

Coal in Victorian Britain

Industrial Relations and Trade Unionism

Edited by
Keith Gildart



ROUTLEDGE


COAL IN VICTORIAN BRITAIN

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COAL IN VICTORIAN BRITAIN

GENERAL EDITOR
John Benson

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Volume 6
Industrial Relations and Trade Unionism

Edited by
Keith Gildart

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INTRODUCTION

The development of the coal industry had a significant impact on economic, political and social change in Victorian Britain. Coal was crucial to the industrial revolution that would transform the British economy and global capitalism. In this period Britain led the way in the development of mines, coal production and a culture of trade unionism and collective bargaining that would resonate across the world.¹ Throughout the nineteenth century the number of mines increased and particular counties became synonymous with coal mining. Lancashire, Yorkshire, Northumberland, Durham and Nottinghamshire were notable for their coal production along with parts of South Wales, North Wales, Scotland and the Midlands. The Victorian railway boom was central to the expansion of coal extraction. Coal could now be moved quickly from mines directly to towns, cities and ports. The mushrooming of mines also drew labour into the industry, generating migration from areas of high unemployment and poor wages. Thousands of men, women and children made the journey to mining areas, creating new communities that would develop a culture that was steeped in the economy of coal. By 1901 Britain was pockmarked with coal mines and the villages and towns that had expanded with the growth of the industry. Six years later 'the value of coal output accounted for approximately 5 per cent of UK national income and employed nearly one million people.'²

Coal-mining engendered a culture of trade unionism that was developed and consolidated throughout the Victorian period and into the twentieth century. The arduous nature of the occupation along with the inherent dangers involved in working underground created particular bonds between miners that were sustained outside of the workplace. In the early nineteenth century miners realized that through combination they could attempt to circumvent coal owner attempts to maximize production and profits by lowering labour costs. Unions were successful in some mines and coalfields but less so in others where owners proved to be more resistant to collective action. Trade union strength was dependent on a number of factors relating to the nature of colliery ownership, the broader political culture of coalfield society and the ability of labour pioneers in being able to build and sustain working-class organizations. Mining

unions would often find that initial success was quickly followed by the depletion of funds and influence as a result of defeat in a strike or lockout or a change in the ownership and ethos of colliery companies. The economic instability of the industry and the fluctuating market for coal was also a factor in determining the fortunes of trade unionism. In the period 1830–1914 there were numerous examples of the construction of local unions that then became moribund and later resurrected when conditions improved. Similarly, attempts at national miners' organizations were numerous in the nineteenth century, but were often undermined by booms and slumps of the coal industry and the particularities of trade unionists in particular coalfields.

Coal mining trade unionism posed a challenge to the direction of British capitalism and also impacted on the policies of both the Conservative and Liberal parties. Prior to the extension of the parliamentary franchise in the late Victorian period miners could still act as an effective pressure group in persuading social elites and elected representatives to act in the interests of a significant section of their constituents. In general, the Liberals benefited from the support of miners particularly in local government elections and parliamentary representation. Yet a significant minority of miners and the working class as a whole retained an allegiance to the Conservative Party through to the end of the Victorian period and beyond. Successive British Governments intervened in the coal industry throughout the nineteenth century through the passing of legislation preventing women and children working underground and attempting to minimize the risks inherent in such a dangerous occupation. The state's relationship with mining trade unionism was complex and dependent on the balance of forces between capital and labour at any given time. Local and national miners' organizations gained legitimacy through particular Government initiatives in the Victorian period, such as the introduction of legislation that improved safety and allowed for the election of checkweighmen. Miners themselves had now built organizations that could sustain pressures from Government and coal owners. In densely populated localities that were dependent on the coal industry miners also had the ability to elect their own representatives to local Government positions and to seats in the House of Commons.³ The increasing strength and depth of mining trade unionism across the country ensured that miners' leaders could influence policy in the Liberal Party and from 1909 in the Labour Party.

The coal industry has created an expansive historical scholarship that has placed miners at the centre of the narrative of British economic, political and social history. Business historians have contributed to a broad literature on the economics of the coal industry. The multi-volume series on the history of the coal industry published with the support of the National Coal Board (NCB) in the late twentieth century provides a rich overview of the industry from its origins through to its subsequent decline in the 1980s. The third volume of

the series *The History of the British Coal Industry 1830–1913* covers the Victorian period through which Roy Church explores reorganization, technological change and industrial relations, setting a benchmark for future historians.⁴ Outram's recent work on the under-researched coal owners complements the institutional dimension of some of the more general business histories of the coal industry.⁵ As a result the owners are reconstructed as a more diverse body than early accounts have suggested. The economic and business history literature tends to veer towards a concentration on output, managerial changes and the booms and slumps of coal capitalism in which local nuances and the individual and collective experience of the industry is lost.⁶ The historiography of trade unionism in the British coal industry is similarly vast. From the late nineteenth century onwards historians were developing a growing literature that sought to chart the origins of trade unionism in coal mining and the impact that collective bargaining had on coal capitalism. There are now numerous histories of both national and local miners' trade unions, leading personalities, social histories of coal communities and narratives and analyses of major industrial conflicts that rocked the industry and engulfed the whole country in periods of political and economic crisis. What follows is an attempt to highlight the major work on mining trade unionism and the historiographical trends that have underpinned its production. The survey is not exhaustive, but seeks to give the reader a sense of the variety of approaches that have been adopted by historians in seeking to recreate and make sense of the world of coal miners and their trade unions.

Institutional Histories of Coal Mining Trade Unionism

The dominant trend in coal-mining history for many years was the production of institutional trade union studies of particular districts and national organizations.⁷ These were often written by those sympathetic to the trade union movement and socialist politics and adopted a teleological narrative that emphasized the development of class-consciousness and solidarity. The weakness of this literature is that the politics underpinning the texts often masks the fragility of miners' unity and tends to overemphasize a culture of radicalism.⁸ Moreover, the human dimension of mining trade unionism is often lost in the tendency to prioritize political decisions and national personalities. Current historiographical trends have led to the relegation of the miner and his trade union to the margins along with the politics that underpinned such relationships. An earlier emphasis on class-consciousness, militancy and solidarity has given way to a reading of miners' history that seeks to highlight workplace tensions, union factionalism and the brittleness of a collective identity based on occupation and class. Yet institutional histories still have much to offer in their detailed reconstruction of miners' organization, policymaking and industrial struggle. More recent institutional histories

of district unions have attempted to place miners' organizations in the broader context of the workplace, the community and a broader working-class culture.⁹

Institutional histories of mining trade unionism have cast a long shadow over the literature on the British coal industry. Their heroic and elegiac tone adopted by authors tended to construct the miner as an 'archetypal proletarian' and 'class warrior'. Although many have now been subject to serious critique, institutional histories have made a substantial contribution to our understanding of miners' unions charting the foundation of local, district and national miners' organizations utilizing the availability of substantial sources in union headquarters that were opened to researchers in the twentieth century.¹⁰ From the late nineteenth through to the late twentieth centuries a corpus of work exists that covers many of the major mining regions and some of the lesser ones. Ness Edwards's *The History of the South Wales Miners* published in 1926 was an early example of the genre that set the template for later attempts to reconstruct the character and culture of trade unionism across the coalfields.¹¹ Edwards was an official of the South Wales miners and indicative of a generation of leaders who contributed to the historiography of their union and the wider history of the coal industry.

The most quoted and critiqued institutional histories of coal-mining trade unionism are the volumes by Page Arnot on the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB) and its associated districts published between 1949 and 1979. He examines union building in the coal industry through a prism of Marxist historical materialism linking the growing influence of the district unions to changing economic conditions in the industry and the connected development of class consciousness amongst the miners. The four volumes on the MFGB and associated texts on Scotland and South Wales are significant in characterizing the miners as heroic participants in the British class struggle. Mine disasters are explored with great empathy and accounts of industrial conflict with coal capitalists are written as dramatic episodes in the class struggle. Criticism of Page Arnot's work is legion and subsequent histories of mining trade unionism often highlighted the weaknesses in his methodology, assumptions and conclusions. His focus on national organizations and personalities tended to exaggerate the internal cohesiveness of the MFGB. Moreover, his emphasis on strikes and solidarity masked the more consensual and politically cautious culture of many districts. Yet Page Arnot's volumes remain the first port of call for many historians seeking details of the policy decisions taken by the MFGB from the late nineteenth century onwards and narratives of the major events in British labour history and the miners' place in them. His work also injected impetus into the writing of coalfield history with a number of scholars following his template in producing substantial district histories.¹² The most substantial and impressive is Williams's work on Derbyshire followed by the Griffins' on Nottinghamshire, Garside's study of Durham and Challinor's history of the Lancashire and Cheshire miners.¹³

From the 1970s onwards institutional histories moved beyond Page Arnot's framework in attempting to construct a more complex understanding of coal-mining trade unionism through a broader mapping of economic, political, social and cultural relationships. A new generation of mining historians were influenced by developments in labour and social history and in particular the work of Thompson and Hobsbawm.¹⁴ Francis and Smith's *The Fed* explored the world of the south Wales miners' through their organizations, communities and cultures.¹⁵ The use of oral testimony also added a richness and colour that had been absent from earlier more dry institutional histories. More problematically, Allen's *The Militancy of British Miners* shares Page Arnot's Marxist framework and has a clearly defined view of 'heroes and villains', yet is illuminating in its analysis of the changing nature of underground work and how this impacted on political alignments in particular coalfields.¹⁶ Allen's methodology is more sophisticated than Page Arnot's in his explanation of the factional tension within union politics but the text remains underpinned by a notion of miners as 'shock troops' of the working class who would or could act more militantly if they could transform the union bureaucracy and the more moderate culture of some coalfields. The book is both a usable history and a call to action that distorted then-contemporary perceptions of coal mining trade union politics. Francis and Smith's book on south Wales and Allen's on miners' militancy came out of different political positions within the British left but both were written in a period of growing radicalism in mining trade unionism that had been energized by the victories in the strikes of 1972 and 1974. Within a few years of their publication they would seem quaintly out of date in the context of the defeat of the miners in 1985 and the subsequent destruction of the union and the industry.

The catalyst for a more critical/analytical approach to coalfield unionism and its political dimensions was also given impetus with the publication of a collection of essays edited by Harrison that sought to subject the notion of the coal miner as 'archetypal proletarian' to serious critique.¹⁷ This led to a series of more nuanced histories of mining trade unionism examining the fragility and limitations of the collective consciousness of the British coal miner. Significant gaps in the existing historiography were filled by histories of some of the more marginal and neglected coalfields. Griffin's multi-volume history of the Leicestershire miners and Howell's book on the politics of the Lancashire miners published in the 1980s were notable contributions in charting the development of trade union politics in coalfields that were noted for their industrial and political moderation.¹⁸ Institutional histories continue to be published with an emphasis on organizations and policy but they have generally moved beyond the limitations of Arnot's one-dimensional characterization of the development of mining trade unionism. This 'new institutionalism' is personified by recent

work on Durham, Scotland and North Wales that was written in the context of de-industrialization and the decline of the British labour movement.¹⁹

Miners' Lives: Autobiography/Biography

Historians of the British coal industry have often drawn on accounts of miners' lives in reconstructing the origins and development of trade unionism in particular counties. Nineteenth-century trade-union pioneers in the coal industry have been relatively well served through the publication of autobiographies and biographies. A late Victorian example of documenting the personal career trajectory of influential miners' officials is provided by Hallam's *Miners' Leaders*.²⁰ This was followed by a series of autobiographies that emphasized the role of individual agency, struggle and personal sacrifice in building trade-union organization across the coalfields. In the early twentieth century these men of coal looked back with pride at the way in which their organizations had gained respectability and influence through their personal endeavours. Durham, Northumberland, Scotland and South Wales provide examples of the influential position that miners' leaders were able to carve out in the wider society of their particular districts. John Wilson's *Memories of a Labour Leader* (1910), Robert Smillie's *My Life for Labour* (1924) and Thomas Burt's *An Autobiography* (1924) are indicative of the genre. Similarly Frank Hodges's *My Adventures as a Labour Leader* (1925) personifies the belief that natural ability and education could pave a route from the coal mine into the higher echelons of British society.²¹ These texts were followed by a further flurry of autobiographies and personal sketches of conditions in the coal industry and life in mining communities.²² For historians of the politics and culture of the industry three stand out in terms of their depth, insight and literary ambition. Jack Lawson's *A Man's Life* (1932) shares some of the characteristics of the first generation of miner-autobiographers but goes beyond an account of institution building and industrial struggle. Lawson provides an illuminating insight into the broader 'lived culture' of the Durham coalfield.²³ The book also articulates and idealizes the respectable and moderate trade-union leader that became a feature of mining politics in the late Victorian period. Similarly, in Bert Coombe's *These Poor Hands* (1939) the reader is taken underground and introduced to the miners' experience of working together on particular tasks and the culture of camaraderie and friendship that such relationships engendered.²⁴ In contrast, Thomas Jones's *Fingers In The Sky* (1949) exposes the fragility of miners' unity and the divergent cultures of different mines and coal communities. Jones and his father defy their union in 1926 by returning to work during the dispute offering a rare glimpse into the world of the workplace and community transgressor.²⁵ Jones's memoirs subvert explicit assumptions in earlier texts that tended to highlight homogeneity, solidarity and community cohesion.

The link between coal mining trade unionism and its dominant characters continued in the post-war period with the appearance of further autobiographies.²⁶ Many of these were drawn from the dominant coalfields and were written from the perspective of celebrating the achievements of the miners in the wake of the nationalization of the industry in 1947.²⁷ Arthur Horner's *Incorrigible Rebel* (1960) and Abe Moffat's *My Life with the Miners* (1965) are written from the radical left with a particular view of the miners and politics that neglects the more problematic culture of moderation and solidarity that existed in many coalfields.²⁸ Yet they provide a link between the late Victorian coal industry and the post-1947 political settlement through which the miners enjoyed a consensual relationship with the NCB. An under-utilized autobiography that focuses on life and work in the peripheral North Staffordshire coalfield is Harold Brown's *Most Splendid of Men*.²⁹ The author reflects on childhood experiences, domestic relations and the fear that the mine could instil in young miners. Two autobiographies that more systematically challenged the notion of miners as archetypal proletarians emerged from the political right of mining trade unionism in the form of Joe Gormley's *Battered Cherub* (1982) and Roy Ottey's *The Strike* (1985).³⁰

Miners' autobiographies complement the institutional histories in adding personal experience and testimony to trade union organization-building and workplace relations. The autobiography included in this volume is an extract from Edward Hughes's memoir of agitating for union recognition in the context of employer intransigence in the 1890s. Hughes was the leader of the small North Wales coalfield and also on the political and industrial right of the miners' federation. His recollections provide some balance to the over-preponderance of miners' autobiography that has emerged from the larger and more radical coalfields.

Biographies of miners' leaders have also formed a bedrock of the historiography of coal. The benchmark was set by Lawson in his biography of *Peter Lee* (1936) which he followed with *The Man in the Cap: The Life of Herbert Smith* (1941).³¹ In the post-war period the *Dictionary of Labour Biography* has been an indispensable repository for reconstructing the lives of both district and national miners' leaders. The thirteen volumes to date contain numerous entries on miners' leaders from across the coalfields spanning the Victorian period and into the twentieth century.³² More recently, miners' biography has been used to challenge some of the assumptions implicit in the more traditional historiography that has emphasized radicalism and solidarity. Paul Davies's, *A. J. Cook* (1987) is a revisionist portrait of the much maligned miners' leader in the 1926 general strike and lockout. Smith's, *Aneurin Bevan and the World of South Wales* (1993) took miners' biography to a new level of sophistication through an attempt to make sense of a particular coalfield society through the politics and personality of one of its most celebrated political leaders. Fishman's two-volume study of *Arthur*

Horner (2010) is an expansive passionate account of Horner's place in mining politics and the international communist movement.³³

There is still much work to be done in terms of coal-mining autobiography/biography in order to expand the source base and challenge the existing historiography that has tended to emphasize the lives of miners' leaders who were associated with left-wing political activity. Record offices and specialist archives are still uncovering miners' lives through their collections of trade union material and broader labour movement sources. With the late twentieth-century decline in the fortunes of the coal industry miners themselves penned their recollections and thoughts through diaries, interviews and published memoirs. There remains a tendency for miners' biography to be union centred, but work on the more peripheral coalfields has brought to the surface a more representative group of individuals exposing the complexity of both community and political identity. Much work is yet to be done in this area along with more detailed biographical studies of twentieth century miners' leaders such as George Spencer, Will Lawther, Sam Watson, Joe Gormley and Roy Lynk.

The autobiographical/biographical material in this volume covers a range of individuals from both the major and more peripheral coalfields. The extracts from Hallam's collection shed light on the lesser-known characters who were crucial to the building and consolidation of both district unions and the MFGB. Similarly, the autobiography of Edward Hughes is crucial in giving a sense of the struggle that trade-union pioneers faced in establishing local unions in a hostile environment. The miners' obituaries from the Trades Union Congress report symbolize the way in which the labour movement memorialized its leading figures. This process was crucial in the coal industry in connecting the present to the past through the depiction of their pioneering leaders on union banners and the portraits that adorned the walls of their district offices. New directions in the writing of labour biography have complemented recent incursions into the nature of miners' collective identity and their perceived propensity towards strike action.

Industrial Conflict and Miners' Militancy

The adversarial nature of industrial relations and capital/labour conflicts have been the core features of research into the British coal industry. Institutional histories of both local and national unions tend to hook their narratives on the major disputes that erupted in the industry in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Arnot's volumes on Scotland, South Wales and the MFGB contain detailed sections on strikes, lockouts and the struggle they engendered in the wider community. Much of this work was descriptive, moving and expressed a sympathy with the miner that became lodged in the collective memory. The emphasis on industrial conflict also impacted on the miners themselves with union activists

and others referring to works by Arnot and others in attempting to make sense of their own history. This particular reading of the history of the coal industry reinforced the notion of the miner as 'archetypal proletarian'. The disputes of 1893, 1912, 1921 and 1926 emerge as life changing events where heroes are made and villains are ostracized. The national strikes of 1972, 1974 and 1984/5 had a similar impact. The 'new institutional' histories have done much to redress this heroic reading of the miners and their unions along with a more sophisticated sociological literature that has tested the claims of the 'militant miner' thesis.³⁴

In the 1950s and 60s sociological attempts to explain industrial conflict in the coal industry provided a range of theoretical approaches to miners' militancy that remain the subject of much historiographical debate. Kerr and Siegel in their widely quoted and critiqued methodology adumbrated the concept of 'isolated mass' as an explanation for strike propensity in the international coal industry.³⁵ Similarly, Lockwood examined a range of social and economic factors to suggest that miners were indeed 'archetypal proletarians'.³⁶ Subsequent literature on miners, their unions and collective action represented an engagement with the question of militancy and its role in the coal industry and its connected communities. Harrison's collection of revisionist essays published in 1978 had as its subtitle *The Miner as Archetypal Proletarian Reconsidered*. In response to the book a range of local, national and international studies of miners sought to build on the foundation that it had laid. The work of Jaffe is particularly notable in providing a richly detailed and analytical reading of industrial relations in the nineteenth-century coal industry that seeks to break with the assumptions implicit in earlier characterizations of collective action.³⁷

The most sophisticated contribution to the literature on strike propensity in the British coalfields was provided by Church and Outram.³⁸ Through the use of detailed statistical analysis the authors expose the limitations of the 'archetypal proletarian' thesis and show that many strikes were short and often confined to particular mines in particular districts. The evidence they provide makes an overarching claim of 'militant miners' difficult to sustain.³⁹

The events surrounding the national coal strike of 1984–5 once again reignited debates around the notion of miners as 'archetypal proletarians'. The extraordinary resilience of miners and their families throughout the twelve-month dispute exhibited a capacity for struggle and personal sacrifice on such a grand scale that contemporary accounts of the strike returned to the heroic imagery of the miner that had been recently challenged. A range of books and articles appeared in the aftermath of the strike that emphasized the solidarity of the miners through an elegiac narrative of the coal industry that had been utilized earlier in the volumes by Arnot and Allen.⁴⁰ Yet the fact that a significant minority of miners continued to defy the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) throughout the dispute pointed to the legacy of division and factional-

ism in mining trade unionism that had been feature of coalfield politics since the Victorian period. The defeat of the miners in 1985 also led to more sober analyses of mining politics and the culture of trade unionism in specific coalfields. In Campbell, Fishman and Howell's, *Miners Unions and Politics* (1996) a range of contributors explored MFGB factionalism, electoral politics and social identities. The editors placed themselves firmly in the revisionist camp of miners' history, but stressed that although the book accepts the view that miners were not 'innately solidaristic, it nevertheless does not abandon the notion that despite this diversity, occupational and class solidarity *could* be constructed'.⁴¹

The attempt to make sense of mining politics without fully abandoning the notion that a strong sense of collective identity amongst miners existed continued with the publication of a range of district coalfield histories. Respective studies of the South Wales and North Wales coalfields utilized the concept of 'labourism' as a collective identity that created and maintained a particular level of shared values and goals throughout the twentieth century.⁴² Nonetheless, in the case of North Wales a commitment to labourism was not strong enough to maintain solidarity in the dispute of 1984–5. A reappraisal of the miners' lockout of 1926 also exposed the fragility of solidarity in the MFGB through an examination of the internal politics of the union executive and individual case studies of the impact of the conflict in a range of both large and small coalfields.⁴³ Barron's study of the lockout in Durham also attempts to tread a path between the simplistic view of the 'militant miner' and the more recent literature that has emphasized fragmentation and division. She explores the range of political, religious and social identities in the coalfield and the way they interacted in maintaining solidarity and the longevity of the dispute.⁴⁴ Barron's work has set a new benchmark for future work on strikes, solidarity and social identities in the British coalfields.

Industrial conflict in the British coal industry will no doubt continue to command the attention of historians, sociologists and social scientists. The much maligned notion of the 'militant miner' still has resonance given the coal industry's role in some of the major strikes in nineteenth- and twentieth-century British history. The documents on strikes and lockouts selected for this volume cover a broad range of coalfield districts in the period 1843 to 1912. The sources relate to both large and small coalfield strikes through to the national conflicts of 1893 and 1912 when the politics of the coal industry engulfed the whole country. A wide range of sources are drawn from union records, labour newspapers and British government cabinet papers. A reading of the selected extracts highlights the drama and violence of industrial conflict in the Victorian coal industry. The militancy of the British miner might owe much to mythology, yet episodes of industrial conflict did express a sense of collective identity and solidarity that reached unparalleled levels in comparison to other employment sectors of the British economy. Similarly, such a collective identity had ramifica-

tions beyond the workplace and took root in the villages and towns that were connected to the coal industry. The extent to which the coal mine created a specific community that had particular features with regards to particular political and cultural affiliations has also been the source of much debate.

Coal Communities and Miners' Culture

The traditional emphasis on trade-union activism, institution building and industrial conflict has tended to overshadow the world of the miner beyond the coal face. Yet with the development of sociological studies of coal mining in the 1950s, historians endeavoured to reconstruct the miner's life both in the workplace and in the wider community. A key influence on the social history of miners was Dennis, Henriques and Slaughter's, *Coal Is Our Life*, a sociological study of a Yorkshire mining community published in 1956.⁴⁵ The authors explore the ways in which the mine impinges on the broader culture of the district, yet ultimately construct an image of the miner that owes much to the 'militant legend' and tends to ignore or downplay tensions that no doubt existed in the locality between men, women, union activists and non-activists and those who refused to conform to community norms. The *Coal Is Our Life* project raised a number of questions relating to the connections between miners and wider social institutions and identities. In response, historians began to shift their focus away from the formal politics of the miners or sought to contextualize them in relation to competing ideologies and organizations. Robert Moore's, *Pitmen, Preachers and Politics* was notable in examining the impact of religion on miners and their collective identity. Moore argued that the miners' connection to Methodism diluted militancy and underpinned the culture of the Durham mining politics.⁴⁶ Similarly, Ackers's work on Methodism and trade-union leadership provided a more nuanced reading of the role of religion in coal-mining politics.⁴⁷ The development of research into working-class communities tended to view trade unionism as just one aspect of the miners' life both in both the workplace and the wider locality.

Bulmer's edited volume on the Durham coalfield published in 1977 was far less union-centric than previous studies of the north-east and draws upon a range of contributors to explore the history and legacy of the region's miners.⁴⁸ His work was followed by Campbell's expansive political and social history of the Lanarkshire miners.⁴⁹ This engagement with the social history of miners was not confined to academics. A number of miner-writers followed in the footsteps of Bert Coombes and others in telling their own story. Yorkshire miner Dave Douglass provided a detailed study of the underground world and its connected culture in his contribution to Samuel's *Miners, Quarrymen and Saltworkers*.⁵⁰ Similarly, Malcolm Pitt takes the reader through the underground workings and mining villages of the Kent coalfield in the first four chapters of his auto-

biographical impression of the miners' world.⁵¹ Douglass and Pitt were writing history to inform and encourage miners involved in the industrial conflicts of the 1970s. They wanted miners to learn the lessons of the past and acknowledge the limitations of the contemporary union leadership. Both men were to play active roles in the industrial conflicts of the 1980s.

The social history of miners and the relationship between the workplace, the community and political identities was further explored in three notable books published in 1980. Benson's *British Coalminers in the Nineteenth Century* was an attempt to isolate the essential features of the mining community and the associated culture that developed throughout the Victorian period.⁵² Francis and Smith's *The Fed* also broke new ground and gained a reputation as a classic recreation of the South Wales miner, his union and community and the way in which this relationship forged an 'alternative culture' that was underpinned by occupation, class and internationalism.⁵³ Macintyre's *Little Moscows* sought to separate the myth from the reality of villages that had a reputation for industrial militancy and socialist radicalism in the interwar period.⁵⁴ These texts set the benchmark for more sophisticated analyses of mining history. Subsequent scholars built on the methods and sources used by Benson, Francis and Smith and Macintyre to examine the social and political history of particular coalfields. Waller's *The Dukeries Transformed* explored the Nottinghamshire coalfield with a view to explaining the inherent moderation of a section of the county's miners.⁵⁵ The book focused on the sinking of new mines and the erection of villages in the Dukeries district of the coalfield. Waller goes beyond the institutional focus and the stress on solidarity by noting the impact of paternalism and deference on the political culture of Nottinghamshire miners. His work appeared a year before the twelve-month miners' strike of 1984–5 that would reveal the debilitating factionalism that minimized the effectiveness of miners in spreading the strike to politically moderate coalfields. The defence of 'community' became a rallying cry for miners and their supporters. This attempt to present the dispute as more than just an industrial strike fed into the literature that followed. Historians and sociologists contrasted mining communities with the more negative aspects of British society that Government policies had gone some way to exacerbating. Samuel's lengthy introduction to an edited collection of essays on the 1984–5 strike represents a passionate defence of mining trade unionism accompanied by testimonies from participants. Methodologically, the book frames the strike in the experiences of miners, miners' wives and partners and those outside of the decisionmaking structures of the union.⁵⁶ Far more than just an institutional and political history this is a brilliant example of 'history from below' and stands as a testament to the solidarity and memory of the striking miners and their families. Similarly, the oral history by the people of Thurcroft, *Thurcroft: A Village and*

the Miners' Strike takes the reader into the minutiae of everyday life during the dispute and how this transformed domestic and community relationships.⁵⁷

The defeat of the miners stimulated a lengthy post-mortem on the politics of mining trade unionism. Contemporary commentators felt that the end of the strike was a key turning point in the journey of organized labour that had started in the Victorian period. In the post-strike environment historians continued to be fascinated by coal communities. The link between culture and protest in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was explored by Colls in a further study of the coalfields of the north-east.⁵⁸ David Gilbert adopted the comparative method in his study of two mining communities in South Wales and Nottinghamshire.⁵⁹ Gilbert's work moved beyond the Marxist framework adopted by Francis and Smith and uses 'rational choice theory' as way of explaining the divergent political cultures of the South Wales and Nottinghamshire coalfields. In South Wales, socialists were able to permeate social institutions and influence policy whereas in Nottinghamshire management hegemony over local miners was more complete. Thus, miners in South Wales supported their trade union because it offered specific advantages. In contrast, some Nottinghamshire villages were not dependent on the economy of coal and miners received particular rewards and concessions without having to adopt more militant trade union strategies that were a feature of some other coalfields. More recently, the attempt to measure and explain differing levels of miners' militancy and class consciousness has been challenged by writers seeking to push class to the margins. Griffiths's book on the Lancashire coalfield argues that both miners and cotton textile workers drew on a range of identities that informed their support for political parties and particular forms of trade-union activism.⁶⁰ His work formed part of minority trend in labour history that was responding to the claims of postmodernism and seeking to refocus the study of workers in a direction that placed emphasis on 'language', 'discourse' and 'representation'.⁶¹ There is still much to be done in this respect and a wider engagement with the concerns of postmodernism would add significantly to the existing historiography on coal, class, community and industrial conflict.

The miners' relationship to a particular class identity and community continues to generate research. Barron's recent book on the 1926 lockout has made great strides in attempting to make sense of the multiplicity of identities in coalfield communities. She is critical of the simplistic readings of mining trades unionism provided by Page Arnot and Allen but is ambivalent to some of the more outlandish claims that have sought to completely dismiss earlier characterizations of mining trade unionism.⁶² The focus of this volume on trade unionism and industrial relations necessitates the inclusion of sources drawn from labour institutions and radical political organizations. Yet in keeping with recent emphases on deepening and extending the focus on the mining community it also draws

on documents such as songs and poems to illustrate the resonance that industrial conflict could have on the wider culture of coal society.

Women, Gender and the Body

The most recent significant contribution to the historiography of miners has been the development of women's history and methodological approaches that have centred on the body. Prior to the 1960s, labour histories of women tended to be compensatory and did not critically examine gendered relationships in working-class occupations and communities. A small number of autobiographies of working-class women filled the gap that had been left by historians who had neglected to include women in their narratives of coalfield development.⁶³ Elizabeth Andrews was one of very few coalfield women who penned memoirs. She was an energetic campaigner for an improvement in the social conditions of miners' wives in South Wales. Subsequently, the influence of the women's movement and methodological developments in the writing of social history led to an increase in the number of female historians and the broadening of the focus of labour history. Building on the work of socialist historians such as Sheila Rowbotham there are now a variety of feminist and gender interpretations of coal communities. The foundation work on women in the coal industry remains Angela John's groundbreaking, *By the Sweat of Their Brow*.⁶⁴ The book's primary focus is on the exclusion of women from working underground and the experiences of those who remained in the industry as surface workers. Yet it also explores in depth the ways in which gender identities conditioned responses to women workers. John also presents a sympathetic portrait of the roles that coalfield women played in trade-union organization and political radicalism.⁶⁵ This insight into women's experiences in coalfield society rescued them from the footnotes and margins of the institutional histories and pieced together lives from a multiplicity of previously under-utilized primary sources.

The miners' strike of 1984–5 also proved to be a catalyst for the production of gendered histories of the coal industry.⁶⁶ Women's role in the 1984–5 strike cannot be overestimated. From the outset women were at the forefront of picketing activity and political organization. Women also created their own autonomous organizations and their radicalism and activism quickly moved beyond support for the strike. In many cases women's lives were transformed by the dispute. The personal crisis engendered by the strike in terms of poverty, sacrifice and family fragmentation placed immense pressure on domestic and community relationships. The dispute led to a wave of publications exploring women's role in the strike and the implications that it might have for existing working-class politics and contemporary conceptions of male/female identities. The resultant literature took the form of published diaries, autobiography and

accounts of the organizations that women constructed to ensure the longevity of the dispute.⁶⁷ The aftermath of the strike led to the appearance of a new wave of women's history not just on the 1984–5 dispute but on women's role in coal communities from the Victorian period to more recent times.

White and Williams's edited collection on women in the south Wales valleys in the interwar period draws on a range of both published and unpublished sources in depicting the lives of coalfield women and children.⁶⁸ The book is a major contribution to the historiography of South Wales and shatters some of the myths surrounding women's place in industrial society. Carr's *Pit Women* is also indicative of a trend that sought to move beyond the compensatory history of some accounts of women's role in working-class politics and culture.⁶⁹ Carr draws on a range of primary sources and oral testimony in reconstructing women's lives in coal communities. Gier and Mercier's edited collection on mining women brings together a broad range of contributors in presenting essays on women's role in the global coal industry. The book includes chapters on Britain, Latin America, the United States, Japan and Sweden covering a broad chronology from 1670 to the late twentieth century.⁷⁰ Barron's study of Durham mining communities in 1926 also places great emphasis on gender identities.⁷¹

The most recent attempt at unpacking the complexity of the relationship between class and gender can be found in Bruley's *The Women of 1926*. This book examines the occupational, public and private world of men and women in mining communities. The dispute is 'studied in the context of families, neighbourhoods and communities, without privileging the organized labour movement and its internal politics.'⁷² The most impressive section of the book relates to the way the author highlights the role played by popular culture in both reinforcing and undermining community and gender norms. Yet for all their strengths the many texts on women in mining communities never convincingly resolve the tension between class and gender identities. As many historians of women in mining communities have noted, female voices and motivations are difficult to locate in the documents left by trade unions in the Victorian coal industry. Nonetheless, the selection of newspaper extracts and government records included in this volume show that women were involved in attacks on property, strike-breakers and community transgressors.

The influence of the 'new social history' on research on mining communities, trade-union activism and labour politics has opened up new avenues of enquiry that have enriched the literature on social relations and identities in the coalfields. The notion of masculinity and how it impacted on relations underground and in the wider aspects of society has much to reveal concerning mining life. In a major contribution to the historiography McIvor and Johnston have developed this approach and use the body as the point of departure. Masculinity is at the forefront of their analysis of miners' behaviour and the impact that such arduous work had

on their physical wellbeing.⁷³ They explore connections between miners' physicality, perceptions of masculinity, the labour process and trade union policy. Such a culture created a collective identity, but sometimes undermined efforts to enforce safety and was ultimately self-defeating. The physicality of coal mining created an individualistic and competitive strain within miners' identity that led to tensions within and beyond the workplace. The symbolism of the 'archetypal hard man' is a familiar type depicted by miners' as they tell their stories to the authors. Such imagery is explicit in some of the documents selected for this volume. Throughout the nineteenth century miners reaffirmed their masculinity through particular cultural pursuits and violence during periods of industrial conflict.

Research on gender, the body and sexuality presents a new direction for mining history. In the late twentieth century women still remained a significant presence in the industry as canteen workers, secretaries in union offices and contestants in annual 'coal queen' contests. This aspect of the coal industry and how it shaped gender identities and perceptions of sex and sexuality is in need of further research.⁷⁴ Moreover, the extent to which the masculinity of mining trade unionism rendered it more/less effective is a question that could be fruitfully pursued by future historians.

Towards a New History of Coal Mining Trade Unionism

The historiography of coal-mining trade unionism has now firmly moved beyond the narrow confines of leaders, organizations and national perspectives. The comparative method is now applied as a matter of course to local, national and international explorations of coal miners. Historians who contributed to Berger, Croll and LaPorte's *Toward a Comparative History of Coalfield Societies* represent a generation of coal mining scholars who are seeking to continue to challenge the assumptions in the more celebrated literature and to suggest new directions for research.⁷⁵ Yet amongst the debris of historiographical disputes old problems and questions relating to occupation, class and politics remain. Class-consciousness, institution building and industrial militancy are themes that might have been pushed to the margins in recent years, but they should not be completely ignored. The numerous autobiographies, biographies and oral testimonies of miners and their families have illustrated the importance of class identity and the trade unionism that underpinned it. To many miners union organization was seen as a vehicle for social progress, education, welfare and political transformation. Such institutions were placed under immense pressure in the Victorian period, but survived into the twentieth century, symbolizing the resilience of a collective identity that had been forged in coal mining.

This volume engages with the historiography of mining trade unionism that in recent years has been the subject of critique, revision and reappraisal.

There is recognition of the strengths and weaknesses of 'traditional institutional labour history' and the literature influenced by the 'new social history' and 'post-modernism'. Institutional labour history in its crudest form tended to exclude particular voices – the non-militant miner, the miner's wife and children and the non-unionist. Yet the sources selected for discussion suggest that the history of the British coal industry cannot be fully understood without due reference to institutions and their place in creating, sustaining and promoting the collective voice of the miner. The 'new social history' has broadened the focus providing detailed analysis of the mining milieu beyond the mine. Since the 1970s this dimension of mining history has provided a more nuanced reading of coal communities and their place in wider British society. The impact of 'postmodernism' has also made incursions into the labour history much to the chagrin of writers who remained committed to the Marxist framework for making sense of collective action and industrial politics. The discussion of a wide range of primary sources that follows explores the economic, political and social context in which the documents were produced and is informed by a range of methodological and theoretical approaches to coal-mining history.

The volume includes a substantial selection of primary sources that can be read as a narrative and analytical history of the trade unionism in the Victorian coal industry. The text is both chronological and thematic reconstructing the early nineteenth century struggles for trade-union organization and recognition. There are sources drawn from the records of local, district and national miners' organizations along with material from newspapers, trade publications, government records, coal companies and political parties. The first section (pp. 1–78) examines coal owner attitudes to trade unionism, industrial relations and state intervention. The second section (pp. 79–182) provides examples of trade union organization building at both the local and national level culminating in the creation of a national miners' union in the 1880s. The third section (pp. 183–262) focuses on policy developments in the MFGB that exposed the fragility of the organization and on the political factionalism that was a feature of its internal culture. The fourth section (pp. 263–384) includes a number of sources linked to the periodic bouts of industrial action that impacted on miners across the period such as the 1844 strike and subsequent conflicts in 1893, 1910 and 1912. The fifth section (pp. 385–448) charts the link between mining trade unionism and political organization and representation. The documents show that the relationship between miners and Liberalism was slow to dissolve but after the miners' affiliation to the Labour Party their political power became more significant. The sixth section (pp. 449–88) concentrates on the individual experience of the coal industry and trade union activism through biography, autobiography and obituary.

The sources selected for this volume reflect both the traditional and more current trends in institutional labour history. There are documents drawn from

the early years of local, district and national organizations. These are complemented by both sympathetic and critical press coverage of union growth and influence in the industry illustrating the political and social barriers that trade union pioneers had to overcome to create and consolidate an organizational presence in their mines and coalfields. The material from the MFGB exposes the factionalism in the organization and its initial caution in advocating support for the Labour Party. Reading the documents challenges particular aspects of the more traditional institutional focus that has emphasized solidarity and radicalism. Nonetheless, the extent to which miners at particular times eschewed a particular political class and political identity can be exaggerated. Miners were responsible for major industrial conflicts throughout the Victorian period and beyond, articulating a radicalism that found its place in a variety of socialist and progressive organizations. Such radicalism was often generated by personal experiences of coal owner brutality and the poverty engendered by economic depression and industrial conflict.

The documents can be interpreted in a number of ways, but ultimately they stand as a reminder of an occupation that was once crucial to the British economy. The culture and politics of the Victorian coal industry resonated beyond the mine and the working-class community and still leaves its mark on the landscape and the collective memory of the nation.

Notes

1. For a recent global history of coal and its economic, social and environmental impact see B. Freese, *Coal: A Human History* (London: Arrow, 2006).
2. R. Church, *The History of the British Coal Industry Volume 3 1830–1913: Victorian Pre-eminence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 2.
3. For the miners and electoral politics see R. Gregory, *The Miners in British Politics 1906–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968).
4. Church, *The History of the British Coal Industry*.
5. See Q. Outram, 'The Stupidest Men in England? The Industrial Relations Strategy of the Coalowners between the Lockouts, 1923–1924', *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations*, 4 (1997) pp. 65–95 and his 'Class Warriors: the Coalowners', in J. McLroy, A. Campbell and K. Gildart (eds), *Industrial Politics and the 1926 Mining Lockout* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2004), pp. 107–35.
6. For two general histories of the coal industry in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries see M. W. Kirby, *The British Coalmining Industry 1870–1946: A Political and Economic History* (London: Macmillan, 1977) and D. Powell, *The Power Game: The Struggle for Coal* (London: Duckworth, 1993).
7. The standard work remains the multi-volume history by R. Page Arnot, *The Miners: A History of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain 1889–1910* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1949); *The Miners: Years of Struggle: A History of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (from 1910 onwards)* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1953); *The Miners: In Crisis and War* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1961) and *The Miners: One Union One Industry: A History of the National Union of Mineworkers 1939–46* (London: Allen and

- Unwin, 1979). Taylor has recently extended Arnot's chronology by taking the narrative to the decline of the industry in the 1990s in *The NUM and British Politics Volume 1: 1944–1968* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003) and *The NUM and British Politics Volume 2: 1969–1995* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).
8. This is generally the case in Arnot's work. As a member of the Communist Party he had a political agenda that led to the prioritization of some coalfields over others in his institutional histories. For examples see R. Page Arnot, *A History of the Scottish Miners* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1955) and *South Wales Miners: A History of the South Wales Miners' Federation 1898–1914* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1967).
 9. For example see C. Baylies, *The History of the Yorkshire Miners 1881–1918* (London: Routledge, 1993) and K. Gildart, *North Wales Miners: A Fragile Unity 1945–1996* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001).
 10. For the limitations of the institutional approach with reference to the South Wales coalfield see C. Williams, 'The South Wales Miners' Federation', *Llafur: Journal of Welsh Labour History*, 5:3 (1990), pp. 45–56.
 11. See also N. Edwards, *The History of the South Wales Miners' Federation* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1938).
 12. For example see F. Machin, *The Yorkshire Miners* (Barnsley: National Union of Mine-workers, 1958).
 13. J. E. Williams, *The Derbyshire Miners: A Study in Industrial and Social History* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1962); A. R. Griffin, *The Miners of Nottinghamshire 1914–1944* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1962); W. R. Garside, *The Durham Miners 1919–1960* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1971) and R. Challinor, *The Lancashire and Cheshire Miners* (Newcastle: Frank Graham, 1972). See also, A. Taylor, *The Politics of the Yorkshire Miners* (London: Croom Helm, 1984).
 14. Two notable texts in developing new frameworks for labour history were E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963) and E. Hobsbawm, *Labouring Men: Studies in the History of Labour* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964).
 15. H. Francis and D. Smith, *The Fed: A History of the South Wales Miners in the Twentieth Century* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1980).
 16. V. Allen, *The Militancy of British Miners* (ShIPLEY: The Moor Press, 1981). This book is largely focused on the post-1947 history of the miners but also contains some interesting observations on the Victorian period.
 17. R. Harrison (ed.), *Independent Collier: The Coal Miners as Archetypal Proletarian Reconsidered* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1978).
 18. C. Griffin, *The Leicestershire Miners 1840–1988*, 3 vols (Leicester: National Union of Mineworkers, 1989) and D. Howell, *The Politics of NUM: A Lancashire View* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989).
 19. See H. Beynon and T. Austrin, *Masters and Servants: Class and Patronage in the Making of a Labour Organisation* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1994). Also, A. Campbell, *The Scottish Miners, 1874–1939*, 2 vols (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000) and Gildart, *North Wales Miners*.
 20. W. Hallam, *Miners' Leaders. Thirty Portraits and Biographical Sketches* (London: Bemrose and Sons, 1894).
 21. J. Wilson, *Memories of a Labour Leader* (Sussex: Caliban, 1980); R. Smillie, *My Life for Labour* (London: Mills and Boon, 1924); T. Burt, *Thomas Burt MP: An Autobiography*

- with supplementary chapters by Aaron Watson (London: Fisher Unwin, 1924); F. Hodges, *My Adventures as a Labour Leader* (London: George Newnes, 1925).
22. Novels with a mining theme that were published in the 1930s also drew on autobiographical experiences. See L. Jones, *Cwmardy: The Story of a Welsh Mining Valley* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1937) and *We Live: The Story of a Welsh Mining Valley* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1939).
 23. J. Lawson, *A Man's Life* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1932).
 24. B.L. Coombes, *These Poor Hands: The Autobiography of a Miner Working in South Wales* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1939). For a critical reading of Coombes' life and work see B. Jones and C. Williams, *B. L. Coombes* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999).
 25. See T. H. Jones, *Fingers In The Sky: A Miner's Life Story* (Wembley: Clements and Newling, 1949) especially ch. 6.
 26. For example see W. J. Edwards, *From the Valley I Came* (London: Angus and Robertson, 1956).
 27. For an autobiography from a less celebrated coalfield see L. Hare, *Warwickshire Miner: The Memoirs of Len Hare* (Warwick: Warwickshire County Council, 1988).
 28. Both Horner and Moffat were influential members of the Communist Party. See A. Horner, *Incorrigible Rebel* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1960) and A. Moffat, *My Life with the Miners* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1965). For a less radical perspective see J. Griffiths, *Pages from Memory* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1969).
 29. H. Brown, *Most Splendid of Men: Life in a Mining Community 1917–25* (Poole: Blandford Press, 1981).
 30. See J. Gormley, *Battered Cherub* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1982) and R. Ottey, *The Strike: An Insider's Story* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1985).
 31. J. Lawson, *Peter Lee* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1936) and *The Man in the Cap: The Life of Herbert Smith* (London: Methuen and Co., 1941). Also see E. W. Evans, *Mabon (William Abraham 1842–1922): A Study in Trade Union Leadership* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1959).
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THE COAL OWNERS AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

During the nineteenth century the British coal industry underwent a process of dramatic change. For many years coal had been collected close to the surface and this was followed by the development of drift mines and bell pits. The industrial revolution that began in the middle of the seventeenth century was to be the catalyst for a major expansion in coal mining. The number of mines increased rapidly, new methods of extraction were developed and coal dominated the economies of particular regions. The industry formed the core of Britain's economy, and successive governments were aware of the impact that disruption in the industry could have on economic performance, industrial relations and social cohesion. The coal owners were linked to political parties, business organizations, religious denominations and the legal structures of England, Wales and Scotland. Within all these forums they pressed the claims of the industry and developed a variety of strategies in order to deal with the growth of trade unionism, calls for state intervention and the radical plans for the industry put forward by emerging socialist organizations.

Industrial relations across the coalfields were shaped by structural factors, but also by the attitudes of individual owners, who ranged from local paternalists to more brutal coal capitalists. The size of mines, the nature of seams and the character of local miners could also impact on the industrial relations culture of particular coalfields. Owners were keen to preserve district and local peculiarities, but also to develop a system of industrial relations that would encompass large swathes of the coal industry. The competing interests of the local and the national industry would impede these moves in particular years, but by the early twentieth century the coal owners were significantly combined in a national organization, the Mining Association of Great Britain (MAGB) representing a powerful pressure group that had the ear of both local and national politicians. The relationship between miners, managers and owners was crucial to this process of owner combination. Adversarial industrial relations could seriously impact on production, community stability and relationships above and below ground. The coal owners reacted to these problems through the application of particular strategies that

were both adversarial and consensual. The more conservative owners sought to deter trade union activity in their mines through victimization, lock-outs and local/national legal sanctions. Their more enlightened counterparts worked to develop a more consensual relationship with their employees in both their mines and local communities.¹ The documents below cover a range of events, approaches and institutional developments that characterized coal owner attitudes to trade unionism and industrial relations between 1844 and 1912.

The extracts from both union and owner newspapers, the *Miners Advocate* and the *Colliery Guardian* reveal the ways in which the printed word became more crucial in promoting and defending the claims of labour and capital. The coal owners were in the ascendancy in this respect as many national and local publications were generally sympathetic to the claims of capital. Unions could sometimes rely on Liberal-leaning newspapers to highlight their plight but received little sympathy from the Conservative press. Coal owners used printed propaganda and warnings throughout the nineteenth century to deter union membership and the use of collective action to challenge the authority of the employers. The notices produced by colliery companies show that the owners would often use threats of dismissal to engender obedience in the workplace and the wider community. The conciliation and arbitration documents are indicative of the way in which the settlement of disputes took on a much more formal character in the mid-nineteenth century. The examples of important legal challenges concerning the union at the colliery level reveal tensions within miners' organizations and the continued coal-owner recourse to the victimization of activists. The material on the 1912 strike illustrates coal owners' attitudes to the challenge of industrial militancy and the miners' union's policy on the public ownership of the industry.

The 'Coal Owners Versus Pitmen' article from the *Miners' Advocate* provides an insight into a lengthy dispute in the Northumberland and Durham coalfields in 1844 that led to much distress and miners being evicted from their homes.² The fact that many miners lived in tied cottages meant that the power of the owner was almost all-encompassing. The *Miners Advocate* was a radical newspaper that provided miners with accounts of union activity giving them a collective voice in print. The paper was also a forum for the wider culture of radicalism that had been engendered by the growth of Chartism and associated reform movements. The extract shows how the relationship between 'masters' and 'men' had broken down over the terms of employment and the recognition of the miners' trade union. Attempts at arbitration had failed and the subsequent strike was already in its third month. The document highlights the often local nature of disputes in coal mining and how they could spread quickly across whole districts. Further, it sheds light on the complicated payment structure that applied to each mine. The multiplicity of different grades of pay made the task of union organizers especially difficult. Unsurprisingly, within the article there is sympathy with the plight of

the miners and a call for a negotiated settlement. The newspaper was a consistent proponent of developing a more enlightened attitude amongst coal owners with regards to their often draconian treatment of miners and their families.

The 'Caution to Pitmen' document (p. 17) also relates to the 1844 dispute in the north-eastern coalfields.³ The notice illustrates the power that the coal owners had at their disposal in minimizing the threat of trade unionism and strikes through recourse to the legal and economic power that they could wield beyond the mine. It is explicit in threatening miners with legal sanction if they participated in strike action or used their collective strength to encourage fellow workers to follow a particular course of action that could be prejudicial to the economic interests of the owners. Yet the threats implicit in the document could also generate a more sustained level of trade union organization and consciousness. In this respect, owners themselves were divided over the utility of seeking to antagonize miners into taking strike action. The 1844 strike ended in defeat for the miners but left a legacy of bitterness that would fuel later union campaigns against the perceived callousness of the coal owners. Disputes such as the 1844 strike laid the foundation for calls for greater union organization on behalf of miners' leaders. Similarly, coal owners would be split in terms of advocating recognition of unions, seeking arbitration, or taking a firmer line in developing strategies to dilute the effectiveness of collective action.

Coal owners were not only concerned with the growth of unionization and collective action, but were also seeking to increase supervision of the labour process underground. The coal industry was fairly unique in terms of the autonomy it bestowed on workers. This was linked to the nature of underground work, with miners working in small groups in dangerous conditions making constant supervision difficult. Nonetheless, the reach of the coal owner in some mining villages was extensive. Local owners would often dominate their districts through intimidation, political patronage, religious affiliation and deference. As can be seen in the 'Notice' produced by the South Hetton Colliery Company in July 1852, some owners in the north-east intervened in the policing of particular forms of working-class culture. This formed part of the general trend in the early Victorian period that led to moves to suppress the popular culture of the masses. At South Hetton and Murton collieries, miners caught gambling on the Sabbath would be subject to dismissal. This form of intervention by coal owners often led to miners attempting to preserve long-held customs and social norms. Some district trade unions responded to such interventions by demanding more days free for leisure, rest and recuperation. The letter from the Nottinghamshire Miners' Association in 1900 is indicative of the union's aim to protect local custom against owners' attempts to maximize production and profitability.⁴ In this case the union is claiming a day off on 'Bank Holiday Monday'. The union push for greater holiday entitlement was linked to the increasing ability of miners to

make trips to the developing seaside resorts and to take advantage of the more commercialized popular culture of late Victorian Britain. Coal owners continued to face difficulties in eradicating particular customs both in the workplace and the wider mining community. Some responded by recognizing and participating in local events and sports (some owners establishing football and cricket teams), while others would seek to undermine or redirect them to suit the economic aims of the industry.

As the nineteenth century progressed, some coal owners developed an enlightened attitude to the possible utility of combination and arbitration. In England, Wales and Scotland coal owners within particular districts developed local associations in order to regulate the economics of the industry and share information on technological developments. Some of these were sophisticated organizations including representatives from a multiplicity of large and small coal companies that would meet regularly to develop uniform policies on rules, regulations and wages. Smaller coalfields also had their own associations but many retained their local particularities, which created the suspicion amongst some of the bigger players in the industry that some owners were overly concerned with their own economic self-interest.⁵ The MAGB was established in 1854 giving the owners a national collective voice and a greater influence in acting as a political and economic pressure group. Some owners felt compelled to combine in order to challenge the growing strength of trade unionism in their districts and others often only contributed to the business of their association in order to minimize the effectiveness of employee combination at their collieries. The Yorkshire Coal Owners Association was formed in 1890 in response to the developing influence of the Yorkshire Miners' Association in both workplace negotiations and local politics. Nonetheless, a small number of owners were reluctant to become members of collective organizations and felt their economic and industrial interests were best served outside of such formal structures. The Coal Owners Association of Monmouth and South Wales did not include many of the smaller mining companies until after 1900.⁶

The development of arbitration in the industry can be found in the joint committees and boards that had been a feature of some districts since the 1860s. The 'Rules of the Durham Coal Owners' Association Joint Committee' from 1872 are indicative of the structure of boards set up to minimize conflict between coal owners and trade unions. The rules state that a committee would have the power to arbitrate in particular disputes involving companies that are members of the organization. In the case of Durham, the Joint Committee contained representatives from the owners and the trade unions. The document shows that the trend amongst coal owners was towards formal arbitration to minimize the threat of strikes and recognition that a particular type of trade unionism could be beneficial to the economic success of individual companies in particular and the

industry more generally. Nonetheless, the joint committees were built on fragile foundations and in particular periods of economic uncertainty and industrial tensions local and district unions would periodically withdraw or refuse to take disputes into the arbitration process.

The benefits of negotiation and arbitration were promoted more widely in the industry newspaper *Colliery Guardian*. Yet although the editorial produced below (pp. 25–6) is in favour of arbitration, it is nonetheless opposed to any intervention from the state in the affairs of such boards. This anti-state current amongst the coal owners would seriously hinder government attempts to re-organize and reform the coal industry in the first decades of the twentieth century. The parochialism and intransigence of some coal owners would lead to consternation amongst politicians who were aware that disputes in the industry could seriously undermine Britain's economic performance and give impetus to radical currents within the working classes. Nonetheless, by the 1890s conciliation boards and their arbitration machinery were dominant features of industrial relations across the coalfields. Yet the development of such boards remained fragmentary and their influence and scope differed between particular districts.⁷ The work of conciliation boards can be adduced through the 'Proceedings of the Durham Board of Conciliation'. The document is indicative of the discussion and negotiations that followed the passing of Government legislation relating to the industry and how this would be applied at particular collieries.

The coal owners were not only concerned with creating a more settled system of industrial relations and resistance to the more radical trade union practices, but also aimed to maximize production through keeping miners to a much more formal pattern of attendance and underground supervision.⁸ This developed alongside new management techniques of organizing workers and the more prominent role of deputies in controlling particular districts of collieries. The 'Notice' from Bettisfield Colliery Company in the small North Wales coalfield threatened miners with disciplinary action for leaving the workplace without the permission of the manager. Across the British coalfields particular districts had their own customs in terms of finishing work early for a particular cultural/sporting event or individual/community celebration. At some mines, workers would leave their place of work once they had produced the desired amount of coal or made enough money for what was needed to support their family or spending habits for a particular period. The 'Notice' can read as both an attempt by particular owners to maximize production and profitability and a move to increase supervision of the labour process. The tension between the push for production and the ability of miners to retain some control over their labour power remained a feature of the industrial relations culture of particular collieries into the twentieth century.

Unsurprisingly, the industry newspaper *Colliery Guardian* was sympathetic towards the coal owner in having to deal with particular aspects of trade unionism. The piece claims that some trade unionists were 'tyrannical' and were not averse to using intimidation to enforce their will. As local and district unions started to emerge they realized that their strength and effectiveness came through mass membership. A number of strategies were adopted in order to increase membership including peer pressure, community pressure and ultimately the use of the strike weapon. The extract refers to a case in the Durham coalfield in which union miners refused to share the same workplace as non-unionists. This tension between union members and those who were reluctant to join such bodies would continue to be a feature of the mining industry. In many districts, this situation would impact on the union's ability to secure collective bargaining rights. Some miners refused to join the union through employer intimidation, others on a point of principle, while a larger group often drifted in and out of membership because of economic distress or apathy. The problem of non-unionism was not fully eradicated from the mines until the nationalization of the industry in 1947.

The owners not only developed rules to deal with workers' combination in the workplace and the community but also initiated legal challenges to weaken district unions. The 'Denaby and Cadeby Main Collieries vs The Yorkshire Miners' case of 1905 (pp. 37–43) is illustrative of a feature of workplace relations that was of concern to both coal owners and district union officials.⁹ Many disputes in the industry erupted at the level of individual mines. Some mines had a reputation for militancy, while others could go for long periods without any serious disruption. Once district unions had been established and conciliation procedures were in place, district union officials worked to minimize strikes and the threat of legal action being taken against them. In the Denaby and Cadeby Main document the Yorkshire Miners' Association make reference to an episode of industrial action that was in breach of contract and that they should not be held responsible for the unofficial action of one its branches. Some members of district miners' unions were critical of officialdom and felt that the rigidity of conciliation procedures was a barrier to more effective collective action. This strand of mining trade unionism was to remain a problem for both coal owners and miners' officials throughout the Victorian period and beyond. Critics of arbitration and negotiation would appear in the more radical miners' movements associated with socialist, communist and syndicalist organizations in the disputes of 1910–11, 1921 and 1926.

Trade union pioneers in the coal industry had to face the threat of intimidation, violence and victimization on a regular basis. The document on the case involving Lewis Jenkins and Edward Hughes from 1897 (pp. 45–55) gives an insight into the way in which mine managers and owners would dismiss trade unionists for attempting to speak on behalf of miners. Jenkins was the manager

of Point of Ayr, a colliery in the North Wales coalfield that had a reputation for being anti-union. He dismissed Hughes, who was a checkweigher at the mine and an official of the North Wales Miners' Association for addressing a meeting of the men on company premises.¹⁰ The document indicates that only around half of the miners employed were trade union members and Hughes was dismissed for leaving his post to address his fellow workers. The legal decision found in favour of Hughes, but the mine retained its reputation for working against union membership and recognition into the twentieth century.¹¹ As a checkweigher, Hughes followed the route of a generation of union leaders into officialdom. The checkweigher was elected by the men and was employed as a workmen's representative to ensure correct payment for coal extracted. The role of the checkweigher was enshrined in the Coal Mines Regulation Act of 1870, but owners continued to try to subvert the legislation by dismissing checkweighers who were often also trade union officials. In North Wales, as in other districts, the miners union used their own publications to inform their members of the legal protection bestowed on such positions. In the edition of the *North Wales Miners Magazine* from 1903 the authors outline the duties and benefits of the checkweigher. The interesting thing to note in the article is that it claims that many miners showed ambivalence or hostility to the appointment of checkweighers. This was a particular feature of the more paternalist coal companies whose deferential miners responded with caution or outright aversion to trade union pressure. The deferential attitudes that underpinned relationships between some mine owners and their employees proved difficult to supplant even in a period of company amalgamation and growing trade union pressure in the 1890s.

In order to deal with the challenge of mining trade unionism some coal owners pressed for greater support for membership of owner associations. Yet, according to Kirby, the MAGB 'was little more than a mouthpiece for the expression of a collective view ... and was not empowered to interfere in the industry's commercial organisation.'¹² The letter from the 'Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, and Leicestershire Colliery Owners' Association' reveals that to some owners the frequency and effectiveness of strikes could only be resisted by a strong collective response. William Saunders, the secretary of the association notes that owners 'are being attacked at their collieries' and invites them to join the Midland Colliery Owners' Association. The development and influence of the MAGB can also be seen in the document from the Coal Owners Federation on the 'Conference on Miners' Wages'. The conference was held in 1898 to discuss the course of action to be taken in response to the Miners' Federation rejecting a deal on wages. The degree of centralization that was taking place in the 1890s in both coal owners' and miners' organizations can be gauged through the list of representatives from both sides drawn from across the British coal-

fields. The document is illustrative of the way in which the 'wages question' in the coal industry was becoming increasingly national.

Towards the end of the Victorian period the industrial relations culture of the coal industry became much more adversarial. The lockout of 1893 had erupted in response to the owners reducing wages and was the biggest industrial dispute in Britain to date involving over 300,000 miners. The conflict lasted sixteen weeks and led to the creation of a conciliation board covering many districts.¹³ Yet the outcome did not prevent a further national conflict in 1912. The 1912 Minimum Wage Strike was even bigger and more dramatic seeking to establish a uniform minimum wage for all miners.¹⁴ The documents on the 1912 strike express a hardening attitude from the coal owners on the role of trade unionism in the industry and their aversion to state intervention in the settlement of disputes. This mentality developed in an environment of intense industrial militancy that also unleashed more radical forces within mining trade unionism. The editorial on 'The Workman and the Manager' from the *Colliery Guardian* bemoans the fact that mining trade union officials often 'manufactured and magnified grievances'. The reference to a piece published in the *Quarry* in 1898 paints a mythic picture of an idyllic period where animosities and disputes were settled as being merely differences between family members. A similar attitude is expressed in 'The Selfishness of the Miner'. The editorial joins the chorus of press disapproval of the miners and their use of the strike weapon to disrupt production and 'wielding enormous political power'. The piece contrasts the heroic characterization of the miner as an individual industrial worker with the behaviour of mining trade union activists and socialists in the 1912 dispute. This would not be the last time that the coal-owners and their political allies would sing the praises of particular aspects of coal mining culture, while simultaneously seeking to undermine the role played by socialists and communists in the industrial conflicts of 1921, 1926 and 1984–5.

The 'Letter from the Monmouth and South Wales Coal Owners Association' raises the spectre of destructive Syndicalist forces seeking to undermine what to some was the pragmatic trade unionism of the more moderate districts of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB). Here we have an attempt to undermine miners' solidarity through claims that the more radical wing of mining trade unionism was somehow seeking to destroy the consensual relationships between owners and local unions that had been constructed in some districts. The owners make particular reference to a syndicalist current in the South Wales Miners' Federation that was using the language of class struggle to divert the union towards a more adversarial position. Syndicalists and socialists in South Wales provided a concise account of their position in the *Miners' Next Step* published in 1912 (see pp. 245–62). The coal owners were faced with a more confident miners' union in this period that was seeking to press its claims on wages and conditions of work.

Moreover, MFGB policy on the public control of the industry was posing a threat to the very existence of private ownership of mines. The extract from the *Colliery Guardian* in 1912 (pp. 77–8) is illustrative of the way the owners presented anti-nationalization arguments to those associated with the industry and to politicians who campaigned on their behalf. Yet the piece also points to the variety of positions held within the MFGB ranging from the socialistic, the syndicalist and the pragmatic on what form state ownership should take.

The documents on the owners provide an insight into the ambitions of coal capitalists in attempting to deal with the problems of adversarial industrial relations in an industry that was undergoing rapid change in the Victorian period. By 1912 the owners had established their own district organizations and a national body, yet in response, the miners themselves had realized the utility of combination. The major challenge confronting the owners was the growing power of a more strident and less deferential trade unionism that had been established in particular districts. The strikes and skirmishes covered in the documents shaped the attitudes of coal owners, mine managers and trade union leaders into the twentieth century.

Notes

1. For overview of ownership and management methods see Church, *The History of the British Coal Industry*, ch. 5.
2. For the local owners in this period see Beynon and Austrin, *Masters and Servants*, pp. 15–28.
3. For a brief synopsis of the dispute and the role of the Miners' Association of Great Britain see Arnot, *The Miners*, pp. 42–3.
4. For a wider discussion of this aspect of miners' culture see D. A. Reid, 'The Decline of Saint Monday 1776–1876', *Past and Present*, 71:7 (1976), pp. 76–101.
5. For example see A. R. Griffin and C. P. Griffin, 'The Role of Coal Owners' Associations in the East Midlands in the Nineteenth Century', *Culture, Theory and Critique*, 17:1 (1973), pp. 95–121.
6. I. G. Sharp, *Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration in Great Britain* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1950), p. 17.
7. For a survey of the boards in each coalfield see Sharp, *Industrial Conciliation*, pp. 18–20.
8. For a detailed of how this impacted on miners in the north east see Colls, *The Pitmen of the Northern Coalfield*, ch. 3.
9. For more detail on the context of this case see J. Benson and R. G. Neville (eds), *Studies in the Yorkshire Coal Industry* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976).
10. For Hughes's career see E. Griffiths, 'Edward Hughes: the Making of a Miners' Agent', *Denbighshire Historical Transactions*, 49 (2000), pp. 128–50.
11. See K. Gildart, 'Militancy, moderation, and the struggle against company unionism in the North Wales Coalfield 1926–44', *Welsh History Review*, 20:3 (2001), pp. 532–64.
12. Kirby, *The British Coalmining Industry*, p. 11.
13. For summary of lockout see H. A. Clegg, A. Fox and A. F. Thompson, *A History of British Trade Unions Since 1889* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), pp. 106–11.
14. For narrative of strike see Arnot, *The Miners Years of Struggle*, pp. 90–122.



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‘Coal Owners versus Pit Men’, *Miner’s Advocate* (1844)

‘Coal Owners versus Pit Men’, *Miner’s Advocate* (1844). Northumberland Record Office, 602/25/21.

COAL OWNERS *VERSUS* PITMEN!

From the ‘Miners’ Advocate’¹

The Pitmen of Northumberland and Durham have been off work somewhere verging on three months, and to all appearance they will hold out for some weeks longer rather than go to work on the terms offered by the masters, and the masters are seemingly determined not to agree to the terms offered by the men, thus the parties are at the opposite extremes, and each or either party would be considered culpable for any amount of distress or privation to which many hundreds of other persons are subjected through the protracted nature of the strike, who do not move from the position first taken up so as to meet and make some approximation to an amicable adjustment of all differences.

From what I have learned from the published documents of the Pitmen, and from all other sources of information, they have always from the first nay, previous to the late engagement being ended, offered to meet the masters to discuss the points at issue so that the strike might not take place, and although such offer on their part was rejected, yet since the strike they have continually repeated the application for a friendly meeting between them and their masters, but all has failed. As a last resource they offer to submit the case to arbitration, the owners to choose one person and the workmen another to adjudicate on and settle at once this important matter, yet if appears this mode is objected to by a document bearing the signature of the ‘Coal Trade Committee,’ and published in the various new papers. Thus it would seem that all and every reasonable means have been resorted to by the workmen to persuade the masters to put an end to this unpleasant, disagreeable, and unfortunate dispute without effect.

I have read the published report alluded to above, and in answer to the alleged difficulties enumerated by the masters in respect in the arbitration. I beg to state that the masters’ bonds contain a clause that each colliers case can ‘ORDEAL.’ The

Owners' Committee go on to say 'that the men may work a whole fortnights and be in debt if they choose to do so,' thereby intimating that neglect on their part was the cause. This same chain of reasoning (if it deserves the name) would apply to the Owners of Thornley Colliery², or rather the viewers, for had they used proper discretion and a more humane policy, they would not have seen themselves involved in a chancery suit; but when the first six men were lawfully discharged from the commitment at Durham, the masters, through their Attorney, threatened to put all the men into Gaol, and it was then sheer necessity and as a protection this was done, and if the Owners did not intend to pursue a similar unfair course they had nothing to fear from chancery suits or any other.

With regard to the reasoning that no other labourer or miner are hired yearly, and, therefore, the Pitmen of Northumberland and Durham ought not to be so, is, to say the heat of it, a lame mode of reasoning, and that the parties adopting it would seem to have been at a loss for a better, for they thus place themselves in the position of the very parties who made the strike, by this attempt to break up a general custom involving the interests of many thousands of individuals and to whose superior condition over other miners, they exultingly call attention, and at the same time have come to a fixed determination to bring their workmen under the same servile condition and slavish dependence, and appeal with tears in their eyes that if the Pitmen will not submit to the same, the result must fall on their own heads. The Pitmen are prepared to abide by the results.

The Committee next take up and expend a considerable amount of reasoning on what Mr. Duncombe³ said relative to the desire of the men to be paid by weight instead of measure, and take advantage of a little error that honorable gentleman had fallen into by arguing that all were paid by measure, whereas be arbitrated upon as far as regards wages, and that cannot be any difficulty which has been regularly a condition in the bonds for a vast number of years. With regard to the necessity of appointing arbitration for each colliery it is nonsense, for with the exception of the wages part all the other conditions of the bond are alike, and always have been and are still wanted to be kept so both by the man and the masters, as witness the published conditions of each party's bonds, so that any disinterested person can look at the two extremes, and, as a matter of course, find the centre or settling point.

With respect to the cavil⁴ at Mr. Dumcombe's assertion, 'That it was not a question of wages,' any sane person could see at once that it was a mistake of the press; what Mr. Duncombe should have said, and what I am well assured he did say was, 'That it was not a question of wages alone, &c.' That mistakes can be made take the report of the masters as published in last week's *Observer*, wherein it is stated that the Pitmen were asking 58 per cent. on the average, whereas in their first report it is set down as 28 per cent. but the Pitmen do not take advantage of such mistake, knowing, as they do, that such errors are not intentional,

but the result of a little want of care, and are so common that not a newspaper report can be said to be free from them.

It is a question of wages, and has emanated and sprung from the previous and continued reductions of prices. In reference to the report published by the Pitmen, wherein they show that the reductions on the two previous years was more by $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. than the advance asked at the present time, so no doubt could be in the minds of the Owners, and I am sure none exists in the minds of the Pitmen but that it is a question of wages; and if they, the owners, would consent to give their late workmen *half the prices and privileges* they are giving to those they have *employed at present*, the strike would be at an end to-morrow. With regard to the amount of *finer* only averaging one halfpenny pay man, per day, that has been shown not only to be absurd in reason, but ridiculous in comparison, and cannot be better illustrated than by putting the question:— has the *community* any right to complain of the robberies perpetrated, when the amount upon an average would not give one halfpenny per thousand persons? 'Comparisons, it is said are odious,' but when the Owners state such ridiculous, absurd, and nonsensical statements, they cannot complain if comparisons are drawn to their discomfiture and defeat; but if it only average one halfpenny per man per day, that in itself amounts to no less a sum than £16,200 per annum, and from every man in the trade upwards of 10s per year, or one week's work; and when it is recollected as it should be, this sum falls upon a few, say one-third of the *Hewers*⁵, it cannot be denied but that £1 10s would be better in the pockets of the workmen than the Owners, for be it remembered, that fines are wages, and the proper way to look at it is, that when a hewer fills and sends to bank what he expects to be 6 cwt of coal, for which (if all is right) he will be paid three pence, yet if deficient, one-half hundred weight or less, at some collieries, he gets no pay, consequently he loses one hundred per cent, and surely that cannot be considered a trifle, when the masters are complaining about the advance asked being 28 per cent.

The owners reply 'that the new system of bonds⁶ has been forced upon them by the treatment they have received by their workmen adopting a systematic restriction of labour,' how that could by any possibility affect them it is difficult to determine, as at the end of one year (and when a further reduction had been entered into) large heaps of coals were at the various pits, which lasted, in some instances, between six and eight weeks, and when the statistical tables published in March last showed that there was at that period several hundred chaldrons of coals more at market than at the same period last year, and which was given with an emphasis necessary to induce the Pitmen *not to strike*, as the market was well supplied with coal, and also that the owners have themselves set the example of restriction by the system of the vends long practised to their especial advantages, and to the disadvantage of the workmen. And as regards *chancery suits* there has only been one colliery that has had to undergo that there are only a certain

number of collieries that pay by measure and another part of them by weight, and what the Pitmen want is that all be paid by weight; the committee have made it appear that such is the case at present, whereas, nothing is further from the truth; and as regards the reluctance of the men to the introduction of the weight, why, they had good reason, when on the change being made the twenty peck corf when accurately weighed did not exceed 5 1/2 cwt, yet when weight was introduced, the workman had to send 6 cwt to bank⁷, and no advance of price for the additional; but that is not all, the hewers want to be paid for what coals they send to bank individually, and not (as has hitherto been the case) lumped together and paid by an average of the whole, whereby those who send overweight are made to suffer for those who send under-weight, and it was this condition of sale, and it is the only fair way, that Mr. Duncombe was desirous of calling, the attention of the House to, and the same is made plain by the bonds or conditions which the men have given in to their masters.

That the Coal Trade Committee should expect any person to believe that any workman in his senses would labour hard a whole fortnight and contrive by neglect or purposed inattention to not only have nothing to take but to be in *debt*, is an assumption that I should not like to have placed to my account; and at the same time make it appear that it is the interest of the workmen to steer clear of fines if possible, whether the same are equally for the benefit of the Owners I cannot say. With respect to the average amount of fines that has been referred to above, it speaks for itself, and need not to be further regarded.

The Committee lastly draw the attention of the Honourable Gentlemen to the system of paying wages, wherein he shows the unfairness of keeping one week's wages continually in hand; the committee reply that it makes no difference to them as the same amount of wages have to be paid, whether weekly or fortnightly, but they allege that it is impossible to get the account ready sooner than by having a week of running-on days. In reply it may be asked how our forefathers did when they had to make up the accounts with only two running on days? are we less expert than they? certainly not; and how the stewards of large factories make up their accounts and pay their workmen weekly, and the greatest number of them on by the piece, as well as the Miners? If, say the committee, the Honourable Member only saw an overman's bill he would be convinced that it would take a week's labour to draw it out and fill it up properly without error, certainly, if it had to be begun with at the end of a fortnight, but such bill can be and is regularly filled up as each day's work is performed, consequently the adding together of the several day's works is all that has to be done, and any school-boy could do that in six hours, and, in fact, it is done at present for if any workman apply to have any additional thing made to his work, notwithstanding he should apply on the Saturday night, or if need be on a Sunday morning, he is

invariably told that it cannot be got in as the bill is closed for the inspection of the viewer, and then there are six days to elapse before payment.

The committee conclude that having been subjected to a vexatious line of proceedings, for the future they are determined not to tolerate them. What those proceedings are they do not specify, but it may be stated that the workmen have been considerably annoyed by the attempts of the masters to withhold their earnings, and when those earnings were requested to be paid, though the application was ever so humble, it was in general treated with contempt and insult, and such treatment frequently led the workmen to adopt other proceedings which might be considered by the owners vexatious; and however determined they, 'the Owners,' may be to put an end to such things, the only and sure way to accomplish that object would be to give a fair remuneration to their workmen, and treat them with kindness as men.

VERITAS.

Newcastle, June 20th, 1844.



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Caution to Pitmen (May 1844)

Caution to Pitmen (May 1844). Northumberland Record Office, 602/23/17.

CAUTION TO PITMEN.

The Statute of the 6th Geo, 4th, c. 129. Section 3, enacts, that if any person shall, by violence to the person or property, or by threats or intimidation, or by molesting, or in any way obstructing another, force or endeavour to force any person hired or employed, to depart from his hiring, employment or work, or prevent or endeavour to prevent any person, not hired or employed, from hiring himself, or accepting work or employment. Or if any person shall, by the same means, force or induce another to belong to any club or association, or force or endeavour to force any person carrying on any trade or business, to make any alteration in his mode of regulating, managing, conducting, or carrying on such trade or business, or to limit the number or description of his workmen, or servants, every person so offending or aiding, abetting, or assisting therein, being convicted thereof, shall and may be imprisoned and kept to hard labour for any time not exceeding three calendar months.

And the statute 9th Geo. 4th, c. 31 Sec. 25, enacts, that if any person shall be charged with, and convicted of, any assault committed in pursuance of a conspiracy to raise the rate of wages, the court may sentence the offender to be imprisoned, with or without hard labour, in the common Gaol or House of Correction, for any term not exceeding 2 Years, and may also, if it shall so think fit, fine the offender, and require him to find sureties for keeping the peace.

May, 1844.



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South Hetton Colliery Notice on Gambling (15 July 1852)

South Hetton Colliery Notice on Gambling (15 July 1852). Northumberland Record Office, ZFO 152.

NOTICE.

Information having been given that several of the Workmen of South Hetton¹ and Murton Collieries² are guilty of playing at Cards, and other sorts of Gambling, on the Sabbath Days; they are hereby required to take Notice, that whoever is detected doing so, will be immediately discharged and further dealt with, according to Law; and the Police have orders to watch strictly, and give the names into the Colliery Office of those who may be found acting in such un-christianlike manner.

THOMAS E. FORSTER, Viewer.³

South Hetton Colliery Office, July 15th, 1852.