life were more in evidence during the later phase despite the declining economic significance of the colliery as a means of subsistence for mining families. How was it that a '100 per cent' mining population came to be characterised by internal cleavage and differentiation (as exemplified by the butty system) whilst an occupationally more broader based populace displayed a cohesiveness which bound miners and others together in an identifiable mining community? The stabilisation of the population at Aylesham after 1945 was of some importance for it allowed a 'customary way of life' to develop based upon a communal knowledge and experience of pitwork; as a result, the homogeneity of the post-1957 population was greater than occupational statistics implied. Equally, the uniformity of experience suggested by the predominance of miners between 1927 and 1939 was misleading; the migrants were differentiated by a

variety of pitwork customs and traditions to which they had been exposed - to say nothing of the more general influence of contrasting regional cultures. Clearly, the processes whereby the local population became stable and socially homogeneous were closely linked; furthermore, the timing of these developments - in particular, the period during which the 'settlement' achieved an 'identity' - had a crucial bearing on the nature of the community which eventually emerged.

At this point it is worth stressing that in drawing comparisons between the two periods under review emphasis was placed upon those facets of social life which best illuminated the contrasts of stability and change, conflict and cohesion. However, it should not be assumed that between 1957 and 1976 sources of conflict and change were entirely absent - or that the contemporary features of social life were universally evaluated in a positive light[7]. Equally, there were sources of solidarity even during the flux of the inter-war years; strikes, for example, were at least attempted if not altogether successfully. In the study of communities therefore 'interdependencies', to use the terminology employed by Elias, may result in co-operation and/or conflict according to the particular social context:

> Co-operation and conflict in other words are ways of handling problems that arise when people become interdependent or more interdependent or in different ways than before. Seen as stationary conditions, conflict and co-operation appear as antagonistic and incompatible. Seen as episodes in a process of changing reciprocal dependencies, they emerge as different ways of handling problems, particularly of power problems, inherent in that process[8].

On a broader level, the present research has also demonstrated that the ideas, values and goals which men professed played a part in determining their immediate social environment. Undoubtedly, the operation of a subcontracting system in the Kent collieries could not be fully explained without reference to the objective structural constraints imposed by, for example, capitalist economic relations or levels of technological achievement in the mining industry during the inter-war years. Nevertheless, the particular shape of the butty system at Snowdown Colliery, its influence and persistence was also related to the limited, instrumental motives of the Kent migrants and their piecework values which, to some extent, legitimated the piecework foremanship of subcontracting. In similar fashion men were able to resist the declining economic importance of Snowdown after 1957; as a result, the 'subjective' mining community of the past lived on in the present despite (or perhaps because of) the crumbling 'objective' base. In their values, social relationships and patterns of behaviour miners and their sons were able to maintain a distinctive occupational community which drew in those with and without pit experience. In both cases it was possible to demonstrate the relative autonomy of <u>past</u> experience and traditional ideas and values in influencing the way in which <u>present</u> experience was interpreted and therefore shaped[9].

The idea of a cyclical pattern associated with the process of coal extraction connected the different themes treated in

Chapters 4-7. Collieries exploit an ultimately exhaustable resource and consequently the discovery and extraction of coal reserves is inevitably followed by contraction and finally closure. Mining settlements established to service collieries pass through related phases and the 'cycle' is completed when miners and their families move on from the declining colliery to new developments in other mining districts. It was this process which brought mining families to Snowdown during the inter-war years and led some of them to ponder a transfer to the Midlands or Selby given the possibility of closures in Kent in the 1970s. In the eventuality of a shutdown not all mining families will move, of course, and the economic structure of the original mining settlement will gradually alter - although traditional social patterns may well persist, as we have seen.

How useful is this cyclical model as a tool with which to analyse the historical development of mining communities? It might be said that a host of other factors - political, economic and social - overlay the geological reality and, indeed, determine whether or not coal measures come to be defined as 'exhausted'; in this sense, the development of the Kent Coalfield may be better explained by reference to, let us say, government fuel policies, technological change and the drastic alteration of world oil prices. There is undoubtedly some truth in this argument, and certainly to ignore the influence of such 'external' factors is to run the risk of producing an account so 'blinkered' as to be virtually worthless. Nevertheless, the

relatively independent role played by the physical availability of coal reserves cannot be denied; the Kent Coalfield developed most rapidly, after all, during a period of severe depression in the British coal industry.

For miners and their families the most immediate implication of the mining cycle was (and is) the necessity of mobility. Bulmer has remarked that: 'Like the plantation the mine has to import its labour...the geological fixity of the mining settlement (entails) population movement'[10]. This was clearly demonstrated in Smailes' account of the 'population cycle' in the mining districts of Northumberland and Durham:

> Mining is a form of destructive exploitation of the earth's resources, a fact which is reflected by the population cycle of colliery settlements. The stage of youth, immediately following the commencement of mining, is a period of immigration and rapid increase in population. As it passes into maturity, although population continues to increase, immigration falls off as the population already assembled becomes able itself to furnish a supply of youths for the developing industry. Maturity is passed when new developments are no longer able to provide extra work sufficient to support the whole of the natural increase in population, so that an outward balance of migration sets in. This of course may happen before coal-production reaches its maximum. The peak is passed, and population begins to decline, when the employment capacity of the industry begins to show an absolute decrease, a fate which sooner or later must overtake all mining undertakings. Depopulation is sometimes rapid, especially if new developments in some adjacent district serve to attract the surplus labour from the first. Such short distance migration has been a prominent feature of the population history of this coalfield, for a high degree of territorial mobility is in the nature of things characteristic of mining populations[11].

The evidence of this movement in Britain is plentiful: if Hobsbawm has classified the 'story' of labour in the nineteenth century as 'one of movement and migration' then the coalminers were a classic example[12]. According to Samuel:

> The mining population at mid-century was notoriously restless and unsettled. Indeed, "the roving disposition and migratory habits" of the miner were as much a commonplace of contemporary social comment as their heredity and fixity is today[13].

Even in the more stable conditions of the present century miners and their families have experienced the necessity of movement as the institutional machinery of inter-war and post-war transference schemes testifies. Thus Evans described a South Wales mining community in the early 1960s as follows:

> Despite the fact that the village of Onllwyn is relatively old, its present inhabitants are recently settled here. Scarcely half were born here, and of those aged 25 years or more, 69 per cent were born outside the Dulais Valley. The majority of the adults have their roots elsewhere and therefore have no common tradition. The village is old, but the community is young[14].

It would appear therefore that the concept of a mining cycle may be of some use in our descriptions of the miners' history. Having said this, no attempt will be made to construct wide ranging generalisations based on the evidence derived from a single case study. It has been wisely pointed out that each

coalfield 'presents different geological, technical, economic and social conditions and no field is "average" or "typical" '[15]; consequently, 'there is no such thing as a typical pit'[16]. At Snowdown periods of rapid expansion and decline were compressed into a relatively brief fifty year period and it therefore represented an excellent 'test case' for an examination of the social implications of two contrasting phases in the mining cycle. Nevertheless, Taylor's observations on the butty system[17] and the Durham University research on contemporary mining communities suggest that the experiences of the Snowdown miners and their sons may not be altogether unique[18].

Clearly there is room for further research designed to establish whether there are common patterns of social behaviour which can be linked to the cyclical process of coal extraction. Of several potential lines of enquiry which could be recommended perhaps the most promising would involve a comparative analysis of the newly established 'frontier type' mining settlements described, for example, by MacFarlane in Yorkshire[19], Lawson[20], Welbourne[21] and Fynes[22] in Durham and Trinder in Shropshire[23]. Along these lines Davis and Cousins have recently drawn comparisons between such settlements and more established communities and speculated upon the possible linkages with particular political ideologies and images of society[24]. An alternative approach is suggested by Burgess who has drawn attention to the changing constitution of the

nineteenth century colliery labour force as coal seams were worked away from the shaft; as such, competition for elite positions became more intense - and more conducive to internal cleavage amongst the miners - as more men were employed on on-cost lower paid grades and subsequently denied admission to the better paid coal-face work[25]. A careful application of this type of analysis in one or two case studies could well illuminate the lines of conflict and competition which may evolve under subcontracting systems. The changing demographic structure of mining villages depicted by Smailes is another area where further research may, for example, throw light upon the formation of mining families and the processes whereby a pattern of inter-generational occupational inheritance is established[26]. Finally, the implications of those centrifugal forces which operate during the stages of colliery decline - and, in particular, the manner in which they affect the relationship between work and non-work activity and behaviour - merit more intensive sociological (as opposed to sociographic) investigation.

What is becoming increasingly apparent is that patterns of working class life, now and in the past, display a complexity and variation which demand more precisely delineated sociological models capable of shedding light upon this diversity of experience[27]. Such models may only be constructed upon the basis of careful empirical enquiries which test the adequacy of existing concepts by examining the experiences of particular

groups of workers in different historical eras. The miners have always occupied a central place within the British working class yet, in a sense, their history has still to be written. If the present study has suggested ways in which the gaps in our knowledge may be filled then it will have served its purpose.

NOTES

1. E.J. HOBSBAWM, 'From Social History to the History of Society', in M.W. FLINN and T.C. SMOUT (eds.), Essays in Social History, Oxford, 1974, p. 7.

2. See the discussion in T. LUMMIS, 'The Occupational Community of East Anglian Fishermen: An Historical Dimension through Oral Evidence', British Journal of Sociology, 28, 1977.

3. P. THOMPSON, The Edwardians, St. Albans, 1977, p. 16.

4. See J. GALTUNG, Theory and Methods of Social Research, London, 1967.

5. G. STEDMAN-JONES, 'From Historical Sociology to Theoretical History', British Journal of Sociology, 27, 1976, p. 296.

6. For a recent example of this style of research see T. LUMMIS, op. cit.

7. See Appendix III.

8. N. ELIAS, 'Towards a Theory of Communities', in C. BELL and H. NEWBY, (eds.), The Sociology of Community, London, 1974, p. xix.

9. For an interesting discussion of the influence of previous experience on present values see T. NICHOLS, 'Labourism and Class Consciousness', Sociological Review, 22, 1974. Several of the process foremen interviewed (on a chemical plant in the South of England) had mining backgrounds (in

the North).

10. M. BULMER, 'Sociological Models of the Mining Community', Sociological Review, 23, 1975, p. 61.

11. A.E. SMAILES, 'Population Changes in the Colliery Districts of Northumberland and Durham', Geographical Journal, 91, 1938, p. 220.

12. E.J. HOBSBAWM, Labouring Men, London, 1964, p. 34.

13. R. SAMUEL, 'Mineral Workers', in R. SAMUEL (ed.) Miners, Quarrymen and Saltworkers, London, 1977, p. 67.

14. G. EVANS, 'Onllwyn: A Sociological Study of A South Wales Mining Community', unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Wales, 1961, p. 16.

15. S. WELLISZ, 'Strikes in Coal Mining', British Journal of Sociology, 4, 1956, pp. 346-7.

16. NCB, Report of the Advisory Committee on Organisation, (The 'Fleck Report'), London, 1955, p. 53.

17. A.J. TAYLOR, 'The Subcontract System in the British Coal Industry', in L.S. PRESSNELL (ed.), Studies in the Industrial Revolution, London, 1960.

18. M. BULMER (ed.), Mining and Social Change, London, 1978.

19. J. MARFARLANE, 'Denaby Main: A South Yorkshire Mining Village', Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History, 25, 1972; 'Essay in Oral History, Denaby Main: An Addendum', Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History, 26, 1973.

20. J. LAWSON, A Man's Life, London, 1932.

21. R.J. FYNES, The Miners of Northumberland and Durham: A History of their Social and Political Progress, Sunderland, 1923.

23. B. TRINDER, The Industrial Revolution in Shropshire, Chichester, 1973.

24. R.L. DAVIS and J. COUSINS, 'The "New Working Class" and the Old', in M. BULMER, (ed.), Working Class Images of Society, London, 1975. For an alternative interpretation in another country see H.R. LANTZ, People of Coal Town, New York, 1958. In contrast to the analysis of Davis and Cousins, Lantz suggests that the early migrants at 'Coal Town' adjusted to the conditions of economic insecurity 'by following rigidly the orders of management', (p. 52).

25. K. BURGESS, The Origins of British Industrial Relations, London, 1975, Chapter, 3.

26. A.E. SMAILES, op. cit.

27. See the discussion in T. LUMMIS, op. cit; M. MANN, Workers on the Move, Cambridge, 1973, Chapter 9.

APPENDIX I

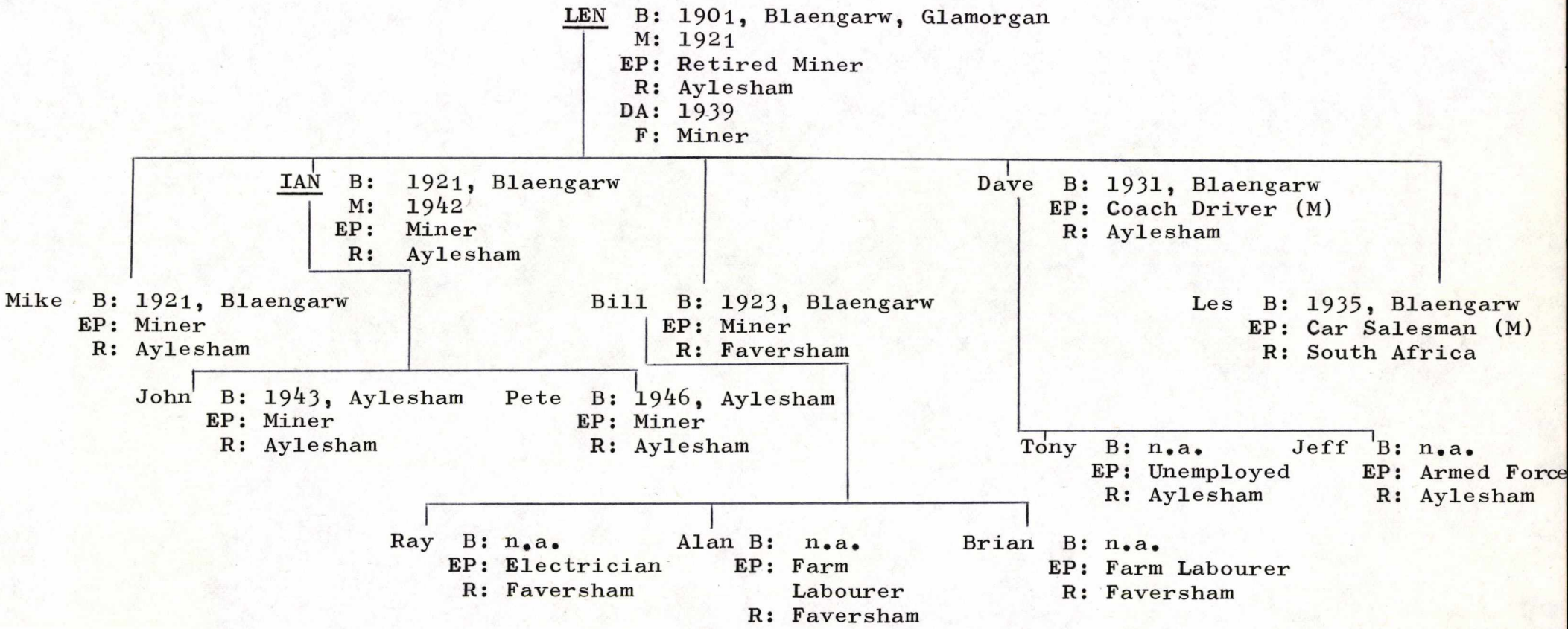
FIRST HAND EVIDENCE: THE TAPED INTERVIEWS

The diagrammatic profiles which follow give personal information for the fathers and sons (of working age) in the twelve families involved in this study. The men who were interviewed are distinguished in the diagrams by block capitals and underlining. In one or two instances family information is incomplete because not all those individuals who were directly contacted could answer all my questions concerning the other male working members of the family. It is of interest to note that these questions normally presented little difficulty if the knowledge and expertise of a wife or mother were close at hand. A profile of the remaining seventeen 'isolated' men is also provided.

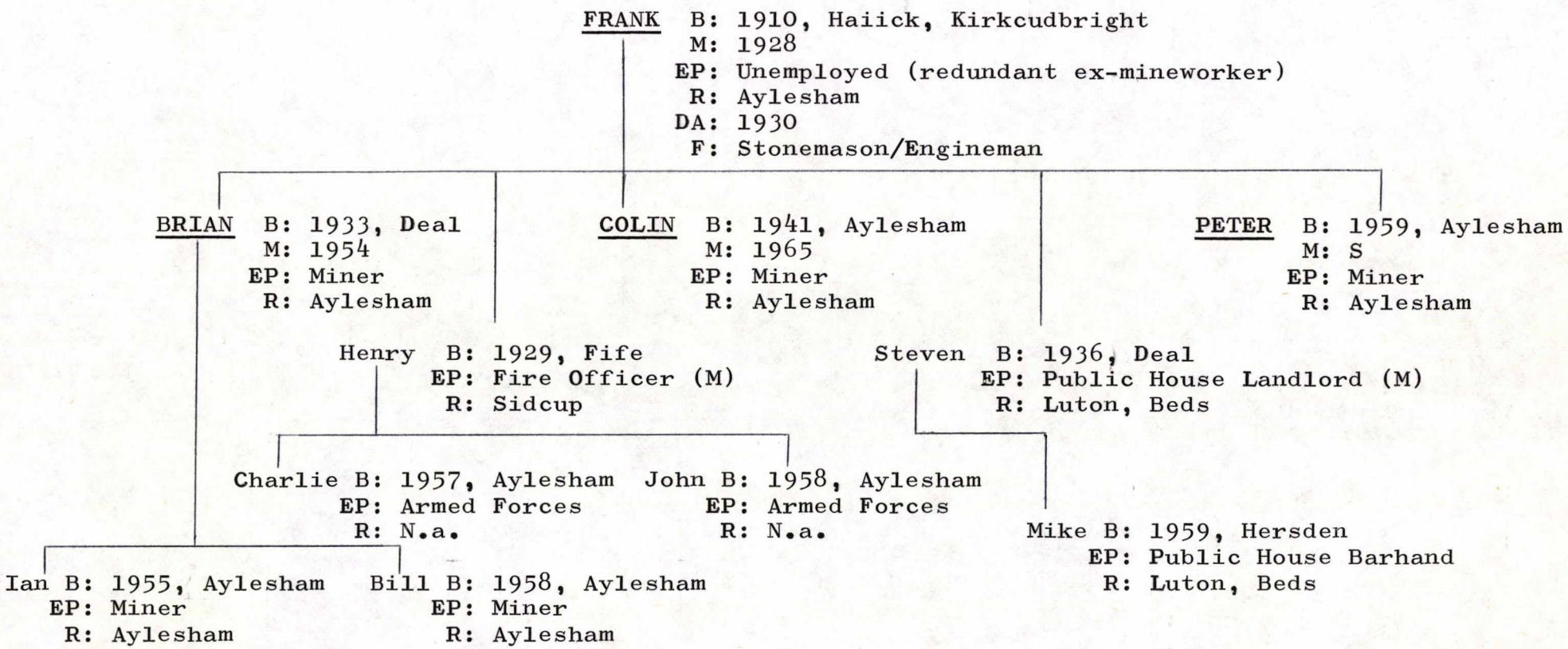
ABBREVIATIONS:

B	Date and Place of Birth	(County is excluded for those born in Kent)
M	Year of Marriage	(S denotes single)
EP	Employment Position	((M) denotes ex-miner)
R	Place of Residence	(County is excluded for those resident in Kent)
DA	Date of Arrival in Kent	(applies to 'heads' of families only)
F	Father's Occupation	(applies to 'heads' of families only)

BAYLE


LEN B: 1901, Blaengarw, Glamorgan
M: 1921
EP: Retired Miner
R: Aylesham
DA: 1939
F: Miner
IAN B: 1921, Blaengarw
M: 1942
EP: Miner
R: Aylesham
Dave B: 1931, Blaengarw
EP: Coach Driver (M)
R: Aylesham
Mike B: 1921, Blaengarw
EP: Miner
R: Aylesham
Bill B: 1923, Blaengarw
EP: Miner
R: Faversham
Les B: 1935, Blaengarw
EP: Car Salesman (M)
R: South Africa
John B: 1943, Aylesham
EP: Miner
R: Aylesham
Pete B: 1946, Aylesham
EP: Miner
R: Aylesham
Tony B: n.a.
EP: Unemployed
R: Aylesham
Jeff B: n.a.
EP: Armed Force
R: Aylesham
Ray B: n.a.
EP: Electrician
R: Faversham
Alan B: n.a.
EP: Farm Labourer
R: Faversham
Brian B: n.a.
EP: Farm Labourer
R: Faversham

WILLIAMS


FRANK B: 1910, Haiick, Kirkcudbright
M: 1928
EP: Unemployed (redundant ex-mineworker)
R: Aylesham
DA: 1930
F: Stonemason/Engineman
BRIAN B: 1933, Deal
M: 1954
EP: Miner
R: Aylesham
COLIN B: 1941, Aylesham
M: 1965
EP: Miner
R: Aylesham
PETER B: 1959, Aylesham
M: S
EP: Miner
R: Aylesham
Henry B: 1929, Fife
EP: Fire Officer (M)
R: Sidcup
Steven B: 1936, Deal
EP: Public House Landlord (M)
R: Luton, Beds
Charlie B: 1957, Aylesham
EP: Armed Forces
R: N.a.
John B: 1958, Aylesham
EP: Armed Forces
R: N.a.
Mike B: 1959, Hersden
EP: Public House Barhand
R: Luton, Beds
Ian B: 1955, Aylesham
EP: Miner
R: Aylesham
Bill B: 1958, Aylesham
EP: Miner
R: Aylesham

EAST

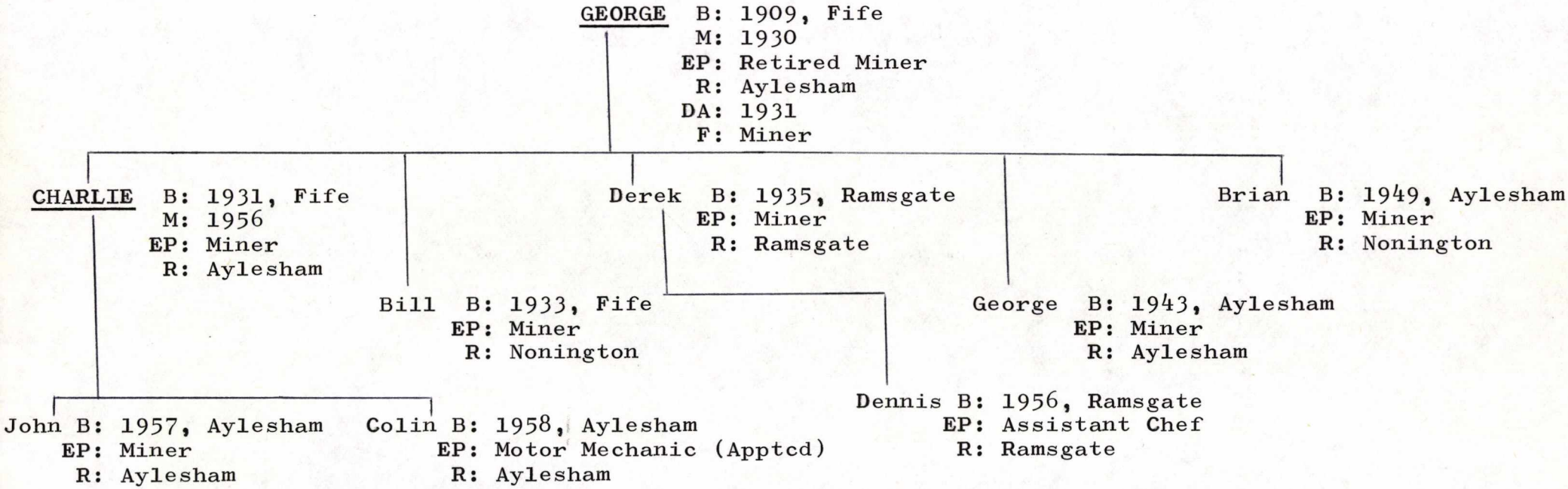
JACK B: 1904, Shildon, Co. Durham
M: 1927
EP: Retired Miner
R: Aylesham
DA: 1947 (after 20 years + in armed services)
F: Miner

Colin B: 1928, n.a.
EP: Armed Forces
R: Australia

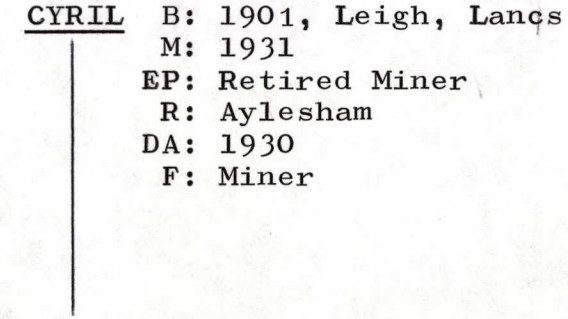
Terry B: 1935, n.a.
EP: Fitter (M)
R: South Africa

RICHARD B: 1941, Aylesham
M: 1964
EP: Miner
R: Aylesham

REID


GEORGE B: 1909, Fife
M: 1930
EP: Retired Miner
R: Aylesham
DA: 1931
F: Miner
CHARLIE B: 1931, Fife
M: 1956
EP: Miner
R: Aylesham
Bill B: 1933, Fife
EP: Miner
R: Nonington
Derek B: 1935, Ramsgate
EP: Miner
R: Ramsgate
George B: 1943, Aylesham
EP: Miner
R: Aylesham
Brian B: 1949, Aylesham
EP: Miner
R: Nonington
John B: 1957, Aylesham
EP: Miner
R: Aylesham
Colin B: 1958, Aylesham
EP: Motor Mechanic (Apptcd)
R: Aylesham
Dennis B: 1956, Ramsgate
EP: Assistant Chef
R: Ramsgate

FOSTER


CYRIL
B: 1901, Leigh, Lancs
M: 1931
EP: Retired Miner
R: Aylesham
DA: 1930
F: Miner
STEVEN
B: 1945, Aylesham
M: 1967
EP: Storekeeper (M)
R: Aylesham

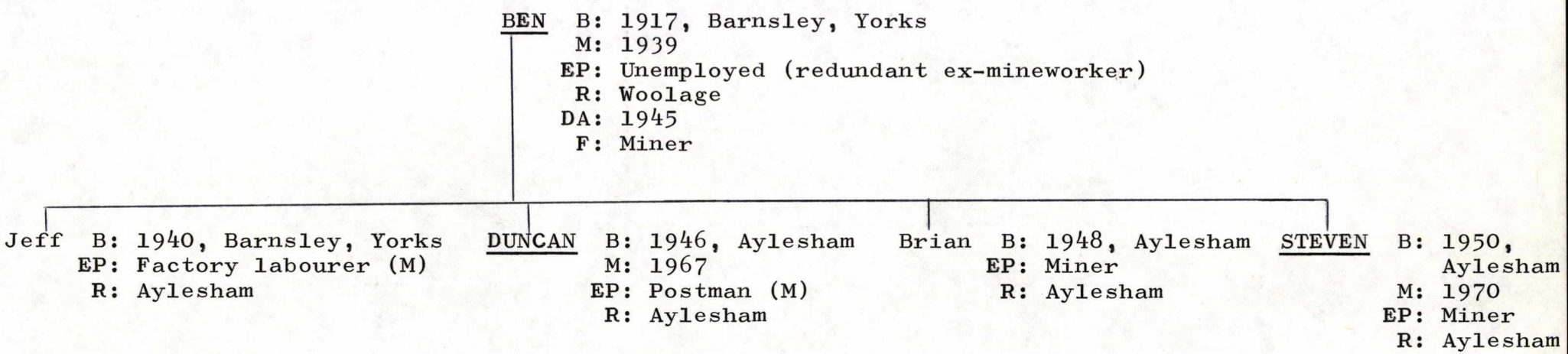
BURNLEY

RON B: 1896, Manchester, Lancs
M: 1922
EP: Retired Miner
R: Aylesham
DA: 1928
F: Miner/Colliery Undermanager

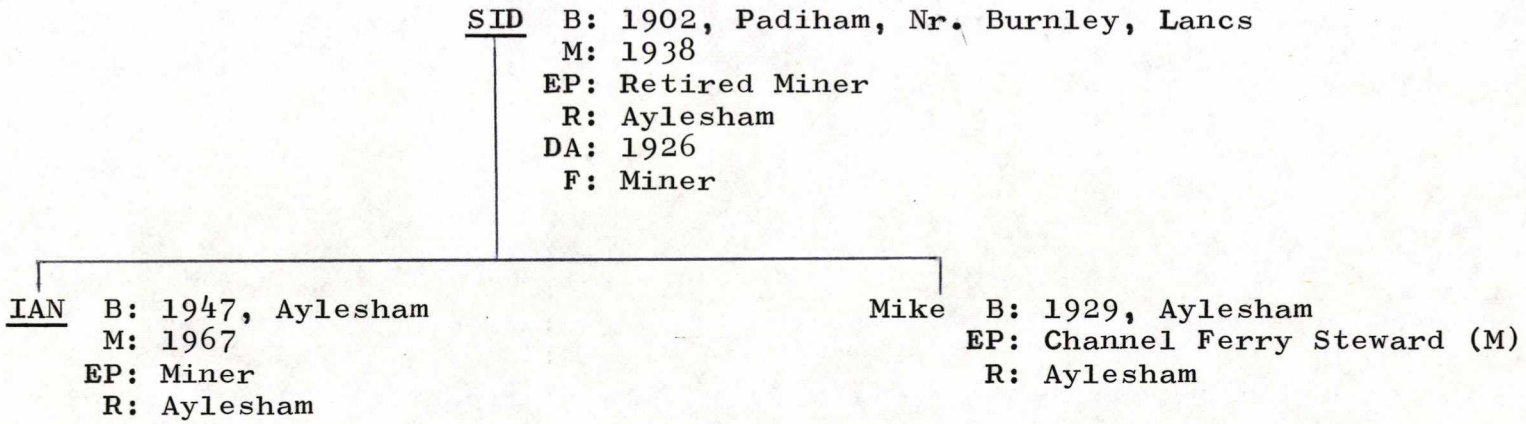
Roland B: 1927, Goldthorpe, Yorks
EP: Architect
R: Surrey

DENNIS B: 1930, Aylesham
M: 1960
EP: Assistant Bank Manager
R: Broadstairs

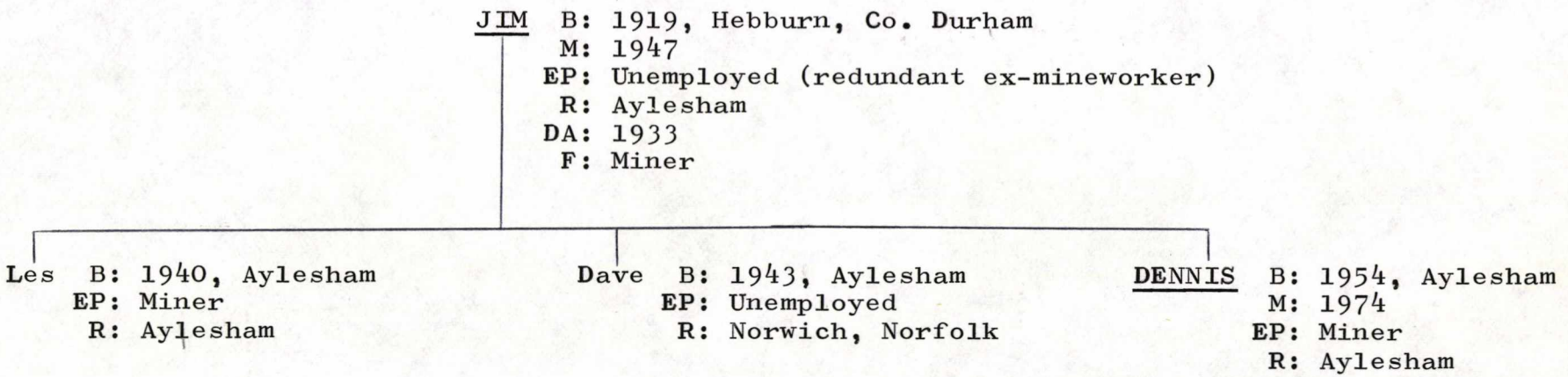
SCHOFIELD


BEN B: 1917, Barnsley, Yorks
M: 1939
EP: Unemployed (redundant ex-mineworker)
R: Woolage
DA: 1945
F: Miner
Jeff B: 1940, Barnsley, Yorks
EP: Factory labourer (M)
R: Aylesham
DUNCAN B: 1946, Aylesham
M: 1967
EP: Postman (M)
R: Aylesham
Brian B: 1948, Aylesham
EP: Miner
R: Aylesham
STEVEN B: 1950, Aylesham
M: 1970
EP: Miner
R: Aylesham

CARLEIGH


SID
B: 1902, Padiham, Nr. Burnley, Lancs
M: 1938
EP: Retired Miner
R: Aylesham
DA: 1926
F: Miner
IAN
B: 1947, Aylesham
M: 1967
EP: Miner
R: Aylesham
Mike
B: 1929, Aylesham
EP: Channel Ferry Steward (M)
R: Aylesham

GILLOW


JIM B: 1919, Hebburn, Co. Durham
M: 1947
EP: Unemployed (redundant ex-mineworker)
R: Aylesham
DA: 1933
F: Miner
Les B: 1940, Aylesham
EP: Miner
R: Aylesham
Dave B: 1943, Aylesham
EP: Unemployed
R: Norwich, Norfolk
DENNIS B: 1954, Aylesham
M: 1974
EP: Miner
R: Aylesham

HUGHES

PADDY B: 1902, Newcastle, Northumberland
M: 1922
EP: Retired Miner
R: Aylesham
DA: 1927
F: Painter & Decorator

FRANK B: 1923, Ashington, North'land
M: 1952
EP: Miner
R: Aylesham

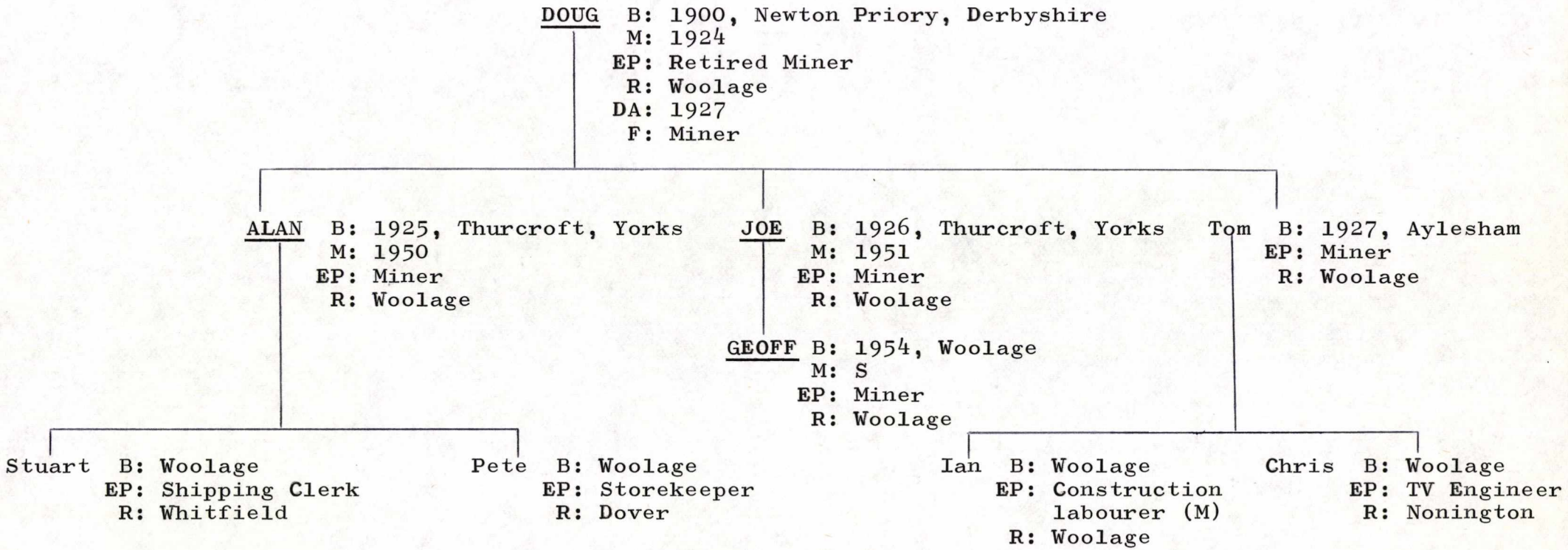
ROBERT B: 1943, Aylesham
M: 1964
EP: Miner
R: Aylesham

Fred B: 1935, Aylesham
EP: Shop Manager (M)
R: London

Sam B: 1937, Aylesham
EP: Factory labourer (M)
R: Enfield, Middlesex

John B: 1940, Aylesham
EP: Factory labourer (M)
R: Aylesham

PETERSON


DOUG B: 1900, Newton Priory, Derbyshire
M: 1924
EP: Retired Miner
R: Woolage
DA: 1927
F: Miner
ALAN B: 1925, Thurcroft, Yorks
M: 1950
EP: Miner
R: Woolage
JOE B: 1926, Thurcroft, Yorks
M: 1951
EP: Miner
R: Woolage
Tom B: 1927, Aylesham
EP: Miner
R: Woolage
GEOFF B: 1954, Woolage
M: S
EP: Miner
R: Woolage
Stuart B: Woolage
EP: Shipping Clerk
R: Whitfield
Pete B: Woolage
EP: Storekeeper
R: Dover
Ian B: Woolage
EP: Construction labourer (M)
R: Woolage
Chris B: Woolage
EP: TV Engineer
R: Nonington

JEFFRIES

TOMMY B: 1900, Usdan, Lanarkshire
M: 1924
EP: Retired Miner
R: Aylesham
DA: 1929
F: Miner

Bob B: 1926, Airdrie, Lanark
EP: Rail Guard (M)
R: Ramsgate

STUART B: 1928, Airdrie, Lanark
M: 1958
EP: Hospital Orderly (M)
R: Canterbury

Jim B: 1948, Aylesham
EP: Factory Labourer
R: Sturry

The 17 'isolated' men:

NAME:	B:	DA:	R:	EP:
Ernie Wright	1907, Leigh, Lancs	1929	Aylesham	Retired Miner
Alf Jones	1901, Aberfan, Glam	1935	Aylesham	Retired Miner
Stan Barnet	1906, Bo'ness, W. Lothian	1932	Aylesham	Retired Miner
Norman Cook	1905, Blaengarw, Glam	1932	Aylesham	Retired Miner
Bill White	1903, Maerdy, Glam	1927	Aylesham	Retired Miner
Sam Lawrence	1902, Hebburn, Co. Durham	1932	Aylesham	Retired Miner
Harry Watling	1910, Tibshelf, Derbyshire	1927	Aylesham	Retired Miner
Geoff Thorpe	1902, Sandhill, Yorkshire	1929	Aylesham	Retired Miner
Dai Evans	1909, Cwmbran, Mons	1931	Aylesham	Retired Miner
Jack Wilson	1903, St. Helens, Lancs	1930	Dover	Retired Miner
Bert Tyler	1906, Bolsover, Derbyshire	1926	Aylesham	Retired Miner
Arthur Fox	1895, Dover, Kent	-	Aylesham	Retired Miner
Ron Foss	1890, Nonington, Kent	-	Nonington	Retired Miner
Harold Burns	1919, Tredegar, Mons	1928	Aylesham	Mineworker
Bill Loney	1918, Congleton, Ches	1933	Aylesham	Mineworker
George Holden	1906, Dunston, North'land	1927	Aylesham	Retired Grocer (M)
John Butcher	1926, Stoke, Staffs	1929	Aylesham	Porter (M)

APPENDIX II

OTHER SOURCES OF FIRST HAND EVIDENCE

A) The Spoken Word

As well as the tape recorded interviews conversations with another 24 men and women were noted in some detail. These included several useful discussions with the General Secretary of the NUM (Kent Area), Jack Dunn - who himself had moved to Aylesham in 1930 at the age of 15 - and two meetings with the late Mr. L.C. Ellson, manager of Snowdown Colliery between 1924 and 1937. Of the other 22 individuals, 18 lived in Aylesham, 3 in the surrounding villages of Adisham, Nonington and Snowdown and 1 had moved from Aylesham to Norfolk. Further details are provided below:

Men	9	ex-miners	(8 retired, 1 employed elsewhere)
	2	miners	)
	2	teachers	) Sons of miners
	1	unemployed	)
Women	8	miners' wives	
TOTAL	22		

B) The Written Word

I also received several replies in response to the following letter which was published in the Miner (issued by the NUM):

'Experiences in Kent'

I am presently engaged in research concerning the changing experiences of miners in Kent, concentrating particularly on those living in or around Aylesham and working at Snowdown Colliery.
I would be interested to hear from any miners who came to Kent during the twenties, thirties and forties and who did not stay. How did they hear about Kent? Why did they decide to go? How did they travel down? Where did they stay? Why did they leave, etc.

Extracts from the replies have been used in the text and four such letters are reproduced more or less in full below - with several purposes in mind:

1. To provide a comparison with the interviews which were conducted with those migrants and their families that stayed rather than left.
2. To indicate that the letter represents a useful means of tapping first hand experience.
3. To give 'supporting evidence' for the interview extracts used. Several of the themes spontaneously introduced into the letters are extensively dealt with in the text and suggest, therefore, that the interviews were sufficiently open-ended for respondents to have an influence in the direction of the exchange and the weight attached to particular aspects of their life histories[1].

R M Harrison, Dinnington, Near Sheffield.

...your search for information...brought back memories of that time. I was working in the mines at West Stanley, County Durham. I can tell you work and prospects were very poor, sometimes we would work one or two shifts per week. So I decided to hitch hike to Snowdown Colliery. I left Stanley in September 1935 with ten bob (50p) and arrived at Doncaster the day before the St. Ledger and slept rough, then went to the free part of the course - and I believe that the winner was 'Barham'. After the races I got lifts until I landed in Aylesham 3 days after starting out with 2/- or 10p in my pocket right at the pit gates. And the following Monday I started work and if my memory serves me right Sir Will Lawther's brother was Secretary at that time. I started work in a district called 19s which was very hot, we used to work with only boots and belt on. Coal face work was on the butty system which one man would be in charge of the face, and if you didn't work you were chucked out. His favourite cry was, 'Come on, coal or dole'. He would collect all the money, and pay what he liked, if you were on different faces you had to see each butty for your pay. In my case I worked on five different faces the first week. I saw two buttys in the pit yard. I had to go to the Greyhound pub to see the other two and the last one I found at his home 8pm on the Friday night. My first wages for five days on the coal face was £2.10.6d (£2.50½p). I paid £1.5s (£1.25p) board and sent 15/- (75p) home to help my family. I remember two men cycled down from South Shields on a Friday, they only worked half a shift and then went back, there was a lot of men who couldn't stand the heat underground. There used to be a club on the left hand side just past the station and on a Friday I have seen men at closing time fill their bottles with beer and sit on the curb and drink until opening time - and by the way a bottle 'Dudley' held 8 pints. And as time got on things in Durham started to improve so I left and went back to the mines in West Stanley to help with the family budget.

Since then I left again in 1962 with the closure of pits and worked at Cynhiedie Colliery in Wales. I left there in 1965 and I am now working at Kineton Park Colliery near Sheffield. I have worked 47 years in the mines - 44 years on the coal face. I have seen a lot of changes in that time. I class a mine like a ship, the comradeship, the hardships, sorrows, joys are all part of mining, and may I add, I am proud to be a miner...

J E Denney, Stainforth, Doncaster

I went from Craghead Colliery, Co. Durham in October 1935 and left Kent April 1937. My reason for going was that half of the pit where I worked was to close, so lots were drawn as to who had to get the sack. I was one of those and at that time the world

ended, but I know now that it was a blessing as we were only existing up there, with short time and the wage of 7/1½d a shift. Being young, and healthy, 35 years old, I cycled to Doncaster where my parents were then living and tried as many pits as I could in the three weeks I'd given myself. There were no jobs anywhere, and as the only thing I thought I was able to do was mining, I had to look elsewhere. So back home to my wife and three bairns I went. Signing on the dole next week I did, as we all did, to see if there was any chance of a job on the noticeboard. There were miners wanted at Kidderminster and Kent (Snowdown Colliery). I left the choice to my wife and oldest daughter, 13 years old, and Kent was their choice. The dole folks paid my rail fare with a chit of some sort. A mate of mine was already working there. I wrote to ask if lodgings were to be had, and I was taken in where he was. I forget the name of the street in Aylesham but it was a very good lodge. There was husband, wife, daughter, 14 years old, and two young boys in the family. Also three other lodgers. There was plenty of good food and the beds were clean. I got 30/- weekly on my pay from the dole which paid for my lodgings. Single men were charged 35/-. She always put an orange in each of our snap for work. The conditions in the pit were terrible. Hot as --ll and lots of water. We had ten pint tin bottles of water and a tank of water came in for snap time when we put our empty bottles on the belt to be returned full. I soon developed a heat rash to be followed by boils, but for the sake of my wife and bairns I stuck it as did lots of others although many men just managed one shift then off back home next day. Some came away after an hour. I saw one poor chap with blood running from his nose and ears. We never saw him more although I heard he died before he got out of the pit. I got a house, which the company fumigated (for bugs) as they did all of them. My landlady's daughter and a friend of hers scrubbed it all out for 3/6d. The dole paid for my furniture and also the rail fare for my wife and family, and down she came with my daughter, 13 years old, my son, 8 years old, and the baby in her arms. Poor lass, on her own, who had not been any farther than Newcastle (12 miles from Craghead). I was unable to afford to go up for her. I paid the chaps who were bringing the furniture from Adisham Station £1 and left the key with the woman in the next house. The reason for this was that I saw a lot of furniture just chucked in the garden in the rain. Poor woman, when she saw her prized possessions broken up she just sat among the wreck and sobbed bitterly. She and her four children had travelled from Scotland. A neighbour took her in. I met my wife at the station late Saturday afternoon. She was in a daze, poor lass, and the bairns were just like zombies. We soon settled in. The house was a palace compared to the one we had left at Craghead. The school was real great, as good as any one up here now. The colliery gave us electric for 1/3d weekly in summer and 1/6d in winter. Lots of folks had 100 watt bulbs even outside. I had left my wireless with my mother-in-law as it was a battery one so we went to Dover to get one on the never-never. We were told that we must produce three testimonials from where we came from, as too many from Aylesham had just put 5/- down and waltzed off with a big radio and never seen more. Well I wrote to my ex-manager, a counciller I knew

and the firm where we had got our furniture from. There must have been a good report as we got a letter to tell us to call and they would let us have a radio for 5/- and 5/- a week. It was a Murphy Richards, a big 'un, and I have forgot the cost. There were films shown at the church hall every Saturday. Mostly Jimmy Cagney and he was called the week-end lodger. Soon the cinema was built. Food was dear as the shops based their prices on the Co-op prices, so we used to shop at Dover or Canterbury each Saturday. I had gradually got used to conditions in the pit when I was sacked because I refused to get nay more coal out unless there was some timber in so I could make it safe. All the colliers were sitting down because of it, and when the deputy came around everyone but me began to dig like --ll. I saw the manager, Captain Ellson, who used swear words I hadn't heard before. I told him he ought to be ashamed as there were young girl clerks about. Whether that did anything or not he started me back on as a dataller. The pay was not much less and the work was easier. I carried on like that for a while when there was a cutting machine (the first) brought to the face I worked at. Although I'd never seen one I was very interested in it, and wanted to see it at work. I went on to the face. The chap who was employed to timber behind while it was cutting took fright so I took over. I got the job permanently at collier's rate. It was a shambles. We went in on Saturday night, 10pm to cut the whole face for the beginning of next week. It took until 10am Sunday to finish. The first shift the overman placed his colliers in the best parts of the face to get as much coal on his shift as possible. The next shift did the same with the result when we turned up at 10am to cut the machine was at the end of the face with about 70 yards of coal to get off before we could start. The head machine man, who was a big young chap from Staffs, soon got on to the manager on the phone. He sorted things out and we began to try to turn the machine which by then had been used as part of the gateside pack. I carried a 10 foot prop and split it down the middle to make a stable to turn it, and as soon as we started up all the colliers stopped work and refused to start because of the noise. There had been no-one told anything, no training of men even though three machines had been bought. Colliers filled 10 tubs for the minimum wage and got 1/- for each additional tub filled. I was averaging 11 shifts per week with no extra pay for overtime. One day we worked continuous for 22 hours. We got snap sent into us twice to keep us going. I got home 8.30am too tired to even eat - I flopped on the bed. My wife took my clothes off but I did not feel her do it. I got up 8am next day and my wife said they had sent for me to go to work at 10am previous day but she said I was at the club while I was out for the count in bed. Why did I leave? It must have been fate. I used to write to my mother, in Yorkshire, also my brother-in-law, who lived up in Northumberland, each week. One week I must have put mother's letter in brother-in-law's and his in hers. While writing to mother I told her everything was fine. I'd a good job, good conditions etc, while I used to tell him the truth, the whole truth and nowt but. Well to cut it short my Ma soon wrote to tell me that there was plenty of work in Thorne Colliery. I got cracking for the move and met a chap who was moving up to a place outside London. We

agreed to share the cost, £3 each. Our furniture stacked in the big van, all of us stowed in the back and off we went, not sorry to leave that --ll hole. Stop to take t'other chaps furniture off and some of their friends took my wife and bairns, gave 'em a feed and a wash and some sandwiches to see us on our way. Bless those kind folks. I do not know who they are and never saw them more but I'll not forget their kindness to us. We stopped at Bedford at a transport cafe for breakfast. It began to snow hard and my wife and bairns were crying with the bitter cold in the back of the van. We arrived at Ma's to a grand welcome, but no work was to be had. I was refused dole as I'd chucked my job up on my own. I then appealed as I had to get parish relief - something I'd never done in my life. My appeal was upheld as the chairman of the committee I met said that hundreds were leaving Snowdown Colliery owing to the terrible conditions there. I received my back pay but most of it had to be paid to the parish. Eventually I managed, after five weeks, of searching, to get started at Hatfield Colliery where I remained, except for two years in New Zealand, until I retired, compelled, in 1965. I hope some of this is of help to you, when I got started memories flowed, and I just had to put 'em down...

H Bishop, Pwllypant, Caerphilly

I started work in the mines at the age of fourteen at a colliery in Wales called Bedwas Colliery until the depression came and caused a strike. That was back in 1928. I was out of work and on the dole for a time. The labour exchange was advertising for men from Snowdown Colliery in Kent so being adventurous I rounded up a few of my friends to come with me. At the time I was nearly eighteen so I was accepted. We were soon on our way there. When we arrived we had to report straight to the colliery so that they could find us digs. The first day of starting work we were put in the coal face. It was so damned hot that we had to wear ladies knickers because they were more suitable for work. We also had to drink about sixteen pints of water a day. Our throats were parched. I hadn't worked half an hour before I was soaked to the skin with sweat. It was just as if I had fell in the river and apart from that my head felt as if it was going to burst any minute. I didn't think I could stick the week out but at the time I was a very keen footballer so I tried to get to play in the Snowdown Colliery team which was going at the time. But being really fed up with the heat and one thing and another, we decided to go back home to Wales. We saw the deputy and told him what we had planned, he very quickly persuaded me to stay because he said I had been picked to play in the football team and he would find me a job in the pit in a much cooler place. He was a man of his word so he got me that job and there I stayed working in Snowdown Colliery for three years. I got married there to a girl from my home town who at the time was working in Margate, Kent. But within two years my wife had to go back home to Wales as she was expecting our first child, but I found keeping two homes going was pretty tough going. So after the football season came to an end I packed up and went home onto the

dole again. I tried and tried to get work but could not. So I decided the only thing to do was to write to the manager of Snowdown Colliery and ask for my job back again. So I received a letter back telling me that providing I would play again in the football team he was prepared to sign me back on and also pay mine and my wife's fare back up there, which he did, and he also found living quarters there. But after twelve months had elapsed, owing to circumstances, I was forced to go back home to Wales, but being more experienced I was lucky enough to get a job in another colliery in Wales. I am now 63 years of age and still going strong, but not underground work. I am now a painter for the Caerphilly Council. But I still think of Snowdown Colliery and the heat and sweat conditions I worked under...

G R Robson, Chesterfield, Derbyshire

In September 1937 I left Lancashire due to pit closures and went to work at Snowdown Colliery. I was 23 years old and signed on as 25 years of age. I paid my own way and went down by train. Some men were given travel vouchers. I was very lucky and found some very good digs in Snowdown village, these were mostly under-official houses, but the man I lodged with was a face worker. He was a Welshman married to a Kent girl. He had come over from Wales in the first case and worked building Dover harbour sea wall.

After a few months I left my digs at Snowdown village and went to live at Dover in digs on Folkestone Road near Priory Station. I shared a bedroom with my brother (who had followed me down) and it cost us 23 shillings a week, full board etc. In Dover I passed myself off as a student, never saying what of. The reason for this was that mine workers at that time in Dover were frowned upon. This was so even by the local yokels who we called 'cherry pickers'. The main cause of this I gather was because of drunken fights by former mine workers. I did in fact go to Dover Technical College.

The face workers' minimum at that time was about 10/9d a shift, my enclosed pay slip shows a little more. Some contractors or face workers on a good face got a £1 a shift, some £2 a shift. This was good money as mostly single mens' digs were about 25 shillings a week.

My first few months at the pit were the worst ones, in fact it nearly broke my heart, but I did not give in and so overcame it. The pit at that time was very hot, and dusty. Also due to some bad airways the ventiliation system had a very high water gauge. The face on which I worked was some distance from the pit bottom. The Kent chalk water caused me to have boils and sceptic sores. One week I worked with seven boils in different places on my body. My landlord was good at bread poultices and with this treatment kept me going.

My reason for leaving Kent was due to having to go back home due to industrial disputes caused by people who would not have work.

If one agitator was to stand on the bath wall and get a few men round him he could disrupt the normal working day. One week I had to return home three times in the week for this reason. This was no good to me. When this happened they would hold a meeting in Aylesham picture house and have a strike vote, even the postman would put his hand up. Then at the pit the manager would refuse to meet them until they went to work. The funny part of the meeting was when the women fell out amongst themselves as to why their husbands could not work on such a face which was getting good money.

I believe in Aylesham village at one time the electric light in the house was stopped out of the mens' money, one shilling a week, so no one switched a light off. This came to a halt. Also if a man got behind with his rent they would stop a week and a half rent at work to level it up. The trouble was if a man did not have a certain amount of wages to draw under the 'truck act' they were only allowed to stop so much money, so some never again worked a full week. I suppose the war stopped this practice.

I think in those days the pits in Kent were government subsidised to help to create work. The dole sent men from all parts of the country. Some good. Some very bad. The worst in that day took over. We also had wife deserters and people who wanted to get lost.

On the face there was no fixed task, everyone just dug in. Some never did a stroke all shift. To overcome this some men wanted a stint marking. When this was done the rest of the men walked out so that was the end of that. Due to the hot conditions water at that time for drinking purposes was sent in the pit at snap time for men to refill their bottle. The men then not used to the heat would get stomach cramp. In those days many men who had never worked on a coal face before got on at these pits before the training act. His employment cards had the mine workers letters on, but this did not mean he had been at the face. When a man went for a job he was interviewed by the manager but his mates had told him all the answers. When going into the pit he would have lost his paper saying which face he was to go on, and so go with his mates to that face, more so if it was on good money. The deputy would not know due to seeing so many fresh faces, also it could be a fresh deputy. One of my jobs was to timber up after these men and also make the new conveyor track.

While I was down in Kent a chance for me to have a deputy's job came but I dare not due to having to be 25 years of age, and I was only 23 years old. This I think came about due to some officials' 'fancy women' having a fall out, then seeing the manager and telling him about what was going off about payments being made for work not done. I think several officials got caught out. Also another chance cropped up when the officials had a dispute - they wanted the names of all workmen with papers. My deputy gave me a rough time during this period in case I sent my papers in, but I got over him.

I made a mistake in leaving Kent in one other way. If I would have signed to stay in the Kent Coalfield for 5 years I could have got one day a week off work paid to go to school for a managers' course. This was before it was done in many coalfields. This was through the union.

I should like the enclosed pay slip back and union card. Looking at the card I must have been a poor paying member...

C) 'Personal Documents'

During the course of the research men and women were kind enough to show me items - often tucked away in an old suitcase or drawer - which shed light upon some of the issues considered in the research. Two such items have been incorporated into the text (see Figures 1 - 4) but many others were produced, including wage slips, union cards, rent agreements, mining certificates, diaries and photographs. At one point, the search for such documents was promoted by letters which were placed in local newspapers and a poster at Snowdown Colliery.

Whether or not such items are directly used at the writing up stage, their systematic collection should, where feasible, form a part of future oral history projects, for personal documents are a potentially rich source. One example is provided below by way of illustration. In his diary, George Holden kept a weekly record of his earnings from 20 August 1927 through until the end of 1928 (for the first year there are 21 entries and for the second 46). George began at Snowdown as a loader but, after three months, became a collier. These two pages from one man's diary are sufficient in themselves to illustrate the shortcomings of average wage statistics as a guide to the week by week fluctuations experienced by individual miners.

WEEKLY EARNINGS (CONVERTED TO DECIMAL CURRENCY) RECORDED IN DIARY OF GEORGE HOLDEN

1927	1928
£1.30	£2.80
£2.55	£2.22
£2.80	£2.22
£2.42	£2.80
£2.71	£2.80
£2.80	£2.55
£2.80	£3.12
£2.80	£2.50
£2.52	£2.50
£1.80	£3.32
£3.52	£2.52
£3.80	£2.52
£3.52	£3.75
£3.10	£3.66
£2.80	£4.82
£3.00	£3.52
£3.35	£3.17
£2.20	£3.87
£3.36	£2.32
£2.80	£3.75
£2.22	£3.60
	£3.82
	£3.82
	£3.82
	£3.82
	£3.82
	£1.67
	£3.17
	£3.00
	£3.52
	£3.85
	£4.32
	£5.00
	£3.75
	£4.12
	£3.37
	£3.75
	£4.17
	£3.36
	£2.80
	£1.91
	Nil
	Nil
	Nil
	£2.85
	£3.50

NOTE

1. The evidence from both interviews and letters used in this research is extensively corroborated in a recent study by Harkell (incorporating taped interviews with miners and their wives) of migration to the Kent Coalfield. Despite the emphasis upon the role of women in the migration process several of the themes dealt with in Chapters 4 and 5 are briefly covered by Harkell and the first hand accounts reproduced suggest that the experiences of the Snowdown miners were by no means exceptional. See G. HARKELL, 'The Migration of Mining Families to the Kent Coalfield between the Wars', Oral History, 6, 1, 1978.

APPENDIX III

A NOTE ON THE EVALUATION OF 'COMMUNITY'

When men and women referred to the fact that, in Aylesham, 'everybody knows everybody else', they normally did so in an appreciative tone; it was pointed out that this provided security, company, help, and a well defined 'place'. This type of positive evaluation normally occurred on first meeting or during the earlier part of an interview, but later (and often after the tape recorder had been switched off) reference was sometimes made to the existence of cliques within the community, the lack of personal privacy and the restricted and oppressive nature of everyday life. The same person who remarked:

> I'm quite happy the way the place is, I wouldn't want to change anything...I wouldn't want to live anywhere else. I've got used to the way of the local people - friendly, you'd never find anybody more friendly than local Aylesham people[1].

also said:

> You don't meet people. We don't meet people like you very often, let's put it that way, no, the only time we meet people like you is when the NUM is on strike and all the students are down here.

There is no attempt here to imply that the second version is any more 'true' than the first; all that need be pointed out is that the taped interview represents a means of access to the different orientations of the individual to what may appear to be ostensibly the same 'subject'. If the run of the argument in the text (and, in particular, Chapter 7) tends to stress the positive views of social life in a close knit community, this note represents a brief attempt to indicate the existence of alternative interpretations.

Strong norms and codes of behaviour may well offer security and identity, but they also limit personal freedom, as Sid Chaplin has indicated:

> Well, the one thing about being born into a mining community is that 'ye knaa whe ye are'. You know who you spring from, you know who you belong to, your roots are firmly embedded. In fact at times you feel almost imprisoned in a past that isn't entirely yours, a past that belongs to the community...To a great many people, I've no doubt at all, it's been a source of strength, to a great many people it's been a source of pain and they've never been happy until they've licked the living daylights out of it and got away[2].

Elsewhere Elias has pointed out the price which individuals pay for the pleasure of a 'community spirit'. Social life becomes 'dulled by routinization' and 'blunted by the narrowness of the community circles, by the sameness of the conversations and gestures' and subsequently 'continuously hovers on the margins of boredom'[3].

This type of dissatisfaction seemed to be experienced particularly by the younger people of Aylesham as the following exchange demonstrated:

> (husband) The clubs are a bit run of the mill aren't they? You never see different faces.
> (wife) You sit and do the same things. Sit in the same seats, drink the same drinks, talk about the same things, day in day out...I used to work down at the 'Welfare' and as soon as the old people...walk in you know what they want to drink, how long it takes them to drink it... it's just their ways, they're set in their ways ...I don't know what it is that makes me fed up about Aylesham. It's always nice to come back to when you've been away...
> (husband) But you tend to find when you've come back and you've seen everybody that you want to see, that they're doing the same things...you know, that's it. You want to go - you've seen it.

Of the men interviewed only one had attempted to run counter to certain well established patterns of social behaviour. His example demonstrated the difficulty and anguish involved in opposition to strong pressures to conform, exerted upon all residents of Aylesham. This young man had deliberately remained unemployed for 18 months after leaving the pit, ('...in the pit it's the work, right, and the work only, and that's all you've got'), and had subsequently experienced the strong opposition of his father who 'hated it', and others in the community who 'seemed to have this opinion of people who want to be voluntary unemployed...it's because they're lazy, they don't want to work'. This pressure was so strong that eventually the man took a temporary job, not for the money, but 'to be of some use to the community...I could have that bit of respectability from

everybody for having a job'. Yet this respectability was not easily won back:

> The workmen I should have been friends with ...they're unsure of me now, you see, I can't go back to them...there's a wall that can't be bloody moved no more...I really tried to break it down, be like them again, but it can't be done...so now...we're pretty friendless, we ain't got many friends no more.

NOTES

1. To guarantee confidentiality the excerpts from taped interviews used here are not identified.
2. S. Chaplin, Durham Mining Villages, University of Durham Department of Sociology and Social Administration, Working Papers in Sociology No. 3, 1972, p. 3.
3. N. Elias, Towards a Theory of Communities, in C. Bell and H. Newby (eds.), The Sociology of Community, London, 1974, p. xxx.

APPENDIX IV

GLOSSARY

The list of mining terms and phrases provided below is by no means comprehensive and the meanings given are certainly not absolute; the present aim is simply to provide an aid to the text. The language of colliery work represents a fascinating (although perplexing - see Chapter 5) subject in its own right: for those wishing to pursue it there are a number of publications which provide more extensive 'translations'[1].

NOTE

1. N. HARRISON, Once A Miner, London, 1954; E.L. TRIST, G.W. HIGGIN, H. MURRAY and A.B. POLLOCK, Organisational Choice, London, 1963; W. FORSTER (ed.), Pit Talk, Leicester, 1972; D. DOUGLASS, Pit Talk in County Durham, Oxford, 1972; A.R. GRIFFIN, The British Coalmining Industry: Retrospect and Prospect, Hartington, 1977.

Afters	Afternoon shift. In a three shift cycle the others are normally termed 'days' and 'nights'.
Beat	Inflammation or swelling typically of knee, elbow or hand through chafing on floor or roof or use of pick or shovel.
Collier	One who wins coal from face and, possibly, loads into tubs, sets supports etc. Also termed 'hewer'. Sometimes refers to skilled underground worker in a more general sense.
Conveyor	Means of transporting materials underground (in roadways or at the face) by a scraper chain or endless belt or rope.
Cutter (ing)	Machine which undercuts coal prior to use of explosives and hand or pneumatic picks.
Datal	Day-wage work (often repair work), or minimum wage.
Deputy	Colliery official (inferior to overman).
District	Area at or about particular coal-face or seam.
Filler (ing)	See Loader.
Gate	Part of roadway near face.
Handgot	Coal won and removed from face through use of a handpick (sometimes after explosive blasting) and shovel.

Heading	Narrow section of coal cut in advance of coal-face; roadway driven into coal seam.
Hewer (ing)	See Collier.
Inbye	Towards the coal-face and away from the shaft. 'Outbye' is the opposite.
Lip	Point in roadway where roof height alters; end of roadway as it joins the face.
Loader (ing)	One who shovels coal from face onto conveyor or into tubs. Also termed 'filler'. Machine filling coal into tubs by a conveyor.
Longwall	Mining on straight faces (of varying length) with faceworkers strung out in a line. On the 'hewing' longwall coal is won with a pick and (normally) shovelled onto a conveyor. On the 'cutting' longwall coal is won by machine.
Market man	Underground worker without a regular place of work.
Overman	Colliery official (inferior to under-manager; superior to deputy).
Pillar and stall	Single place working at the face where, typically, each man responsible for all the major face tasks. The roadways in this lay-out are driven through coal and thus supported by 'pillars' of coal.
Plough	Machine with angled cutting blades which removes coal from the face.

Power loaders	Cutting and loading machines (shearers) mounted on armoured flexible conveyors which may be moved forward (or 'advanced') mechanically without dismantling.
Props	Pieces of wood or steel set to support the roof. Later replaced by hydraulic props and then self advancing supports.
Ripper (ing)	One who excavates rock or stone in the roof, floor or side.
Roadway	Underground tunnel.
Shaft	Passage to mine from surface.
Shotfirer	Colliery official (or 'grade 2' deputy) responsible for coal and stone blasting.
Snap	Snack; break halfway through shift.
Stint	Agreed length of face to be cleared per man.
Trammer (ing)	One who provides colliers with tubs.
Tub	Small wagon for conveying coal.
Washery	Part of coal preparation plant where coal separated from dirt.

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