ACCOMMODATING THE MINERS

A comparative study of industrial relations and community involvement in some South Yorkshire coalmining townships 1855-1894

Two Volumes

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University of Warwick

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ABBREVIATIONS.

B.B.C.     Barnsley British Co-operative Society.
B.C.W.M.A. Barnsley Conservative Working Men's Association.
B.H.       Board of Health (used also, in footnotes, to refer to the records of the Urban District Councils that succeeded them).
B.P.B.S.   Barnsley Permanent Building Society.
M.F.G.B.   Miners' Federation of Great Britain.
M.N.A.     Miners' National Association.
M.N.U.     Miners' National Union.
M.S. and L. Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway.
N.M.A.     National Miners' Association.
P.M.A.     Practical Miners' Association.
P.P.       Parliamentary Papers.
P.R.O.     Public Records Office.
R.C.       Royal Commission.
R.D.C.     Rural District Council.
S.C.       Select Committee.
S.C.L.     Sheffield City Library.
S.Y.M.A.   South Yorkshire Miners' Association.
W.R.M.P.R.F. West Riding Miners' Permanent Relief Fund.
W.Y.M.A.   West Yorkshire Miners' Association.
Y.M.A.     Yorkshire Miners' Association.
Y.M.P.A.   Yorkshire Miners' Political Association.
Summary

This thesis is a social history of coalminers in an area which comprised the greater part of the developed South Yorkshire coalfield by the end of the period under study, 1855-1894. Mining did not become the dominant industry in this area until the 1850s and the influx of men and capital was superimposed on a network of communities, many economically and politically advanced.

Industrial relations were shaped by the ease with which the union and its institutionalisation of collective bargaining took root in these open, mobile communities, in the absence of a large residential coalowning class. This generalisation, however, masks some important contrasts. One or two powerful landed coal proprietors did exist and maintained effective paternalistic regimes which were not conducive to unionism. Other coalowners, mostly absentee, invoked the anger of their employees by attempting less enlightened forms of control or by their inability or unwillingness to conform to district norms in pay and other aspects of industrial practice.

Outside the pits, the miners in this district tended to enjoy a freedom from constraints, imposed elsewhere by a monolithic employer class. Political and institutional power in the more industrialised townships rested primarily in the hands of a Liberal industrial, professional and tradesman class which included few coalowners and had everything to gain by accommodating the miners, or at least their leaders. This accommodation became effective during the early 1870s and laid the foundation for a lasting Lib-Lab alliance in local and parliamentary politics.

Social relations in these communities were, however, complex and at times fragmentary. The concern of this study is as much with what caused divisions within the communities, as with what held their constituent groups together.
PART ONE

The Study Area
INTRODUCTION
Although administratively distinct from West Yorkshire and from Derbyshire, the Metropolitan County of South Yorkshire does share aspects of their recent economic development, beyond just that of the economic infrastructure. This becomes more obvious if we remove the Sheffield and Rotherham axis from the map. Nevertheless, a large central belt of the coalfield, with Barnsley as an off-centric node, can be isolated on behalf of its cohesive socio-political as well as economic experience in the mid and late Victorian years.

This sub-region, the areal unit for this thesis, is defined in Fig. 1. It is distinct primarily because it everywhere felt the impact of the colliery expansion of the third quarter of the nineteenth century on an already complex industrial infrastructure. Unlike its counterpart in West Yorkshire, and despite a marked slackening of momentum in the 1880s, the mining workforce in this area emerged as the most important component of the political and economic landscape.

There are now about 54,000 miners in South Yorkshire, slightly more than in 1893, the majority of whom live outside this central belt. In the period under study, however, the study area was the mining hub of Yorkshire. This thesis will examine the impact of a large-scale and often highly capitalised mining industry on a number of communities, many already industrialised, semi-urbanised or even urbanised (in the case of Barnsley). It will isolate the main social and political groupings which interacted within this changing economic environment. It will define the social tensions and examine how some had been resolved by 1894.

1 South Yorkshire facts + figures (South Yorkshire County Council, 1975), p. 22. The figure is for 1973.

2 There were 49,921 miners in Rotherham, Staincross, Sheffield and Lower Strafford and Tickhill police divisions in 1893 (roughly coinciding with the mining area of South Yorkshire). Registry of Deeds, Wakefield Riots MSS circular memoranda, 27th July, 1893.
Relations within the mining industry will be examined in detail, but so will the emergence of the miners into the mainstream of community life outside the mine. Having been an under-represented and neglected subgroup in South Yorkshire in the early 1850s, the miners slowly came to dominate community decision-making even if the decisions were not always made by themselves or their elected representatives. This process will be under study for insights it gives into how the controlling middle and landed classes were obliged to allow channels of participation and expression to open up to embrace many of the working class's own representatives, without putting that control too much at risk. The study will also reveal how the miners' own leadership at district and branch level responded to this liberalising process, in particular its tendency to conciliate in industrial matters and to seek acceptance into institutional roles in the community at large. The motives behind this activity may not imply a departure from a moral standpoint which held the well-being of the unionised miner uppermost. Its consequence was, however, to blunt the force of aspects of the rank and file's own moral arguments.

The period under study opened with the reassertion of authority systems which had at times been challenged in the preceding three decades. The operation of social controls, though, rarely needed to be stringent. It was a process of accommodation and adjustment in seeking the co-operation of the leaders of new and reorganised working class groups. The manufacturing, professional and tradesman classes - and even the active landed magistrates - sought some common ground with these leaders on the basis of shared mores: the dominant values of work and temperance. These efforts on behalf of the middle and landed classes were returned doubly in kind by the working class leadership. Only at the workplace (and particularly at the coalface) was overt conflict consistently found. Social relations in the collieries, therefore, will receive special emphasis for what evidence they throw up of the emergence of new norms and values and of the establishment of order in the pattern of industrial conflict. Variations in
community and workplace responses will be seen in terms of a multi-faceted behavioural 'model' towards which both working class and middle class leaders were working.

As John Saville has suggested, the establishment of a 'labourist' ideology¹ among the miners in the second half of the nineteenth century served to blunt enthusiasm for socialism in the last two or three decades before the First World War. Saville contends that 'the more successful the tradition in practice ... the more difficult it was for socialist ideology to penetrate'.² This was a characteristic of the Yorkshire coalfield as a whole and the study area in particular, although there were pockets of resistance to the leaders' political and industrial orthodoxy which will be examined in a wider context.

The approach will be horizontal, across the components of the social and political landscape, not vertical down the span of the 40 years. The stability of the period, and the continuity of many of the institutions within it, facilitates its treatment as a unit. Yet change will be identified in the context of each group or institution.

Part One begins with a survey of the economic structure of this sub-region and of the major changes that occurred over the period in this respect. Chapter Two traces the pre-1855 industrial and political background to the study area; the section continues with a more detailed analysis of the major economic trends, 1855-1894, especially in mining, and concludes with an overview of the institutional development of the miners' unions in those years.


Part Two concentrates specifically on the mining industry, so as to examine the internal conflicts and adjustments - both between men and their employers and between men and their leaders - and place them in their industrial context. Industrial relations in the South Yorkshire coalfield, it will be shown, were at times bitter and unyielding. Yet it was the overall inability and/or reluctance by most representatives of both sides of industry to sustain long, damaging confrontations - especially after 1870 - that prepared the wider community for the acceptance of miners into positions commanding influence and respectability.

In Part Three, the study turns to the institutions, individuals and groups in the wider community to find out to what extent miners in general, and their leaders in particular, participated and on what terms. It will also assess how the rest of the community orientated itself to accommodate them and what strains were imposed upon it in the process. The thesis will conclude with a study of the involvement of the miners and other groups in parliamentary politics, an involvement which, more than any other, forced the various groups in the community to examine and define their relations one with another.

Defining the geographical limits of the study was not a straightforward task. The study intended to concentrate on communities where coalminers were, or were to become, a dominant group. Yet it was important to include other occupational groups such as glass and iron workers, linen weavers and potters, in the study population. It was decided to include Barnsley but exclude Rotherham and Sheffield. This preserved the geographical integrity of the spatial unit, without including a large non-mining population. The decision to include township A and not township B on the northern, eastern or western borders was made on the criteria of the

1 See Fig. 1. The terms 'study area' and 'district' are, for most purposes, interchangeable throughout this thesis.
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Variable print quality
CONTAINS PULLOUTS
FIGURE 1
THE STUDY AREA AND ITS ENVIRONS

SCALE: 1" = 1 mile

PRINCIPAL VILLAGES IN STUDY AREA (AND OTHERS REFERRED TO IN THE THESIS)

- PRINCIPAL TOWNS WITH POPULATION BETWEEN 8000 AND 35000 IN 1841
- PRINCIPAL TOWNS WITH POPULATION OVER 35000 IN 1841
- LIMITS OF STUDY AREA
- APPROXIMATE LINE OF 600' CONTOUR
existence, at some time between 1855 and 1891, of a coalmine employing around 100 or more men and boys, or of a significantly large number of miners resident in the township, but working at pits elsewhere (Swinton, Mexborough and Bolton were included on the latter criterion). It was decided, however, to exclude mining townships north of Darton, Carlton, Monk Bretton, Ardsley, Darfield and Bolton. For a large part of the period, these parishes were non-industrialised and isolated from the social forces at work in and around Barnsley. When pits like Hemsworth Fitzwilliam, South Kirby and Monckton Main were sunk in those communities, their isolation proved to be a very potent factor in the shaping of industrial and community relations. Their story is a very different one from that of the bulk of the mining communities in this study, and owes far more to the twentieth century than to the nineteenth; and to a certain extent more to the experience of West Yorkshire than of South Yorkshire.

In Part Three, the discussion of the communities and their institutions will tend to take its examples from three townships chosen because they occupied widely spaced locations on several spectra of community characteristics: size, birth-places of inhabitants, occupational homogeneity, depth of the formal institutional infrastructure, geographical location, and history of economic development. It was originally intended to organise this thesis around a strict micro-comparative study of these three townships (Silkstone and Dodworth to the west of Barnsley, and Swinton - with Kilnhurst - to the south east). But for methodological reasons - principally the difficulty of isolating communities in this mobile and interdependent area - the scheme was abandoned in favour of a much looser, district-wide comparative analysis. For the sake of economy and in the hope of retaining some controls over the sum of interacting community forces, it was found to be valuable to give extra weight to gathering

1 The existence of miners resident in 1871 in all the parishes chosen was verified from the returns of the Registrar General's Census enumerators, P.R.O., R.G. 10.
empirical evidence from these three townships. They will also figure large in Part Two whenever a closer look is needed at, for example, the activities of local union leaders, the issues in particular strikes, or the nature, attitudes and reactions of the coalowners and pit management. It therefore seemed expedient also to give special attention to these communities in the study of economic background and pre-1855 developments, dealt with in Part One.

Finally it is necessary to say a few words about some recent research in subject areas close to that of this thesis. From F. Machin and from R. Neville we have institutional histories of union development in South and West Yorkshire, from the earliest attempts, up to 1926. As guides to the fluctuating fortunes of these institutions and to the unions' main points of contact with the outside world, they are very valuable. But although they vary considerably in scope and style, they both suffer from the seemingly unmitigated tendency of this type of work to equate the unions' histories with those of the miners in their districts, whether these miners were members or not.

James Evison, in a short B.A. dissertation and a later M.Phil. thesis, examines a wider range of social and economic variables and in particular, the mechanics of community growth

1 An exhaustive bibliography of material relating to the Yorkshire coal industry can be found in J. Benson and R.G. Neville (eds.), Studies in the Yorkshire Coal Industry (Manchester University Press, 1976), pp. 163-169.


in a belt of townships, running north to south, roughly between Hemsworth and Wombwell. Evison does not set out to examine, in detail, the interaction of social groups in these communities, and they emerge as subordinate to the institutions and to the built environment.

A recently published collection of essays on the Yorkshire coal industry has brought together seven short studies, ranging from one on the early economic development of the South Yorkshire coalfield to two accounts of life and conflict in Denaby Main, a particularly strike-prone colliery on the eastern flank of the study area of this thesis. John Benson has contributed an account of the West Riding Miners' Permanent Relief Fund to add to his earlier treatment of all forms of accident compensation for English miners. And in the same volume, J.T. Ward contributes one of his two published accounts of West Riding landowners' involvement in mining. His other article concentrates on the Earls Fitzwilliam and their South Yorkshire estates, which is also

1 J. Benson and R.G. Neville (eds.), op. cit.
2 G.G. Hopkinson, 'The development of the South Yorkshire and North Derbyshire coalfield, 1500-1775'.
3 J. MacFarlane, 'Denaby Main: a South Yorkshire mining village'; R.G. Neville, 'In the wake of Taff Vale: the Denaby and Cadeby miners' strike and conspiracy case, 1902-06'.
5 J.T. Ward, 'West Riding landowners and mining in the nineteenth century'.
the subject of a recent book by Graham Mee.¹ No study of the area's social, political or industrial history can afford to ignore this very powerful coal and landowning family. Last of all, an even more recent publication includes several short articles dealing with aspects of the social and economic history of South Yorkshire outside the boundaries of Sheffield.² James MacFarlane's contribution³ gives us more insights into the traumatic world of the Denaby colliers. There is a danger, however, that the reader of these studies of conflict at Denaby Main will assume that conditions were similar elsewhere in South Yorkshire.⁴ They were not. The behaviour of the coalowners, the nature of the community of Denaby Main, and the reaction of the workforce were distinctly atypical, and throw into stark relief the advantages enjoyed by miners in other South Yorkshire collieries and communities in the period under study. This thesis will draw out these distinctions in its attempt to meet the need for a comparative social history of the South Yorkshire coalfield in the second half of the nineteenth century.


³ S.Pollard and C.Holmes (eds.), Essays in the Economic and Social History of South Yorkshire (South Yorkshire County Council, 1976).

⁴ My experience of teaching and discussing local history in South Yorkshire confirms this.
CHAPTER ONE

The Structure of Population and Employment, 1855 - 1894
The structure of population

Before examining the broad distribution of occupational groups within the study area's population, it is important to consider the demographic growth of the townships over a period longer than that of this study. It will also be useful to relate this growth to the chronology of colliery development in or near each township. Comparison of population figures for the following years seems most significant in terms of the district as a whole: 1831, when coal-miners were not yet the largest occupational group and Earl Fitzwilliam's Elsecar collieries comprised the only mining unit in the district which employed anywhere near 100 workmen; 1851, when the mining industry was poised on the edge of railway-led expansion; 1871, when this phase of expansion had made its impact; and 1891, which reveals the full effect of the early 1870s coal boom (which, in demographic terms, reverberated into the 1880s).

From Table 1, it is clear that the townships which experienced the most spectacular relative population increase (i.e. those over 150% between 1851 and 1891) were, with the exception of Ecclesfield and Tankersley, those to the east of the outcrop of the thickest and most lucrative coal seam: the Barnsley bed. This is particularly true of townships like Denaby and Darfield which were wholly or predominantly rural before the first pit sinkings. It was to the Barnsley seam that most of the large pits of the 1860s and 1870s were sunk - pits which were employing between 250 and 500 men within a year or eighteen months of drawing their first coal. The pattern is complicated, however, by the existence of large employers of labour in other industries - notably glass, pottery, iron and linen weaving - both before and after 1851. This, and the fact that mining along the Barnsley seam outcrop, and near the outcrops of the Silkstone and other viable seams, 2


2 Fig. 2 and Fig. 3.
TEXT BOUND INTO
THE SPINE
FIGURE 2  THE PATTERN OF SETTLEMENT IN THE 1890s

SCALE: 1" TO 1 MILE

TOWNSHIP BOUNDARIES

BUILT-UP AREAS
FIGURE 3  RAILWAYS AND MAJOR COLLIERIES IN THE STUDY

AREA 1855-94

SCALE: 1" to 1 mile

- MAJOR COLLIERIES
- RAILWAYS
- OUTSIDE OF MAJOR COLN SEAM
- MAJOR WATERWAYS
- TOWNSHIP BOUNDARIES
was already established in some areas precludes a simple explanation of population growth and community development.

The three townships chosen for special attention, Silkstone, Dodworth and Swinton, illustrate three different growth rates that, broadly speaking, can be identified in the district as a whole. Starting from a similar base population in 1831 to the other two, Silkstone moved, faltering at first, to a figure about 60% higher in 1891. Dodworth's population grew more rapidly in the first twenty years, almost doubled in the period of big colliery sinkings, and then eased off to a population level rather more than 150% above that of 1831. Swinton not only experienced a higher growth rate in the early expansion years, but maintained a high rate to 1891 and beyond. Along with Silkstone, we can group Wentworth, Adwick, Cawthorne and Stainborough: parishes which, even at the height of the mining expansion, remained only semi-industrialised and still predominantly rural. With Swinton, we can include those townships with high, sustained growth rates from the 1850s onwards: i.e. Hoyland, Wombwell, Darfield, Mexborough and Rawmarsh. Dodworth reflects a median rate and pattern of growth experienced by the largest number of townships, particularly those nearest to the Barnsley seam outcrop. Denaby Main, Carlton and Bolton, as late developers, belong in a class of their own. One final point of significance is that, in 1851, all but seven of these townships had populations of over 1000, indicating an already advanced industrial base. Even in 1831, when mining was on a very small scale, all but nine townships topped the 1000 mark, suggesting that many were dependant on industries other than coal.

The structure of employment

Table 2 splits the district up for convenience's sake into groups of townships linked principally by virtue of spatial

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1 The ecclesiastical parish of Kilnhurst lay partly in the township of Rawmarsh. Unless otherwise stated, the whole of Kilnhurst is treated as part of Swinton, although in the case of population figures, the township boundaries are obviously preserved.
contiguity but to a certain extent also through some degree of economic homogeneity. For each group, the principal collieries are identified and data relevant to their impact on the local economy (i.e. age and size) appended. Other industries which contributed significantly to each group's economy are also listed. In South Yorkshire (as will be shown later) journeys to work were often long and the overall pattern contained a high degree of transversality. There is no suggestion, therefore, that all of any colliery's (or other unit of employment's) workforce was necessarily resident in the immediate neighbourhood. However, any important discrepancies in the pattern suggested in Table 2 will emerge in the text.

Group 1 (Barnsley, Darton, Carlton, Barugh and Monk Bretton)

This group lies mostly on or to the east of Barnsley bed outcrop and was one of the first parts of the district to be mined intensively with both horizontal 'adits' and vertical shafts. Some of the pits, notably those of the Day family (originally linen bleachers) of Monk Bretton, survived from the pre-railway era, but there were also important sinkings in the 1850s and 1860s, and Monk Bretton (which was to become the most important pit in this part of the district) Carlton Main and Wharncliffe Woodmoor in the 1870s. Pits sunk in Barnsley in the second half of the century were, like High Stile and Agnes usually small because of the difficulty of negotiating leases with the large numbers of freeholders in the town. Also, in common with Darton, Barnsley's share of the seam which bears its name was largely exhausted near the outcrop. One or two pits sunk in the 1880s, such as Thomas Marsden's Winter colliery, were obliged to work previously untried and thinner seams. Four of the larger collieries, as Table 2 demonstrates, found room for expansion, but with the exception of Carlton, these townships declined, relative to most others, in terms of coal output. It is fairly clear, however, that many miners at pits in surrounding townships chose to live in Barnsley. The reluctance or inability of local colliery companies to build houses was a contributing factor.
Barnsley's early growth was not founded on coal, but on linen. An earlier industrial base in the form of wiredrawing and nailmaking did not have a great impact on population growth. Despite the decline of handloom weaving after the middle of the century, affecting Darton and other neighbouring townships, there were still about 800 of these looms in the district as a whole in 1872, and over 3000 power looms, almost certainly all in Barnsley. There were 24 linen firms listed in that year, compared with 36 in an 1822 Directory. One - the firm of Thomas Taylor - employed 800 weavers at power looms alone in 1875. The linen manufacturers were to remain a major force in the economic, and more especially the institutional life of Barnsley and its neighbouring parishes well into the 1880s. Linen also generated employment in processing industries: bleaching (works at Greenfoot and Old Mill near the Barnsley - Monk Bretton boundary, and at Rob Royd in Worsborough and Redbrook in Barugh), dyeing and printing. There was also a down quilt factory opened in 1867 and thriving tailoring and drapery trades.

Barnsley had, by 1855, a couple of ironfounding and engineering firms - in Summer Lane and in Wellington Street, making amongst other items steam engines, mill machinery, boilers, ovens and stove grates. Pigott and Farrar at Summer Lane were important manufacturers of machinery for the local coal industry. On the northern edge of the town was Thomas Marsden's paper works, established in the mid 1880s and said to be the second largest in the country at the time. There was also a large glassworks at Old Mill.

1 White's Directory of Sheffield 1872.
2 Barnsley Chronicle, 7 June 1884.
3 Ibid, 16 Oct. 1875.
4 Barnsley Illustrated Annual Business Review 1897.
5 Barnsley Chronicle, 24 July 1875
6 Ibid, 31 July 1886.
Group 2 (Cawthorne, Silkstone, Dodworth and Stainborough)

These townships straddle the outcrop of the Silkstone seam, the second richest in the area. Consequently they also supported an early, low-capitalised coal industry. Its peak of expansion seems to have been in the first decade of our period, when the railway opened up the London house coal market to the Silkstone seam coal, which, partly because of its cosmetic attraction, seems to have established its 'brand name' after the 1851 Great Exhibition. This was largely due to the activity of the townships' leading coalowning family, the Clarkes of Silkstone. Several of the pits owned by small, independent partnerships had closed or declined in output by 1893 on account of exhaustion of the seams and the interruption of faults. Furthermore, two of the larger collieries, Church Lane and Stanhope Silkstone, were rarely fully solvent in these later years.

The only other major employer in these townships was the linen industry which maintained a diminishing number of handloom weavers in what had been (with the exception of Silkstone) important outtownships for this activity. Cawthorne, Silkstone and Stainborough were more rural than their eastern neighbours and were each dominated by a resident Tory landowner of substantial means and influence, again unlike most of the other townships in the study area. This is one of the contrasts that will be examined closely, particularly in Part Three. Dodworth too had a Tory 'squire', but was a rather more industrialised and cosmopolitan community than Silkstone and the others. It provides us with a mid point on that particular continuum.

Group 3 (Tankersley, Ecclesfield and Wentworth)

Tankersley, and what was part of the Grenofirth ward of the huge Ecclesfield township after the creation of the Wortley Rural District Council, were largely the domain of Newton,

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1 G.H. Teasdale, Silkstone Coal and Collieries (Typescript, n.d. c. 1899).
Chambers and Co., iron and colliemasters, and of the Earl Fitzwilliam, the dominant landlord in the study area.  

Having commenced coal mining in support of their ironworks in 1806, Newton, Chambers and Co., expanded into surplus coal production after the sinking of the Thorncliffe Drift pit in 1859 (to the Parkgate seam) and the Tankersley No. 1 pit in 1860 (to the Silkstone seam). This expansion continued steadily up to 1894, when the first of their larger pits, Tankersley Thorncliffe, closed. These two townships were characterised by a large number of small and medium sized pits, and, with the exception of Chapeltown, by small, scattered and non-nucleated settlements. The iron industry, from the extraction to the founding stage, was very much in evidence, with Newton Chambers and Co., employing a similar number of workers in this aspect of their operations as in their coal mines.

In the north of Tankersley parish were the two pits of the Wharncliffe Silkstone colliery, collectively one of the largest in South Yorkshire throughout the period. Here also was one of the few examples of comprehensive colliery company community building before the opening up of the Doncaster area of the South Yorkshire coalfield.

They were not, however, substantial freeholders. Earl Fitzwilliam owned the majority of Tankersley (over 1300 acres) in 1867. See Rate Valuation Books for Tankersley and Ecclesfield, in the archives of the offices of the former Wortley R.D.C. at Grenoside.

(Cusworth Hall Museum) Newton Chambers MSS. This uncatalogued collection has now been deposited with the Sheffield City Librarian to join other Newton Chambers material. It will be referred to, however, by the title of the original repository. The Newton Chambers' collieries were collectively known as the "Thorncliffe Collieries" and are occasionally referred to as such in this thesis.

Barnsley Chronicle, 5 May 1894.

Newton Chambers alone had 8 pits in 1875, ranging in size from the Thorncliffe Drift with 324 men to the Westwood Parkgate pit with 24. S.C.L., National Coal Board, South Yorkshire Collieries Collection, N.C.B. 831. Rockingham colliery, opened in 1875, soon became the largest of the Newton Chambers pits, with 1200 men in 1893.
Wentworth parish witnessed its first major colliery sinking in 1887: the Barley Hall pit,\(^1\) at first only an upcast air shaft for other Newton Chambers pits. Wentworth remained predominantly rural due to the influence of its resident landowner and political magnate, Earl Fitzwilliam, whose Wentworth Woodhouse estate occupied much of the parish.

Group 4 (Hoyland Nether, Worsborough and Ardsley)

Hoyland, Worsborough and Ardsley witnessed continual expansion throughout the period, the first-named achieving urban proportions by the 1890s. They were also hosts to some of the largest colliery sinking of the 1870s, two of which, Barrow and Hoyland Silkstone, took the then unprecedented step of deciding to work the Silkstone seam below the Barnsley, the latter having been widely exhausted, especially in Worsborough. All three townships had an early start in medium scale mining: Hoyland with the Fitzwilliams’ early pits at or near Elsecar, and with the Hoyland and Elsecar colliery from which Hoyland Silkstone was later developed; Worsborough with pits like Darley Main and Blacker Main, employing about 100 men each before the advent of the railways; and Ardsley with the Old Oaks colliery which was sunk about 1840.\(^2\)

Hoyland and Worsborough also had an early iron industry: the first blast furnace was established at Elsecar in 1795 and the nearby Milton works was also soon in operation.\(^3\) In 1882 the two works also sustained, between them, 45 puddling furnaces and seven rolling mills,\(^4\) but, by the beginning of 1885, all operations had ceased. Hoyland also contained two foundries and two brickworks in this period. Worsborough's

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\(^1\) Sometimes known as Barley Hole pit.

\(^2\) Mining Journal, 8 July 1871 gives 1835 as the opening date: Barnsley Chronicle, 6 March 1886 gives 1840/41.

\(^3\) A.K.Clayton, op.cit., p.46.

\(^4\) Barnsley Chronicle, 10 Jan. 1885.
iron industry was on a smaller scale. It was based originally on the furnace worked for many years by Samuel Cooper and his son of the same name who later concentrated solely on coalmining. The foundry and waggon works of Joseph Mitchell proved more enduring. It became a limited company in 1884 under the name of the Dearne and Dove Steel Co. Ltd. Mitchell too was an owner of important collieries in Worsborough and elsewhere.

The third major industry in these townships was glass. At Worsborough Bridge, flint glass had been manufactured since the 1820s by a number of partnerships, culminating in that of the Wood Brothers, who, in 1890, employed about 200 at their works. Ardsley, however, was the larger centre, expanding with the fortunes of the soda water industry. The Ryland family’s Hope works employed 378 in making glass bottles in 1883 and 1,154 in 1892. Dan Rylands ventured into mining in the late 1880s by taking over the shaft of the Old Oaks pit which had exhausted the Barnsley seam in its 'take' by 1886. In 1890, Rylands was working two higher seams, Abdy and Meltonfield, and was sinking to the Silkstone. The New Oaks colliery, opened in 1870, continued to work the Barnsley and later the Parkgate seams, to the south of the old workings. All three townships supported relics of the once predominant handloom weaving industry by virtue of their proximity to Barnsley.

1 J. Wilkinson, Worsborough (London, 1872), p. 255. Barnsley Chronicle, 31 March 1883 claimed that the operations had been discontinued 'some years ago'.


3 Ibid, 29 March 1890.


5 Ibid, 8 Nov. 1890.

6 Mining Journal, 8 July 1871.
Group 5 (Wombwell, Darfield and Brampton)

These three parishes reveal the impact of the mid-century expansion of mining perhaps better than any. Before 1856, they were almost entirely rural and unindustrialised except for one or two small pits and a pottery in Brampton, a glass works and a little mining by Earl Fitzwilliam in Wombwell. In the next four years, three important sinkings, Wombwell Main, Darfield Main and Lundhill changed Wombwell and Darfield into rapidly expanding mining villages. A second wave of sinkings in the 1870s (Mitchell Main, Cortonwood, and Houghton Main) contributed to Wombwell's acquiring urban proportions by the end of the period. All three townships remained almost exclusively mining communities until the end of the century.

Group 6 (Bolton, Adwick, Wath, Mexborough, Swinton, Rawmarsh, Denaby and Conisborough)

This is by far the largest (in area) of the groupings, but possesses many features which give it an economic and geographical unity. Early coal mining near the outcrops of thin seams such as the Meltonfield and the Kent's Thick was overshadowed by the sinking of Earl Fitzwilliam's Parkgate pit in the early 1820s and later by the Charlesworth's new pit at Warren Vale in 1850. Both pits worked the Barnsley seam. Each following decade saw the sinking of large deep pits, which had a radical effect on the population of all the townships, except Wath and Adwick which jealously guarded their village proportions (albeit on different scales). Two of these new pits, Denaby Main (1867) and Manvers Main (1870), were to become the largest in South Yorkshire by the late

1 Houghton Main was over the study area border in the parish of Houghton Parva, but drew its workforce from Wombwell and other industrialised parishes.

2 The 1901 Census records 3065 coal miners in Wombwell, among an occupied male population of 4459. This was the highest proportion of any of the larger South Yorkshire townships.

3 For an account of early coal mining in Swinton, see H.W. Quarrell, A History of Swinton (Mexborough, 1954). For the Fitzwilliams' enterprises in Rawmarsh see A. Fletcher, op. cit., especially p. 36.
1870s, forerunners of the colliery enterprises of the late 1890s and the early years of the twentieth century, out on the concealed coalfield to the east. Cadeby Main, opened by the owners of Denaby Main in January, 1893, was in many respects the first of this later batch.\(^1\) Despite the impact of these large collieries, three other industries provided enough employment to make the four larger townships more heterogeneous in occupational structure than any other in the area up to the 1890s, except Barnsley itself.\(^2\)

A small scale pottery industry, based on local clay deposits, seems to have been well established in Wath, Mexborough, Swinton and Rawmarsh by mid century.\(^3\) Swinton gained an early start with an export-orientated fine china works - the Rockingham pottery - built up by the Brameld family after 1806 from less ambitious beginnings, but hit by the vagaries of fashion, and closed in 1843.\(^4\) Production of the more utilitarian earthenware manufactured at the Don pottery and by the Twigg family at Kilnhurst survived until the 1890s, along with potteries in most of the neighbouring townships. In 1890 there were 260 men and women employed in this industry in Swinton and Kilnhurst.\(^5\)

Glass bottles and jars had been manufactured in several of these townships since the early 1850s when Thomas Barron moved from the older centre of Hunslet, near Leeds, to

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\(^1\) Barnsley Chronicle, 28 Jan. 1893.  
\(^2\) See Chapter Seventeen.  
\(^3\) See White’s Directories.  
\(^5\) Mexborough and Swinton Times, 7 March 1890.
establish his works at Mexborough. Kilner's works at Conisborough was founded in 1862, and in 1880, about 540 hands were employed in six firms in Mexborough, Swinton, Kilnhurst and Conisborough (where Kilner's with 210 was the largest).

The third major industry was iron and steel to which the southern part of Rawmarsh township known as Parkgate was the major contributor. Here, William Oxley and Co., and the Parkgate Iron Co., produced large quantities of bar iron and sheet steel for rails, armour plating, etc. The Parkgate Company incorporated Samuel Walker's old works at Holmes and employed 1800 hands in 1871, and 2000 in 1890. Its output of armour plating was, however, being gradually superseded by heavier material from Cammells of Sheffield. There was only one blast furnace at Parkgate in 1871.

To the north, there were ironworks at Kilnhurst, Swinton and Conisborough, in the first case, with origins in the charcoal burning era. In the 1880s, however, all three works closed, in one case, removing to Rotherham. The only

1 Barnsley Chronicle, 20 Aug. 1887. There was already a thriving glass industry at Catcliffe (Sheffield) and Nasborough (Rotherham). See G.D. Lewis, The South Yorkshire Glass Industry (Sheffield, 1964).


3 Mexborough and Swinton Times, 16 Jan. 1880.


5 Barnsley Chronicle, 25 Feb. 1871; Mexborough and Swinton Times, 31 Oct. 1890.

6 Mexborough and Swinton Times, 1 Jan. 1886; H.W. Quarrell, op. cit., p.60; S.C.L., H.G. Baker's Notes on Iron and Steel, 'Kilnhurst' entry. The works was owned by J. Brown and Co., of Atlas Works, Sheffield, from 1863 to 1903. It was then bought by J. Baker of Rotherham who began steel production there in 1905.
survivor of this industry was the Mattersley's foundry in Swinton, which employed a little under 100 hands. Swinton also had a railway engineering plant belonging to the South Yorkshire Railway, and a firm making railway waggons.

Swinton and Mexborough, throughout the nineteenth century and before, vied with each other as market centres for the agricultural produce of several parishes in the centre of the Doncaster-Barnsley-Rotherham triangle. In 1869 there were plans to hold an agricultural show at Swinton where there was already a thriving trade in horses, based around the training stables set up around 1850.¹

¹ Barnsley Chronicle, 3 July 1869.
### TABLE 1
Population of townships in the study area, 1831-1891.

Percentage increase in population, 1851-1891.

People per acre, 1891.

N.B. Only the northern part of Ecclesfield township is considered in this thesis.

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*Townships which underwent significant boundary changes in these years.

Source: Registrar General's Census Abstracts.
### TABLE 2

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<th>Townships/Collieries</th>
<th>Period of First Coal</th>
<th>Size of Workforce 1874</th>
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<th>Other Industries</th>
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*There were two pits at Woolley, the second and larger one was sunk in the 1860s and outlived the first. (It is still operating today.) These pits were marginally north of Darton's boundary with the parish of Woolley, but will be included in this study, as most of the miners lived in Darton.

**Church Lane (now known as Dodworth Colliery) and Higham pit (straddling the northern boundary of Dodworth township) were treated as one unit for most purposes other than union organisation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Townships/collieries</th>
<th>Period of first coal</th>
<th>Size of workforce 1874</th>
<th>1893</th>
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*Elsecar Colliery was the generic name for a group of Earl Fitzwilliam's pits, including Hemingfield pit over the boundary in Wombwell.

**Hoyland Silkstone replaced an earlier colliery, Hoyland and Elsecar.

***Barrow was sunk almost exactly on the site of an earlier colliery, Worsborough Park.
TABLE 2 (contd.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Townships/colliers</th>
<th>Period of first coal</th>
<th>Size of workforce 1874</th>
<th>Size of workforce 1893</th>
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*J. Goodchild, *The Coal Kings of Yorkshire* (Typescript available for consultation on application to its author) suggests that there were 460 men and boys employed at Warren Vale in 1874. Other discrepancies have been found between the data in the *Barnsley Chronicle*, 11 July 1874 and in other sources. A high degree of accuracy, therefore, is not claimed for the 1874 figures.

**Stubbin replaced earlier pits of the Earls Fitzwilliam, generically known as Parkgate colliery.
Total workforce in Collieries in the Study Area:

1874  15000-16000*
1893  31000**

*This approximate range of numbers includes about 500 miners employed at about 16 pits in the study area which had less than 100 men.

**This figure includes about 250 men employed at 13 pits (excluding Silkstone Fall) which employed less than 100 men.

CHAPTER TWO

The Study Area before 1855; some Aspects of its Social and Economic History.
Having, in Chapter One, established the structure of employment in the area for the period of this study, it is now necessary to take a retrospective look at the early economic, social and political history. This survey will not attempt to be exhaustive, nor comprehensive, but will simply trace the recent origins of some of the important social and industrial groups that we find interacting in the period 1855-1894. Also, we must look at the roots of some of the less tangible forces which shaped the special politico-economic environment of the district in the second half of the nineteenth century. In particular, we should consider what was special about the colliery entrepreneurs of the early nineteenth century in South Yorkshire that permitted a mobile and relatively well paid and independent workforce to develop; one that had all the characteristics suited to the type of unionism promoted by the S.Y.M.A. after 1858.

The early coal industry

The development of a colliery industry in South Yorkshire was, of course, dependent on adequate means of transport. Lacking both navigable rivers and the suitable terrain and geographical location for long distance tramroad building, the industry remained severely localised until the canalisation of the river Don was completed as far as Tinsley, on the edge of Sheffield, in 1751. Prior to this, and in the seventeenth century, the most important pits in South Yorkshire were in the Park neighbourhood of Sheffield, on the estates of the Earls of Arundel and Pembroke, later to become the property of the Dukes of Norfolk. They served a major market in the local cutlery trade and also large householders and small industries such as brewing. The Effingham estates around Rotherham were similarly exploited; and there is plenty of evidence that local ironmasters such as the Spencer family and members of the smaller gentry such as the Elmhirsts worked coal around

1 G.G. Hopkinson in J. Benson and R.G. Neville (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 3.
Barnsley in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. 1 This, however, was on a very small scale due to the then plentiful supplies of water power and wood for charcoal smelting. 2 The largest collieries in the district were probably only producing about 5000 tons a year each. 3

The canalisation of the Don had an immediate effect on the Rotherham district. Even before the Tinsley section was complete, in 1732, 'South Yorkshire coal was effectually competing with Durham coal in the Humber estuary and the valleys of the Trent and Ouse'. 4 Thirty years later, Rotherham coal was rivalling Wakefield and Derbyshire in the mid Lincolnshire market and much was also being consumed locally in the growing cast iron industry, pioneered by Samuel Walker and Co., of Masborough. Mining inevitably left the outcrops and pits were sunk deeper, some employing Newcomen-type pumping engines for the first time around 1750. 5 For the first time, there appeared a small class of colliery owners, like the Fentons who mined at Greasborough near Parkgate and in West Yorkshire, who approached the trade with a professional outlook. Much of the initiative in the technical side of these developments came from the Duke of Norfolk, who, in the 1770s, employed John Curr as a full-time manager in the Park pits, which the Duke for a while operated himself. 6 Curr brought the inventive traditions of the north-

5 G.D.B. Gray, op.cit., p.33. The Fentons' engine was installed in 1753.
6 A. Fletcher, op.cit., p.33.
eastern coal industry to bear on the primitive technology of the South Yorkshire pits. Wooden tubs rather than baskets, and a flat winding rope were used for the first time at the pits in his charge in 1787.¹

Despite the increase in size of these new operations, the small landowners and tenant farmers remained the most important class working the coal or providing the capital, except in Sheffield. The majority of coal was still got near the surface and sinking a pit was within the means of these two groups. Before the coal seam dipped enough to necessitate long headings and expensive pumping, the pit would be abandoned.² A small colliery near Rotherham was sold in 1754 for £115; while a Newcomen-type engine could cost £1100.³ The larger landowners and the ironmasters of Sheffield and Rotherham did not, on the whole, venture into colliery sinking in the early and mid eighteenth century.⁴ The field was left open for a transient and less economically powerful class of owner.

A major exception to this trend stemmed from 1752 when the Marquis of Rockingham, the owner of large estates in South Yorkshire, took over the operation of a small pit on his land after the lessee, a local farmer, had failed to come to a satisfactory agreement.⁵ Rockingham increased his direct involvement in mining in 1763/4 with the Low Wood pit and the

¹ G.D.B. Gray, op.cit., p.34.
³ G.G. Hopkinson, op.cit., p.22.
⁴ Two minor exceptions were the Hon. Sidney Wortley of Wortley who, with partners, mined coal on Barnsley Moor towards the end of the seventeenth century; and the Walkers of Masborough who opened a small pit at Holnes in 1758. See R.M.Cox, op.cit., pp.68, 102.
⁵ A.Fletcher, op.cit., p.35.

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first Parkgate pit in Rawmarsh. It was in 1795, however, with the opening of a new colliery at Elsecar, drained by means of a Newcomen-type engine, that the Fitzwilliams (the descendants of the Marquis of Rockingham) really committed themselves to exploiting local coal deposits. Between 1807 and 1820, the fourth Earl Fitzwilliam spent £122,000 on plant for nine other collieries in the district. By 1836, his son, the fifth Earl, was employing about 200 men and boys in the pits in and near Elsecar alone. This was the largest colliery enterprise outside Sheffield until about 1840; but, despite having professional managers in Thomas Smith and, later, Joshua and Ben Biram, the Earls ran the pits as part of the household economy until the death of the fifth Earl (and Ben Biram) in 1857.

There were obvious incentives for the Earls' intervention in the local mining industry. There were, at the end of the eighteenth century, huge untouched reserves of coal in the Barnsley seam, which reached a thickness of nine feet in places. These were, however, beyond the reach of the class of entrepreneur previously involved in mining locally. Exploitation of these reserves needed capital (much local capital was being ploughed into the expansion of the Barnsley linen industry around the turn of the century), a developing market and the means of transport to reach this market. Earl Fitzwilliam contributed to the provision of all three. In 1772, a scheme was mooted to open up the South Yorkshire coal reserves by means of a canal up the Dearne Valley, flanking Barnsley to the north. The aim was to boost the district's


ability to market coal in the Trent valley, by then keenly contested by Derbyshire collieries. Coal from the Elsecar area previously had to be carted to the Don at Kilnhurst. This scheme did not materialise, but in 1799 and 1804 two canals - the Barnsley-Calder canal and the Dearne and Dove - opened (see Fig.3). The former had branches to Worsborough and to Elsecar. Not surprisingly, the fourth Earl Fitzwilliam was a leading promoter of the Dearne-Dove; while colliery owners such as Jonas Clarke and landowners such as W. Spencer Stanhope who lived on the western flanks of Barnsley provided much of the capital for the Barnsley Calder canal.2 For these interested parties, the facilitated access to the Humber, the Don and the Trent (improved after the completion of the Stainforth-Keadby link) meant increased royalties or returns on capital - or both.

Distant markets, however, were probably not uppermost in the Earl's mind in 1795. Within a year of the opening of the Elsecar pumping pit, a first blast furnace was built nearby by John and William Darwin.3 About 1802, a second ironworks was established in the neighbourhood by the Walkers of Nasborough. In the 1820s, Fitzwilliam worked his Elsecar complex directly, after the Darwins' company became bankrupt. He also employed over 100 ironstone miners in his pits around Tankersley Park. Until 1849, when both the Milton and the Elsecar works were let to John Dawes of Birmingham, the Earls' control over economic activity in a wide swathe of South Yorkshire was steadily increasing and undoubtedly bolstered the considerable political standing which the Fitzwilliams inherited.


2 Barnsley Canal Navigation Act and Dearne-Dove Canal Act. (Both 1793) (Copies in Barnsley Public Library.)

3 The information in this paragraph has been gleaned from A.K. Clayton, Hovland Nether, pp.46-64.
Outside Sheffield, the Earls Fitzwilliam were the only large landowning family to take an active interest in developing the coal reserves under their land; and, for about 40 years, the scale of mining operations at Elsecar was unrivalled in the district. Barnsley itself, in a directory of 1798, could claim no colliery owners worthy of note. Most of the Barnsley colliery owners of the following 25 years lacked permanence. The owners of the largest pits—William Locke of Cockerham, James and John Porter of High Stile, Longcar and Pinfold Hill Pits, and Sam Thorpe of Gawber—were independent but small investors. Most of their pits were closed by 1830, and only the renewed working of coal at Cockerham by Messrs. Hopwood and Jackson mitigated the resultant unemployment and met the growing demand. By the late 1830s, there were six coalowners in the town worthy of mention in the trade directory, but none were likely to have employed 100 hands or more. Several of these small Barnsley owners were connected with the linen trade or its subsidiary industries (especially bleaching); but none seems to have been a man of sufficient means to have made an important impact on the South Yorkshire coal industry, or to have carved out a significant portion of political power in Barnsley itself.

While Barnsley made its faltering entry into the trade in which its name later became a by-word, one or two of the lowermost coal seams were being worked with considerable success and on an increasing scale. In 1792, Jonas Clarke, a Barnsley attorney from a longstanding local family of wiredrawers, bought a 90 acre estate in the parish of

1 See Burland's 'Annals' in Barnsley Chronicle, 15 Aug. 1874. As early as 1778, however, a colliery at Pogmoor on the north western edge of Barnsley, was large enough to have a steam engine installed (R.M. Cox, op. cit., p. 99).
2 Ibid, 14 Nov. 1874 and 20 Nov. 1875.
3 Ibid, 14 July 1877.
4 Barnsley Chronicle, 11 June 1887.
Silkstone, about five miles west of Barnsley, where what proved to be the second richest seam in Yorkshire outcropped. Before the turn of the century, he had tested the depth and quality of the coal in other parts of the parish and begun to work the coal on his own estate, while casting his eye around for more land to consolidate what was becoming one of the largest owner-developed colliery holdings in the area. By the mid 1840s, there were about 90 hewers, 100 daywagemen (plus a number of young haulage hands not entered in the pay books) in the Clarke family pits (four or five in number at the time). To the north and east of Silkstone, mining in the parishes of Cawthorne, Darton and Dodworth was also an expanding activity before Barnsley made its mark in the trade. Collieries were being operated in the early nineteenth century by such diverse proprietors as the Low Moor Iron Company of Bradford, the Charlesworth brothers from the Wakefield area, and Thomas Wilson of Banks Hall, Cawthorne, a man with his roots in farming and who later became auditor of the Aire and Calder Navigation Company. Of these early adventurers, only the Charlesworths remained active in the neighbourhood after the railways arrived.

To the south, a permanent feature of the industrial landscape was established near Chapeltown in 1795. This was the first blast furnace of the Thorncliffe ironworks, later owned in partnership by the families of Newton and Chambers. Coal mining on a limited scale was undertaken by the firm to

1 S.C.L., CR 624.
2 See p. 474.
4 R.Jackson, op.cit., p.164.
5 G.H.Teadale, op.cit., pp. 6, 18, 19.
6 Barnsley Chronicle, 5 Feb. 1876.
7 Sheffield Independent, 27 Oct. 1881.
fuel their growing manufacture of pig iron and castings. Mining began on a small scale at Thorncliffe in 1795 and at High Green in 1806 and expanded to over 3000 tons per annum in 1814, after the employment of their first steam pumping engines. The biggest boost to the early development of the Newton Chambers mining operations, however, came with the opening, in 1834, of a tramroad from Thorncliffe to the canal at Elsecar. This provided the means for the company to market the coal outside the neighbourhood. The diverse nature of their mining operations, however, and their inability, at first, to purchase land and build houses in Tankersley and the Chapeltown district, restricted the control the firm would have liked to have exercised over their employees.

By 1830, for the first time, as Cox puts it, 'in some villages the coal mines were the dominant feature of the economic life'. The late 1830s and the 1840s saw a more general expansion of mining in the district as a whole. The Charlesworths completed sinking a pit to the Kents Thick seam at Rawmarsh in 1839, and about the same time opened smaller pits in Swinton. Their major role in this part of the district, however, was performed from 1850 onwards when the Barnsley bed was reached at a pit a few hundred yards from these sinkings, at Warren Vale. The Charlesworths were to remain the principal coalowners in this neighbourhood until the steel manufacturer, John Brown of Sheffield, intervened with his Aldwarke and Roundwood collieries in the 1860s and 1870s. The Charlesworths moved into this south eastern corner of the study area about the time that the Fentons abandoned their last pits at nearby Greasborough. The Charlesworths, however, being absentee owners (as at Dodworth), never exerted an influence

1 Ibid; R.M. Cox, op.cit., p.108.
2 Cusworth Hall, Newton Chambers MSS. Typescript entitled 'Notes for a history of Newton Chambers' Collieries' (1936).
3 R.M. Cox, op.cit., p.131.
4 J. Goodchild, op.cit., section on the Charlesworths.
5 Ibid, section on the Fentons.
in this neighbourhood that extended much beyond that of their immediate economic role. In this respect they set the pattern for many other large colliery concerns in South Yorkshire.

The late 1830s saw the entry of the Day family of Monk Bretton (at first in partnership with another local linen manufacturer, John Twibell) into coal mining at Mount Osborne and Old Mill. The townships of Worsborough, Ardsley and Hoyland also saw mining develop from, at best, shallow outcrop pits and horizontal adits to deeper mines employing around 100 men or more in the late 1830s and the 1840s. Traviss and Horsfall's Darley Main, the Hoyland and Elsecar colliery (later to become the large Hoyland Silkstone colliery), Samuel Cooper's Worsborough Park pit, and the Oaks colliery (originally the property of a local landowner, William Micklethwaite, but later leased to Smith, Barber and Company and eventually to C. Cammell and Company of Sheffield) began producing coal for local businessmen and small landowners. The Oaks and Darley Main were the first really deep pits working the Barnsley seams in South Yorkshire, and were also the first to suffer major loss of life in explosions. The Oaks, in particular, was a prototype for many of the collieries of the railway era that was about to dawn, and unlike most of its smaller neighbours, suffered persistent labour unrest in the 1850s and 1860s.

Other industry before 1855

(a) Iron.

The iron and steel industry in the second half of the nineteenth century had an important impact on the area under study only insofar as it provided a market for its coal.


2 Sheffield Independent, 6 March 1847. The depth of the Oaks pit was 283 yards.

3 F. Machin, op. cit., p. 9. 73 were killed at the Oaks in 1847.
Only on the periphery - at Thorncliffe and at Parkgate - was its presence significantly felt on the labour market. The foundry industry, though widespread, remained in relatively small units. At the beginning of the century, however, as we have seen, new ironworks within the district were some of the main stimuli in the opening up of the Barnsley seam reserves at Elsecar, and the Silkstone and Parkgate seams around Thorncliffe.

Prior to this, the district had witnessed the growth and decline of a relatively large and widespread charcoal-burning iron industry, predominantly in the hands of a number of partnerships amongst whom the Spencer family of Cannon Hall, Cawthorne figured large. The district had a large number of furnaces burning local ores, such as those at Rockley (in Worsborough) and Barmby (in Cawthorne), but few forges on account of the dearth of natural streams in the area. As the industry grew older, however, local ores either ran out or pits got too deep for the limited capital involved. Profits declined and with the retreat of the Spencer family from entrepreneurial involvement, the industry fragmented and declined. Some relics, however, survived. John Cooke of Kilnhurst forge (owned by the Sheffield banking firm of Shores until 1811) had stayed outside the Spencer group and, possibly with co-operation from Cort, employed the puddling process at an early date. The works at Kilnhurst survived in some form or another until 1881. A forge at Wortley (just to the west of our study area) also worked iron in connection with the developing Sheffield iron and steel industry.

3 A. Birch, op. cit., p. 40.
4 A. Raistrick, op. cit., p. 79.
5 Ibid, p. 54.
Much of the output of this early iron industry went to slitting mills for the production of nails and wire; two trades traditional in the Barnsley-Wortley-Chapeltown district for several centuries.¹ These industries were thriving in the late eighteenth century (there were, for example, eight wire manufacturers in Barnsley in 1789)² and marginally survived into the twentieth century (although there was only one wire manufacturer listed in Barnsley in 1858).³ It was a nailmaker from Grenoside, near Chapeltown, Joseph Walker, who moved to Masborough in 1746 and established the basis for the large-scale iron smelting industry in that area.⁴

The two ironworks complexes at Thorncliffe and Elsecar fared differently in the fluctuating economic climate of the 1820s. Both the Elsecar and the Milton works changed hands in those years, but continued to make losses.⁵ The Milton works was partly closed in 1849 and the Elsecar works was let the same year to John Dawes of Birmingham under whom it became more viable, manufacturing, among other things, castings for the expanding colliery industry around it.

The Newton Chambers works, however, was probably the most prosperous in South Yorkshire in the late 1820s, according to Birch.⁶ This may have been because of the consistent demand for its main foundry product, gas pipes, unlike the staple of concerns like Walkers of Masborough: munitions. The 1830s and 1840s witnessed steady growth at Thorncliffe until the railways transformed the firm's progress into one of outright

¹ Nailmaking was said to have been carried on at some time in Chapeltown, Thorpe Hesley, Mortomley, Ecclesfield, Worsborough, Hoyland, Wath, Mexborough and Silkstone (R.M.Cox, op.cit., p.159).
² Burland's 'Annals' in Barnsley Chronicle, 31 Jan. 1874; R.Jackson op.cit., p.166.
³ Ibid.
⁶ A.Birch, op.cit., p.160.
expansion, especially in coalmining. The other major iron producer in the area was the Parkgate company. Established in 1826, it manufactured wrought iron, castings and tinplate. In the 1840s it expanded into railmaking and established the neighbourhood as an important appendage to the Rotherham iron and steel industry.

On the eve of the completion of the basic rail network in 1855 we have a situation in this large section of South Yorkshire where, unlike the industrial belts of the Midlands and central Scotland, an iron industry existed beside an expanding coal industry, with few direct links through ownership. Only Newton, Chambers and Company and Joseph Mitchell, ironfounder of Worsborough, substantially supplied their works from their own collieries. To the south east, however, at Brightside, where John Brown, Charles Cammell, Mark Firth and others had established large steelworks in the 1840s and 1850s, the grounds for closer links were to be laid in the following decades.

(b)Linen.

Linen weaving was introduced into Barnsley in 1744 by William Wilson of Cheshire, who along with other pioneers of the trade, recruited weavers from Lancashire and Cheshire (including many former Irish immigrants). The industry was set to prosper because of the availability of cheap imported flax, shortages of cotton goods and the preferential status accorded to British textile products in the colonial markets. The Barnsley industry from the start spun little of its own yarn, and relied more and more on imports, mainly from Leeds.

1 Sheffield Independent, 27 Oct. 1881.
2 A. Birch, op. cit., p. 163.
4 R. Jackson, op. cit., p. 167.
5 F. J. Kaijage, op. cit., p. 85.
By 1789, there were seven manufacturers in the town, including John Wilson (William's nephew), Edward Taylor, founder of the largest firm in Barnsley's weaving history, and Joseph Beckett who, about 1796 provided an important amenity for the expanding industry: Barnsley's first bank. It was at this time that men such as Beckett were also providing finishing processes for their linen, such as bleaching and dyeing, while the former later became for some linen manufacturers a more important operation than their original trade. At first, Barnsley produced regular heavy sheetings, but to outwit the cheaper and inferior products from Scotland and Ireland, the local industry diversified about 1810 into finer fabrics such as damasks and huckabacks. This development was taken one stage further in the 1830s by a few firms, like Taylor's, who produced fancy drills, largely for export.

Barnsley's early production was from handlooms, there being about 500 connected with the industry in 1789. This grew to about 800 in 1812, and, after the greatest period of expansion (1812-1822) and some years of slower growth, the peak of about 4000 looms was reached around 1836, with production in the hands of 36 master manufacturers. The greatest single factor in the expansion of these years was the commencement of flax spinning at Leeds around the turn of the century - an industry to which Barnsley's handloom weavers became inextricably linked. Handloom weavers lived mostly in Barnsley and immediately adjacent parishes (Dodworth, Worsborough, Darton, Ardsley and Monk Bretton) because of the problems of carting

1 Barnsley Chronicle, 14 Nov. 1868.
4 F. J. Kaijage, op. cit., p. 88.
5 Census Enumerators' returns, 1851. About 70% of Barnsley's labour force, at the peak of prosperity in the early 1830s, was in linen (F. J. Kaijage, op. cit., p. 94.)
the yarn and the finished products over the hilly terrain around the town. Power weaving came to Barnsley linen much later than to the cotton industry. Handloom weaving was said to be expanding in eastern townships like Ardsley as late as the 1830s. At the numerical peak of the handloom sector, there were only about 1000 power looms.1

Just as this slow transformation to the town-based power weaving was beginning to gather speed in the mid 1830s, the bottom fell out of the home market for linen, and although the Barnsley industry picked up a little around 1846 when about 200 weavers were taken on (many from the declining Knarcsborough area), it declined steadily from the 1850s due to competition not only from cotton, but also from Belfast linen.2 The failure of Barnsley's fancy drill patterns at the Leipzig fair in 1847 was particularly blamed for the downturn.3

The linen industrialists, all of whom lived in Barnsley or neighbouring parishes, all-powerful in the early, enthusiastic days of the Town Commission (established in 1822), remained a major force in public life, even into the fourth quarter of the century. Few of them diversified into coalmining; only Samuel Cooper and the Day family, small linen manufacturers in the 1820s and 1830s, became major coalowners in their own right and this mainly after diversification into other industries. In fact, the colliery proprietors of the railway age in our area remained largely outside the realms of local power which the gradually diminishing number of linen manufacturers still clung to.

There had been for some years a small wool and worsted industry in the area that persisted into our period. There were still three mills in Hoyland, the largest centre, as late as 1838.4 Cotton spinning was introduced to Barnsley in 1845,

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1 R. Jackson, op. cit., p. 168.
3 Sheffield Independent, 20 Nov. 1847.
4 Returns relating to factories (PP. 1839, xiii), p. 278.
but never challenged the dominance of linen in the local textile trade.¹

(c) Other industry and the railways.

Except in certain individual outlying townships, no other industry made a significant impact on the economic life of the area. Pottery expanded and declined in the first half of the nineteenth century in the eastern townships where, especially in Swinton, it was a very important factor in the labour market until the middle of the century.² The glass industry was largely a product of the second half of the century. There had been a small flint glass industry at Worsborough Dale since 1828,³ but bottle making had to wait over twenty years. Masborough and Catcliffe, to the south east of the area had, however, been centres for both flint glass and bottles since the mid eighteenth century and the Blunn family were manufacturing at Catcliffe about twenty years before they opened their works at Kilnhurst.⁴ Other, more service-orientated industries, like brewing, canal boating and boat-building grew more 'organically' with the expansion of the built communities themselves.

The most important catalyst in the process of change around this time was the railways. The Midland Railway came to the area in 1840, but by-passed Barnsley because of topographical

¹ Barnsley Historical Almanack and Year Book 1863, p.28.
² There were five small potteries at Rawmarsh in the early nineteenth century, collectively not as large an industry as that of Swinton which (with Mexborough) supported three potteries. There were also one each in Wath, Brampton and West Melton (R.M.Cox, op.cit., p.166).
³ J.Wilkinson, op.cit., p.222. There was also a glasshouse at Gawber, on the north western edge of Barnsley, in 1821 (R.M.Cox, op.cit., p.167.)
difficulties. It passed through Masborough and linked with the Sheffield-Rotherham Railway, opened in 1838. The Sheffield-Manchester link was completed by 1846 and enabled the westernmost colliery villages to reduce their dependence on the Barnsley Canal for shipments out of the area, and gave them access to both London and industrial Lancashire. However, it was not until 1853 and 1854 that the main lines linked Barnsley, Wombwell and Hoyland with Sheffield and the London market, and another sixteen years before all the Barnsley stations, and the Midland Railway's station at Cudworth to the east, were integrated. In the meantime, the mining communities to the south east had been linked with Doncaster, Rotherham and Barnsley by the South Yorkshire Railway's network.

1853-4 proved to be crucial years for the opening up of a large part of our district. The Wakefield Express, early that first year, claimed that Barnsley was 'fast becoming a second Newcastle' on account of the recent advances in the railway network. The new markets precipitated the opening of a large number of pits which were to employ, individually, more than any before in the district, with the exception of the Oaks. Most of them were designed to serve varied and distant markets for the first time, and were not a response to specific local demand. Wombwell Main (1856), Strafford Main (1857), Lundhill (1855), and Wharncliffe Silkstone (1854) were examples of these large pits of the early railway boom. They were owned by partnerships, usually combining a mixture of local men and outsiders, whose interest was largely in the investment or speculative gains of the operation. Rarely were these pits linked to any specific industrial market.


2 G. H. Teasdale, op. cit., p.12

3 Wakefield Express, 15 Jan. 1853.
In the case of the Clarkes at Silkstone and the Charlesworths at Rawmarsh and Higham, the railways provided the means for further expansion of existing colliery operations. In both cases, their trade had languished in the 1840s and these owners found themselves in sharp conflict with other local proprietors. James Wake, Sarah Clarke's agent in the Goole area, their main market at the time, wrote to her manager that 'what little trade there is is run away with by the New Silkstones' referring to other firms working the Silkstone seam. A close eye, in particular, was being kept on the Charlesworths who unloaded in the same markets, both from their small pits in South Yorkshire and their larger ones in the Wakefield area. When the Barnsley Junction Railway Bill was proposed, therefore, Sarah Clarke's local agent was called in to mobilise both her workforce and the parish of Silkstone as a whole on its behalf. The obvious result of the coming of the railways to Silkstone was the sinking of the first Clarke pit with over 100 men: the Sovereign pit in 1852 or thereabouts. For the Charlesworths, it meant putting to use land, purchased in Dodworth as early as 1825, for the sinking of the pit at Higham. In the Swinton-Rawmarsh district, it meant the expansion of the Charlesworth operations at Warren Vale. Further discussion of the roles of these collieries and their owners belongs in Parts Two and Three.

Power and Politics

(a) Land.

Land and farming interests remained major forces in the economic and political life of the district well beyond 1855. But unquestioned control of whole communities was rare. Estate villages - parishes where the land was owned almost exclusively, and the institutions controlled, by one family, resident or nominally resident in that parish - effectively numbered only

1 S.C.L., CR 139; Wake to Browne, 8 Sept. 1845.
2 S.C.L., CR 145; Wake to Browne, 8 April 1843.
3 S.C.L., CR 139; Tyas to Browne, May 1846.
4 J. Goodchild, op. cit., section on the Charlesworths.
three: Stainborough, Cawthorne and Wentworth. Of the three, Stainborough, the seat of the Vernon-Wentworths (distant cousins of the Fitzwilliams), was perhaps the best example. Another township on the western edge of the coalfield, Tankersley, was similar in some respects, but had no resident landlord. It was mainly the property of the Earls Fitzwilliam and, as in their home parish of Wentworth, they tolerated and in some cases actively encouraged mining under their land. They were careful, however, to keep at bay unsightly rashes of industrial housing which might have invaded their pleasant farm and parkland. It was probably the Fitzwilliams' carefully selective policy in leasing and releasing land which kept many of the townships in which they had substantial holdings - Rawmarsh, Swinton, Hoyland, Wath, Ecclesfield as well as Tankersley and Wentworth - relatively open and free from domination by lesser landed or industrial magnates. ¹

The eighteenth century in South Yorkshire was a melting pot for land and influence. Many of the manorial estates (including Barnsley-cum-Dodworth and the two to which Swinton originally owed allegiance) had been in the hands of priories before the dissolution. ² Others, like that of Silkstone, fell into Crown hands by other means. It followed that, after the Restoration, many of the manors were released to speculative purchasers or to a strong class of small freeholders. For a while the district was largely devoid of landowning magnates. There were, it is true, a few more permanent landed families. The Wortleys of Wortley, the Wombwells of Wombwell and the

¹ It is perhaps significant that Newton, Chambers and Co., major industrial competitors of the Earl, were not permitted to buy the freehold of the Thorncliffe Ironworks in 1882. Cusworth Hall, Newton Chambers MSS, George Dawson's diary, 21 Oct. 1882.

² Information obtained from scrutiny of the catalogues of the Wentworth Woodhouse Muniment, the Elmhirst MSS, the Clarke MSS, the Spencer Stanhope MSS and the Wharncliffe MSS in Sheffield City Library. These catalogues contain summaries of the transactions of leases, sales, etc., of land and other property. See also Barnsley Times, 15 Nov. 1856 and 27 May 1857 for accounts of the early history of Silkstone and Dodworth parishes.
Montagues of Mexborough had consolidated their estates for generations, and, in the case of one or two members of these families, numbered political recognition among their rewards. ¹ There were also a number of smaller yeoman families like the Elmhirsts in Worsborough who maintained or increased their status through dabbling in the early iron and coal mining industries. ² The state of flux that existed in the land market at the beginning of the eighteenth century, however, was to transform the pattern of ownership fundamentally.

It was the activity of Thomas Watson-Wentworth and his son, the first Marquis Rockingham, in the early and mid eighteenth century which laid the basis for the land-based political and, later, industrial power held by their descendants, the Fitzwilliams. Two manors bought in 1712 and 1749 for a total of just under £11,700 gave the family title to much of the townships of Swinton, Hoyland and Wombwell. ³ A large number of smaller, fragmented estates were available for purchase in South Yorkshire at this time, partly because many of the owners of land (or their heirs) released by the Crown had no roots or ambitions in the area, or, like the Cutlers of Stainborough, had fallen on hard times. Two families, the Spencer-Stanhopes at Cawthorne and the Vernon-Wentworths at Stainborough, partly through propitious inheritance, and partly through shrewd purchase, came to be established in 1800 as minor magnates with no direct involvement in either industry or government, which had been the means by which their eighteenth century ancestors had ascended into the squirearchy. ⁴ The manor of Barnsley-cum-Dodworth and land to the east were

¹ Sheffield Independent, 27 Dec. 1845, obituary of the Earl of Wharncliffe.
² E. Elmhirst, op.cit.
³ See (p. 43 footnote 2).
⁴ For the Spencer-Stanhopes, see A.M.W. Stirling, Annals of a Yorkshire House, 2 vols. (John Lane, 1911). For the Vernon-Wentworths, see Barnsley Chronicle, 22 April to 15 July 1882.
also in Crown hands well into the eighteenth century, and, in 1735, was sold to Thomas Osborne, the fourth Duke of Leeds. Although one played an important role in the enclosure of the manor's common land in 1777 and later they reaped rich royalties, the Dukes were absentees and did not figure in local political life.

On a smaller scale, there were vacancies for successful industrialists to fill. Like the Aldams of Frickley (to the north of the district), the Clarkes of Silkstone made this transition to the small landed class within a generation. In 1834, forty years after first acquiring property in Silkstone, the Clarkes owned about 500 acres in that parish, including four complete farms, three of which they usually let to tenants. The family was able to make these purchases because the farms had fallen into the hands of absentee owners who let them out to tenants, without any real interest in the parish and without awareness of the potential of the coal seams that lay below. Further land, cottages and mineral rights were to be purchased by Jonas's descendants up to the 1870s when their mining activities reached a peak.

In the neighbouring parish of Dodworth, the process was to be emulated on a slightly smaller scale by the Taylor family who had acquired, and was still acquiring its wealth from linen manufacture. The Taylors' venture into landownership, however, began rather later than the Clarkes' and was aided by marriage into an old Dodworth family, the Thornleys, who owned over 150 acres in 1838. Another branch of the family, also involved in the linen firm, established themselves in a similar way at Middlewood Hall in Darfield. This process, however, became

1 Barnsley Chronicle, 30 Aug. 1880.
2 Silkstone Parish Safe, Silkstone Rate Valuation Book, 1834.
4 Dodworth Urban District Council Offices (Dodworth B.H.), Dodworth Rate Valuation Book, 1834.
increasingly rare and there was no more obvious examples of land acquisition on this scale after the 1840s. The fluidity of the trade in estates seems to have crystallised around the middle of the nineteenth century. The stakes became too high to be lightly disposed of once the true potential of the coal under this district became known.

(b) Local government.

Local government in South Yorkshire in the first half of the nineteenth century was largely the preserve of those groups one would have expected to find in control of a predominantly rural area. The Poor Law Unions, established in the 1830s at Wortley and Rotherham, were administered in the main by farmers and small landowners. The first Barnsley Union Guardians were a similar mix, although the representatives for Barnsley itself (as to a lesser extent for the town of Rotherham) were, throughout the nineteenth century, from the industrial and trading middle classes. Barnsley Union diverged from the others however, inasmuch as stringent opposition from the local Chartists in the late 1830s, coupled with hostility from the Tories, forced the Poor Law Commissioners to suspend their plans for implementation of the 1834 Act until the 1850s.¹

At parish level the farmers also dominated. In Swinton, for example, the lists of men rotating for parish office consisted in the main of farmers, mostly tenants of Earl Fitzwilliam, the others being professional men, small industrialists or large tradesmen, or simply 'gentlemen'.² As we shall see later,³ the type of Guardian and parish officer changed little over the century, although the importance of these offices tended to diminish in the more industrialised parishes.

In Silkstone, the pattern was slightly unusual. Here, everyone with any economic influence seemed to belong to the Church of England, unlike the more pluralistic communities to the east.

² Urban District Council Offices (Swinton B.H.), Vestry Minute Books.
³ See Chapter Twenty.
At this level, the church-wardens' committee books reveal that not the farming class but the Clarke family and its closest associates dominated parish life. Only one or two farming families had any sort of permanence in Silkstone in the nineteenth century. The most mobile tenancies, indeed, were those of the Clarke estates. The power of land was here linked with the power of coal. Other than the overriding example of the Fitzwilliams, this was a relatively rare phenomenon in our study area.

Nevertheless, the lasting influence of land is revealed in scrutiny of the local Bench. Of the Staincross (Barnsley) magistrates in 1860, only one - Thomas Taylor - of the twelve magistrates qualifying for office between 1820 and 1855 had recent roots in industry. Between 1805 and 1850, only two magistrates were resident in Barnsley, the remainder representing the interests of outtownships and of the land and the church. The implications of this phenomenon, which persisted well into the second half of the nineteenth century, will be discussed in Part Three.

Urban powers were obtained by a group of commissioners in Barnsley in 1822, ostensibly for lighting, paving, watching and generally 'improving' the town. It was undoubtedly a response to the rapid growth in population and the resultant pressure on housing and sanitation; but it was also, as Kaijage suggests, an initiative by the local landed and middle classes designed to extend social controls in the wake of the Grange Moor uprising in which many local radicals participated.

Of the 69 commissioners appointed in 1822, 23 were linen

1 Silkstone Parish Safe, Silkstone Churchwardens' Books, 1820-1882.
2 White's Sheffield Directories reveal a high turnover of farmers in Silkstone.
3 Barnsley Chronicle Almanac 1860-1.
4 F.J.Kaijage, op.cit., p.54.
5 F.J.Kaijage, op.cit., p.274.
manufacturers, well over half of those who were operating in the town at the time. The three large landowners on the first Commission — Earl Fitzwilliam, Francis Offley Edmunds of Worsborough, and John Spencer-Stanhope may, in fact, have been little more than courtesy nominees. The chairman of the first meeting was Joseph Beckett, linen manufacturer and banker, typifying a combination of industrial and professional/commercial interests which characterised the active membership of the town commission for the following three decades. New membership reflected the changing economic structure of the town as more coalowners filled places on the Commission. The Clarkes (Jonas and his son Robert), William Hopwood, John Twibell, George Traviss, John Horsfall, James and Joseph Porter and Richard Thorp were all members at one time or another. But the fact that they represented the sum of coalowners of any significance in the immediate locality of Barnsley before 1840, indicates how small a group they were in the overall economy. On the Commission, they were easily outnumbered by the growing groups of professional men and of small tradesmen who alone could have provided a counterbalance to the linen manufacturers if the occasion had demanded it.

It would be wrong, however, to assume that the Barnsley Town Commission was a stage for pressure group politics; a battleground between the reformers and the defenders of the status quo. It is true, that within the first eighteen months, action was taken on lighting the town with gas from the newly built works, on scavenging, watching, inspecting nuisances and purchasing the market rents from the Duke of Leeds. But it wasn't long before the early enthusiasm waned and attendances dwindles, many meetings not attracting any members bar the chairman. In Kaijage's words, the Commission, which was not directly accountable to the ratepayers, was characterised, at best, by inertia and, at

1 Much of the information in the following two paragraphs is taken from a number of articles about the Town Commission in Barnsley Chronicle, June and July 1884.

2 Barnsley Chronicle, 18 Oct. 1884.
worst, by a conspicuous absence of a serious sense of duty.¹ Not surprisingly, there was considerable agitation against the Commission in the late 1830s, agitation that

provided a meeting point for the working class radicals, led by Crabtree, Hoey and Valiance, and frustrated small businessmen and manufacturers whose ambition to participate in the running of an institution which consumed their rates was thwarted by the 'monopolistic faction'.²

This alliance was short lived but it did ensure that there was a considerable degree of enthusiasm from many groups for the establishment of a local board of health in 1853.

The inhabitants of the smaller townships relied on the vestry for improvement of their living environment, and evidence of any major local effort is lacking. One exception was Wath, a town with a large middle class population, industrial, professional and leisured. Since the early 1840s Wath had had commissioners of its own who, for example, in 1844 implemented the ratepayers decision to light the village with gas.³

(c) Parliamentary politics.

Parliamentary politics rarely had an obvious and immediate effect on the lives of most of the people in the district under study. If the ordinary people of South Yorkshire took an interest in who was representing them at Westminster, their voices were ineffectual. The radicalism of Barnsley was not confined entirely to the Chartist period;⁴ at a Whig election meeting there in 1832, for example, the candidates for the West Riding, Morpeth and Strickland, were shouted down by a crowd of some 2000 with cries of 'no Lords' and 'we want some Radicals'.⁵

¹ F.J.Kaijage, op.cit., p.277.
² Ibid, p.286.
³ Sheffield Independent, 20 Jan. 1844.
⁴ See pp. 60-62.
⁵ Leeds Mercury, 8 Dec. 1832.
But apart from the occasional outpouring of anger from the tradesmen and working class, the overall pattern was one of easy acceptance by the enfranchised of power-sharing by the two parties. Elections for the West Riding constituency were often uncontested and, although there were occasions when the interests of the Whig Fitzwilliams and those of the Tory Stuart-Wortleys and Spencer-Stanhopes appeared to be opposed to each other (especially in 1841 when members of the first two families were candidates for the division), there were no overt signs of the political rivalry and enthusiasm that were often witnessed in the boroughs of the West Riding.

The sixth Earl Fitzwilliam himself had stood as M.P. for Malton between 1837 and 1841, and again between 1846 and 1847, and from then on for Wicklow in Ireland until he acceded to his father's title in 1857. The Stuart-Wortleys had active and influential support from the relative newcomers, the Spencer-Stanhopes, and the moral support of the Vernon-Wentworths and most of the smaller landowners like the Micklethwaites of Ardsley and the Clarkes of Silkstone. Where possible, these men took their parishes to the poll with them. Thus there were no Whig votes among the enfranchised residents of Stainborough in 1835 nor in 1848, and only a handful in Silkstone and Cawthorne. The reverse was true in the Fitzwilliams' home parish of Wentworth. However, most communities were not so obviously committed and returned more balanced voting figures. Thus, in 1835, Tory and Whig votes in Barnsley, Mexborough, Wombwell, Ecclesfield, Tankersley and Darfield were evenly shared. The more industrialised of the outtownships like Hoyland, Swinton and Rawmarsh voted more heavily for the Whigs. The fact that these communities had a large number of tenants of the Fitzwilliams was bound to have been important, but less so than in Wentworth itself. In 1848, the swing to the Tories carried several townships decisively into their camp and only Darton, Hoyland, Rawmarsh, Swinton, Dodworth and Barnsley itself

1 Who was Who, 1897-1915 (Black, 1929), p.248.
returned a majority for the Whigs. Several of the Fitzwilliam's larger tenant farmers, such as Thomas Dingley of Swinton, switched their votes to the Tories. The party political spectrum was indeed an ephemeral one in these townships, but, as we shall see later, long-term change was uni-directional.

Labour and protest

(a) Miners and their working conditions.

Working conditions for the majority of miners in our district, before the 1850s, were both primitive and unbound by rigid work discipline, when compared with those in the north eastern coalfield. Most pits employed well under 100, were shallow and did not merit capital outlay on expensive pumping, winding and ventilating equipment. When a colliery got too large for coal to be effectively drawn in one shaft and in one tub at a time, a second shaft was sunk, as at the pits in Stainborough, Silkstone and Elsecar, rather than employ more sophisticated winding arrangements.\(^1\) Use of young female labour was particularly notorious in parts of South Yorkshire, and especially at the Clarkes' Silkstone collieries, where 53 were employed immediately prior to the 1842 Coal Mines Act.\(^2\) Owing to the thickness of the seams, however, work couldn't have been as hard for them and the men at the coal face as in the thin seam districts of West Yorkshire where the employment of female labour was also common. Other aspects of J.C. Symond's (the Sub-Commissioner) evidence to the Children's Employment Commission indicate the lack of sophistication in the industry locally. Deputies, for example, often no more skilled nor intelligent than the other underground workers, were left in sole charge of the workings.\(^3\) Compare this with the strength of the north eastern coalfield's tradition of professional viewers (in the larger pits at least). In many pits, hours were not fixed; and the large number of

\(^1\) Children's Employment Commission, (1842, xvi), p.268.

\(^2\) Ibid, p.182. One was aged eight.

\(^3\) Ibid, p.191.
non-vertical mine shafts (known as dayholes) promoted this flexibility, with easy entry and egress for the individual workman. As the underground steward at the Charlesworths' small pits in Silkstone and Dodworth testified of the hurriers:

'... some work ten, some eleven, some twelve hours, no regularity, and no statement to compel them'.

The same seems to have been true of John Barber's pits at Rawmarsh and even at the larger pits of the Clarkes, although there, a starting time of six a.m. applied. There is no reason to believe that the same flexibility did not apply to hewers and many other underground workers. At the Clarkes' pits, however, this seems to have been a change from the regime in the early years of operation. A set of rules dating from 1810 specified that 'No collier (was) to leave his or her bank or task work till finished to the satisfaction of the agent; and his or her tools and plates delivered up.'

Perhaps it was the fall off in demand for coal in the late 1830s and early 1840s which permitted a liberalising of the work stint.

Nevertheless, the fluctuations in trade and the short life of many of the pits had important repercussions on a mining population which was fast becoming divorced from alternate sources of employment. As Thomas Wilson, a local colliery owner, pointed out, mining was rapidly approaching the state of 'uncertain and irregular employment, arising from the same cause of an ill regulated relation between supply and demand as in factory employment'. This led miners to work what hours they could whenever trade allowed, which resulted also in periodic pressure to maintain the employment of young children. As much as the South Yorkshire coal industry might have superficially resembled one that existed before the impact of the industrial revolution was felt, it lacked in most places

1 Ibid, p.200.

2 A 'bank' or 'benk' was the coal face in the stall in which the miner worked.

3 G.H.Teasdale, op.cit., p.7.

what Rimlinger saw as characteristic of British mining in the eighteenth century:

... the collier, though nearly a social outcast, possessed a considerable degree of personal independence. His wages and working conditions were largely a matter of local custom and did not reflect short-run market conditions. ¹

There was also evidence that the 'ties of loyalty' that often bonded master and servant in small pits were being severed. The 1844 Miners' Association strike proved that this realignment was as likely to occur, in extreme conditions, at paternalistic collieries like the Clarkes' as in more cosmopolitan concerns. ²

In the 1840s, the miners of South Yorkshire were in the middle of a transitional period. They had in most cases lost the security and ties of the old, family based mining industry that lingered on at the Fitzwilliam and Clarke collieries. ³

With these benefits had also gone abuses like truck and the butty system. But the miners did not yet work in a highly capitalised and disciplined industrial environment. They were still considered by many observers (especially those outside mining areas) to be a race apart. Symonds, the sub-commissioner in 1842, bore this out:

It cannot be too constantly remembered that the mining population, owing to the early age at which they begin to work, owing to their spending the daylight out of sight, and owing to their need of fresh air and light on Sundays, are a class, the great bulk of whom mostly live out of sight of the rest of the community, and almost wholly out of its ken: they are reached by none of our institutions. ⁴

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¹ G.V. Rimlinger, 'International differences in the strike propensity of coal miners: experience in four countries', Industrial and Labour Relations Review, xii (1958), 402


³ See pp. 309-12. The Earls maintained the relatively rare combination of fairly large, well run mines, and traditional master-servant relations. See, for example, the evidence of James Hutley, the steward at Elsecar, in the Report of the Commissioners under 5 and 6 Vict. (1845), p. 25.

⁴ Children's Employment Commission (1842, xvi), p. 197.
This attitude fast became outdated as Barnsley and other mushrooming South Yorkshire communities played host to increasing numbers of miners from the proliferation of pits in the railway era. But the story of the 1844 miners' strike and the organisation which promoted it does show that in the 1840s the miners did not immediately identify with the more urban-orientated political institutions of the time, even if these institutions were proclaiming their cause. The inclusion of the South Yorkshire miners into the mainstream of local institutional life took many more years to complete and the 'drunken, brawling, gaming collier' tag took time to throw off.¹

(b) Miners' unionism and industrial action

The South Yorkshire miners' collective response to fluctuating living standards and, no doubt, deteriorating relationships with the coalmasters, was fragmented and, generally, half-hearted. We are told of a combination at the Newton Chambers pits around Thorncliffe in 1810 which pressed for an advance in wages.² There also seem to have been a few, more permanent organisations in West Yorkshire before the Combination Acts were repealed in 1824. These institutions avoided protracted confrontation with their employers, but a union in Sheffield in 1825 won a temporary advance by strike action and, in 1836 several pits in the Barnsley area (including Elsecar) pressed for advances in wages, demands which seem to have been met.³ Already, union activity was beginning to relate its demands to the state of the market for coal. But until the 1840s, the Barnsley area pits (even those of the Fitzwilliams, the Clarkes and the Newton Chambers partnership whose operations were scattered) were too small in number and too fragmented to be a cohesive force or to forge a combination with any degree of permanence. Moreover, a few

¹ F. Machin, op. cit., p. 24. He quotes from a speech at the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, 1860.
² Ibid, pp. 30-34.
owners like the Earls Fitzwilliam and Jonas Clarke, with substantial capital resources and political sway, made up considerably for the lack of a cohesive and powerful coal-owning group in the district as a whole.

The story of the National Miners' Association and the strike of 1844 in South Yorkshire need not be repeated. Some observations are important, though, for understanding their role in the development of trade union consciousness among the miners in our area and of the response of the coalowning class.

First, it must be remembered that the union in both South and West Yorkshire took a long time to develop despite the main impetus for the formation of the N.M.A., having come from meetings at Halifax and Wakefield in August and November 1842. Chartism had failed to mobilise the miners of the Barnsley area and the miners' missionaries like S. Davies of Newcastle toured the district in August 1843 without much success. No Yorkshire delegates were observed by the Northern Star at the N.M.A., conference in early September and the paper bemoaned the lack of organisation in the face of at least one Barnsley coalowner's attack on his men's wages. The Northern Star clearly believed that the South Yorkshire miners were powerless to organise themselves politically and industrially and suggested that a Chartist lecturer should be put to work. A month later, the Clay Cross miners of North Derbyshire publicly acknowledged that one such an outsider had played an important role in the establishment of their own organisation.

When David Swallow finally succeeded in mobilising the miners in our district, however, the response was immediate and overwhelming. We read of the miners of Blacker, in

2 Ibid, p.62.
3 Northern Star, 9 and 30 Sept. 1843.
4 Ibid, 4 Nov. 1843.
Worsborough parish, marching to Barnsley as one body to join the union and, a week or two later, striking for parity and the removal of grievances.\(^1\) Even at Fitzwilliam's Parkgate colliery, as the understeward later testified, there was considerable enthusiasm:

... several of the men, whose real interests are consulted with paternal care and generosity, entertained the idea of joining the strike almost at the first moment of the appearance of the union delegates ...\(^2\)

This flirtation on their behalf was soon terminated. By April 1844, the Fitzwilliam miners had disclaimed any connection with the union after the pits had been shut down and with the men under the threat of dismissal and eviction.\(^3\) A miners' meeting at Rawmarsh on the 22nd April, clearly organised for the benefit of the Fitzwilliam men, discussed their capitulation and their absence from the meeting with regret.\(^4\) This sequence of events was to be repeated in 1858 when the permanent union in South Yorkshire was formed: the Fitzwilliam miners were again the weak link, though, by then, they were no longer the dominant presence in the district labour force, and the newcomers in the large railway era pits were in a position to take the initiative.

No other coalowner held this degree of sway over his men. A few, like Samuel Cooper, reacted immediately with dismissals and prosecutions. Sarah Clarke evicted several families from her cottages in Silkstone and, like Cooper, succeeded in getting blackleg labour.\(^5\) There were inevitable skirmishes, but at these pits, whose owners were both of local families, the termination of the strike marked the beginning of a long

\(^1\) Ibid, 20 Jan. and 3 Feb. 1844.
\(^3\) F.Machin, op.cit., p.54.
\(^4\) Sheffield Independent, 27 April 1844.
\(^5\) Ibid, 13 July and 14 Dec. 1844.
period of industrial peace. At other pits, the strike was marked by a lack of violence. There were isolated cases of assault and intimidation, but apart from the storming of the Soap House Pit in Sheffield on the 4th July 1844, major disturbances were avoided. At Warren Vale, the miners even used the courts in their favour when they won a case against the Charlesworth's agent, William Sellars, who had been paying wages in kind. Caution had been preached by the union leaders from the outset. In Machin's words, Swallow had 'damned a premature strike as the major sin' and George Moore, a Yorkshire delegate to the Glasgow conference of the 2nd April, urged the lodges to keep their demands low and to go to work if the advances were met. At a meeting in Sheffield on the 5th April, he also advised against connection with Chartists, as the Sheffield Independent reported:

He had been led to believe that there was a design to turn the Association into a Chartist movement, and therefore, he had proposed (at the conference) that none be employed as lecturers . . . They were resolved never to admit politics into their proceedings for it would give the Government the opportunity to pounce upon them.

Challinor and Ripley claim that 'Chartism . . . greatly influenced the Miners' Association' and point out that most of its leaders played an active part in the movement. Swallow and William Holgate, regular lecturers in Yorkshire, were among them. Moreover, the Northern Star was used as a regular organ of publicity by the N.M.A., in the early days of 1843. In South Yorkshire at least, however, there is little evidence of active recruiting of miners to Chartism. Swallow's appeal to the rank and file was essentially industrial and not

1 Ibid, 25 May 1844.
2 F. Machin, op. cit., p. 63.
3 Sheffield Independent, 6 April 1844.
4 Ibid.
5 R. Challinor and B. Ripley, op. cit., p. 244.
political. There was no suggestion of extra-legal action. Sctalow's formula involved stopping at home, not a resort to activities like plug pulling. While the plugs in the West Riding mills were being drawn in August 1842, local colliers' leaders called a meeting at Wakefield and invited the coalowners. The politicising activity of Roberts, and others, in Yorkshire seems to have been staged after the defeat of the strike, late in 1844. The local branches of the Chartist union, at Sheffield and Barnsley (there seems to have been little or no activity in Rotherham) had little to do with the miners, and vice versa.

The strike was over in South Yorkshire by early October, although weaknesses in the ranks were evident as early as June. In Barnsley, the linen weavers 'jeered and booted the miners when the latter gave in' and the miners admitted that they were 'ashamed to meet' the weavers. But some owners, it appears, 'came to accept the hold of the Miners' Association over their men' and advances gained in June and July at several pits may have been retained at the end of the confrontation. For the first time on a large scale the South Yorkshire coalowners made full use of the discharge note and imported blackleg labour. If these tactics were not as successful as they had hoped, they did, at least, help to

1 Northern Star, 8 June 1843.
5 R. Challinor and B. Ripley, op. cit., p. 165.
6 Sheffield Independent, 3 Aug. 1844. See also S.C.L., CR 139A for a report of a coalowners' conference at Wakefield, 11 March 1844, at which the members resolved to make full use of such certificates.

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create some degree of corporate feeling among a fairly disparate group of small capitalists.

Recent assessments conflict somewhat on the success of the coalowners' counter attack, on the general shortcomings of miners' organisation and on the state of the union in Yorkshire after the strike had ended. Machin claims that 'there was little left of the Union in South Yorkshire by the end of 1844', and that the West Yorkshire area fared little better. Challinor and Ripley suggest that 'the Yorkshire miners emerged from the fray with their organisation in a reasonable condition'. If one focuses on the Barnsley and Sheffield districts, the gloomier picture is, indeed confirmed. It was at three or four large pits in these districts that the hard line of the owners was most successful and, unfortunately for the miners, the compensating advantage of organising amongst a comparatively large workforce had not yet been learnt. There seems to have been little contact with the rather more mature traditions of combination around Wakefield and further north and, moreover, little contact between the Barnsley and Sheffield districts. These shortcomings emerged again in the late 1850s and the 1860s, although, by then, the miners' had clearer if more limited objectives and a better grasp of the means of attaining them. Meanwhile, the union in South and West Yorkshire dwindled into insignificance. As with the national union, the district organisations depended considerably at this early stage on their leadership. As Challinor points out, the leadership was not decided on how to exercise this responsibility:

... the Miners' Association never had a clearly thought out industrial strategy. It wavered between conflict and conciliation. Prominent members reflected this indecisiveness by their own vacillation, swinging from moderation to militancy and back again.

1 F. Machin, op. cit., p. 64.
2 R. Challinor and B. Ripley, op. cit., p. 165.
3 Ibid, p. 249.
Some lessons were undoubtedly learnt by the mining rank and file of South Yorkshire and of other coalfields; and, in 1858, a new leadership emerged with new strategies and tactics. The coalowners had learnt their lessons too, although their tactics had been partly vindicated in 1844 and were to be used again. Most of the leading personnel on both sides in 1858, however, were new, unlike the position in some of the other coalfields. Thus many of the more controversial aspects of the 1840s union could conveniently be forgotten.

(c) The linen weavers and Chartism.

The only other large industrial group in the study area to be involved in organised protest and industrial action was the weavers of Barnsley and the surrounding parishes. Weaving, as we have seen, was an expanding industry up until the 1830s, although this expansion didn't prevent periods of acute distress, especially among the handloom weavers whose competitive position was under threat from many angles. In fact Kaijage contends that there was an almost permanent glut of labour in the local industry.¹

As in other textile trades, the beginnings of a decline in wages in the linen industry coincided with the end of the Napoleonic wars. 1814 seems to have been the last year the weavers secured an advance. In 1818, there was an unsuccessful six week strike for an advance which ended in arrests and imprisonment.² Two years later, five men from Dodworth and Barnsley were convicted for their involvement in the Grange Moor uprising which had drawn considerable support from the linen weavers of the district. A crowd of some 300-500 men had assembled south of Barnsley, and another 80-odd at Dodworth for the march north to Grange Moor. Of the forty seven arrested or questioned after the incident, thirty six were linen weavers and four were miners.³ Grange Moor was the

¹ F.J. Kaijage, op.cit., p.304.
³ F.J. Kaijage, op.cit., pp.423, 447.
climax of a brief flurry of ultra-radical activity in the Barnsley area that had undoubtedly been stoked up by the Peterloo Massacre the year before. This mood was silenced after the fiasco of Grange Moor and thereafter radical discontent was channelled largely through industrial action.

In 1823, there was an unsuccessful strike among the handloom weavers over the withdrawal by the manufacturers of the traditionally concessionary pieces of cloth known as 'fents'. Three men were gaolèd after an incident involving a strike breaker. The action failed after the strike fund had been exhausted. In 1825, however, the weavers formed a union on the repeal of the Combinations Acts. ¹

A few years of unrest culminated in the most disturbed year in the industry, 1829, when the weavers were wholly or partially on strike from June to October to force the proprietors to adhere to a common price list. ² Eventually the proprietors agreed, but not until they had wrested another 10% reduction. During this strike, in late August, Thomas Jackson's (one of the larger proprietors) house was stormed and materially damaged, prompting the intervention of troops already on alert in Barnsley. ³ About a month later, some Dodworth weavers, defying the strike by taking out yarn from Jackson's warehouse, were pursued and had their material destroyed. ⁴ Several of the activists were rounded up and two, Frank Mirfield and William Ashton, were convicted of malicious destruction of property and transported for fourteen years. ⁵ Mirfield had been secretary of the local weavers' union and Ashton a prominent spokesman. They were easy targets. Ashton

¹ Ibid, p.323.
² Ibid.
³ Sheffield Iris, 1 Sept. 1829.
⁴ Ibid, 6 Oct. 1829.
⁵ Ibid, 1 Oct. 1830.
later professed that he only fell in with the crowd in the belief that the Dodworth weavers' yarn would be returned to the warehouse.  

Rationalisation or not, Barnsley found room for both Ashton and Mirfield on their return from Australia.

1829 saw the last mass industrial action by the handloom weavers, despite a renewed attack on their wages in 1837 and piecemeal reductions in the trade depressions of the early and late 1840s.  

Their position was so weak that, despite some proprietors agreeing to the weavers' own proposals for new price lists, other, more tough-minded manufacturers forced their amended lists on the unfortunate handloom weavers without a struggle. This meant that many prices had been more than halved between 1814 and 1838.  

The Assistant Commissioner estimated that, allowing for periods of unemployment and under-employment, and for periods of non-productive work, the linen handloom weaver in 1840 was earning little more than five shillings and sixpence a week on a long-term average. Few weavers could afford to subscribe to friendly societies and in periods of acute distress, such as in 1839, many were forced to rely on charity or the workhouse. Not surprisingly, this was fertile ground for Chartism. In June 1838, two weavers, George Uttley and Joseph Crabtree took the initiative in forming the Barnsley Northern Union - one of the first of these bodies - and on the 14th of October, the Chartist demonstration on Peel Green was, in the opinion of a contemporary Chartist journalist and historian, 'probably the largest meeting ever held in Yorkshire'.

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1 Burland's 'Annals' in Barnsley Chronicle, 20 Nov. 1875.
3 Handloom Weavers Commissioners (1840), Vallance's evidence, p.317.
4 Kaijage holds that radicalism in Barnsley as typified by the activity of the Chartist weavers owed more to economic than to intellectual factors; though the tradition was deeply embedded and transcended short-term hardships. See 'Manifesto of the Barnsley Chartists' in Bull.Soc.Stud.Lab.Hist., 33 (Autumn 1876), p.20.
5 Burland's 'Annals' in Barnsley Chronicle, 26 Aug. 1876.
1839, christened Barnsley: 'The right eye of Yorkshire'.

The mood of the Barnsley radicals after 1829 was, however, essentially non-violent. By 1838, some of the weavers' leaders had acquired some degree of respectability. John Vallance had given evidence before the Handloom Weavers' Commission and, along with Crabtree and another activist, Peter Hoey, had sat with coalowners and linen proprietors on a committee to look into the subject of incorporation of their town. Chartist activity, however, was widespread and assertive in the early days. Fergus O'Connor had been received enthusiastically in 1835 when a Radical Association was formed. Three years later the local association formed on the lines of the Birmingham Political Union, had branches at Dodworth, Cawthorne, Worsborough, Ardsley and Claytonwest.

In April 1839, the Barnsley Chartists took over the Oddfellows Hall during a Corn Law meeting and, in the following months, held regular public meetings leading up to the 'Chartist National Holiday' of August 12th. It was at one of these meetings, on the 16th of July, that Peter Hoey, the chairman, was reputed to have used language likely to have incited riot. He was alleged to have claimed that the Holiday would be a 'national revolution' and that miners 'would, if they were forced to it, try their picks upon a material of softer nature than they had been accustomed to operate on before'. It was also claimed that Hoey had referred to the need to resort to arms. This was too much for the, until then,

5 Barnsley Chronicle, 25 March 1882.
6 Sheffield Iris, 24 March 1840.
relatively unassertive magistrates.\textsuperscript{1} They rounded up several of the leaders, including Valiance, Uttley and Hoey, on the 13th day of August, but later released them on bail. At the Spring Assizes in 1840, however, Hoey, Crabtree and Ashton were gaolled for two years for incitement to riot: somewhat milder sentences than those received by their Sheffield counterparts for their part in the conspiracy of January 1840.\textsuperscript{2} Valiance and others were not convicted.

The Barnsley Chartists were probably not over-intimidated by this luke-warm re-assertion of traditional authority. Dodworth re-opened a branch of the Charter Association in August 1840, which was overwhelmed by the number of new recruits.\textsuperscript{3} A petition with 3069 'unsolicited' signatures was entrusted to Duncombe, the Radical M.P., calling for the release of the three prisoners.\textsuperscript{4} In October, collections for their families were made. Nevertheless, the largely weaver-dominated Chartists were powerless to resist an even more intimidating force: economic decline. In 1843, only two thirds of the looms were said to be at work in the town at the best of times\textsuperscript{5} and the tick weavers of Haxworth, Carnelly and Co., were forced to strike, unsuccessfully, against a reduction of about three shillings in the pound.\textsuperscript{6} The false boom of 1846 ended in a further decline in the living standards of the handloom weavers, and this time demoralisation was so complete that the Chartists failed to mobilise any support. Even the weavers' leaders abandoned mass political action;\textsuperscript{7} some drifted away

\textsuperscript{1} O'Connor expressed satisfaction with the tolerance of the Barnsley magistrates in 1839. See Burland in \textit{Barnsley Chronicle}, 7 Oct. 1876.

\textsuperscript{2} \textit{Sheffield Iris}, 24 March 1840.

\textsuperscript{3} \textit{Northern Star}, 8 Aug. 1840.

\textsuperscript{4} Ibid, 1 Aug. 1840.

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid, 17 June 1843.

\textsuperscript{6} Ibid, May 1843.

\textsuperscript{7} Valiance among others, took no part in Chartist activity in 1848. See \textit{Barnsley Chronicle}, 25 March 1882.
from the industry, while others adopted roles in the community which precluded class confrontation.\(^1\) The Barnsley district had seen the last of the radical traditions of the handloom weavers.

That the mass action of the weavers had been seen as a threat to the established order was evident from the stationing of cavalry in newly constructed barracks at Mount Vernon, Worsborough from 1839.\(^2\) There were occasions, even after 1839, when the authorities thought they might have to be used. In 1840, Ben Biram, Earl Fitzwilliams's agent and Lieutenant of the Wath troop of the Yeomanry Cavalry, was ordered to assemble his men at Wentworth due to an 'apprehended outbreak of the Chartists'.\(^3\) In September 1842, the magistrates were clearly anxious about a planned Chartist lecture. The Clerk to the magistrates wrote to the Home Secretary, asking his advice as to their power to suppress such meetings. What worried the magistrates was the fact that it was not advertised as a public meeting, as had been the rule before the arrests of August 1839: '... They are of more consequence in their nature being private than public, it not being possible to ascertain the object and design they contemplate'.\(^4\) He was advised simply to watch the meeting.

That the Barnsley Chartists were virtually synonymous with the loosely constituted handloom weavers' union is evident from the coincidence of their leadership. There were a few non-weaving activists like Thomas Lingard, a shoemaker, and, later, owner of the Barnsley Chronicle, the local liberal weekly. There were, as we have seen, small branches of the Charter

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1 See Chapter Eighteen.
3 Ibid, 9 Dec. 1876.
4 P.R.O., H.O., 45, 264B, o.s., Marshall to Home Secretary, 26 Sept. 1842.
Association in several of the adjacent weaving townships like Dodworth and Worsborough, but the only organisation in our study area formed outside the weaving communities, seems to have been the Chartist 'district' formed at Mexborough in August 1842.¹ Delegates to the first meeting came from as far away as Gainsborough in Lincolnshire, although there was already a Charter Association at Doncaster. It seems that Rotherham came within the bounds of the Mexborough 'district' as the secretary was a man called William Gillender, a glassworker at Beatson's in Masborough (not at Mexborough, as one report claimed).² Rotherham itself had failed to mobilise under the Chartist banner. As the correspondent of the Northern Star put it: 'Politically speaking, Rotherham has, for the last three years, been a dead letter - a cypher in the work of political redemption, and, I may add, is yet . . . Such is the deplorable apathy and supineness amongst the workers'.³ Both Rotherham and its expanding adjunct, Masborough, had a large population of miners and ironworkers. But neither of these groups were politically active locally. The ironfounders, of course, had an organisation in the Friendly Society of Ironfounders, with some considerable degree of influence over the branches. But this control was often used as a barrier to militant action rather than as a means of mobilising discontent.⁴ John Kane, it is true, had links with Chartists in his campaign to unite ironworkers under a single organisation. But his influence in South Yorkshire seems not to have been very strong.

Thus it may have been left to the glass bottle makers to mobilise support for Chartism. Mexborough itself, at this time, was more of an oversized agricultural village than an industrial community. It had some potters and a few boat-

¹ Northern Star, 20 Aug. 1842.
² Ibid. But see Burland in Barnsley Chronicle, 22 Sept. 1877.
³ Northern Star, 7 Dec. 1844.
CHAPTER THREE

Economic Trends in the South Yorkshire Coal Industry,

1855-1894.
builders, but mostly it functioned as a local market centre. It may have been chosen as a centre for the Chartist 'district' for geographical convenience. Nevertheless, the radical leanings it may have acquired, however short lived the Chartist organisations may have been, may have been retained, to emerge in the second half of the century. If so, this and other extremely tentative threads may have been the only real link in local political traditions after the demise of the Barnsley weavers ensured the extinction of radicalism in that part of the district.
Table 3 reveals the general growth of the coal industry in Yorkshire as a whole in this period. In the forty years, output rose 215%, rather more than in the United Kingdom as a whole (191%). Also in percentage terms, the industry in Yorkshire grew faster than in Northumberland and Durham, in Lancashire and in Staffordshire, but slower than Scotland and substantially slower than South Wales and the Midlands (Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Warwickshire taken as a whole). The latter produced over five and a half times as much coal in 1894 as in 1855. Between 1864 and 1894, the rise in manpower closely followed that of output, reflecting rather less than some coalfields the overall phenomenon of a decline in productivity from 1883, noticed by A.J. Taylor.  

Separate figures for South Yorkshire, if they had been available, would have revealed a growth rate nearer to that of her East Midlands neighbours, based on larger pits. The South Yorkshire coalfield must have overtaken its West Riding neighbour in output sometime in the late 1870s or early 1880s, despite the larger number of pits in West Yorkshire. In 1855, there were 81 pits producing 2.8 million tons of coal in South Yorkshire, and 252 producing 5 million tons in West Yorkshire. In 1870, the figures were 108 pits and 4.4 million tons against West Yorkshire's 308 pits and 6.25 million tons. Pits in the Barnsley area in 1870 were said to be producing an average of 50,000 tons p.a., compared with 25,000 for Yorkshire as a whole. In 1893, the four police divisions of Rotherham, Sheffield, Staincross and Lower Strafforth and Tickhill (roughly encompassing the South Yorkshire coalfield as it was

3 47 of these were in the study area.
5 *Barnsley Chronicle*, 17 Feb. 1872.
then being worked) had almost 50,000 miners out of 88,600 for the county as a whole. The faster growth rate in our study area can also be seen in a comparison of the total workforce estimated for the area in 1874 and the figures for 1893. The 1893 figure is about twice the earlier one, whereas the figures for the county as a whole between these years rose only 41%. Figures for a slightly wider area indicate that South Yorkshire's contribution to the United Kingdom's coal output had risen from 6% in 1851 to 7% in 1900.

Relative to West Yorkshire, then, and to several other of the older-established coalfields, the part of South Yorkshire under study expanded steadily, and at times rapidly, within the period. It maintained, moreover, a more consistent level of productivity per-man-year than most other coalfields. A glance at the second, third and fourth columns of Table 2 and at Figure 4 will dispel any doubts as to the nature of this expansion and the reasons why productivity was maintained at a high level in the 1880s and 1890s. South Yorkshire moved in the direction of large, modern pits which worked the Barnsley seam in virgin territory; while the thinner seams of West Yorkshire were gradually being worked out. This is an oversimplification, of course. Many new pits in West Yorkshire worked the same seams that dipped under the Barnsley area, although even in the expanding coalfield around Wakefield, these seams were not easy to work as in the South. Also, several of the largest collieries in the Barnsley area worked the Silkstone as their main seam; but only from the mid 1870s did this occur east of the Barnsley outcrop. A.J. Taylor's observations of the coal industry nationally, in which he identified a large stock of small, ageing pits, were not, in

1 Registry of Deeds, Wakefield, Riots MSS, Memoranda 27 July 1893.
2 See Table 2.
3 The Times, 15 Oct. 1929. I am grateful to J. MacFarlane and J. Woodhead for leading me to this reference.
4 See A. Finlay Gibson, A Compilation of Statistics of the Coal Mining Industry of the United Kingdom (1936), pp. 11, 22.
5 A.J. Taylor, op. cit., p. 65. He refers to a slightly later period.
FIGURE 4 THE SIZE AND ANTIQUITY OF MAJOR COLLIERIES

SCALE: 1" TO 1 MILE

PERIOD WHEN OPENED
PRE-1851 1851-70 1871-94

SIZE IN 1870
UNDER 250 250-1000 OVER 1000

PERIOD WHEN OWNED
PRE-1851 1851-70 1871-94

SIZE IN 1870
UNDER 250 250-1000 OVER 1000

Legend:
- Black dots represent collieries
- Red dots represent antiqutity
- Green dots represent size

Map of煤矿分布图示，颜色和标签代表不同时间和规模的煤矿。
general, applicable to this area. There were few small, ageing pits in 1894 in the study area.

Table 4 reveals dramatically the differences between the growth of the United Kingdom coal industry and that of Yorkshire. By the mid 1850s, other coalfields, such as Northumberland and Durham, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire were making full use of the main line railways in supplying the London market and the tenders of the locomotives themselves. Yorkshire, and the Barnsley area especially, was disadvantaged geographically in this respect. Barnsley itself waited until 1870 before it had a direct connection with the Midland Railway, while Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire had established their presence in the London house coal trade a decade or more before. In the 1850s, South Yorkshire began to rival Derbyshire's strong hold on this trade by using its lines which connected with the Great Northern Railway; although the Great Northern, marketing the coal it carried by means of its own retail operation based on sidings at Kings Cross station, had an important leverage on prices. In 1860 however, through the efforts of Samuel Plimsoll, several large coalowners in the district, including Earl Fitzwilliam, Robert Clarke, and the Wharncliffe Silkstone, Wombwell Main and Newton Chambers companies took over this marketing operation, forming their own company, the Silkstone and Elsecar Coalowners Co. Unfortunately, this move provoked a railway rate war with the Midland Railway which, according to J.E. Williams, damaged the trade of both South Yorkshire and Derbyshire, and was not resolved until 1871.

In 1856, Samuel Plimsoll had attempted to promote a viable export trade through the Humber ports and criticised the local

3 J.E. Williams, *op. cit.*, p.46.
monopoly of the Great Northern and South Yorkshire Railway.¹ The initial impetus of his efforts was lost. But there were important markets for South Yorkshire coal other than in London. The development of the Brightside area, on the eastern flank of Sheffield, as a steelmaking centre provided increasing local demand for coal. The expansion of firms like John Brown and Co., C.Cammell and Co., and M. Firth and Co., from small beginnings and the developing contribution of the Parkgate Iron and Steel Co., were important from the mid 1860s especially.² A few years earlier, it was reported that steam coal was being sent to Merseyside for consumption in ships' tenders.³ A few coal proprietors consumed coal in their own allied industries. But even Newton Chambers, whose coal operations possessed this advantage, could not fully expand them until the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincoln Railways's branch line through their workings was completed in 1865. Their output doubled between 1862 and 1872,⁴ mostly on the basis of the shipment of coal out of the district. They were said to be the first colliery company in the area to use long distance railway transit extensively.⁵

Taken together, these and other factors produced a real, if fluctuating, expansion in output from the mid 1850s to 1870. Prices were generally maintained at a profitable level until 1857/58 after improvements in 1853/54.⁶ This encouraged firms like the Thrybergh Hall, Darfield Main and Strafford Main companies to sink capital in large enterprises after the pioneering examples set in particular by the Wharncliffe Silkstone and Wombwell Main companies earlier in the decade.

¹ See his article prepared for the 1856 Free Trade Congress in Belgium, reproduced verbatim in the Barnsley Times, 7 Feb. 1857.


³ Barnsley Times, 6 June 1857; Barnsley Chronicle, 6 Aug. 1859.

⁴ Sheffield Independent, 29 Oct. 1881. The figures were: 170,667 tons in 1862 and 349,021 in 1872.

⁵ Cusworth Hall, Newton Chambers MSS, copy of the Coal Merchant and Shipper, 15 Feb. 1908.

⁶ F. Machin, op. cit., p.277.
Despite some short-term advantages gained in the autumn of 1858 from interrupted production during disputes in Lancashire and West Yorkshire\(^1\) (interregional competition was a feature of the United Kingdom coal trade throughout the period), the fall off in demand in the spring of that year signalled a period of some twelve years of fluctuating prosperity. Overall, it must have fallen short of the 'rapid and almost continuous advance' which the Derbyshire trade was said to have enjoyed.\(^2\) The local papers reported widespread short time working in July 1861, June 1865 and April 1868 (when the trade was said to have been 'never more depressed').\(^3\) The local industry was, moreover, only just beginning to eliminate seasonal aspects caused by over-dependence on the house coal market.

The period from 1871 to early 1874 witnessed an unprecedented increase in production, manpower and in wages and coal prices in South Yorkshire. An average pit-head price per ton of coal in Yorkshire of 7/6d in 1866 had risen by 1873 to 20/-d.\(^4\) Best Silkstone house coal fetched 38/-d a ton in London in February 1873, a rise of 24/-d over the previous February.\(^5\) This inevitably boosted an output expansion trend that had begun in 1870: six leading Silkstone pits sent nearly half as much again to London in the first six months of 1871 as in the same period of 1870.\(^6\)

Despite the enormous pit-head price rises and the tendency of the railway companies to advance tonnage rates, demand for certain coals did not slacken until late in 1873. Demand from steelworks was probably the main contributor to this boom.

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4. *Select Committee on Coal* (P.P., 1873, x), Q.768.
environment and created what the **Sheffield Independent** described in February 1873 as 'the coal panic'. It claimed that 'The effects of the unprecedented coal famine are assuming a seriousness which in Liverpool is creating great alarm and stagnation throughout the most important branches of commerce.'

South Yorkshire clearly had the spare capacity to meet the demand. Many of the sinkings of the 1850s and 1860s were working well below the capabilities of the relatively modern plant. Church Lane, for example, with only about 200 men under its original owners, the Charlesworths, was sold in 1873 to a group of Lancashire merchants and industrialists and was employing over 400 men within the year. As elsewhere, labour must have been attracted in large numbers from outside the district to work at the relatively high wages that had become the norm. However, Wardell, the county Inspector, reported that as far as he knew, there had been no lowering of standards in the rush to cash in on the inflated prices. Men were not being transferred from 'dead' work (non-productive development and safety work) to coal cutting; nor did he believe there had been any widespread attempt to introduce shifts above where they had already been tried. Newton Chambers had introduced them at one of their pits in 1871, but elsewhere, owners weren't prepared to risk labour troubles over this unpopular practice.

Apart from the enormous influx of outside labour, there were two other important changes triggered off by the coal boom.

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1 **Sheffield Independent**, 22 Feb. 1873.
2 Ibid, 17 Feb. 1873.
4 **Select Committee on Coal** (1873), QQ 696-7, 805.
5 Cusworth Fall, Newton Chambers MSS, George Dawson's diary, 8 May 1871.
With the demand for coal seemingly insatiable, even small coal, or 'slack', found a ready market. It was fetching about 12/-d a ton in 1873 as opposed to 2/3d in 1866, mostly due to the rapid expansion of the coke industry. Old pits which had been abandoned because of the deteriorating nature of their coal, were re-opened, including one of Fitzwilliams's at Elsecar. Also, more serious consideration was given to the benefits of the longwall system, up to then fairly rare in South Yorkshire mines. Perhaps the most significant change as far as the future of industrial relations was concerned, was the entry into coal-owning of many large consumers of coal, especially iron and steel and cotton manufacturers, by buying or leasing collieries at what the Barnsley Chronicle described as 'fabulous prices' or by sinking new pits. Thirty new pits were opened in Yorkshire in 1873 and, more significantly, notice was given of about 100 new sinkings in the first few months of 1874. Most of these latter schemes fell foul of the change in trade that reached a critical point in about May of 1874.

The most important effect of the boom, then, as far as additions to South Yorkshire's stock of colliery plant was concerned, was the creation of several pits, like Rockingham and Hoyland Silkstone, capable of producing around 1000 or more tons of coal a day. These were deep, highly capitalised pits, often taking several years to sink. Thus, most did not open until after the reversal of fortunes in early 1874 (in the case of Wath Main: five years after), with important repercussions on their profitability and their ability to meet district wage norms. More fortunate was a handful of large pits which had opened a little before the boom began - Manvers Main, Denaby

1 Select Committee on Coal (1873), Q 769.
2 Barnsley Chronicle, 11 May 1872.
3 Barnsley Chronicle, 3 Jan. 1874.
4 J.E. Williams, op.cit., p.53 refers to 115 planned sinkings. Barnsley Chronicle, 11 Sept. 1880 refers to 97.
Main and Monk Bretton - all risking large amounts of capital by sinking in parts of the district yet untried, across a well-known system of faults. Despite more than their share of labour troubles, these collieries undoubtedly amassed vast profits which helped them survive the depression better than many of their competitors. Vast profits were also to have been won by some of the more well-established companies like that at Wharncliffe Silkstone, which doubled its income from coal sales between mid 1871 and mid 1873.¹ Strafford Main reversed five years of losses in 1871 with a profit of £6,750 and, in the first quarter of 1872 alone, with over £5,000.² Dividends were high and capital was attracted into ventures which never had a chance of supporting the expectations of the investors. A classic example was the Silkstone and Dodworth Coal and Iron Company which bought the Church Lane colliery in Dodworth from the Charlesworths in 1873 for £34,500 and then issued shares worth £300,000 on the guarantee of 12 1/2% interest per annum.³ The result was that in 1878 it was unable to pay any dividend and from then on was hit by financial troubles which, accompanied by several damaging labour disputes, led to frequent restructuring of the company and several standstills in production.

Coal prices reached a peak in early 1873 and continued at this inflated level until early 1874 when they began to fall steeply. By March 1877, Silkstone coal in London was fetching about 23/-d a ton, similar to prices in late 1870. By February 1878, prices were at the pre-boom level. 21/-d a ton in London meant 8/-d a ton, after freight and terminal charges, to be divided between owners and merchants.⁵ This meant

² Lincoln County Record Office, Strafford MSS, Embleton to Wragge, 7 June 1872.
³ Barnsley Chronicle, 30 Aug. 1879.
⁴ Ibid, 15 Feb. 1879.
⁵ Ibid, 12 June 1880.

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pressure on profits, wages and freight rates. The first and second of these bore the brunt of the initial assault of the oncoming depression.

The five years from 1873 to 1878 in Yorkshire saw a faltering climb to a slightly higher level of production. There were many pit closures, permanent and temporary, brought on by the depression. The List of Abandoned Mines for 1880 (here a mine can mean only one of several seams worked at a colliery) listed 102 registered in Yorkshire since October 1874. Of these, however, only 23 were in South Yorkshire, most of them small, short-life pits. More common were instances of pits closing down partially (for example, Monk Bretton in June 1880 and Strafford Main in March 1878) or wholly, but temporarily (Church Lane in 1877, North Gawber in 1881 and Stanhope Silkstone in 1880). Even Newton Chambers and Co., felt the wind of recession in 1877 when they were forced to close their Newbegin pit prematurely and in 1879 when they laid off 150 men at their most important pit, Thorncliffe Drift. In August 1880, Wharncliffe Silkstone gave notice of the closure of three out of their four pits, which would have made about 700 men redundant. The pits re-opened two months later when the men submitted to a sliding scale.

Many collieries ran at a loss for several years rather than close. Closure was a serious step for many owners, especially if it was their only major undertaking or investment. A colliery could not be put in mothballs without the prospect of considerable expense on re-opening. Moreover, the consequent raising of the water level would have threatened adjacent workings. Thus, in 1884, Edwin Teasdale, the manager of the

1 Home Office List of Abandoned Mines, 1880.
3 Ibid, 3 March 1877: 12 June 1879.
Clarke collieries in Silkstone, contemplated stockpiling coal in order to keep his pits working.¹

The inflated prices of colliery schemes in the early 1870s had repercussions when the owners came to sell them or to reorganise their capital bases. When the Silkstone Fall colliery, floated as a limited company in 1872, closed in 1875 after paying dividends of up to 24%, the leading shareholders were said to have made unseemly profits out of a purely speculative operation.² But when Thorpe's North Gawber and Willow Bank collieries were offered for sale in 1880, they failed to reach the reserve price of £18,000. They had originally been floated at £130,000 and had made losses of £31,000 since June 1876.³ In 1885, Stanhope Silkstone was withdrawn from sale at the breaking up value of the machinery, its leading shareholder, Henry Lodge, having lost about £30,000 in the venture.⁴ Even a new colliery like Mitchell Main, which made a profit in 1881, could not be sold in 1882 at a reserve price under 20% of its original cost.⁵ Several firms, like the Blacker Main colliery company, went into compulsory liquidation and there were personal bankruptcies. John Ryde, one of the directors of Hoyland Silkstone colliery, had net liabilities of £12,000 in 1883.⁶

More of these examples could be drawn on from the ten to twelve years after 1876, when the depression had begun to bite. The causes of failure were widely speculated about. In 1880, a letter from a coalowner was read at a miners' mass meeting near Barnsley. It claimed that the misery the men were experiencing was caused by:

¹ S.C.L., CR 110, Teasdale to Clarke, 30 May 1884.
² Midland and Northern Coal and Iron Trades Gazette, 1 Sept. 1875.
³ Barnsley Chronicle, 13 Nov. 1880.
⁴ Ibid, 7 Nov. 1885; 12 May 1888.
⁶ Ibid, 15 Sept. 1883.
those cursed collieries which were bought and formed into companies at four or five times their value some few years ago and will now sell coal at any price to keep them in funds, causing others to have to do the same or throw their pits idle.  

Limited companies were not the only colliery owners to enter the trade in the boom period and, in fact, several small landsale pits had even opened since 1875. But, on the whole, this particular owner, disgruntled at the intense competition of the depression years, had his finger on the problem. The attractions of the Barnsley seam outweighed even the falling price of coal after 1875 and, although there were no major sinkings after that date, until the 1890s, some collieries like Manvers Main continued to expand and contributed to the overstocking of the market.

The recession in prices continued in South Yorkshire, as elsewhere, until 1888. As late as September of that year, the South Yorkshire owners were refusing the miners' demands for a wage advance on the grounds that prices were as low as at any time since 1885. The early 1880s had, in fact, shown some signs of improvement. Prices rose temporarily in 1881 and in 1883, when buyers stockpiled in case of a strike. Coalowners were being rather more adventurous in 1883 than they had been for several years. A second shaft was sunk at Wath Main; a limited company, with more capital, was formed at Cortonwood colliery; and John Brown and Co., sunk to the Silkstone seam at Aldwarke. But in the long run, prices remained low, employment intermittent through to 1889. Mild winters hampered the house coal trade and the market for 'slack' hardly met the costs of bringing it to bank. The coke industry, ironically, did well out of this. In early 1879, it was said to be booming. Owners such as the Hoyland Silkstone company and Joseph Mitchell opened ovens to consume the slack which could

1 Ibid, 25 Sept. 1880.
2 Ibid, 29 Dec. 1883.
3 Ibid, 3 Jan. 1885.
not be sold\(^1\) and were given a further incentive by the revival of the iron trade in September 1879. In 1880 there were about 1000 ovens in South Yorkshire producing 4000-5000 tons of coke per week.\(^2\) Ten or eleven collieries in the district became involved in coking, undertakings which did something to defer the losses many of them were sustaining elsewhere. Nevertheless, the optimism of 1879 may have been a little premature. In June 1881, one of the main markets for South Yorkshire coke, the North Lincolnshire iron and steel industry, was hit by recession, and most of the coke ovens at Silkstone Common and at Church Lane were stopped. In 1886, again, threatened closure of the North Lincolnshire furnaces produced gloom in the South Yorkshire coke trade.\(^3\)

The problems of the coal trade were not helped by the policies of the railway companies. General dissatisfaction with the rates to London charged by the Great Northern was voiced in 1878,\(^4\) and the monopoly control of the M.S. and L., in South Yorkshire led to a long and bitter series of legal confrontations with the Denaby Main Colliery Co., which suffered from their differential rating policy. Denaby Main was a captive customer of the M.S. and L., who also owned the canal outlets to the north. They priced their carriage so as to give Denaby Main no advantage in the Humber market, despite its geographically favourable location, and yet priced it out of the Midland Railway's markets. The Denaby company took the M.S. and L., to the Railway Commission and won a price advantage of six pence a ton to the Humber.\(^5\) But the railway company, instead of dropping Denaby's rates, raised others. This, according to J.B.Pope, the managing director, accounted for the moribund state of the South Yorkshire economy at the beginning of 1881.\(^6\)

1. Ibid, 3 May 1879.
2. Ibid, 15 May 1880.
5. See, for example, J.B.Pope's letter in the Barnsley Chronicle, 15 Jan. 1881.
6. Ibid.
Exports through the Humber ports (about half of which went abroad, mainly to the Baltic nations)\(^1\) provided a growing market for South Yorkshire coal, especially the hard steam coal found in the lower portion of the Barnsley seam. For several years, when the house coal and other trades were depressed, the Humber trade advanced. The tonnage of coal sent to Hull for export from the three leading collieries in this trade are given below, for the years 1881 and 1884.\(^2\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colliery</th>
<th>1881</th>
<th>1884</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denaby Main</td>
<td>127,632</td>
<td>150,024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manvers Main</td>
<td>43,800</td>
<td>71,168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsecar</td>
<td>58,900</td>
<td>60,352</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Denaby, though consistently the largest user of Hull, was not the only colliery company to see the Humber outlet as a way out of the stranglehold imposed by the railway companies and the London market. So when, in 1879, an independent company was formed, mainly by Hull commercial interests, to build a railway between there and Cudworth on the Midland Railway, east of Barnsley, many South Yorkshire coalowners showed considerable enthusiasm. The line was eventually opened in 1885, with a branch line to Wath.\(^3\)

Immediately, the M.S. and L., and the North Eastern Railway reduced their tonnage rates to Hull, yet even in combination, these benefits failed to have a significant effect on the volume of traffic from the pits in the study area. The Hull and Barnsley Railway did, it is true, provide an outlet for three or four large, new pits to the north of the district, but the tonnage sent by Denaby, Elsecar and several other large collieries in 1886 was actually down on 1884 levels. As the figures below reveal,\(^4\) tonnage of coal transported to Hull for export improved in 1887, but by 1888, commentators were suggesting that the Hull and Barnsley had not been the success

\(^{1}\) Ibid, 13 Jan. 1883.
\(^{2}\) Ibid; and 9 Jan. 1886.
\(^{4}\) Mexborough and Swinton Times, 20 Jan. 1888.
that had been intended. The railway company unsuccessfully sought amalgamation, first with the Midland and then with the North Eastern Railway. It failed, moreover, to solve Denaby's special problems because of the high rates of carriage to the junction at Stairfoot in Ardsley. Only 9500 tons of Denaby's exports through Hull in 1887 had been carried there by the Hull and Barnsley. Therefore, in 1888, the Denaby company decided to promote a private railway project: a line to link its new sinking at Cadeby with the Hull and Barnsley. This line, the South Yorkshire Junction Railway, was opened in September 1894 and soon began to fulfil the intended function of the Hull and Barnsley: the opening up of the virgin concealed coalfield on the eastern flank of our district.

The period 1875-1888, was not, however, entirely one of unmitigated gloom and financial disaster. For miners, it is true, wage levels were low and employment uncertain, with a large pool of unorganised, surplus labour competing for available work. Production did, however, rise and coal found markets, albeit at consistently low prices. The period was in many ways a paradox, witnessing an expansion of coal production coupled with severe and persistent price deflation. Some pits even broke with usual practice and introduced shifts at times of higher demand - Manvers in 1878 and Clarke's Old Silkstone colliery in 1879. A second pit was opened at Manvers in

1 Barnsley Chronicle, 4 Feb. 1888.
2 Mexborough and Swinton Times, 11 May 1888.
3 Ibid, 6 Dec. 1878; S.C.L., CR 100, Teasdale to Mason, 21 April 1877. Changes in demand were often dramatic: thus, in May 1884, Mrs. Clarke's manager suggested emptying coal onto the pit floor to keep the colliery going; while in August, he was talking about the urgency of finding more hurriers to get out more coal for pressing contracts (CR 110, Teasdale to Clarke, 30 May 1884; Teasdale to Mason, 26 Aug. 1884).
1876, and in 1880, the colliery was said to have been in fuller work than any in the district. Denaby too, despite its problems with the railways, seems to have survived the depression better than some. W.H. Chambers, the manager, wrote in 1885 that 'for the last six years, except in cases of accidents or standing holidays, the men have never been compelled to stand idle a single day'. He seems to have ignored the temporary closure of the colliery at the end of 1880 due to the rate war with the M.S. and L.

Many of the smaller collieries survived better than the larger companies with expensive overheads. In 1887, four pits which had survived from pre-railway days eventually closed, not, it seems through financial difficulties, but because they had reached the end of their natural life. One or two small to medium-sized pits like Lidgett colliery, actually opened during the worst depression years.

Several of the larger pits returned profits at the same time as parts of their workings were closed down. Ben Pickard, the Yorkshire Miners' Association secretary, in a letter to the Barnsley Chronicle in 1883, named fourteen Barnsley seam collieries, plus the Newton Chambers and Wharncliffe Silkstone operations, which had made profits the previous year. This was undoubtedly true of the ironmaster-coalowners who were shielded from price fluctuations in the coal market, as far as that part of their coal production they consumed themselves was concerned. Newton, Chambers and Co., made a net profit of

1 Midland and Northern Coal and Iron Trades Gazette, 12 Jan. 1876.
5 Ibid, 31 Dec. 1887.
7 Barnsley Chronicle, 6 Oct. 1883.
£25,354 in 1882 on their total operations, and issued a 5% dividend in 1883.\(^1\) Charles Cammell and Co., the owners of Oaks showed overall profits of £132,821 in 1887, and John Brown (Aldwarke and Carr House), £61,177 in the same year.\(^2\) Even the reconstituted ownership of Church Lane colliery made a profit in the first six months of working in 1883/4.\(^3\)

Most owners who were solely dependent on coal and who claimed to be making a loss were probably insulated from bankruptcy or even from retrenchment if they owned all or a large part of the mineral rights in their collieries. This seems to have been true of Mrs. Clarke who was exhorting her miners to keep up production despite claims from her manager, H.B. Nash, that the undertaking was not making a profit. Nash warned her to be careful of her remarks to her men in case they misunderstood the 'real position'. In his words, many had already voiced suspicions that all was not entirely gloom and hardship at the family seat:

Several of them made the remarks: do you think we are all blind at Silkstone, there has been more company at Noblethorpe this year than ever there has been since Mr. Clarke died, where's the money come from to keep them all, if it has not come out of the pit - and a very many more remarks of a similar shade, but too coarse for repetition.\(^4\)

The affairs of an enterprise like that of Mrs. Clarke (or, more accurately, that of her deceased husband's trustees) were less likely to become public than those of large limited companies like Old Silkstone and Dodworth Coal and Iron Co., or the Hoyland Silkstone Colliery Co. The latter type, having to pay inflated royalties negotiated in the boom period, and with a large, unwieldy labour force, were much less flexible when prices dropped. Mrs. Clarke was able to phase out her operations slowly over the fifteen years from 1885 when the

\(^1\) Ibid, 24 March 1883; 29 March 1884.
\(^3\) Ibid, 15 March 1884.
most important branch of her operations, the New Sovereign's Silkstone seam, proved no longer profitable. For the owners of nearby Church Lane colliery to have done this would have meant problems with both lessors and with labour.

Overall, however, judging by wage levels, South Yorkshire fared no worse than the average coalfield in the worst depression years and was able to seize the advantages of the improvement in trade in late 1888. A major contributory factor here was the varied nature of her markets, in particular, the lack of dependence on exports (particularly important in the mid 1880s) and on the iron and steel industry. During this deflationary period there were no large stable markets at home or abroad. Table 5 gives some indication of the relative progress of prices in Yorkshire as a whole as opposed to the national trend and to her competitors in the Midlands. Because of its price advantage on the railways, the Midlands coalfield was able to compete more successfully in the London market and maintain a higher pit-head price in the worst years of depression. In 1889 and 1890, however, Yorkshire made up some of her losses by producing more and at a higher pit-head price to meet growing demand in several non-metropolitan sectors. Only South Wales, with its export-orientation, was able to charge higher prices on the upswing.

The first signs of real improvement in trade came towards the end of 1888. In October, the Barnsley Chronicle reported that demand for coal had been abnormally high in the previous few weeks, sending some pit-head price, at least temporarily, up by '50% or more'. In December, the South Yorkshire steam coalowners met and put up their prices officially by 15-20%. By late 1890, hard coal was selling at pit-heads for 10/6d to 11/-d a ton as opposed to 6/6d in October 1888. Production

1 Barnsley Chronicle, 27 Oct. 1888.
3 Ibid, 27 Dec. 1890.
for export in particular prospered. There was reported 'a remarkable increase' in traffic to Hull in early 1889.\footnote{Ibid, 15 June 1889.} The 1888 figures for exports via Hull showed a big improvement for Manvers and Elsecar, despite a temporary decrease for Denaby. 1889 showed 'continued growth' overall,\footnote{Ibid, 28 Dec. 1889.} and in the first 11 months of 1890, all the major collieries improved on their 1889 totals in this trade, and three overtook Elsecar in volume.\footnote{Ibid, 27 Dec. 1890: Mexborough and Swinton Times, 17 Jan. 1890.} It is most probable that these trends charted a further transition in a continuously increasing orientation to trade outside the county. In 1892, the volume of South Yorkshire coal sent out of the West Riding amounted to about two thirds of total production.\footnote{Barnsley Chronicle, 5 March 1892}

The upturn in trade undoubtedly saw a return to profitability for most coal companies, despite the rapid advance in miners' wages. The \textit{Barnsley Chronicle} commented about colliery companies at the end of 1890: 'many a firm which two years ago had a struggle to exist is now in a sound position, paying a good dividend, and clearing off liabilities incurred in other times'.\footnote{Ibid, 27 Dec. 1890.} The Roundwood Colliery Co., for example, in its first year of operation as a limited company, made a gross profit of £13,216:\footnote{Mexborough and Swinton Times, 14 Nov. 1890.} this, a medium-sized, one-colliery venture. The larger colliery enterprise of the Charlesworth family, which began to operate as a private joint stock company in 1889, paid a dividend of 7\% in its first year, 22\% in 1890 and 27\% in 1891. From then on, dividends fell steeply (until 1896 and three subsequent years when no dividend was paid).\footnote{Cusworth Hall, Charlesworth MSS, List of Dividends paid, 1889-1905.}
1889-1891, however, were not marked by a large number of new sinkings. Perhaps the lessons of the 1870s had been learnt by investors who might have been drawn into the industry purely on the basis of the high coal prices of a two year peak in the trade cycle. Newton, Chambers and Co., opened Smithy Wood colliery in 1890, but this was undertaken in order to phase out operations through the Norfolk pit shaft to the north. ¹ Two large collieries just outside our area were sunk during the early 1890s – Hickleton and Rotherham Main (by John Brown) – but the only significant new development within the district was the sinking of Cadeby Main by the adventurous Denaby colliery company. Cadeby, which was sunk between 1889 and 1893, superseded Denaby as the deepest colliery in the area (by all of 300 yards), and was said to be the first pit to pierce the Magnesian Limestone which overlay the coal measures to the east of our district.²

As in 1871, increase in demand was first met by using up spare capacity in the existing collieries. Table 2 reveals the doubling or more of the workforces of Denaby, Thrybergh Hall, Manvers and Monk Bretton in the 20 years up to 1893, much of which was achieved by exploiting to the full their leases of the Barnsley seam. Newton, Chambers and Co., from a smaller number of pits than earlier, produced over a million tons of coal in 1894 compared with about 620,000 in 1880.³ Nevertheless, the rise in demand produced a new phenomenon at some of the older collieries. This was the decision to sink to some of the thinner seams above or below the Barnsley bed. The working of several seams was already common practice at pits west of the Barnsley outcrop – Church Lane and Strafford Main, for example, had worked three seams simultaneously for some years – but a new departure in this part of the district occurred about 1890. This was the sinking, by the Wharncliffe

¹ Cusworth Hall, Newton Chambers MSS, Notes for a History of Newton Chambers (Box 47).
² Barnsley Chronicle, 28 Jan. 1893.
³ Ibid, 3 Sept. 1898.
Silkstone and Newton Chambers companies to the Whinmoor seam, only three feet wide and previously only worked near its outcrop in the hills to the west of the area. In 1890, it was also the turn of several Barnsley seam pits to look for other seams to help them to meet demand. The Lundhill Coal Co., was about to open up a higher seam known as the Meltonfield, as was Dan Rylands, a glass manufacturer, on the site of the Old Oak pits. Rylands' eventual target, however, was the deeper, but more lucrative Silkstone seam. At the New Oaks, C. Cammell and Co., were sinking, in mid 1892, to the Parkgate seam. In the south east of the area, the Barnsley seam was exhausted in the Aldwarke pit, and other companies in the neighbourhood followed John Brown and Co's., lead in sinking to the Silkstone coal.

Some of these new sinkings were a result of the near-exhaustion of one or other of the two main seams under the collieries' leaseholds. This implies that the law of diminishing returns had, for some years, been taking its toll on productivity, mainly because of the ever-increasing costs of haulage and main roadway maintenance as the headings were driven further and further away from the pit bottom. The new seams, being narrower, were also to contribute to a decline in productivity, relative to the early bonanza days of the Barnsley area sinkings. This, of course, was a familiar story in other coalfields and contributed, along with a shortage of capital and slow progress towards mechanisation, to a national decline in productivity. It is demonstrable that South

1 Ibid, 8 Feb. 1890.
2 Ibid, 27 Dec. 1890.
3 Mexborough and Swinton Times, 1 Jan. 1892.
4 Barnsley Chronicle, 30 July 1892.
5 S.C.L., NCB 454a.
Yorkshire, for all that has been said above, suffered less than some earlier-developed areas from this phenomenon, although diminishing returns eventually bit deeper into the profitability of large collieries than into that of small ones.

In June 1893, contracts to supply railway companies were negotiated by the South Yorkshire coalowners at a reduction of 1/6d a ton on 1892 prices. Some owners had breached the united front already that year by accepting lower prices to secure big contracts.¹ This move coincided with the beginning of a campaign to reduce miners' wages which led to the M.F.G.B. lockout. Events in 1893 showed how fragile the optimism of 1890 had been. Early in the year, the Hull dock strike had damaged the South Yorkshire trade through that outlet. By July, a two or three day week was fairly common.² In May, Dan Rylands had a receiving order placed upon him and in June, he was declared to have £73,788 in unsecured liabilities.³ His speculation in sinking Rylands Main, rather than any major difficulties in the glass trade, was blamed. Also in June, another colliery company, Willow Main, was wound up as bankrupt.⁴ These may or may not have been isolated cases of entrepreneurial incompetence, but the economic climate was clearly not favourable for speculation. Even a well-established company like Wharncliffe Silkstone could not make a profit in 1893. Four years later, the managing director, blamed this state of affairs on the level of wages; if 'Durham' wages had been paid in South Yorkshire, he claimed that a loss of almost £6,000 in 1894 would have been turned into a profit of £12,863.⁵ By 1897, the memories of the overstocking of the

¹ Barnsley Chronicle, 3 June 1893.
² Ibid, 1 July 1893.
³ Ibid, 10 June 1893.
⁴ Ibid, 17 June 1893.
⁵ S.C.L., NCB 940, Wharncliffe Silkstone Correspondence 1897, Walker to Dawson, Bennett and Ryde, solicitors.
productive units of 1871-4 were perhaps not so vivid. But the effects were undoubtedly still being felt in South Yorkshire. The make-up of the major colliery companies had hardly changed since 1876, even if the workforce was larger and with many miners of a different generation. It was perhaps this new generation that had learnt more lessons than the coalowners from the experiences of the early and late 1870s. It was these miners and not the coalowners who began to lay the foundations for change in the mining industry around 1890.
Conclusion

What, if any, conclusions can be drawn from a comparative study of the collieries' economic record in the depression years in particular? Below is a list of collieries that were known to have run into difficulties at some time after 1874, often necessitating closure or partial closure of their workings. Significantly, only three of these collieries mined the Barnsley seam, and two of these were relatively small ones, opened a decade or more before the 1870s boom without a great deal of capital investment. The inexorable law of diminishing returns had probably begun to take its toll of these two pits (North Gawber and Blacker Main) before many of their more ambitious successors in the field. Several of the most obvious failures - Stanhope Silkstone, Hoyland Silkstone and Rylands Main - were latecomers in the Silkstone and thinner seams, over-investing and not achieving the necessary returns that might have been won from the Barnsley seam in a more buoyant market. Long, damaging strikes must have had a profound effect on short-term profits and on investment decisions at pits like Church Lane. But in general, strike frequency does not correlate significantly with the list of collieries singled out as having experienced economic difficulties. We cannot discount these difficulties as causes or as effects of labour troubles. But at first sight, except in a few instances, they do not seem to be all-important variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main seam worked</th>
<th>Origins pre- or post-1871</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Gawber</td>
<td>Barnsley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Lane</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woolley</td>
<td>Barnsley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strafford Main</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallroyd</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silkstone Fall</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrow</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoyland Silkstone</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanhope Silkstone</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wharncliffe Silkstone</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarke's Old Silkstone</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacker Main</td>
<td>Barnsley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rylands Main</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willow Main</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

90
We are, of course, looking for a central model of economic (as well as social and political) behaviour within the many overlapping working/residential communities of South Yorkshire, as much as we are attempting to compare phenomena at either ends of continua based on economic, social and political variables. The central tendency which emerges from a study of available hard data and of impressionistic accounts about long-term financial viability of colliery companies in the district, is one of persistent though, except in the period 1871-4, rarely spectacular profitability. We hear of few personal bankruptcies directly attributable to the demise of the person's coal interest: those of Ryland and Ryde are the only major examples. The ironmaster-coalowners and most of the Barnsley seam pits rode out the years after 1874 with, at worst, some short-time working, and in most cases, a new wave of expansion after 1888. We must bear this in mind while looking at the response of the miners themselves. But we must also consider that, despite continued expansion in the coal industry, the majority of both employers and miners considered it to be caught in the grips of a depression. ¹ This undoubtedly had a dulling effect on the miners' readiness to fight for better terms, although it by no means fostered harmonious industrial relations overall.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Output of Coal (in millions of tons)</th>
<th>Numbers Employed (in thousands)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1855</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1856</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1857</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1858</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1859</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1862</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1864</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>34.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1865</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>35.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1866</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>35.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1867</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1868</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>37.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>1869</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>36.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>36.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>38.6</td>
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<td>1872</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>51.1</td>
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<td>1873</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>57.5</td>
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<td>1874</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>62.5</td>
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<td>1875</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>62.2</td>
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<td>1876</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>61.0</td>
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<td>1877</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>60.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>1878</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>59.8</td>
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<td>1879</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>60.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>60.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>60.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>61.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>63.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>64.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>63.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>65.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>66.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>67.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>69.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>76.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>82.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>86.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>16.0*</td>
<td>88.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>91.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Affected by the Miners Federation lockout.

### TABLE 4

Actual (five year average) and percentage change in coal output in Yorkshire and the United Kingdom, 1855-1894.

Key to columns:
(a) average annual coal output (millions of tons).
(b) percentage increase over the previous five years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yorkshire (a)</th>
<th>(b)</th>
<th>United Kingdom (a)</th>
<th>(b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1855-59</td>
<td>8.118</td>
<td>66.70</td>
<td>66.70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860-64</td>
<td>9.240</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>84.86</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1865-69</td>
<td>9.887</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>102.96</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870-74</td>
<td>13.629</td>
<td>37.9%</td>
<td>121.32</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875-79</td>
<td>15.722</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>133.58</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880-84</td>
<td>18.822</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
<td>156.44</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885-89</td>
<td>20.122</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>165.16</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890-94</td>
<td>23.00*</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>184.44*</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Output figures of 23.3 million tons (Yorkshire) and 185.0 million tons (United Kingdom) have been attributed to 1893 as the hypothetical production (calculated as the average of the 1892 and the 1894 figures) in that year assuming no major trade dispute.

### TABLE 5

Average price per ton of coal at the pit-head in Yorkshire, the Midlands and the United Kingdom, 1882-1894.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yorkshire</th>
<th>Midlands</th>
<th>United Kingdom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>6/3d</td>
<td>7/0d</td>
<td>5/0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883</td>
<td>5/7d</td>
<td>6/0d</td>
<td>5/8d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>5/3d</td>
<td>6/0d</td>
<td>5/5d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>5/1d</td>
<td>5/9d</td>
<td>5/2d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>4/10d</td>
<td>5/6d</td>
<td>4/11d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>4/9d</td>
<td>5/8d</td>
<td>4/10d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>5/2d</td>
<td>5/6d</td>
<td>5/1d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>6/9d</td>
<td>6/7d</td>
<td>6/4d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>8/9d</td>
<td>7/6d</td>
<td>8/3d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>8/3d</td>
<td>7/5d</td>
<td>8/0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>7/9d</td>
<td>7/4d</td>
<td>7/3d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>7/6d</td>
<td>7/8d</td>
<td>6/10d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>6/11d</td>
<td>6/10d</td>
<td>6/7d</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHAPTER FOUR

The Development of Miners' Unionism in South Yorkshire

1855-1894.
It is not intended in this chapter to rewrite or comprehensively re-interpret the work that has already been completed on the institutional history of the S.Y.M.A. and Y.M.A.\(^1\) As the backdrop to the bulk of the analysis in Part Two, and to a lesser extent in Part Three, however, it is important at this stage to define phases in the development of these institutions, to identify significant turning points and to discuss briefly the extent and nature of industrial action, and elements of the union's official policy in conflict situations. In conclusion, a glance at the careers of the full-time officials themselves will draw out any obvious discrepancies in their continuing role as the only effective voice of thousands of South Yorkshire miners, outside the coalfield itself. This exercise will inevitably shift the focus of study away from the pit-head, the miner's cottage and the lodge meeting room, and concentrate it on the Miners' Offices in Barnsley, and their more humble predecessors. But in order to clarify the nature of the edifice which the miners themselves constructed in the South Yorkshire landscape of power, and in order to emphasise that at times, despite outward appearances of strength, its foundations might, in less favourable environments, have been placed under great strain, we have to take a broad, general perspective on the union over these forty years. To understand how, even when the institution in Huddersfield Road, Barnsley, was at a low ebb through much of the 1880s, its ideology and discipline still exerted a powerful force on affiliated and non-affiliated miners alike, we have to look to later chapters.

Above all, a general survey of union development will emphasise the point that the forty years did not witness an inexorable forward movement of union power and credibility both over and in the lives of the miners and over the decisions of the mine owners. Union membership in South Yorkshire, as Table 6 reveals, collapsed after the death of John Normansell in late 1875, but this was only the acceleration of a

\(^1\) F.Nachin, \textit{op.cit.}, R.G.Neville, \textit{op.cit.}
centrifugal trend that had set in with the end of the boom in early 1874. The closeness of fit between the trend of union membership and the general movement of wages and coal prices is the most obvious feature of the available statistical evidence for our period. Nevertheless, this must not obscure the fact that South Yorkshire, despite several long and bitter confrontations with the coalowners, and despite mass disenchantment with formal union institutions from the late 1870s to the late 1880s, remained one of the best examples of a coalfield which minimised industrial conflict through formalising its bargaining and grievance procedures. The acceptance of conciliation and arbitration, not only by the S.Y.M.A. executive but also by a large number of influential rank and file spokesmen, gave Alexander MacDonald, the president of the N.N.A. grounds to regard it as his model for successful organisation. Exhorting his own Scottish miners at a conference in 1872, he insisted that 'What the hard-headed men of South Yorkshire have accomplished can be done elsewhere if the men are only thoroughly in earnest'.

In the 1880s, Pickard was able to negotiate a political deal with the Liberal party and sell it to the miners of Yorkshire, not because the 8000 members of the Y.R.A. (barely 15% of the total workforce) gave him a powerful mandate, but because the Yorkshire miners as a whole had no concept of a political and industrial strategy outside the one offered by Pickard and his supporters.

The phases of union development
(a) 1855 to March 1858

This period is bound at the beginning by an arbitrary parameter and, at the end, by the date of formation of the permanent district union. No attempt was made at district-wide combination, although for the previous two years, a union in the Leeds district had achieved some sort of recognition and success in wage bargaining. In a period of slack demand,
individual pits fought off piecemeal attacks on wages and on accepted aspects of custom and practice. The most important dispute, however, was over an issue which, after 1858, was almost always dealt with through the formal institutions of the district union. The dispute was over the standards of safety at the large Oaks colliery and, in particular, the ability of the underground manager to satisfy the men on this issue. The dispute lasted ten weeks, was ultimately resolved without the dismissal of the manager, but attracted the attention of the whole district and established the Oaks miners for several years as the vanguard in confrontations over wages and conditions. To question the status of management and to take industrial action over the issue with no union support, was a bold and principled step. Fred Kaijage sees it as an assertion by the Oaks miners of the 'right to job control' and not just as a conditioned response to threatened danger.\(^1\) Whatever the motivation of the Oaks men, their stance attracted union missionaries from other districts. At mass meetings in July and August, 'strangers' from Newcastle were observed; and some actually addressed the audience 'in support of a scheme of union'.\(^2\)

(b) April 1858 to December 1864

The foundation of the S.Y.M.A. was laid at two delegate meetings in Barnsley on March 29th and April 1st 1858, from which date subscriptions were collected.\(^3\) This course of action was in response to resolutions, passed at a meeting of South Yorkshire coalowners about three weeks before, to follow the West Yorkshire owners' lead in giving notice of a 15% reduction. This, the first organised district level confrontation for fourteen years, resulted in a return to the status quo in wages: a temporary victory for the miners based, to a great extent, on the lack of unity and lack of experience of conflict on behalf of the coalowners. This could also be

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\(^2\) Barnsley Times, 2 and 30 Aug. 1856.

\(^3\) F. Machin, op. cit., pp.277-8.
said of the local miners' leaders. Although the first mass meeting was chaired by a local veteran miner, the men who took the reins of the union in 1858, unlike their contemporaries in, for example, Lancashire, Staffordshire and Durham, had played no leading role in the N.M.A., of the 1840s. Much of the groundwork of organisation had been done by James Price of Dukinfield in Cheshire, who performed the role of missionary as had Swallow in 1843. As Machin testifies: 'There were no miners in South Yorkshire, at that time, with any comparable knowledge of trade union work or organisation'. The absence of the more militant traditions of the 1840s and the success of the 1858 mobilisation in establishing the principle of the eight hour day and starting a sickness and accident fund on a friendly society basis, combined to steer the new union onto a less radical path than might otherwise have been the case. Unlike the 1844 strike, the 1858 confrontation produced tangible gains for the miners. But it is probable that the very establishment of a friendly benefit fund and a delegate structure (which, in skeleton form, covered most of the study area) were factors securing the permanence of the union, rather than the actual success of the resistance to the owners' demands. Machin points out that 'although the Association remained in existence, the first six years were very difficult ones, and at one point during this period it sank almost into

1 A man called Isaac Sutcliffe, Barnsley Chronicle, 3 April 1858.
3 F. Machin, op. cit., p. 280.
4 The Barnsley Chronicle, 10 April 1858 likened it to that of the Oddfellows. See also the report of the meeting of April 12th, Barnsley Chronicle 17 April 1858.
insignificance. But the South Yorkshire association was helped by growing strands of organisation at national level. If the South Yorkshire miners had not been as active as their West Yorkshire neighbours in pressing for an effective national union in 1858 to help them in their struggles with the coalowners, through several members of their executive, they were at the forefront of early moves to secure changes through parliamentary channels. Richard Mitchell, the first full time secretary of the S.Y.M.A., worked closely with MacDonald in 1859 to make their presence felt during the drafting of the new Mines Act. The emergence of the British Miner and General Newsman (later published as the Miner and Workman's Advocate and other titles) in 1862 proved an invaluable means of maintaining communication among organised miners across the country and the paper was exploited to the full by Mitchell. In the summer of 1863, partly through the medium of the Miner and Workman's Advocate, Mitchell and the S.Y.M.A. Council took a major part in the initiative for the establishment of the Miners' National Association by calling and drawing up the agenda for the conference at Leeds that November. Mitchell was the secretary of the M.N.A. until his ignominious departure in April 1864, and was soon succeeded on the executive by John Normansell. Normansell had been one of the South Yorkshire delegates in November 1863. Unlike other coalfields, the South Yorkshire rank and file seem to have been content with this wholehearted identification with the MacDonaldites and the district provided no recruits for the breakaway Practical Miners' Association in November 1864.

Faced with the reality of permanent organisation amongst

1 F.Machin, op.cit., p.293.
2 Ibid, p.320.
4 Miners and Workman's Advocate, 13 June and 22 Aug. 1863.
5 Ibid, 14 Nov. 1863.
6 Ibid, 31 Dec. 1864 and 17 June 1865.
their miners at district level and the threat of co-operation at national level, the South Yorkshire coalowners formed an association in May 1860, ostensibly to resist a chain of wage demands at several pits. This time the owners struck first with what was to become a favoured tactic in these early confrontation years: a lockout at member pits. They forced an undignified compromise on the union executive, which led to two important secessions from the union. The new-found strength of the Coalowners Association and, in particular, their use of the clearance paper, subdued even the Oaks colliers and forced them to abandon their checkweighman.

Three and a half years later, however, the Oaks miners struck, without the official backing of the union, for an advance of 10% precipitating a second major district lockout. The owners, fearing a general spate of demands (despite the fact that the union executive was known to be opposed to this) demanded the Oaks miners' return. Unlike 1860, however, the district delegates to the S.Y.M.A. were in no mood to seek settlement in the face of the owners' aggression. The dispute that followed more than any since 1844, was seem as a trial of strength. Leading M.N.A. figures, such as the Reverend Raynor Stephens and William Crawford of Durham, came to offer their encouragement, and the lack of material support from the M.N.A. executive became one of several flashpoints between them and the more impatient group of delegates, centred on John Towers of the Miner and Workman's Advocate, many of whom later were to join in the Practical Miners' Association. In the midst of the lockout, Richard Mitchell was removed from his office. He had been censured by the Oaks miners for not allowing them, 'the old veterans', strike pay at first in

1 S. and B. Webb, op.cit., p.239.
3 Ibid, p.329 passim.
4 Barnsley Chronicle, 12 March 1864.
5 Ibid, 14 May 1864.
pursuing their struggle. And in April, he was obliged to make an undignified public apology as a result of a successful libel suit brought against him by the owners of Wharncliffe Silkstone colliery.\(^1\) Condemnation was heaped on him from all quarters\(^2\) and after May, nothing more was heard of him. With this joint attack on the credibility of the M.N.A. executive, one might have expected South Yorkshire to swing towards the alternative offered by the Towers group radicals. But with John Normansell, a committed MacDonaldite, securing unanimous nomination as S.Y.M.A. secretary in December,\(^3\) having, with Philip Casey the interim secretary, steered the district through the lockout to a relatively successful conclusion, the South Yorkshire miners were persuaded to adhere to the new orthodoxy.

Normansell had achieved renown during his struggles at Wharncliffe Silkstone in 1859 and 1863 to establish and retain his right to be appointed as the men's checkweighman. Initially won at the end of a twenty eight week lockout in November 1859 and pursued through the courts, both locally and in the Queens Bench Division in 1863 and 1864,\(^4\) this 'right' was underwritten in Clause 29 of the Mines Act of 1860. Throughout these actions, Normansell stood aside as the man of principal, urging restraint of his fellow miners, yet, with the aid of the S.Y.M.A., refusing to stand down on the central issue. It was this type of 'responsible and cautious leadership', carried forward into his years as secretary, to which the Webbs referred when they contrasted the behaviour of the South Yorkshire unionists with the uncompromising attitude of the coalowners at this time.\(^5\)

\(^1\) See Miner and Workman's Advocate, 15 Aug. 1863. Mitchell claimed that the owners had caused a boy's death by their behaviour.

\(^2\) Ibid, 30 April 1864.

\(^3\) F. Machin, op.cit., p.339.

\(^4\) Ibid, pp.311, 315-6.

\(^5\) S. and B. Webb, op.cit., p.239.
Alongside this emergence of alignments in the early 1860s, we should be aware of a growing disparity in militancy (as expressed in its crudest form: readiness to strike) between branches. The Oaks emerged, in Evison's words, as 'the cockpit on which the eyes, the hopes of the whole district were focused'. The Fitzwilliam colliers, as in 1844, and those at Woolley, on the northern edge of the study area, were persuaded to remain outside the union by their tough-minded owners. With the establishment of John Normansell in 1865, however, as the moulder of a strong bureaucratic union organisation, many of these differences were ironed out and a 'model' of union branch behaviour set up and, in general, adhered to.

(c)1865 to 1870

The period 1865 to 1870 saw not only the establishment of John Normansell as a leading national figure with, perhaps, 'a position little if at all inferior to MacDonald in the mining world', but also the consolidation of the moderate, federalist philosophy of the MacDonaldites in the M.N.A. as the public response of the S.Y.M.A. as a whole. In October 1870, Normansell became vice-president of the M.N.A. and, by then, his credentials were valid enough in official eyes for him to be invited to give evidence before three parliamentary inquiries.

At district level, he established the S.Y.M.A. as early as 1865 as a recognised negotiating body in most corners of the coalfield. On October 26th of that year, the employers refused to meet the miners' delegation which had come to

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2 F. Machin, op. cit., p. 413.
3 The inquiries were: the Royal Commission on Trade Unions (1868), the Select Committee on Mines (1866) and the Select Committee on the Master and Servant Laws (1866).
4 R.C. on Trades Unions (1867-8 xxxix), Q 16119.
explain its reasons for demanding an advance in wages. ¹ By a well-organised combination of restriction of output and selective local strikes, the union gained a moderate increase of 5% and the principle of weekly pay. This latter concession and the recognition of the union's representative and bargaining machinery were the real fruits of this, one of the two last major confrontations before the depression in the late 1870s. This struggle had seen the defeat of a nine month lockout (which extended well into 1866) imposed by the Newton Chambers company, the standard bearer of the Coalowners Association,² and it prompted a significant increase in union membership, boosted by the accession of collieries in the Brightside, Tinsley and Masborough district between Rotherham and Sheffield.³ The 1865/6 dispute was as much a confrontation as that of 1864, but one that was fought only between the front line troops, with the main manoeuvring off the stage of war. The real test was not whether the Thorncliffe miners would hold out through their nine month ordeal, but whether Normansell and the S.Y.M.A. executive could retain control over the branches in the policy of restricted aggression. It was his success in gaining and retaining this control and support which ultimately forced the owners to recognise the union.

There was nothing covert about the machinery of control, details were written into the rules of the association. Branches' statements to employers were to be vetted, details of accidents and of contract rules - potential sources of grievances - were to be scrutinised, and a uniform system of book-keeping imposed by the S.Y.M.A. executive.⁴ Wherever

¹ F. Machin, op.cit., p.342.
² Ibid., p.345. Normansell claimed that the owners were supporting Newton Chambers in the hope that, if they defeated their men, all the owners would be able to claw back what they had conceded.
possible, disputes were to be settled by what Normansell called the 'Reference' system: voluntary collective bargaining by appointees from both sides.¹ This was a less formal version of the conciliation and arbitration procedures set up in later years. But, under certain conditions, the miners were willing to set up more formal mechanisms. The conditionality was made clear in a Council resolution of July 20th 1868:

That this Council, while strongly advocating 'courts of conciliation and arbitration', will not consider themselves bound to any such principle except they have a voice in making the rules and regulations for carrying out the same . . . "²

The most determined owners, however, were to make one last attempt at undermining the status of the S.Y.M.A. Three large companies, who believed that they had no need to harness what some owners by then saw as the moderating force of the union, decided to put all their financial and other resources against what they perceived as a challenge to their control.

The confrontations of 1869-70 began at the collieries of Den Huntsman, steelmaker of Tinsley to the south of our area, where attempts to reduce wages, directly and indirectly, had been made in 1868, most probably as a challenge to the recent union encroachments into those pits. Huntsman persistently refused to negotiate with Normansell over the grievances and a strike began in January 1869.³ More direct attempts to destroy the union were made at Denaby where the men had only been formally accepted into the S.Y.M.A. for a few days when notices were given that they should lose their jobs unless they renounced their membership. ⁴ Finally, at Newton Chambers' pits, disputes and dissatisfaction ever since the 1866 lockout

¹ S.C. on Coal (1873), p. 327
² S.Y.M.A. minutes, 20 July 1868.
³ F.Machin, op. cit., p. 359.
⁴ S.Y.M.A. minutes, 1 Feb. 1869.
culminated in a major stoppage beginning on March 24th 1869. At all these collieries, the owners insisted on non-unionism, either directly in Denaby's case, or by making a provision of re-employment the membership of a 'Free Labour Society' as at Tinsley, or of an accident club coupled with individual negotiation of wages at Thorncliffe, effectively usurping the functions of the district union.

In all three cases, blacklegs were recruited to replace the existing workforce with varying success and strong resistance from the men. At Tinsley, a year after the strike began, the pit was virtually running at full capacity with non-union labour. At Denaby and around Thorncliffe vigilant and purposeful picketing by the locked out miners and other sympathetic groups, which at times flared up into unprecedented levels of violence, ensured the failure of the policy. Almost unconditional victories were won by the miners at Denaby after six months and at Thorncliffe after eighteen.

(d) 1871 to Spring 1874.

Whether this type of challenge to the union would have been repeated if the economic climate had remained unexceptional is a matter for conjecture. As it happened, the coal boom of 1871-3 ensured that most grievances of a financial nature were removed as wages and prices began to rise.

The South Yorkshire miners' share in this boom amounted to five increases in wage levels - in total, 57½% between September 1871 and March 1873 - all without a district strike, but with a degree of pressure both by the lodges on Normansell and the executive, and by the union as a whole on the more recalcitrant owners, especially in Derbyshire. Higher percentage gains were made in other coalfields, but, in general, South Yorkshire miners had enjoyed considerably higher wages at the beginning of the boom.

1 F. Machin, op. cit., p. 359.
2 See Chapter Fourteen.
3 See S.Y.M.A. minutes, 10 March 1875.
The comparative ease with which these concessions were gained and the rapidly increasing membership had two obvious results. First, the union executive was able to turn its attention to matters other than the defence of wages, Normansell was able to devote himself to the M.N.A.'s campaign for improved safety legislation which resulted in the Coal Mines Act of 1872. This Act also improved the lot of checkweighmen, a cause still close to Normansell's heart. Secondly, the union did not have to work too hard to emphasise its credibility as an institution to both employers and men. To the former, it must have appeared as a moderating force, holding back larger wage demands when profits were seen to be spiralling. ¹ To the former non-unionist and to the miner at a newly opened or geographically peripheral pit, membership of such a wealthy and seemingly successful union ² became more and more attractive, particularly for those who believed that sooner or later the boom would collapse. The failure to defend these gains sufficiently after the Spring of 1874, of course, proved the point by default in the sense that membership and central control lapsed.

Perhaps just as significant, the union began to make its first inroads into institutions which were involved in the welfare of the wider community. In June 1872, Normansell, with the sanction of the S.Y.M.A. Council put pressure on the Mexborough Board of Health to clean up a notorious part of the

¹ This was especially true in the wage agitation of May to September 1872. See F. Machin, op. cit., pp. 385-6. Even the Fitzwilliam miners joined the union in 1872, unhindered by their employer, 'with pure motives and at a time when they are at peace with their employer and managers'; S.Y.M.A. minutes (Normansell's notes), 26 Feb. 1872.

² F. Machin, op. cit., p. 392. By June 1874, there was over £45,000 'invested or in the hands of the treasurer', contributed by about 100 lodges including the North Derbyshire lodges which had joined the union piecemeal since February 1872 (Balance Sheet, 26 Feb 1872).
township where smallpox had broken out. To emphasise the disinterested nature of this involvement, he exonerated the Denaby Main company, who owned some of the houses in that quarter, from blame and publicly praised the precautions it had taken. On a more formal level, Philip Casey, the other full-time official at Barnsley, was successfully put forward as a School Board candidate in 1871 and, a year later, Normansell became the first trade union sponsored town councillor in the country's history.

In order to display the union's new-found status and respectability, yet to a certain extent also its independence, three new facets of the institution were revealed to the people of South Yorkshire and the world at large. The S.Y.M.A. was the first miners' union to organise an annual demonstration on a regular basis, attracting, as Williams suggests, the pick of the speakers. The 1872 and 1873 demonstrations were impressive events and while emphasising the numerical strength that the industry had already achieved, the overall tone was one of harmony between miners and their employers. In 1874 and 1875, the union acquired two properties which absorbed a large proportion of the surplus funds, very soon to be needed for the defence of wages. The decisions to build the ostentatious Miners' Offices in Barnsley and to buy the Shirland colliery in Derbyshire as a co-operative production venture, were made before the first attack on wages in May 1874, although strikes and reductions in other coalfields and continuing grievances in North Derbyshire pits gave some warning of the impending downswing. Very soon, both the

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1 S.Y.M.A. minutes, 3 June 1872.
2 F. Machin, op. cit., p. 389.
3 J. E. Williams, op. cit., p. 143.
4 F. Machin, op. cit., p. 392.
5 The first instalment of £5,000 for the colliery was paid in November 1874. The Miners' Offices were opened on November 4th 1874 (Ibid, pp. 403, 416).
offices and the Co-operative Colliery were to appear as massive 'white elephants'.

The weaknesses in Derbyshire throughout this period somewhat tarnished the advances gained by the S.Y.M.A. on behalf of its Yorkshire members and, no doubt, confirmed Normansell and others in their belief in a federalist union structure at national level. At district level, however, Normansell believed in centralising control. But a change in the union's rules in this direction eventually was to prove detrimental and achieved a weakening of the executive's control over many lodges: the very opposite of its intended effect. On May 9th 1873, the Council consented to the District Committee (the executive body) being increased from nine to thirteen men, while the Council itself was to meet monthly and not fortnightly. On more than one occasion in the following seven years, the Executive Committee, dominated by the two secretaries, were at odds with the more representative Council. In the balmy days of 1873, this was not foreseen, by the Council delegates at least.

(e) Spring 1874 to May 1881

This period witnessed more conflict between the rank and file and the district leadership, and among the executive itself, than any other period between 1858 and 1894. At no other time were the union's directives ignored on so many occasions. Never were there so many branches withholding payment of dues either for financial reasons or in protest. Neither was there, at any other time open conflict between existing and former full-time officials, conflict which, in 1880, resulted in the establishment of three geographically distinct union bases, almost totally independent and often publicly at odds one with another.

The background was that of coal prices sliding rapidly towards pre-1871 levels, accompanied by employers' demands

1 S.Y.M.A. minutes, 19 May 1873.
for general wage reductions and the creeping in of confiscation, coal riddling and other unpopular practices which, in the optimism of the early 1870s, many miners believed to have gone forever. The lockout of July 1874 enforced 121/2% reduction, partly through arbitration: a settlement strongly criticised by several of the larger lodges. In recommending it, Normansell and Casey lost much of their credibility, and were strongly censured at a mass meeting in Rotherham on July 23rd.¹ This short lockout, involving such a large number of men, stripped the union of £20,000 in lockout pay,² the prospect of which obviously influenced Normansell's decision originally to try to avert the confrontation by recommending acceptance of the owners' terms. Numerical strength could be brought to bear on employers as long as the bulk of the members were at work and contributing their dues.

A further reduction of 10% was accepted by Council in March 1875, but Normansell and Casey faced mounting opposition from the rank and file. A proposal from the Nanvers delegate for Casey's discharge was removed from the agenda of Council on April 19th, but a ballot on the acceptance of Normansell's resignation only failed to recommend this by one vote.³ More orchestrated criticism of the leadership followed, based partly on deficits found in an audit of the S.Y.M.A. accounts.⁴ These criticisms, however, were stifled by Normansell's death on December 24th 1875.

Two new secretaries were appointed in the ensuing weeks, Casey having been rejected at the ballot. But the uncertainty

¹ F. Machin. op. cit., p. 401.
³ S.Y.M.A. minutes, 19 April 1875.
⁴ See p. 140.
and financial weakness of the union were immediately exploited by a coalowners' association, reformulated the previous year with £200,000 capital backing. And as Machin points out: 'For the first time in twelve years, the coalowners decided to post notices without consulting the miners' officials'.

A 15% reduction was demanded and 12 2 3/4% eventually negotiated with outside mediation, after a seven week lockout. John Frith, one of the two full-time secretaries, echoing Normansell's moderation, and on the advice of MacDonald and other national miners' figures, had tried, unsuccessfully, to get the miners to accept a 10% reduction before the notices expired. The lockout plunged the union into further financial difficulty and the Widows and Orphans fund, one of the S.Y.N.A.'s real selling points, was raided to pay off arrears of strike pay to impatient lodges. In the confusion that followed, several lodges ceased paying their contributions.

Membership declined until mid 1877 when several large collieries, including Denaby and Church Lane, faced bitter strikes. Despite the adoption of a rather tougher attitude by Frith, a further reduction could not be avoided in 1878, bringing wages down to pre-boom levels. The next demand, in the winter of 1878, was met with more determination by executive and rank and file, and in the following Spring, the reduction was formerly put to arbitration. On May 26th, Judge Ellison announced that no wage cut should be made, arguing in general terms on the basis of the concept of a living wage and rejecting the principles behind the sliding scale, already

1 F. Machin, op. cit., p. 401.
2 Ibid, p. 428.
3 Ibid, p. 435.
4 Including Kilnhurst and Rawmarsh which had been the first to do so in 1868 when criticism had also been levelled at the leadership. See Balance Sheets.
5 F. Machin, op. cit., p. 453.
6 Ibid, p. 461.
adopted elsewhere. This is what the rank and file wanted to hear, but their rejoicings were soon dampened by a spate of piecemeal and concealed reductions imposed by employers across the district. The South Yorkshire leadership were obliged to follow their West Yorkshire neighbours into negotiations over just such an instrument for adjusting wages. These ultimately failed through the inability of the parties to decide on a standard selling price for coal, but not before the S.Y.M.A. had been split into two separate organisations, ostensibly over approaches to policies like the sliding scale and restriction. William Chappell, Frith's full-time partner since 1876, was discharged after a vote in Council in December 1880. 1 Chappell disagreed with Frith's continuing advocacy of restriction, but this overt cause of their failure to work together undoubtedly concealed a deeper clash of personalities and some degree of opportunism on Chappell's part. 2 Within a few days of his dismissal, Chappell was organising a breakaway union in the Rotherham district 3 which, in one form or another, was to survive until 1885. On his instigation, several member lodges were to adopt their own sliding scales. Philip Casey, too, returned to the district and tapped the discontent of two or three lodges on the western edge of the study area, 4 organising a third association around the principle of autonomy for branch funds.

John Frith, who, since about the summer of 1876, had been inching away from the moderation of his predecessor and of the Miners' National Union, 5 took up a positively militant stance in 1881 when compared to the policies put forward by Chappell. In particular, Frith attempted, unsuccessfully, to back demands

1 S.Y.M.A. minutes 22 Dec. 1879.
2 See pp. 146-7, 149-51.
3 Barnsley Chronicle, 3 Jan. 1880.
4 Ibid.
5 The S.Y.M.A. considered leaving the M.N.U. in the summer of 1876; Glasgow Sentinel, 5 Aug. 1876. From then on, it took virtually no part in the organisation.
for a wage increase with strike action, early in the year. This aberration was soon corrected. More in desperation than in hope, South Yorkshire turned to Ben Pickard's suggestion of amalgamation with West Yorkshire. With both unions at almost their lowest ebb, negotiations were completed in June 1881.¹

(f) May 1881 to May 1885

The upswing in trade towards the end of 1881 gave the miners hope of wage increases and a demand for 10% was put to the owners in January 1882.² The refusals from both the South and West Yorkshire owners were accompanied by proposals for a sliding scale. Ned Cowey, the county president, at a district conference in Rotherham in September (one of many such gatherings which enabled a minimum of co-operation with Chappell's union) rejected both arbitration and a sliding scale on the grounds that the employers had contravened arbitration awards before and would use a sliding scale agreement to enter into coal contracts at cut-throat rates.³ Although Cowey claimed that strikes had been 'a dead failure and were nothing less than folly',⁴ a levy was proposed for the Y.M.A. area against Chappell's advice,⁵ and a day later, the South Yorkshire owners conceded the 10% advance in general, although some were said to have held out and forced their men to accept only 7½%.⁶

In September 1883 and January 1884, before prices began to fall again in the spring of the latter year, the rank and file

¹ F. Machin, op. cit., p. 489.
² R. G. Neville, op. cit., p. 119.
⁴ Ibid.
agitated for further wage increases, but met with blank refusals from the owners and lukewarm support from the union executive, apprehensive about the lack of support from outside Yorkshire. ¹ Ben Pickard, the secretary, was more concerned with establishing permanent conciliation machinery and, in January 1884, proposed a scheme for a standing joint committee to regulate wages above a minimum standard and on the basis of the selling price of coal: a virtual sliding scale. ² This and revised schemes were rejected by the owners on the basis of the minimum level of prices. In February 1885, most Yorkshire coalowners gave their men notice of a 10% reduction. ³ This demand was resisted at most pits but, by May 28th, those who had not already drifted back to work conceded the 10%. ⁴ This was the last general wage attack for seven and a half years and the last to be met by a weak and divided union. The defence of wages in 1885 saw the end of Chappell's control over Denaby and Manvers, his last two major collieries. Manvers, however, remained aloof from the Y.M.A. longer than Denaby which sought to join the union during the strike over riddling which had been ongoing since the beginning of the year.

1881 to 1885 were years of retrenchment, brightened only by the owners' concessions of 1882. The continuing difficulties faced by the coal industry did not provide any common ground for owners or men. Pickard's overtures about the setting up of conciliation machinery were ignored, probably because they did not give quite as much leeway to the owners as some of the formal sliding scale agreements negotiated elsewhere. His enthusiasm for restriction as a policy to be adopted by both sides was not shared and, in October 1885, his demand for a wage advance was not even forwarded to the employers by the

² Barnsley Chronicle, 12 Jan. 1884.
³ Ibid, 28 Feb. 1885.
secretary of their association. ¹

Pickard did not have to face the type of open rebellion by union members against the decisions of the executive that marked the last years of the S.Y.M.A., although, of course, membership was down to a loyal rump of about 8,000-12,000. Opposition from Casey and, more especially, from Chappell, was frustrating and often reduced both sides to degrading exchanges. But with funds so low and the state of trade so hostile, the question of striking for advances was rarely raised.

1884, however, did see the one real achievement of the period: the beginning of the union's involvement in parliamentary politics, in the train of the third Reform Act. In August, the Yorkshire Miners' Political Association was formed, ² and there followed an electoral pact with the Liberals which secured 100% Liberal representation in the newly-formed South Yorkshire constituencies in 1885 and a seat in Parliament for Pickard. The resolution at the annual demonstration in August 1884 calling for 200 members to represent Labour in the Commons now seems rather fatuous, as the Liberal pact remained an obstacle to further labour representation in South Yorkshire until the twentieth century.

(SE) May 1885 to September 1888.

1886-7 were unspectacular years in the history of the Y.M.A. Hopes of a joint wages movement with other coalfields were buried, at least temporarily, hampered by weak organisation especially in the Midlands. Wages were at their lowest in the Yorkshire union's history, albeit rather higher than in most other districts; ³ and once again, Pickard's attempts to negotiate a sliding scale and conciliation machinery foundered

¹ Barnsley Chronicle, 17 Oct. 1885.
² R.G.Neville, op.cit., p.443.

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on the question of a minimum standard. In January 1888, the persistent refusal of the South Yorkshire owners even to meet deputations on this issue provoked criticism from the editor of the *Barnsley Chronicle* and an open attack by Pickard himself on the very nature of the profits earned by colliery companies. His criticisms were levelled at F. Parker Rhodes, the secretary to the coalowners, and a partner in a colliery himself:

> Mr. Rhodes, as a lawyer, I am really surprised to find indulging in such rhodomontade as to state that colliery owners do nothing else than live by the loss. 2

Pickard went on to refer unfavourably to aspects of the life style of colliery owners and managers in an irritated and rather generalised manner that brought accusations of irresponsibility from Rhodes.

By this time, signs of a slight improvement in coal prices brought demands for action on a 10% wage increase and, in February 1888, a ballot was taken showing a majority in favour of handing in notices. 3 Pickard was able to postpone this course of action until the support of the other coalfields gave teeth to the demand. But he was clearly less reluctant than in earlier years to be carried along by the momentum of his rank and file. Local grievances were rife, particularly victimisation and blacklisting 4 which had inflamed a long dispute at Monk Bretton in 1887. Another bone of contention was the framing of pit bye-laws (provided for under the 1887 Mines Regulation Act) which, according to members of the Y.M.A. executive, was undertaken without any consultation with the workmen. 5 Several of the 'Special Rules', along with the tendency of owners to contract out of the Employers Liability

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2 Ibid, 21 Jan. 188, open letter to F. Parker Rhodes.
3 Ibid, 4 Feb. 1888.
4 Y.M.A. Annual Report, 1885/6, quoted in *Barnsley Chronicle*, 12 March 1887.
Act, were seen as a means of transferring responsibility for bad management decisions onto the shoulders of the men, while giving discretionary powers to managers over, for example, what constituted a 'bad corf'. As Neville suggests, the campaign against these and other grievances got caught up in the movement for wage increases after September 1888.

1887 also saw the birth of the mass parliamentary campaign for the eight hour day, of which the Y.M.A. were in the forefront. At first, the eight hour day was generally accepted as a means of combating unemployment in the dismal state of the coal trade that year. But it rapidly became a symbol of the assertiveness of the M.F.G.B. after its initial successes on the wages front.

(h) September 1888 to July 1893.

The joint wages movement, stemming formally from the Manchester conference of September 1888, was a joint initiative by Lancashire and Yorkshire and, at least in the latter's case, was prompted by demands from one or two lodges. The reluctant Yorkshire owners eventually fell into line with their counterparts in other coalfields on the wages question, having been convinced, no doubt, of the new determination of the miners. The Barnsley Chronicle sensed the change of atmosphere when the 30,000-odd miners who had not gained the advance came out on strike on the 23rd and 24th October. the unanimity of the men proved beyond a doubt that the men as a whole, and not a mere noisy section, were the moving, determining force in what was being done.

1 A corf was a tub in which the coal was brought to the surface. One that was insufficiently filled, or filled with too much stone, dirt or small coal, was not accredited to the hewer.

2 R.G. Neville, op. cit., p. 163.


5 See Barnsley Chronicle, 4 Aug. 1888, for example.

Much of this shared determination was certainly forged by the masters' 'initial blunder' in refusing to negotiate.¹

The advances of 1889 and 1890 were won in a climate of optimism over the state of trade. Pickard, in November 1889, referred to the upturn as 'one of the greatest booms known to this generation'.² Clearly, as in 1871-3, here was an occasion for the mutual recriminations of the last few years to be shelved and for relatively amicable discussion about conciliation machinery to progress.³ Pickard was enthusiastic enough about detente to personally admonish the Denaby pony drivers who threatened to rock the boat by striking while these negotiations were taking place.⁴ Nevertheless, an unconditional 10% advance was demanded by the miners against the initial advice of Pickard, and was conceded by the owners on November 25th 1889 with some misgivings.⁵ It was obvious that industrial peace could only be maintained in ideal economic conditions, and Pickard's successful negotiation of the establishment of a Joint District Board in 1890 to settle local grievances was one method of establishing a buffer between the employers and the increasingly restive rank and file in the event of a worsening of the economic climate.

The miners' inability to convince the employers of the mutual benefits of an eight hour day, and the latter's reluctance to concede wage advances to the less well organised and less powerful surface workers, both brought home to the Y.M.A. member that the 'common cause' highlighted by John Normansell in the 1870s boom was a myth. Pickard was careful to avoid such pronouncements.

¹ Ibid, 3 Nov. 1888.
² Ibid, 9 Nov. 1889
³ Particularly at the Leeds meeting on June 4th 1889; ibid, 8 June 1889.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Ibid, 30 Nov. and 14 Dec. 1889.
(i) July 1893 to 1894.

In the British coal industry, 1893 opened against a background of falling coal prices, soon reflected in piecemeal attacks on wages in the weaker districts. Yorkshire, it seemed at first, was strong enough to resist a general downward slide of wages, although it was claimed that overcrowding in the pits had diluted the benefit of the 40% gained since 1888. In response, Pickard persuaded his county to put its faith one last time in the policy of restriction as a lever on the workings of supply and demand. The Y.M.A. voted for a two week stop period, a policy rejected by the M.F.G.B. as a whole. Several important lodges in South Yorkshire also showed little enthusiasm for this action. Throughout May and June, it became clear that, despite pronouncements from prominent coalowners, such as A.M. Chambers, that coal prices had fallen by up to 35%, the miners in Yorkshire and other M.F.G.B. districts would not submit to a general reduction nor to arbitration. As Neville suggests, it marked the first outright rejection of the strict tying of wages to prices since the permanent unions were established in Yorkshire.

Pickard believed that his control over the progress of resistance was vital if it was not to be a repeat of that earlier multi-district confrontation in 1844. But in fact, there could have been no real comparison. The miners of Yorkshire at least, in 1893, were no longer the scattered groups of outsiders, as much of the population saw them in 1844. They were a large and economically vital workforce, thoroughly politicised, with years of organisational experience behind

1 Ibid, 18 Feb. 1893. R.G.Neville, op.cit., p.177, refers to indirect wage reductions and layoffs.
2 Y.M.A. minutes, 27 Feb. 1893.
3 R.P.Arnott, op.cit., p.222.
5 Ibid, 30 June 1893.
6 R.G.Neville, op.cit., p.179.
them or, at least, their spokesmen. The 1893 confrontation was a trial not just between the miners and the employers but, to a certain extent, between those outside groups, political and otherwise, which had respectively ranged themselves behind the two camps. A spokesman for one such group was the editor of the Liberal *Barnsley Chronicle* who declared that:

> The instincts of common humanity prompt us to side with (the miners), to sympathise with them and to promise to help them by every legitimate means in our power. ¹

He was 'at one with the men in their determination to resist a reduction'² and considered that the colliery owners were 'jeopardising the interest of the nation'.³ So long as Pickard retained control over his army in a principled stand on wages, the organs of local liberal opinion were seen to rally round. When the violence of early September sprawled briefly across the coalfield, that opinion was as horrified as that of any Tory backwoodsman.

Apart from the temporary lapse of control in that week in September,⁴ the only other major point of issue during the lockout (apart from its final result) was that of whether the union should allow pits to go back to work at old wages, if offered. In mid August, the Y.M.A. Council voted emphatically against this piecemeal return;⁵ but on September 4th, Pickard issued a notice which stated:

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¹ *Barnsley Chronicle*, 8 Sept. 1893.
² Ibid., 19 Aug. 1893.
³ Ibid, 22 July 1893.
⁴ See pp. 353-60.
⁵ Y.M.A. minutes, 19 Aug. 1893. The delegate vote was 1097 to 84 against allowing a piecemeal return.
I wish you also to remember that we won the last advance and the one before it by allowing collieries to work on who gave the advance unconditionally. I know in stating these matters I may obtain censure by some. 1

The ballot, whose result was announced on September 13th, confirmed his fears. The Yorkshire miners had voted against his guarded advice in a similar proportion to the delegate vote at the mid September M.F.G.B. conference. 2 Nevertheless, with so many pits in the Midland counties returning to work, the Yorkshire vote swung dramatically the other way on September 28th. 3

The outcome of the final settlement of November 17th was heralded by Pickard as a victory for the miners' resistance to the unfettered workings of political economy. 4 Pickard was dubbed 'the hero of the present hour' by one of his most consistent opponents on the radical wing of the union. 5 But these reactions were prompted, no doubt, by belief that the struggle which had impoverished not only the funds of the district union but also whole communities that were dependent on the industry, was over. With hindsight, observers such as J.E. Williams 6 have seen the settlement as a compromise and the Conciliation Board, which claimed a 10% wage reduction from August 1st 1894, as a device for fettering rank and file demands.

On the one hand, the lockout produced a settlement that accorded with the best principles of institutionalised wage

1 Y.M.A. records, Circular, 4 Sept. 1893.
2 Y.M.A. minutes, 13 Sept. 1893, 23639 to 16029 against. R.P. Arnot, op. cit., p. 222: the vote at the M.F.G.B. conference of 14 and 15 September was 91369 to 61923 against.
3 Y.M.A. minutes, 28 Sept. 1893, 31423 to 2751 in favour.
6 J.E. Williams, op. cit., p. 341.
determination as promoted by Mundella and others in the 1860s and 1870s and complied with by trade union leaders. On the other hand, there were signs of a new consciousness of the miners' industrial power and importance which had won them recognition from most quarters and support from many. Pickard and his supporters on the Y.M.A. executive, on the whole held the respect of the majority of their members, not just in the immediate wake of the 1893 settlement. But ultimately, it was their control over the institutions contained by and associated with the union that prevented the changing rank and file consciousness from taking a more aggressive form than it did in 1893. The branch leaders were a vital link in this chain of control, and their loyalty to the executive, with one or two exceptions, could be counted on.

The validity of the trade unions within the framework of orthodox political economy was no longer as supportable an argument as it had been in Normansell's heyday. It is true that, as Clements insists, 'The colliers' battles of the 1860s were as fierce as the Northumberland strike ... in 1844'. Trade union policies, even those of Normansell and MacDonald, 'often offended against these laws (supply and demand, the wage fund, etc.), and consequently against economists and the employers'. Nevertheless, Normansell, unlike his predecessors in the 1840s and, to a certain extent, also unlike the upsurge of not altogether unheeded rank and file opinion after 1888, eventually subsumed the concept of a living wage - a minimum standard - beneath his acute sensitivity to price movements.

5 See R.V. Clements, op.cit., pp.95, 102 for a different viewpoint on this.
The Yorkshire miners as a whole were moving away from this level of consciousness, but the wage machinery set up by Pickard after the 1893, coupled with more subtle controls over the channels of expression and even over the terms of reference of that expression, implicit in the success of the Lib-Lab pact, ensured that brakes were applied to that drift.

The district leaders.

As a final section of background material before beginning the more detailed analysis in Parts Two and Three, it will be useful to draw together some common and divergent threads in the biographies of the most important district leaders, full-time officials and other office holders. Bearing in mind that policy was not always formulated, let alone implemented, in the executive meeting rooms of the Miners' Offices, it is important, nevertheless, to gauge the power and influence wielded by the executive and particularly by the district secretaries. To assess this, it will be necessary to compare their backgrounds and their profiles.

In this section, we are concerned primarily with six men: John Normansell, secretary of the S.Y.M.A., 1864-75; John Frith, secretary of the S.Y.M.A., 1876-81, and financial secretary of the Y.M.A., 1881-1904; William Chappell, assistant secretary of the S.Y.M.A., 1876-9, and secretary of the Rotherham District of the S.Y.M.A., 1880-5; Ben Pickard, secretary of the Y.M.A., 1881-1904; Edward (Ned) Cowey, president of the Y.M.A., 1881-1903; and William Parrott, agent of the Y.M.A., 1881-1904. There were other long-serving figures, such as Richard Mitchell, secretary of the S.Y.M.A., 1858-64; Philip Casey, one time treasurer and, from 1867-75, assistant secretary of the S.Y.M.A.; Samuel Broadhead, permanent treasurer of the S.Y.M.A. and Y.M.A., 1875-1897; David Moulson, several times president of the S.Y.M.A.; and John Wadsworth, regular member of the Y.M.A. Executive Committee and, outside our period, secretary of the Y.M.A. But their influence was limited, as in Mitchell's case, by a weak organisation, or by the greater mobility, control of and access to information, and executive powers of the other
figures listed above. Pickard and Normansell, in particular, combined control over the district organisation with the prestige and influence of senior executive roles in the M.N.A. and M.F.G.B.

Normansell, Frith and Chappell, all secretaries of the S.Y.M.A. before its merger with West Yorkshire in 1881, came from mining families. Unlike the last two, however, who worked many years at a single South Yorkshire colliery (in each case the same one as their fathers), Normansell was twenty six before coming to South Yorkshire, having already sampled pit life in two other counties. All three men were educated largely through their own efforts, after beginning work at an early age. Chappell learnt arithmetic after he had been elected checkweighman at Thorncliffe Drift in 1867, and Normansell became literate sometime after his marriage at the age of twenty two. Both Chappell and Normansell lost one or both parents in childhood: occurrences that may have been spurs to achievement. Frith lost his first wife before taking union office, and a brother in an explosion in 1851.

Each man's road to local recognition and then to district office is worth examining. Normansell, a newcomer to the district when the union was formed in 1858, rapidly moved into the position of checkweighman and branch secretary at Wharncliffe Silkstone No. 1 pit. At this level he might have remained, but for the action of the owners in ejecting him from the weighhouse when he transferred to the No. 2 pit. Twice the union took the matter to court and won (the second time, before

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1 Much of the information for this section has been taken from J. Saville and J. M. Bellamy (eds.), Dictionary of Labour Biography, i and ii (Macmillan, 1972 and 1974); and for William Chappell, Barnsley Chronicle, 11 March 1876.

2 Barnsley Chronicle, 26 Feb. 1876.

3 Ibid, 20 Feb. 1904, Frith's obituary.

the Queens Bench, the issue was settled by a compromise on costs).\textsuperscript{1} Normansell, all the while arguing against a strike and publicly announcing his satisfaction with conditions after the settlement, had nevertheless established himself as a man of determination. He had only to prove his energy and tactical skills on the 1864 lockout committee to gain unanimous approval of his rise to full-time district office in December of that year,\textsuperscript{2} an indication of the way that the old parochiality of the coalfield was breaking down.

Chappell, too, emerged from his checkweighman's post through confrontation in the courts with the employers at his pit. In 1867, the Newton Chambers company unsuccessfully sued him for damages for setting down the pit.\textsuperscript{3} Although Chappell received union support in this case, his lodge was formally condemned the same week for striking over confiscations (an issue in which he, as checkweighman was bound to be involved). Chappell remained at his post until the beginning of the eighteen-month lockout at Newton Chambers' pits in 1869 and 1870, during which he was active in fund raising. In July 1870, however, he was issued with a writ for libel, perpetrated against the company in a public notice he had issued. In it, he had referred to their 'oppression of the foulest nature' and accused them of never telling the men the conditions on which they would have been allowed to have been re-engaged.\textsuperscript{4} Despite union support support and a directive not to plead guilty 'or accept any terms that may be degrading to the men and the Association',\textsuperscript{5} the case

\textsuperscript{1} Ibid, p.316.

\textsuperscript{2} S.Y.M.A. minutes, 26 Dec. 1864.

\textsuperscript{3} Ibid, 23 Nov. 1867.

\textsuperscript{4} Cusworth Hall, Newton Chambers MSS, Trades Disputes file. Chappell had been issued with a notice by the company warning him to keep off their property.

\textsuperscript{5} S.Y.M.A. minutes, 15 Aug. 1870.
was lost. To avoid paying compensation, Chappell tendered a humiliating apology. Unlike Richard Mitchell in 1864, Chappell emerged relatively unscathed from this defeat, and was employed by the S.Y.M.A. as auditor for about six months up to June 1871. He then found a job as a fire trier (carrying the status of a deputy) at Manvers Main where he stayed, except for a year at nearby Thrybergh Hall colliery, until just before his election to district office, although not with the best record of harmony with his employers. His departures from both Thrybergh and the second one from Mamvers were said to have been less than voluntary.

John Frith's early career seems to have been far less traumatic. He worked at Warren Vale colliery for twenty four years, during which he established and nurtured the strong Rawmarsh union lodge in what appears to have been an ideal environment for moderate union activity. It was reported that he developed a friendship with Normansell from the time of the 1864 Manchester conference of the M.N.A. to which he was delegate. Until his assumption of the post of interim secretary on Normansell's death, he was a regular member of the Executive Committee and was president of the S.Y.M.A. in 1874. Underlying this uncontroversial path to high office, there did lie a note or two of radicalism. In 1872, Frith moved to the newly opened Roundwood colliery where he established the union branch. Shortly after, though, he was victimised by the company for his championing of the lads' cause in a dispute (pit lads were treated unfavourably even by owners who were

1 Sheffield Telegraph, 17 Aug. 1870.
2 S.Y.M.A. minutes, 21 Nov. 1870 and 19 June 1871.
3 Preliminary Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into Accidents in Mines (P.P., 1881, xxvi), Q 10507.
4 Barnsley Chronicle, 11 March 1876; Mexborough and Swinton Times, 27 Sept. 1878.
5 See p. 366.
6 Barnsley Chronicle, 20 Feb. 1904.
prepared to listen to the grievances of experienced adult miners) and moved back to the Charlesworths' employ at Thrybergh Hall. Moreover, all might not always have been plain sailing between Frith and Normansell in those years. In 1869, at the time of widespread criticism of union executive policy, Rawmarsh, along with the neighbouring Kilnhurst and Thrybergh Hall lodges, withheld their union dues for several weeks, invoking censure from the Council.

It may well have been that a condition of mass support from the South Yorkshire miners in the 1860s and 1870s was not just a proof of intellectual and organisational competence but also a certain renown for boldness and experience of confrontation. As one of Normansell's contemporaries on the S.Y.M.A. Council, Thomas Gee, explained, the district secretary came to power in the lockout of 1864 'when other men were afraid to do so . . . when defeat meant banishment from the district to those who had taken a leading part in it'. These three leaders, in varying degrees, combined the formal with the informal qualities. The latter quality, it seems, did not usually survive the experience of full-time office.

The local press, in their obituaries, probably give us the best insights into Normansell's character, at least as seen by a sympathetic section of the local Liberal middle class. Normansell undoubtedly won their respect and, at times, their support, partly because of the down-to-earth qualities they accredited to him. He also won the confidence of audiences distant from the union lodge rooms for reasons reflected in the appraisal of a Sheffield Conservative newspaper. It observed

1 Ibid.
2 S.Y.M.A. minutes, 21 Dec. 1869 and 1 Feb. 1870.
3 Barnsley Chronicle, 29 Jan. 1876.
that, having given the union power, Normansell spent much of
his energy keeping that power in check.¹ The Sheffield
Telegraph feared the excesses of the mining rank and file, and
Normansell could be seen as an ally in a possible confrontation.
He 'had to hold in check masses of men among whom the ignorant
were ever the most headstrong'.²

No major change of course was made when Frith and Chappell
took the helm of the union in 1876. Most of Chappell's early
abrasiveness and defiance soon wore off in the defence of
rapidly shrinking union funds and of a union organisation that
was beginning to crack at the seams. Of the two, Frith, a less
assertive and ambitious man, remained the more consistent,
adhering to a middle-of-the-road policy on industrial action,
while remaining sceptical of the owners' offers of arbitration
and sliding scales. Rarely becoming involved in non-mining
affairs, he did, however, enter the public debate in 1877 in
support of Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh³ and was an
unobtrusive member of Barnsley Town Council from 1890 to 1899.
He was probably not unhappy at receiving the less public
position of Financial Secretary in the newly formed Y.M.A. in
1881.

Chappell, on the other hand, made great play of his opinions
on economic matters. In 1879, for example, he launched a
campaign to publicise the effect of freight rates on
aggravating the depression in the South Yorkshire coal
industry.⁴ He continued to promote the debate in 1881, helped
by his new platform as secretary of the Rotherham district
union.⁵ In 1882, he made public his opinions on the operation

¹ Sheffield Telegraph, 27 Dec. 1875.
² Ibid,
³ Barnsley Chronicle, 5 May 1877, the letter is quoted from
the National Reformer.
⁴ Barnsley Chronicle, 28 June 1879.
of market forces, in opposition to the more aggressive policy of Pickard and the official Y.M.A.: 'we ought to recognise the laws of the market which forced owners to lower their prices before we make unrealistic demands'. He became a firm proponent of sliding scales. Chappell must be judged as an opportunist, exploiting the disarray of 1879 by forming a disruptive rival association on principles that, collectively, barely held water. After the collapse of his support in 1885 through his aversion to confronting the Denaby employers in a conflict situation, he negotiated with the Dean Forest miners for a position as their union agent. He failed, however, to attend their first meeting and the Dean Forest men withdrew their offer. Later in 1886, while employed as a mines equipment and explosives agent, he unsuccessfully stood as a candidate in the Rotherham Board of Health election.

Underlying his inconsistencies, however, there was a strand of determination and attention to detail that came of a Noncomformist conscience. Chappell had been a Wesleyan preacher.

Ben Pickard, Ned Cowey and William Parrott had all become district officials in West Yorkshire in the early and mid 1870s, but they too witnessed the initial struggles to form a union in the late 1850s and early 1860s. In Cowey's case, the scene had been the north eastern coalfield where he was twice victimised for his role in strikes, and was obliged to find work in a more accommodating coalfield. Similarities with their South Yorkshire counterparts exist. Two were formally checkweighmen (Cowey and Parrott) and all three were Methodists (Pickard and Cowey actively). Each one's personal history since gaining office in West Yorkshire, however, was relatively free

2 Dean Forest Mercury, 18 June 1886.
3 Ibid, 16 July 1886.
4 Rotherham Advertiser, 16 Oct. to 6 Nov. 1886.
from controversy and had an air of stability that was lacking amongst the South Yorkshire leadership, despite some radical rank and file opposition the West Yorkshire leaders' policies in the mid 1860s. They were seen as the natural leaders of the new but beleaguered union in 1881.

These men, like Frith, survived as miners' leaders into the late 1880s and the 1890s when the extension of the franchise and the miners' alliance with the Liberal party made it almost incumbent on their roles that they should stand as candidates, not only for the School Boards, Boards of Health and Town Council, but also for the County Council and Parliament. There were also the executive places in the M.F.G.B. to share out. Although these experiences took them into circles of contact beyond those enjoyed even by Normansell and MacDonald, this was not seen as unusual, as working class expectations in this direction had been raised largely through the precedents set by those early pioneers.

The acid test for a branch level miners' leader in the eyes of his members was still his ability to offer resistance to the employers' excesses, combined with his possession of some of the more middle class, chapel-based virtues of sobriety and literacy. But, by the 1890s, it was a district official's performance on a more public stage which guaranteed him a softer ride from the rank and file than Normansell had experienced. The district officials' resistance and, at least, short-term success in the 1893 lockout, moreover, served as a reminder that they hadn't entirely exchanged the miner's clothes for the politician's tailcoat. The bulk of the rank and file were willing to go along with these men in their bitter opposition to socialism until the credibility of their painstakingly constructed platform crumbled after their deaths.

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1 See, for example, the attacks of Abraham Tibbott and Martin O'Malley on John Dixon in the *Miner and Workman's Advocate*, 23 July and 13 Aug. 1864.
### TABLE 6


Membership of the Y.M.A. as a percentage of all Yorkshire mineworkers, 1881-94.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>S.Y.M.A.</th>
<th>Y.M.A.</th>
<th>Membership as % of Yorks. miners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>4022</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861-3</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1864</td>
<td>2200</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1867</td>
<td>7000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1868</td>
<td>5800</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>6900</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1876</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>1889</td>
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<td>55000</td>
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<td>77.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
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<td></td>
<td>76.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>55000</td>
<td></td>
<td>74.9%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*This is a combined figure representing the approximate membership of the S.Y.M.A. and the West Yorkshire Miners' Association. It is, however, a most unreliable figure as branch returns at this time were inconsistent and incomplete. Membership in practical terms was probably similar to that of 1881.

**Sources:** Barnsley Chronicle, 19 May 1860: S.Y.M.A. Balance Sheets; P.P.1896 xciii, pp.336-7; Mines Inspectors Reports. Figures for 1864-76 are for the month of December. The figure for 1860 is for May. The figures for 1880-94 are approximate and are for no specific month.
PART TWO

Miner, Union and Colliery.
From now on, the analysis will turn away from the union stage at Barnsley and direct itself towards individual branches, collieries and pit communities, as well as to assessing the impact of particular variables on the study area as a whole. The two central tasks of this thesis are to establish why the miners in the study area reacted collectively in the way they did to the changing components of the local and national industrial and political environment; and to analyse how and why this reaction differed from pit to pit and from community to community. Elements of an answer to the first task will emerge from the comparative analysis. But first we should attempt to find out what the union meant to the rank and file, what they expected of it and how these ambitions often came into conflict with the union executive's policies, though less so than in most other coalfields.
CHAPTER FIVE

Rank and File Opposition to the District Executive.
Through a study of the consistencies and inconsistencies in support for the district union in the next three Chapters, we may discover something of the labour consciousness of the rank and file in South Yorkshire. Inevitably we must concentrate on their spokesmen who in many cases were not wholly representative of the small units of men whose grievances and hopes they claimed to voice. This is a familiar dilemma for the historian. Nevertheless, these men played an important role in directing mass consciousness, even if they didn't always succeed either in diverting the executive from their policies, or in providing a lasting alternative strategy for the rank and file.

This chapter will examine the extent to which there existed in the miners' ranks a body of opinion that disagreed with and often mistrusted the policies, motives and the very structure of the union at Barnsley. The extent to which this was commonplace and overtly displayed depended to a great extent on the executive's success in improving wages and conditions. In the more prosperous years, collective acts of defiance were usually limited to individual collieries or branches; but at other times, the ease with which this opposition became generalised reveals the existence, not only of general mistrust, but also of a substratum of local leaders who were willing and able to articulate these feelings up to a certain point. Other rank and file spokesmen, however, were more inclined to rally their men in defence of the full-time officials; while occasionally the rank and file ignored the overtures of the local leaders themselves. This chapter will chronicle the incidence of opposition, emphasise the variations across the coalfield and advance some explanations of both the general and the particular phenomena.

Mass opposition (a) 1858-78.

The instability of the early years of the union under Richard Mitchell has been mentioned, not a surprising phenomenon in a district with little experience of organisation.
in its mining labour force. Twice in the first three years, important lodges revealed their unfamiliarity with centralised decisionmaking by withdrawing from the district union when Mitchell's policies disagreed with them. The lack of consistency in this early rebelliousness is reflected in the fact that the two collieries involved, Clarke's Silkstone and the Oaks, as we shall see later, were at opposite ends of the spectrum in most factors affecting labour relations. Other evidence of discontent with Mitchell's leadership is mostly of an indirect nature: for example, it may be reflected in the falling membership of the S.Y.M.A. between 1860 and 1864 and in the ease with which Council dispensed with his services in April 1864.

John Normansell took over the union in 1864, riding on the crest of a wave of enthusiasm for his energetic and skillful management of the lockout. For three years, he seems to have maintained unqualified mass support, whilst he achieved success in the bargaining arena. 1868, however, was a year more likely to test his members' loyalty. Having expended about £7,000 in vain support of the Church Gresley miners of Derbyshire, the South Yorkshire miners found their own local industry sliding into a slump and their wages coming under attack from the owners. Normansell and Casey averted a demand for a 10% reduction only to accept a 5½% reduction on behalf of their men. The S.Y.M.A. Council appears not to have fully endorsed this action and the two secretaries, to disarm the gathering opposition, threatened to resign. This proved to be a successful tactic, but meanwhile, more significant though less conspicuous notes of discontent were sounded from opposite ends of the coalfield.

1 See, for example, R.C. on Trades Unions (1867-8), Q 16164.
2 See Table 6.
3 F. Machin, on cit., p.335.
5 Barnsley Chronicle, 20 June 1868.
In January 1868, there came requests from the Rawmarsh and Swinton lodges for more local autonomy, especially in the funding of subscriptions: an indication of dissatisfaction with the insensitivity of the growing bureaucracy of the union which was to reveal itself again and again. A few weeks later, amid 'charges and bad feeling', the two lodges effectively withdrew from the S.Y.M.A. by withholding their contributions: a form of protest which they repeated on and off for over a year. Normansell insisted that the opposition in Rawmarsh was 'a clique', only 'five or six men' who were 'doing all they can to break up the union' and 'who have, on many occasions since its formation, used their influence out of prejudice against the officials and against the progression of this Association'. This 'clique' must have been very influential if they did in fact prevent over 200 men from exercising their will to support the district executive and from unseating the Rawmarsh delegate who was sympathetic to the lodge's defiance.

On the other side of Barnsley, the secretaries squared up to a second attack, this time addressed more directly at their performance as leaders. The leaders of the large Strafford Main lodge in Dodworth, in September 1863 by-passed Council and

1 S.Y.M.A. minutes, 20 Jan. 1868

2 Ostensibly, their reason for this action was the union's failure to pay a miner's widow the benefit she believed she was due.

3 S.Y.M.A. minutes (Normansell's notes), 2 March 1868.


5 S.Y.M.A. minutes, 21 Dec. 1869.

6 This was the combined membership of the Swinton and Rawmarsh lodges both before and after the secession. See S.Y.M.A. Balance Sheets.

7 He was ejected from the Council meeting of 21 Dec. 1868, at which Normansell expressed his strongest condemnation of the Rawmarsh action.

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distributed a circular around the district which contained criticisms of Normansell and Casey. These included, it appears, an attack on their intention to perpetuate their own engagements as full-time officials, to increase their own pay and to hold a dinner for the Council and the executive. The circular saw these devices as means of obtaining 'more uncontrolled power'. It posed the question:

Now, are we to understand from this condition (their permanent re-engagement) that our Secretaries desire to be sole dictators of the entire District, without any control of the Association's members? . . . we originally united ourselves together as a protection against tyranny and oppression, and we hope we are not come to such a condition as to be obliged to hand these symbols of serfdom from our employers to our paid servants.

This attack seems to have caught Normansell off his guard because the Strafford lodge had been one of the most consistent supporters of the union since its formation and because two of its branch officials, Isaac Haigh and Peter Silk, had been active either on the Executive Committee or as auditor for over two years. Peter Silk was promptly removed from the Committee, but the criticism did extract a concession in the form of a seven-man committee, including Haigh, which was to draw up the form of re-engagement for the two secretaries. This seems not to have satisfied the Strafford spokesmen, because they, like those at Rawmarsh and Swinton, persuaded their lodge to withdraw their contributions to the S.Y.M.A. Normansell again insisted that the action was 'entirely against the feeling and votes of a large majority of their members' and appealed to the

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1 S.Y.M.A. minutes, 28 Sept. 1868.
2 Ibid, (Normansell's notes).
3 Ibid.
4 S.Y.M.A. minutes, 12 Oct. 1868.
5 Ibid, 23 Nov. 1868.
Strafford rank and file to pressurise their leaders at lodge meetings for payment to be resumed.

The branch did return to the union, but not for six weeks. Normansell used the opportunity for propaganda, claiming that the Strafford lodge, along with Rawmarsh, had previously 'been split up' and were 'semi-defunct' rather than suggesting they might have hung aloof for principled reasons. This provoked public responses from Haigh and Silk. Haigh, in the Barnsley Chronicle, wrote that, far from being semi-defunct, the lodges in question had taken an important initiative and 'have disturbed Messrs. Normansell and Casey from their slumbers in their easy chairs they have occupied so long'. Peter Silk, in the Sheffield Independent, emphasised that 'we at Strafford Main are as well organised and have been during our separation from the District as any other lodge in the District'. He went on to list their grievances with Normansell and Casey. First, there was no proper vetting of the S.Y.M.A. accounts. Second, like Rawmarsh, they saw the need for alterations in the administration of the Widows and Orphans Fund (especially compensation for families whose breadwinners had died of 'natural' causes as well as those who died in pit accident): alterations which, he claimed, Normansell and Casey had prevented Council from approving. Finally, he expressed the lodge's dissatisfaction with Normansell's handling of the lockouts of 1869, recommended the implementation of a board of arbitration and stressed the good relations that usually existed between employers and men at his pit. If we interpret the Strafford opposition as an attack not on union policy but on the machinery of policy-making - the power structure itself - then the opposition of 1868 and many of the later incidents begin to make sense, whether the miners in question were

1 Ibid, (Normansell's notes), 15 March 1869.
2 Barnsley Chronicle, 13 March 1869.
3 Sheffield Independent, 12 March 1869.
calling for more, or less resistance to the employers. At root, most of the more articulate criticisms of the executive were appeals for a share in control of the institution that had been built up, with considerable sacrifice, since 1858.

The boom period, 1871-3, gave the executive a respite from attacks by both employers and union members. Although there is evidence that Normansell was pressurised by the rank and file into bidding for some of the advances,\(^1\) general satisfaction with the progress of wages and conditions enabled the secretaries to isolate one or two lodges\(^2\) and individuals\(^3\) who threatened to rock the boat during the mutual congratulations of those years. But early in 1874, as the boom began to deflate, Normansell published his awareness of a growing unease. He referred in his official notes to 'slanderous and abusive language uttered so frequently of late against the District Secretaries'.\(^4\) At a public meeting in March, he claimed that there were rumblings about strikes from many quarters and that some were suspicious of the friendly attitude of 'the gaffers'.\(^5\) The storm broke on May 28th when the executive met the owners at Barnsley and offered to accept a 10% wage reduction. Simultaneously, a mass meeting was held in the centre of the town and was addressed by Edward Jones, checkweighman at the Oaks, who opposed the reduction and suggested that more representative delegates be elected.\(^6\) Some members of the Executive Committee, in particular, came under fire. A few had been on it 'until they almost stank and it was high time they were let off in order that they might sweeten themselves'.\(^7\) Although Jones declared himself to be

\(^{1}\) In August 1872, for example. See F. Machin, op. cit., p. 386.

\(^{2}\) Monk Bretton, for example. See pp. 161-3.

\(^{3}\) Edward Rymer, for example. See pp. 177-8.


\(^{5}\) Barnsley Chronicle, 21 March 1874.

\(^{6}\) Ibid, 30 May 1874.

\(^{7}\) Ibid.
against a strike, his pit came out for a week in protest against the reduction.

With little of the union's funds readily available to support a strike and faced with a newly-formed and apparently militant owners' association, the dangers of that course of action impressed themselves on many of these voices of opposition. In July, Jones proposed acceptance of the 10% reduction at Oaks, as did the Denaby spokesmen, 'to the surprise of a great number of miners in the Rotherham district'. At a mass meeting, the motion of a Wombwell miner, John Wood, that Normansell and Casey be discharged was ruled out of order. A few weeks earlier, however, David Moulson, a member of the Executive Committee, suffered a physical assault near his home in Swinton after a vehement defence in the press of the executive's policy.

What really polarised the miners in the district was the agreement between the executive and the employers, in mid July, to put to arbitration a further 2½% reduction after the employers had rejected the miners' offer of May 28th. The mass meeting was again employed as a medium of opposition. One at Wombwell and one at Barnsley on May 21st and 22nd involved a total of from 8,000-10,000 people. At both meetings, the main criticism was the executive's failure to consult Council before recommending arbitration; but suggestions were also made that lodges should keep their own funds, and that Normansell and Casey had accumulated too much authority and that they should be discharged. Edward Jones chaired the Barnsley meeting and there were plenty of voices from the Wombwell area; but most significant, there were two spokesmen from Elsecar colliery,

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1 F. Machin, op. cit., p. 401.
2 Barnsley Chronicle, 18 July 1874.
3 Ibid, 11 July 1874.
4 Ibid, 6 and 13 June 1874.
5 Ibid, 25 July 1874.
one of the least militant in the district. One, Sam Woffinden, the branch secretary, was a model of a moderate miners' leader. Even Joseph Fletcher, one of Normansell's closest colleagues agreed that the district secretaries had erred on that occasion.

By means of a carefully orchestrated campaign of defence, publicly supported in the district by Alexander MacDonald, Normansell and Casey managed to subdue the opposition and gain tacit acceptance of the full 12\(\frac{1}{2}\)%, after brief resistance at most pits. One tactic they employed was character assassination. In letters to the Barnsley Chronicle, and in a circular issued on July 27th, they systematically cast many of the spokesmen for the opposition in the mould of irresponsible troublemakers. John Daniels, the chairman of the recent Wombwell meeting, it was said, had recently been discharged from Manvers colliery, where he had 'kept the place in a continual state of warfare'. John Berry of Darfield Main had 'unfairly' taken advantage of his employers' weakness after a damaging fire at the pit by pressing for radical price list changes. John Wood of Wombwell was exposed as a criminal who had recently served two months for assaulting a woman and who had also been charged by his employers with neglect of work. Sam Woffinden, it appeared, had overstepped the mark by declaring that 'every employer in the country from the Prince of Wales downwards is like a horseleach'. The message was a clear one. The circular suggested that 'the prosperity of the last three years (was) gradually corrupting and destroying our moral natures'. In the true, rigorous language of the Victorian Methodist, the remedy was offered: 'will nothing but a severe chastening clear our mind from the darkness that seems to envelop it and holds us in ignorance and vice'.

1 See pp. 170-1 and Appendix 1.

2 23,000 miners, including some in Derbyshire, were locked out for much of July. See F. Machin, op. cit., p.401.

3 Barnsley Chronicle, 1 Aug. 1874.

4 Ibid.
Trouble arose again in the Spring of 1875, at a time when Normansell and Casey appear to have been having deep disagreements. A motion from the Manvers lodge that Casey be discharged was removed from the Council agenda, but Normansell deemed the affront serious enough to offer his own resignation. No doubt to his surprise, only 50 lodges out of 103 rejected it (49 accepted and 4 abstained). Further shocks followed at the same Council meeting with the announcement of an unaccountable deficit, revealed by a four-year audit, of over £24,000 (over 20% of the total receipts in that period). There was no immediate reaction in the district, possibly because the auditors' report was not published and circulated until June. But Isaac Haigh, one of the two auditors, despite having held executive office himself, was determined to nurse his criticisms. A month after he failed to be elected permanent treasurer on August 9th, he appealed to all lodges to send two members to a meeting in Barnsley 'as the members of the Strafford Main lodge believe that the affairs of our Association are in a very serious and critical state'. Forty lodges responded to his call, despite Normansell's warnings that:

1 S.Y.M.A. minutes, 19 April 1875. Casey left the Miners' Offices to manage the Shirland Co-operative Colliery at the end of July.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid; Auditors' Report and Balance Sheet, 2 Jan 1871 to 19 April 1875.

4 S.Y.M.A. minutes, 31 May 1875.

5 He was also, for example, delegate to the M.N.A. conference in November 1874 (S.Y.M.A. minutes, 9 Nov. 1874); and one of the managing committee of the Shirland Co-operative Colliery (S.Y.M.A. minutes, 12 July 1875).

6 Rotherham Advertiser, 11 Sept. 1875.
the promoters of such 'hole and corner' meetings are out to gain a place at the head of the Association and failing that to destroy one or other of the officials or the cause itself. ¹

Normansell defended the deficiency in the funds by claiming that only about a quarter of the strike pay sheets of July and August 1874 had been returned correctly by the lodges. ²

Council narrowly voted to drop the matter, ³ but Haigh was not satisfied and called regular mass meetings from the beginning of September. At one in Barnsley, on October 19th, he claimed that he was no longer able to express his disapproval of affairs 'in a fair, straightforward, business-like manner within the Association'. ⁴ He had strong language for Normansell and his supporters who were present, as had Edward Jones who recommended that 'Normansell and the class he had brought in with him that night' should stand down. Other members of that platform represented pits as far apart as Woolley (Albert Earnshaw) and North Derbyshire (William Catchpole), as well as the Wombwell area, traditionally the union's heartland.

Ignoring a further Council resolution to terminate such unofficial meetings, Haigh rallied the opposition in the Mexborough district at the beginning of November, but the platform, which included Edward Jones, was comprehensively routed by Normansell and his supporters (including Marsland, the Denaby checkweighman). ⁵ Normansell, at the same meeting, went on to dismiss his opponents' potential as leaders. Haigh who was always to be seen 'at the surface where strikes and discontentment ruled supreme', ⁶ came in for special treatment.

¹ S.Y.M.A. minutes, (Normansell's notes), 6 Sept. 1875.
³ Ibid, 18 Oct, 1875. The voting was 52 to 43 in favour.
⁴ Barnsley Chronicle, 23 Oct. 1875.
⁵ Rotherham Advertiser, 6 Nov. 1875.
⁶ Haigh was a checkweighman and was bound to be involved in the processing of many grievances 'at the surface'.
The last meeting of the 'Haigh party', as Normansell dubbed them,\(^1\) seems to have been the one in Barnsley the following week. Apart from Jones' call for a committee of inquiry into the accounts, endorsed by Edward Rymer, another noted radical activist,\(^2\) the meeting, however, indulged solely in the type of character destruction and defence favoured by Normansell.\(^3\) Six of Normansell's supporters were singled out: Sam Woffinden (now firmly in his camp again), William Longley of Higham, Thomas Haigh of Church Lane, George Senior of Thorncliffe, Jeremiah Whittington of Wharncliffe Silkstone and John Barlow of the Oaks. Normansell, aided by John Dixon and Ben Pickard of West Yorkshire, replied in kind at a meeting in the Barnsley Corn Exchange the same week and, moreover, issued a summons for malicious libel against Charles Lodge of Strafford Main over a letter he had published in the Barnsley Chronicle.\(^4\)

It is most probable that the opposition had spent itself for the time being on the accounts issue. What form a renewed attack on the district secretaries would have taken is academic, because Normansell fell ill on December 12th and died 12 days later. Nevertheless, the scars that the recent polarisation had left were inevitably to open up again. Individual communities like Dodworth and pits like the Oaks must have felt the impact of having spokesmen in both of the increasingly distinct camps. With Normansell gone and Haigh within a few months of leaving the industry,\(^5\) the two camps

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1 S.Y.M.A. minutes, 1 and 4 Nov. 1875.
2 See pp. 173-81.
3 Barnsley Chronicle, 13 Nov. 1875.
4 Much of Lodge's manuscript letter had been censored by the editor, but passages remained which implied that Normansell had attempted to remove Casey altogether from district office and that he had unfairly covered up his involvement in the accounts deficit. See Barnsley Chronicle, 30 Oct. 1875.
5 He set up an accountancy business in Barnsley in 1876. See p. 183.
must have disintegrated. But mistrust remained.

The ensuing campaign for the election of two new secretaries inevitably resurrected the issues of 1875. Philip Casey returned from Derbyshire, where he had been managing the ill-fated co-operative colliery scheme, to contest the election. But in the middle of the campaign, he had to face criticisms in the report of the committee of inquiry into the accounts. Casey compounded his unpopularity first by reacting strongly to the report, referring to the 'foul calumny this committee have attempted to cast upon me', and then by attempting to shift much of the blame onto his deceased partner. He even hinted that Normansell's illness had been of a mental nature. Casey failed significantly in the election, winning only fifteen votes as opposed to the thirty five apiece for Chappell and Frith, and left the union altogether for nearly four years.

The burdens of office were soon felt by the two newcomers. Unlike Normansell who had never really favoured formal machinery, they responded to employers' demands for a further reduction by suggesting the establishment of 'a sounder and more praiseworthy system of adjusting the alterations in wages, which are called for by the various fluctuations in trade'. They then surrendered to wage cuts amounting to between 11½ and 15%. The decision to circularise the employers had been made without recourse even to the district Executive Committee, an error which was seized upon by Edward Jones and Albert Earnshaw of Woolley, who called a mass meeting in defiance of


2: Ibid.

3: This was in a letter he had sent to the *Sheffield Telegraph* but which was never published. See *Barnsley Chronicle*, 29 Jan. 1876.

4: *S.Y.M.A. minutes*, 6 March 1876.

5: *Barnsley Chronicle*, 3 June 1876.
the decision.\textsuperscript{1} The following week and in the face of a district lockout, several lodges rejected the reduction, and at another mass meeting – at Wombwell – several speakers backed a motion of censure on the district secretaries, despite the presence of Chappell and several supporters (including the M.P. A.J.Mundella) at the meeting.\textsuperscript{2} At an unofficial conference in Barnsley, there were renewed calls for autonomy in funding.\textsuperscript{3} The financial disaster of Shirland and other recent drains on the union funds, made payment of the escalating claims for lockout pay impossible. This was seen by Frith as the major cause of discontent.\textsuperscript{4}

Several lodges terminated their contributions to the union;\textsuperscript{5} others who were still on strike in July ignored Frith's advice to return;\textsuperscript{6} and there were calls for the sale of the Miners' Offices.\textsuperscript{7} One lodge – Edmunds Main – circularised the miners with a details attack on the leadership, mentioning, amongst other things, its failure to take action over the victimisation of their checkweighman, Dougherty (a noted critic

\textsuperscript{1} Ibid. V.L.Allen points out in 'The origins of industrial conciliation and arbitration' Int.Rev.Soc.Hist., ix (1964), 250, that unofficial strike action on a mass scale began with opposition to union executives' roles in conciliation and arbitration in the 1870s.

\textsuperscript{2} Ibid, 10 June 1876.

\textsuperscript{3} F.Nachin, op.cit., p.434; S.Y.M.A. minutes (Frith's notes) 12 June 1876.

\textsuperscript{4} Barnsley Chronicle, 24 June 1876.

\textsuperscript{5} S.Y.M.A. minutes, 27 Dec. 1876. Wombwell Main lodge was amongst them, see Barnsley Chronicle, 28 April 1877.

\textsuperscript{6} Barnsley Chronicle, 15 July 1876.

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid, 22 July 1876.
of the executive),\textsuperscript{1} and demanding the return of the regular Council meetings.\textsuperscript{2}

Although mass opposition subsided again, the increasing disarray in the management of the union was reflected in the resort, first to progressively serious tinkering with the Widows and Orphans Fund\textsuperscript{3} (which resulted in Wombwell lodge taking the union executive to court over non-payment of benefit to one of their widows)\textsuperscript{4} and then to the suspension of payment of arrears of lockout money.\textsuperscript{5} Amid the disaffiliation of most of the Derbyshire branches of the union and rumours of a rival union in the Rotherham district, criticism of the dissensions among, and stubbornness of, the leaders came from Ben Pickard.\textsuperscript{6} Council became a forum for discontent and more than once acted against the advice of the two secretaries.\textsuperscript{7} Further reductions were conceded by Frith without the resort to strikes, but the 'terrible revulsion of feeling' that Rymer noticed after 5% was conceded in April 1878\textsuperscript{8} expressed itself in an escalation of local industrial disputes, many of them technically unofficial.

\textsuperscript{1} Ibid, 19 Aug. 1876.
\textsuperscript{2} Council had been relegated to quarterly meetings and replaced by a less representative 'Panel' system whereby delegates spoke for groups of collieries, rather than just their own.
\textsuperscript{3} F. Machin, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 435.
\textsuperscript{4} \textit{Barnsley Chronicle}, 28 April 1877.
\textsuperscript{5} F. Machin, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 437.
\textsuperscript{6} \textit{Barnsley Chronicle}, 25 Nov. and 9 Dec. 1876.
\textsuperscript{7} See, for example, its role in the Church Lane dispute of 1877, p.
\textsuperscript{8} \textit{Barnsley Chronicle}, 20 April 1878.
1879 proved, in some ways, to be an even more traumatic year than the previous three, but the disintegration of Frith's control over the branches took a new form. The year began with preparations for a confrontation with the coalowners over their latest demand. This was one time when Frith determined to dig his heels in, and he got full support from the dwindling core of members. The employers' offer of arbitration on January 9th, however, gave the executive a chance to avoid the clash that would certainly have bankrupted the union. Chappell seized the opportunity with enthusiasm, but Frith preferred, at first, to test the feeling of the branches. His caution was justified as the majority voted against arbitration at the Council meeting of January 14th. Edward Jones was once again in the public arena, citing cases where arbitration resolutions had been infringed by the employers. With Chappell and Mundella making full use of the union's propaganda resources, however, the majority of branches were eventually won over. This victory for moderation and the ostensible success of Judge Ellison's arbitration of May 26th, both proved hollow.

By the middle of the summer, more and more branches were holding back their contributions: evidence of the increasing centrifugal tendencies which were soon to be provided with custom-made vehicles. Dissention among the branches seems to have spread to relations between the two district secretaries. Ostensibly, the major disagreement was over the policy of restrictions to which Ben Pickard had recently converted Frith. The earlier differences over arbitration, however, and a major personality clash (if we accept Frith's testimony) may

1 F. Machin, op. cit., p. 456.
2 S.Y.M.A. minutes, 14 Jan. 1879.
3 Barnsley Chronicle, 1 Feb. 1879.
4 S.Y.M.A. minutes, 7 July and 10 Nov. 1879.
5 Barnsley Chronicle, 10 Jan. 1880. Frith claimed that he had found it impossible to work with a man 'so full of ambition' and that Council would have dismissed Chappell twelve months before it had been better attended.
have driven a wedge between them at the beginning of the year. Whatever the cause of the split, the lodges took the matter in their own hands, and, by a vote of sixty eight to fifty eight, Chappell was discharged in December 1879. A motion to deal similarly with Frith was quashed.

Within two weeks, details appeared in the press of a new union centred on the Rotherham district and with Chappell at its head. It succeeded in drawing off, intact, the organised miners at Manvers Main, Denaby Main, Stubbin and Thrybergh Hall collieries, plus those at two pits outside the study area, Holmes and Kiveton Park and a few in North Derbyshire. It also attracted the lodges based on Newton, Chambers and Co.'s Norfolk and Thorncliffe Drift pits, but not their Tankersley miners. Chappell's union also initially attracted the interest of one or two other pits in the district, including Elsecar. Meanwhile, Philip Casey, who in January 1879 had briefly appeared on platforms in and around Dodworth supporting arbitration, attracted notice by his campaign to form a 'Remodelled Association' in that and the Chapeltown neighbourhoods. Early reports exaggerated his success, for, by the end of 1879, he had only attracted miners from two or three small lodges in Silkstone and Stainborough. His association took on more importance when he won over the lodge attached to the large Barrow colliery after the failure of earlier attempts.

Barrow was a large colliery, opened a little over two years before and filled, to a large extent, by the miners from Church

1 S.Y.M.A. minutes, 22 Dec. 1879.
2 Barnsley Chronicle, 3 Jan. 1880.
4 Mexborough and Swinton Times, 9 Jan. 1880.
5 Barnsley Chronicle, 25 Jan. 1879.
7 Ibid, 3 Jan. 1880.
Lane in nearby Dodworth, who had been out of work since the lockout of 1877-8. These men had reason to be dissatisfied with John Frith who had withdrawn official support from their struggle at Church Lane. To compound it, once at Barrow, they had been forced, like several other pits, to submit to a 10% reduction despite the Ellison arbitration decision. Frith and the Y.M.A. had given them no support in their resistance to this reduction and, what is more, the reduction looked like being written into a formal sliding scale that Frith and Chappell were negotiating at the time. Casey advocated the return of this 10% (Wharncliffe Silkstone and the Newton Chambers pits had also submitted to reductions and for a while it seemed that Casey might win their support), and upheld the principle of autonomous funds. Having failed to make further inroads into Frith's territory, Casey backed a strike at Barrow in February 1880 and successfully clawed back half of the reduction and some other concessions.

Casey's manoeuvre, however, seems to have owed more to opportunism than to a genuine strand of militancy. For one thing, Casey had originally recommended Barrow's acceptance of the 10% reduction and, at the same time, stood on a pro-sliding-scale platform in his recruitment campaigns in Dodworth and Silkstone. A second point to notice is that his agitation for local autonomy was based on a general dissatisfaction with the state of the union's finances and the ease with which Council had recently been granting strike pay (in theory at

1 Ibid, 15 Nov. 1879 and 13 March 1880.
2 Ibid, 2 Aug. 1879.
3 Ibid, 14 Feb. 1880.
5 Ibid, 28 Feb. 1880.
6 Ibid, 15 Nov. 1879.
7 Ibid, 22 Nov. 1879.
Finally, his espousal of militant resistance did not extend to Monk Bretton, a colliery outside his orbit, where his advice to concede a reduction, later in 1880, earned him censure for this unwarranted interference.  

Casey's settlement of the Barrow dispute turned sour in July when large numbers of the miners were laid off and only re-employed under stringent conditions. He did, however, retain the loyalty of the Barrow branch committee, who by then were intricately involved in the executive of Casey's association. (Henry Ashirst, the checkweighman, was the Association's main spokesman; and Frederick Taylor, another branch official, was the secretary.) The treasurer of the association was James Wilson of Old Silkstone lodge, an employee at Clarke's colliery; the chairman, Robert Pickering, and another leading spokesman, a man called Bostock, were part-time miners in two of the most disorganised and non-militant neighbourhoods in the district. The miners of Stainborough and Silkstone had, in fact, withdrawn from the S.Y.M.A. before Casey's association was formed.

If there was any logic in Casey's marriage of these very different groups of miners, then there must also have been some behind Chappell's Rotherham District association - though it was not immediately obvious. This larger organisation consisted of pits which spanned the entire historical spectrum of militancy and commitment to unionism, from the high

1 Ibid, 10 July 1880.
2 Ibid, 6 and 13 Nov. 1880.
3 Ibid, 31 July 1880. These conditions included the tenure of a company house and a return to fortnightly wages. Both were unpopular in South Yorkshire.
membership and strike-prone Donaby to the paternalistic Stubbin via the recently inconsistent Thorncliffe branches. Most of these lodges had been firm supporters of Normansell even at the height of his unpopularity, and Ben Pickard, writing from West Yorkshire, noted his surprise at seeing certain lodges, once critical of Chappell, now helping him to 'break up the union'. Chappell was undoubtedly the most conciliatory of the three leaders of 1880. He not only declared himself against restriction, but also against the principle of striking. He was in favour of sliding scales, of arbitration (even after the failure of Ellison's award to maintain wage levels) and of autonomous funding. It is true that the bulk of support for arbitration in 1879 came from the Rotherham area, but in several cases (Manvers for example), only after much persuasion from Chappell himself.

Chappell's success was based on pragmatic exploitation of inconsistencies within the district. First, there was a strong re-awakening of local consciousness: a tendency for the unwieldy and diverse area covered by the S.Y.M.A. at the height of its success to split up into local, more cohesive and historically (if not contemporaneously) homogeneous units at this time of crisis. Chappell had worked at Manvers before gaining district office in 1876 and had recruited almost exclusively in that district. He had retained more contacts

1 See p. 204.
2 See p. 141.
3 Barnsley Chronicle, 10 Jan. 1880.
5 Ibid, 6 Sept. 1879.
6 Ibid, 3 Jan. 1880.
7 Ibid, 1 Feb. 1879.
8 Contrast the meetings in the third and fourth weeks of January 1879, at Manvers (Barnsley Chronicle, 25 Jan. and 1 Feb. 1879).
there than Frith who, as corresponding secretary, was more confined to Barnsley and its immediate neighbourhood. It was the pits in the Rotherham district which voted against Chappell's discharge in December 1879. There was, moreover, more than a hint of rivalry with the strong Wombwell area which seems to have been the prime mover against Chappell in that year.¹ Wombwell miners, being numerically weighty and near to Barnsley, managed to gain more publicity than other groups, and more attention from Council and executive. Denaby, in particular, had a major grievance with the lodges that dominated Council. On January 6th 1879, Council had withdrawn support from the Denaby miners who were resisting a demand for a large reduction and for the introduction of a butty system. They were eventually forced to accept a 5% reduction and lose their checkweighman, Marsland, whom the employers refused to deal with.² With the old union's policies and credibility in disarray, these specific commitments and grievances were suddenly invested with importance. Chappell and Casey, both of them had been affronted by Frith and his supporters, were motivated to exploit these fragmentary tendencies. Only those lodges that were firmly committed to oppose arbitration and conciliation grouped around Frith, encouraged by his recent adoption of a more militant line against the employers.³ Former opponents like Edward Jones and Albert Earnshaw ended up firmly in his camp and Wombwell became his main core area of support.⁴

The depression years 1881-5 are not a good framework for assessing labour consciousness in South Yorkshire. Work was

¹ Ibid, 21 Nov. 1879 and 3 Jan. 1880.
² Mexborough and Swinton Times, 16 Jan. 1879.
³ See his speech at Monk Bretton urging the necessity of 'combined action' to halt the slide in wages (Barnsley Chronicle, 27 Sept. 1879).
⁴ Jones now worked at Cortonwood colliery in Wombwell. Joseph Fletcher was a close associate.
irregular, wages low and a cynical and opportunist attitude towards unionism persisted. As Evison suggests,¹ the lack of positive, principled leadership led to the adoption of the line of least resistance by many formerly militant miners' spokesmen.

Casey's organisation seems to have collapsed sometime in 1882. In January of that year, Pickard claimed that it had a mere forty members.² Little was heard of it after that and Barrow colliery was back in the Y.M.A. in December 1882.³ Apart from interfering in the Monk Bretton dispute, Casey also made himself unpopular in the Barnsley area by opposing the fight for a full 10% advance in 1881⁴ (although he purported to support a moderate claim). His middle path enabled him occasionally to appear on platforms with Frith and with Chappell, but personal attacks on important local leaders, like Fletcher and Rymer, hastened his eclipse.⁵ So also did his appearance on a Tory political platform in Durham in 1880.⁶ Casey became a pit sinking contractor and, in 1884, tried unsuccessfully to take over the licence of an inn in Barnsley.⁷ He later emigrated to the United States.⁸

Chappell survived as an active force until 1885, representing, in August 1882, about 2,000 miners as opposed to Pickard's 6,000.⁹ Throughout these years, his stance was that

² Barnsley Chronicle, 28 Jan. 1882.
³ Barrow was back in the Y.M.A. in November 1882 (Barnsley Chronicle, 2 Dec. 1882).
⁶ Ibid, 10 April 1880.
⁷ Ibid, 12 Jan. 1884.
⁸ Ibid, 13 July 1889.
of the moderate, always heeding the tenets of political economy. Wage demands had to bow before the laws of the market place. In 1881, he opposed the industrial action for a 10% advance, writing that 'the strike is a disgrace to the district and a most serious reflection on its promoters'.

This time his judgement proved prudent, but in September 1882, he circularised the district advising against pressure for the wage increase shortly before it was conceded by most Yorkshire coalowners. Earlier in that year, he infuriated Pickard by his interventions in the negotiations which gave the owners an excuse to prevaricate. In his notes for the annual Council meeting, Pickard addressed him: 'you don't want an advance, neither do your men, therefore we have nothing in common'.

After the increase was granted, however, Chappell claimed credit for his role in the negotiations, but opposed the movement for another advance in 1883, persuading Manvers and Denaby not to press their notices for an advance in November. He helped to negotiate local sliding scales, including one at Manvers which outlived his association and, unlike Frith, did not oppose employers who wanted to contract out of the Employers' Liability Act.

2 Barnsley Chronicle, 5 March 1881. Frith draw attention to his opportunism: 'Mr Chappell's horror of strikes is not very old or deeprooted' (ibid, 12 March 1881).
3 Ibid, 23 Sept. 1882.
4 Y.M.A. Annual Council Meeting minutes (Pickard's notes), 9 Jan. 1882.
5 Barnsley Chronicle, 4 Nov. 1882.
6 Ibid, 24 Nov. and 1 Dec. 1883.
7 Ibid, 29 Jan. 1881; Mexborough and Swinton Times, 8 June 1883.
8 Barnsley Chronicle, 4 Dec. 1880.
Chappell retained the loyalty of several large collieries for up to five years, despite his conciliatory stance. He also obtained the support of several important local and even national trade union spokesmen. The names of Henry Broadhurst of the stonemasons, Charles Fenwick of the Northumberland miners and Mallinson of the Sheffield Trades Council at one time or another lent respectability and recognition to his platforms.¹

The success of Pickard's wage campaign in 1882 was the first stage in the decline of Chappell's union. Thrybergh Hall voted decisively to rejoin the Y.M.A. in late November and Stubbin left the Rotherham District association about the same time.² It was Chappell's weakness in the 1885 attack on wages which lost him his two strongholds of Denaby and Manvers. The general assault in the district was preceded, at Denaby, by a strike primarily over the introduction of riddles. The dispute continued with increasing friction between the striking miners and the blacklegs, with a diminishing strike fund and with evictions on April 8th.³ Chappell's failure to provide tents or even moral support for the evictees highlighted his incompetence in handling the strike as a whole. Chappell had disagreed with the men's assessment of the effect of riddles on their pay and had probably encouraged them to return to work.⁴ At a mass meeting of about 300 miners in Mexborough the day after the first evictions, the men voted unanimously to stay on strike and pledged themselves 'never to support (Chappell) again'.⁵ At another meeting on April 15th, the day after more

¹ See Mexborough and Swinton Times, 25 Nov. 1881, 8 June 1883, 24 May 1884. Broadhead had to cancel the engagement at the last moment.

² Barnsley Chronicle, 25 Nov. 1882. Thrybergh Hall did not formerly affiliate to the Y.M.A. until May 1885 (ibid, 16 May 1885).

³ Mexborough and Swinton Times, 6, 20, 27 March and 8 April 1885. See also J. MacFarlane, ' "One association - the Yorkshire Miners Association" '.

⁴ Barnsley Chronicle, 11 April 1885.

⁵ Ibid.
evictions, the miners voted to join the Y.M.A. They were accepted back in that union and given the benefit of a voluntary levy eleven weeks later. Meanwhile, at Manvers, Chappell's pleas for moderation in resisting the reductions were ignored and in May the miners at that colliery voted to leave his association. Chappell's bubble had been burst and, as with Casey, his further presence in South Yorkshire went almost unnoticed.

The Manvers miners clung onto their sliding scale and remained aloof from the Y.M.A. until the end of 1887; but once they returned, they became, as before, a consistent and well-organised lodge. In 1894, they were the largest single subscriber in South Yorkshire to Pickard's testimonial fund. Only the Norfolk and Thorncliffe Drift pits (both owned by Newton, Chambers and Co.), of the major collieries, remained aloof after the beginning of the joint wages movement. With that exception, the period under study had seen the last of branch disaffiliations.

Nevertheless, Pickard and his colleagues did not have an altogether easy ride into the 1890s. A year before Chappell had ceased to be an obstacle to unity, the formation was announced of another splinter group, the 'Wombwell Auxiliary Miners' Union' with Charles Hamilton of Darfield as secretary. The Darfield lodge had, in 1883, petitioned the executive to consider running a weekly newspaper for miners, free of the 'capitalist controlled press', along the lines of their own broadsheet the 'Darfield Circular'. The shelving of this

1 Mexborough and Swinton Times, 17 April 1885.
2 Barnsley Chronicle, 4 July 1885.
3 Ibid, 16 May 1885.
4 See p. 128.
5 Y.M.A. minutes, 23 Jan. 1894.
6 Barnsley Chronicle, 21 June 1884.
7 Y.M.A. minutes, 22 Dec. 1883.
radical proposal by the Y.M.A. was seen by the Wombwell union, along with other actions of the Barnsley executive, as 'suppressing the free expression of opinion of our branches'. 1 It also criticised the Y.M.A.'s involvement in Liberal party politics, convinced that the union's 'status - if not its funds' would be 'frittered away in pursuit of a shadow'. 2

The political levy which was proposed to support Cowey's original intention to stand as a parliamentary candidate was seen as undemocratic, implying that 'we should be treated as blacklegs in case of refusal'. 3

The Wombwell miners were also critical of the West Riding Miners' Permanent Relief Fund, which the executive supported, suggesting that 'some of our men say a man must die twice almost before the Permanent Fund will pay his funeral'. 4 The initial circular, issued by the new association, went on to claim that a resolution from the Darfield and Cortonwood lodges to press for an extended inquest into a recent colliery disaster (at Wharncliffe Carlton) was not put to Council for fear of souring the executive's relations with the Government. Here, in total, was a serious questioning of the representative nature of the Y.M.A. coming from two or three lodges with a solid, if at times critical, adherence to union principles. Earlier in 1884, the Wombwell lodge had suggested reforms in union procedure, including the implementation of local Panel meetings after every Council and Executive Committee meeting for delegates to report back to their local forum and be briefed for their next involvement at district level. 5 Pickard saw this device as unnecessary and no more was heard of it.

1 Y.M.A. records, Annual Report, 1884.
2 Ibid.
3 Barnsley Chronicle, 21 June 1884
4 Y.M.A. records, Annual Report 1884.
5 Y.M.A. minutes, 7 Jan. 1884.
Although the official Darfield delegate denounced the Auxiliary Union as unrepresentative, claiming that his members knew nothing about the initial circular until it was issued, the splinter union existed in some form or other late into 1886 when Frith alluded to its claim to be 'doing all the work in recruiting members'. In the interval, it was more than once publicly critical of Y.M.A. policies.

In 1887, two neighbouring parishes (Monk Bretton and Ardsley) furnished the core of support for a movement that began innocuously enough with a picnic for miners in the grounds of a large house in Ardsley, but which turned out to pose a not inconsiderable threat to two institutions of the Y.M.A. Like the Wombwell Auxiliary Union, this movement opposed the political levy and hoped to repeat the action of the Northumberland miners in voting to discontinue paying their M.P.s. It also aimed to put an end to their checkweighmen's funds. Pickard, Frith and other leaders denounced the movement as a Tory plot to reduce miners' voting influence. Edward Rymer, who was working at Monk Bretton at the time, claimed that the men involved were in league with the owners and that their aim was 'to get up some social spawn and political abortion in the shape of a new fangled club or society ... having for its object the extinction of the Miners Union and the Miners Permanent Relief Fund'.

These denunciations were probably near the mark. In December 1887, a meeting, chaired by the manager of Houghton

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1 Ibid, 8 July 1884.
3 In offering arbitration, for example (Barnsley Chronicle) 30 May 1885.
6 Ibid, 10 Sept. 1887.
Main, discussed plans to promote, through Parliament, a Miners' Superannuation Fund, membership of which would be compulsory. Members of the Fitzwilliam family showed interest, as did several local miners' leaders beyond those concerned with the original meeting. But it was destined to fail because of the strong taint of Tory involvement. George Collins, the sponsor of the original meeting in August 1887, was the Tory recruiting agent for Hoyland. John Norman of Ardsley, Joseph Linley of Darfield and George Hoyland, the three most active supporters, were all miners who professed themselves to be Tories. The Miners' Superannuation movement, based as it was in the old union heartland east of Barnsley from which also sprang several of the radical movements of opposition, provides yet another complication in our search for enduring inter-community variations in attitude and behaviour.

The Superannuation movement, after 1887, got lost in the joint wages movement and South Yorkshire heard no more of conciliatory splinter groups, except in isolated spots, for many years. From the late 1880s, however, Pickard and his colleagues had to contend with internal forces nudging the rank and file spokesmen politically to the left and industrially towards greater militancy. The tendency did not have time to gather much steam in our period, but the symptoms were there for all to see. The success of the joint wages movement, the

1 Ibid, 17 Dec. 1887.
2 Ibid, 25 Feb. 1888. Among the interested miners was Duffy, a branch official of Monk Bretton, later a close associate of Edward Rymer's (ibid, 7 July 1888).
3 See, for example the report of the Darfield Conservatives' dinner (ibid, 8 Oct. 1887). Linley claimed to have once been a 'radical', but there is no trace of any previous involvement by him in the district.
4 A Kiveton Park branch official appeared on Tory platforms in 1891 (ibid, 28 March 1891).
rapid expansion in union membership and the consequent achievement of, for the first time since the early 1870s, a relatively sound collective financial position, combined to create new expectations and a new restlessness, especially when the wage advances came to a halt in 1890. Pickard had great difficulty in persuading his Council delegates to accept the deferred wage increase of that year.¹

In particular, the pit lads on several occasions took the initiative in removing their grievances against the directions of an executive that still was inclined to equate coalminers (and unionists) with faceworkers and skilled development and maintenance men. In June 1892, a Special Executive meeting was called to discuss the matter which was becoming 'very serious'.² Moreover, one or two pits struck without the union's support, although these were usually in isolated neighbourhoods.³ Neville suggests that, in the 1890s and after:

> there was always a minority of dissidents who favoured militant action whatever the circumstances, but in Yorkshire there was always a majority support for conciliation and the M.F.G.B. leadership which upheld the system.⁴

¹ Ibid, 15 March 1890.

² Y.M.A. minutes, 24 June 1892. The pits lads' cause was championed in the 1890s by Willie Wright, an articulate I.L.P.'er (and former miner) from Mexborough. During one lads' dispute at Denaby Main, they were said to have shown their indignation at having been shrugged off by the union by publicly tearing off their Y.M.A. cap badges. See Mexborough and Swinton Times, 19 March and 21 May 1897.

³ Notably, Hemsworth at the end of 1891. Hemsworth, which was outside the study area to the north, was to become one of the most radical mining neighbourhoods in Yorkshire: a model for other new and isolated mining communities to the north and east of our study area. See J.Evison, op.cit., (M.Phil. thesis), p.200.

⁴ R.G.Neville, op.cit., p.263.
It was true that almost all Y.M.A. branches never publicly wavered from Pickard's line on industrial and political matters and voiced no criticism of the conciliation machinery set up in 1894. But in the heartland of the district, at Barrow colliery, with support from influential rank and file activists at Church Lane, Rylands Main and Hoyland Silkstone in particular, there grew, under James Murray and Levi Dyson, a militant cell which, in July 1894, unanimously rejected the Conciliation Board's proposals. Murray and Dyson were both early supporters of independent labour candidates at local and parliamentary elections and the former brought down a torrent of criticism on his head for getting a vote of condolence on the death of the Duke of Clarence removed from the agenda of the M.F.G.B. conference in January 1892. Pickard twice wrote from his sickbed to make amends for this breach with the miners' traditional loyalty to the royal family and Wombwell Main moved a resolution in Council condemning Murray's behaviour. Murray and a few others swung large numbers of rank and file miners behind them in their opposition to the Lib-Lab alliance; but their immediate impact was too territorially confined to change the overall mood of the district, unable as they were to manipulate the main channels of union publicity and control.

**Opposition at individual pits.**

Having chronicled the more general movements and symptoms of opposition to the executive of the S.Y.M.A. and the Y.M.A., it is important to stress that there were many occasions when the voice of protest was heard in more isolated circumstances. In particular, there were collieries which, at every stage in the unions' development, struck against the directives of Council or Executive Committee, or refused to accept a

1 *Barnsley Chronicle*, 7 July 1894.
2 Ibid, 23 Jan. 1892.
3 Ibid, 6 Feb. 1892.
settlement negotiated on their behalf. A few cases have already been mentioned - Old Silkstone colliery in 1860, the Oaks in 1864 and Church Lane in 1877-8, for example - but there were many others. Three collieries stand out, either for their persistent flouting of union directives, or for the nature of their resistance. They also have in common the fact that they struck during the period 1872 to mid 1874 when, in most respects, hostilities between employers and miners in South Yorkshire were buried.

The first example is Monk Bretton, a colliery of about 250 men in 1872, two years after it opened. In 1871, after a dispute over payment for development work, the miners joined the S.Y.M.A. But in March 1872, they rejected a price list which, as was common practice, had been arbitrated on their behalf by two miners' and two owners' representatives. The Monk Bretton men accused the union-nominated arbitrators of 'selling' them and for several months, conducted a campaign of wildcat strikes which angered the S.Y.M.A. executive as they had not been consulted over the men's grievances. In a public circular, Normansell and Casey condemned the Monk Bretton miners' 'disgraceful' conduct and declared that if it continued:

> the Association will most assuredly assist the employers in bringing them before the magistrates for compensation and as an example to others for breach of contract of service.

A year later, they struck again for a revision of the price list and at a Special Committee meeting, it was decided that they would be excluded from the union unless they returned to work. The Council meeting, however, three weeks later, was critical of the Committee's decision and Normansell, in his

1 Work involved in opening out new roadways and headings (also known as 'dead work', 'strait work' or 'straight work').


3 Ibid.

4 S.Y.M.A. minutes, 7 Nov. 1873.
notes, suggested that if that attitude persisted 'the sooner (Council meetings) are held every three months, the better it will be for the Association'. ¹ The Beehive endorsed the executive's condemnation of the Monk Bretton miners' independent action:

If the example of the Monk Bretton men were generally followed, these wonderful associations which now carry in them so grand a promise of the emancipation of labour would fall back into anarchy; suspicion and distrust would take the places of confidence and mutual reliance. . . . The present moment, therefore, is the time to oppose this spirit of insubordination and drive it out . . . Such conduct is a treason against authority, and a practical denial of principle, and the betrayal of a cause which all honest working men should regard as sacred. ²

A different viewpoint was expressed by the republican Miners' Advocate and Record:

When a body of men find themselves plunged into such conflicts with close-fisted employers, who are known to be always on the 'screw down' principle, the union ought to relax its stern rules, or, if it cannot help the men, the officials have no moral right to send out circulars to stop the men from getting support elsewhere.

The S.Y.M.A. executive made no public reply to these criticisms (in fact it hardly recognised the existence of the paper). ⁴ To Normansell and Casey, the Monk Bretton men's behaviour was jeopardising the widespread recognition of their union as a responsible, moderate institution with a high degree of control over its individual branches. Monk Bretton, with no strike pay to fall back on, eventually returned to work, but real discontent remained, much of it articulated by Edward Jones who, though a checkweighman at the Oaks, was Monk Bretton's delegate to Council. In 1880, the pit was again

¹ Ibid. (Normansell's notes), 1 Dec. 1873.
² Beehive, 6 Dec. 1873. This represented rather a different posture to that adopted by the paper in the 1860s.
³ Miners' Advocate and Record, 6 Dec. 1873.
⁴ Ibid, 31 Oct. 1874. See the editorial of this, the last edition.
embroiled in a dispute with the employers and again the S.Y.M.A. executive threatened to cut off support. The branch responded with a circular, protesting in strong language about this perceived injustice. This dispute probably hastened the disintegration of the local branch of the union, for it remained very weak until the late 1880s when the Monk Bretton miners, a large number of whom lived in Barnsley, struck over aspects of their price list. This went against the advice of the Y.M.A. officials and the local branch committee which included supporters of the Miners' Superannuation scheme and Edward Rymer (by then a distinctly moderate figure).

Monk Bretton remained the most independent of workforces in South Yorkshire during the period under study, and this independence was frequently expressed in disaffection with and antagonism to the official union in a manner that, at times, was almost anarchic. There were other collieries where the men displayed similar symptoms of often rather disorganised defiance. Church Lane in Dodworth was one. In 1874, Council refused them strike pay after they had rejected an arbitrated award. Organisation at Church Lane at this time appears to have been poor. Few attended branch meetings, a phenomenon which enabled a daywageman to be elected branch chairman. This was an unusual occurrence as daywagemen were rarely concerned in disputes over such things as price lists. Three years later, after considerable expansion of the colliery's

1 Barnsley Chronicle, 25 Sept. 1880.
2 See p. 211.
3 E.A.Rymer, The Martyrdom of the Mine (Middlesborough, 1898), pp. 26-7; Barnsley Chronicle, 22 and 29 Jan. 1887. Edward Jones was no longer connected with this colliery or township.
4 Barnsley Chronicle, 13 June 1874.
5 Ibid, 27 June 1874.
labour force, the men struck again after the introduction of riddles to the pit. The miners demanded compensation for the extra work involved in filling a tub with only large coal, but the manager's offer was rejected.\(^1\) So too was the award negotiated by, amongst other, Edward Jones of Monk Bretton.\(^2\) Council condemned their action, but later went back on this decision, much to Frith's regret.\(^3\) The strike officially terminated late in 1877, largely because of the successful recruitment of new labour, a policy that probably would not have succeeded if the Church Lane miners had had the official backing of the S.Y.M.A. Many of the striking miners, as has been mentioned, found their way to the nearby Barrow colliery the following year.

The third example of a colliery workforce that ran into trouble for embarrassing John Normansell or ignoring the conventional channels agreed by union and employers for the airing of grievances was, at first sight, an unlikely candidate. Earl Fitzwilliam's Stubbin colliery had been opened in 1871, replacing his old operations at nearby Parkgate.\(^4\) Many of the miners at Stubbin, however, would have been recruited from outside the family's employ and lacked the loyal tendencies of the longer-standing workmen. Within two months of opening, two union lodges were established, the first successful independent organisation of Fitzwilliam miners since 1858.\(^5\) In April, a deputation to the underviewers announced that the men would strike unless a miner who persistently refused to pay his debts to the branch was forced to co-operate.\(^6\) According to

\(^1\) F. Machin, \textit{op. cit.}, p.445.
\(^2\) \textit{Barnsley Chronicle}, 6 and 13 Oct. 1877.
\(^3\) S.Y.M.A. minutes (Normansell's notes), 29 Oct. 1877.
\(^4\) \textit{Barnsley Chronicle}, 21 June 1873.
\(^5\) Ibid.
\(^6\) Ibid.
Fitzwilliam, friction continued, with frequent stoppages, until, in May the following year, Casey came to censure them for one long unofficial strike, ostensibly over the quality of the concessionary coal they were receiving. The Stubbin men persisted, despite threats of evictions, of the dismissal of John Vaughan and John Smith, two branch officials, and of the closure of the pit.

Fitzwilliam, as was his custom, refused to negotiate with any union deputations, but his threatened sanctions were never implemented. Vaughan, the most public of the Stubbin activists, was invited to a picnic at the Earl's home, along with other employees, a month after the dispute ended. The most bitter attack on the Stubbin miners came, however, from John Normansell. He visited the men on May 20th 1873 and declared that if he had been their employer, he 'would have the law of service carried out to the very letter'. The following week, he took the unprecedented step of travelling to London to tender to the Earl an apology, extracted from the Stubbin miners after considerable pressure from Council. Although Council, after the Earl's refusal to treat with Normansell, recommended support of the Stubbin miners, Normansell himself insisted that Fitzwilliam should have the right to negotiate on his own terms (i.e. with no union intervention). The Barnsley Chronicle

1 Ibid, 7 June 1873.
2 Ibid, 17 May 1873.
3 Ibid, 24 May 1873.
4 Sheffield Telegraph, 28 May 1873.
5 Barnsley Chronicle, 16 Aug. 1873.
6 Ibid, 24 May 1873.
7 Barnsley Chronicle, 31 May 1873.
8 S.Y.M.A. minutes, 19 May 1873.
9 Ibid.
shrewdly observed that Normansell and Casey were more anxious to get the dispute settled than to win the Earl's recognition of the union. Against the activists at Stubbin, Normansell used a favourite tactic of issuing a condemnatory circular which discounted responsibility for 'the illegal or criminal acts of one or more of its (the lodge's) members'.

What these three examples show is that determined rank and file action, articulated by aggressive local leaders, was prepared to break the bounds of union orthodoxy even in relatively prosperous years. Moreover, the less a colliery or union branch was involved in the structure and traditions of the S.Y.M.A., the more likely it was to adopt and maintain an independent stance. Monk Bretton, Stubbin and Church Lane were, in more respects than one, on the fringe of the union in the 1870s. With the first-named, the habit appears to have stuck.

As a footnote, it is important to mention a third form of rank and file protest: one that is far more difficult to chronicle but probably far more common than the two identified above. This is the opposition met by local union officials within their branches. To paint a comprehensive picture of this type of dissent, we would need to have reports of branch meetings and details of turnover among branch officials. We do know that branch secretaries were, in the district as a whole, surprisingly immobile, many holding their posts for ten years or more; but at local level, the more controversial posts were those of delegate and branch chairman. Press reports of mass meetings and other isolated evidence do give us accounts of

1 Ibid, 7 June 1873.
2 Ibid, 14 June 1873.
3 See S.Y.M.A. records, Lists of Branch Secretaries (e.g. June 1866, Oct. 1870 and Jan. 1879).
4 There is no systematic information on the holders of these positions.
this type of dissent. Silkstone Main officials complained to Council in 1873 of the insubordination of their members;\textsuperscript{1} and a deputation to the owners of Aldwarke Main and Carr House, in 1881, claimed that they had had a hard struggle getting their men to agree to ask for a 5\% and not a 10\% advance.\textsuperscript{2} The Manvers branch committee had their advice to retain a sliding scale ignored by their members in 1888;\textsuperscript{3} while during the 1893 lockout, their resolution condemning the violence that took place at the pit was rejected at a mass meeting.\textsuperscript{4} Three weeks later, Baker and Storer, two of the officials, tried to get their men to ballot again on a resumption of work but the 1,000-odd miners present at this meeting voted almost unanimously against this course of action.\textsuperscript{5}

This type of opposition was most likely only met at times of general concern: during wage negotiations, strikes and similar flashpoints. At other times, with branch meetings poorly attended, local leaders had a relatively free rein in formulating general branch policy around their interpretations of the S.Y.M.A.'s rules and objectives. Some local leaders, it is true, voiced the discontent of the rank and file in the public forum; and via a vigilant local press, we have been given insights into aspects of working class consciousness that were not always reflected in the public statements of Normansell, Frith and Pickard. Normansell may have 'had a tight hold on the extremists of his rank and file' as Evison puts it,\textsuperscript{6} no less through his 'deputies' at branch level

\textsuperscript{1} S.Y.M.A. minutes, 27 Jan. 1873.

\textsuperscript{2} S.C.L., NCB 425, Aldwarke Deputation Notes, Jan 1881. This may, of course, have merely been a bargaining ploy.

\textsuperscript{3} Mexborough and Swinton Times, 2 Nov. 1888.

\textsuperscript{4} Ibid, 8 Sept. 1893.

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid, 29 Sept. 1893.

\textsuperscript{6} J.Evison, \textit{op.cit.}, (M.Phil.), p.30.
than through his own intervention or charisma. But there were grades of opinion within the extremities of the spectrum which were often at variance with the official union line, and which were articulate, representative and often powerful. The next task is to identify a few spokesmen for these grades of opinion and to assess their overall impact on the fulfillment of rank and file objectives and needs. Chapter Six will conclude with some comments on the district executive's reactions to opposition and its awareness of its vulnerability.
CHAPTER SIX

Local Miners' Leaders: the Main Voices of Dissent;
and the Executive's Response.
Local leaders.

At any time from the mid 1870s, except in the years when organisation was at its weakest, there were upwards of about 150 miners holding branch offices, each one of whom had opportunities of getting his voice heard beyond the branch and the possibility of achieving office at district level: on the Executive Committee, the Panel Board, or as an auditor, delegate to national conferences, trustee of this or that fund, arbitrator or one of several other such posts connected with the S.Y.M.A. or Y.M.A. It is a contention of this thesis that those who filled posts at this level, at least in the first thirty years of the period, were likely to reflect the views of the full-time officials, either because of the latter's influence on the selection procedures or because of the conditioning effects of working closely with them over an extended period. Normansell, in 1868, liked to think he had control over selection of the branch officials as well: 'We always make it a point to get the most respectable men at the head of affairs at the local branches for local secretaries and treasurers and all those officials'. He pointed out in particular, the stress on temperance at branch meetings, a rule that seems rarely to have been broken, but which helped to erect a barrier between the formal activities of the branch (as well as of the district union) and the day to day lives of many of its members. It seems, however, that this type of cultural alienation did not develop to such an extent that, where the local leaders chose to emphasise industrial objectives above moral and narrowly institutional ones, they could not rely on mass support.  

1 R.C. on Trades Unions (1867-8), Q 16196

2 Burgess's contention that respectable local leaders were 'almost inevitably isolated' from their members is not justified without further qualification in the case of the mining industry at least. K.Burgess, The Origins of British Industrial Relations (Croom Helm, 1975), p.174.
A disproportionate number of successful district leaders seem to have been checkweighmen, despite Frith's claim in 1881 that many were not fulfilling their 'expected' role as local agents for the union.\(^1\) This was partly a consequence of the literacy and numeracy that they, by definition, possessed, and partly of their relative independence from owners' sanctions. (The number of publicised ejectments of checkweighmen was low.) While it may be true that on the whole, checkweighmen, as Challinor suggests, 'took away the cutting edge, the militancy, from the established machinery' and at local level 'helped to lay the foundations for the policies' pursued by MacDonaldite leaders,\(^2\) there were many in the district who articulated opposition to these policies and to a certain extent undermined rather than, as Foster suggests, helped to provide 'the foundation of a new authority structure in coal'.\(^3\) It must be stressed, though, that the process of undermining rarely went beyond the terms of reference of men like Isaac Haigh and Edward Jones who still believed, essentially, in a strong, centralised union.\(^4\)

A scrutiny of the minute books of the S.Y.M.A. and the Y.M.A. isolates a small group of about 15 miners resident in the study area who regularly performed roles at district level.\(^5\) In several cases, their organising careers at district level spanned more than one decade (in Broadhead's case, four\(^6\)). With two notable exceptions (James Murray and Isaac Haigh),\(^7\) none of

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\(^1\) Barnsley Chronicle, 15 Oct. 1881.


\(^4\) See pp. 181-8.

\(^5\) See Appendix 1.

\(^6\) See his obituary in Barnsley Chronicle, 20 Dec. 1897.

\(^7\) Also Woffinden, briefly in 1875. He was also different from others in this group in that he was involved in local institutions: as a School Board representative for Hoyland.
these men were involved either in major gestures of opposition to their full-time colleagues, or in a high degree of public activity external to the union and its constituent institutions. They were professional union leaders in all respects but remuneration. The two exceptions were very different men whose public careers in mining never coincided, but who both set themselves up as poles of opposition while working within the executive.

It is when we look at a second tier of public figures in the miners' ranks - men who appeared briefly on the executive bodies, on Council or on district platforms (such as at annual demonstrations) - however, that we discover more miners of their conviction and with their experience of conflict. Whether by choice or by exclusion, many of these men remained independent from the institutionalising effects of long-term public office and were able to adopt roles in opposition to the full-time officials without losing their credibility as union spokesmen. Most of them also seem to have taken on commitments to other institutions in the surrounding communities - the chapels, school boards, boards of health, the co-operative movement, temperance societies or, latterly, the Barnsley Trades Council - which, to a certain extent, moulded the way that they articulated the rank and file opposition to the executive.

There remains a third tier of local leaders who were, perhaps, more accurate in reflecting the views of their men, but who lacked access to the local channels of the media. Their names appear in controversial circumstances - Yardley of Wharncliffe Silkstone in 1870; Lodge of Strafford in 1875; and Hatton of Denaby in 1885 but at other times, they

1 See Appendix 2.
2 See p. 350.
3 See p. 142.
4 See p. 342. Hatton, a branch official, fell foul of the law in this dispute.
remained anonymous, doing the work that was required of them, not set apart by status or life style (the remuneration of a branch official was negligible, although some may have been more inclined to save than the average miner), sometimes victimised, occasionally prosecuted. Unlike leaders more often in the public eye, they had freer hands to take risks and to boldly articulate their men's frustrations, just as Frith, Chappell and even Normansell had done in their earlier days.

Three nodes of dissent.

We shall now look closely at the careers of three leading 'independent' rank and file leaders, Edward Rymer, Isaac Haigh and Edward Jones - who headed the movements of opposition to the district executive in the 1860s and 1870s. The fragmentary nature of the opposition in the 1880s and the highly political content of the dissent of the 1890s excludes other figures, such as Hamilton of the Wombwell Auxiliary Union and Murray, Holden and Taylor of the independent labour movement from a direct comparison with Rymer, Haigh and Jones who were part of mass movements within the union antagonistic to the way the full-time officials were steering their own institution. Murray and his supporters, however, will be considered in their political context, especially in Chapter Twenty Four.

1 J. Evison, op. cit., (M.Phil. thesis), p.878. Challinor refers to the relative affluence of local leaders and checkweighmen; Alexander MacDonald and the Miners, p.31. This could only have been significant where they had saved to buy shops, beerhouses, newsagencies etc., which, with the help of their families, several of these men operated on a part-time basis.

2 Dougherty of Edmunds Main in 1876, for example.

3 For example, Peter Hatton at Denaby (see Barnsley Chronicle, 13 June and 19 Sept. 1885) and Joseph Yeardley after the Thorncliffe riot of 1870 (see Barnsley Chronicle, 29 Jan. and 26 March 1870).
Edward Rymer.

Rymer's early life in Northumberland and Durham bore the impeccable credentials of an outspoken and committed labour activist. His campaign against the Bond won him a short spell in prison; his promotion of union organisation at Thornley colliery and elsewhere, and his appearance as secretary of a skeletal county union in Durham in late 1865 and early 1866, ensured that he found it impossible to get work in that coalfield.

In 1866, therefore, Rymer eagerly accepted the offer of a job as full-time miners' agent in St. Helens, Lancashire, a district with a strong radical tradition among the miners. Although Rymer had worked alongside many of the moderate M.N.A. figures like MacDonald, Burt and William Pickard, both in Durham and Lancashire, he had acquired, by 1868, a reputation as a radical and a rebel. In 1864 and 1865, he had been closely involved with the Towers group and the Practical Miners' Association in opposition to the MacDonaldites on the Council of the M.N.A. During the 1868 strike in South Lancashire, Rymer consistently urged a more resolute line than that of William Pickard, the Wigan leader, who, with MacDonald, had tried to affect a compromise settlement at more than one point in the strike. Rymer was, moreover, at this stage, one

1 E.A. Rymer, op. cit., p. 6.
3 E.A. Rymer, op. cit., pp. 9-12.
5 R. Challinor, The Lancashire and Cheshire Miners p. 63; Miner and Workman's Advocate, 20 Feb. 1864.
6 He was delegate to the P.M.A. conference in June 1865, for example (see Miner and Workman's Advocate, 10 June 1865).
7 R.C. on Trades Unions (1867-8), QQ 12115-57, 15620-2; Wigan Observer, 17 April 1868.

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of the supporters of a larger and more aggressive central fund for the M.N.A.¹

It is not surprising then, that during his long career in South Yorkshire from 1868 to his death in 1915 (with the exception of a three and a half year spell as agent in the Forest of Dean²), he never achieved district office. His help was accepted, it is true, by Frith in 1876 and by Chappell in 1881,³ when the unions in their charge were in particular need of organisational support. But Normansell and Casey in particular excluded him from involvement, and Frith and Chappell circumscribed his activities.⁴

During Rymer's employment at Sharlston colliery in West Yorkshire (where incidentally, he worked alongside Ned Cowey, not always without friction⁵), he became actively involved in the English republican movement, locally and even nationally. Rymer was a regular correspondent in W.H.Riley's International Herald⁶ and a leading columnist in the Miners' Advocate and Record,⁷ where he was severely critical not only of coalowning capitalists, but also of the national and district union leaders. He was particularly critical of the recommendation

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¹ For example, Glasgow Sentinel, 23 Nov. 1867.
² E.A.Rymer, op.cit., pp.24-6. He was also, for short periods, itinerant organiser in West Yorkshire (1869), Derbyshire (1876) and Staffordshire (1880); and a miner for about two years in the early 1870s at Sharlston colliery in West Yorkshire. (Ibid, pp.17-19, 21, 23.)
⁴ For example, Frith prevented him from speaking on political issues at a mass meeting at Mapplewell (Barnsley Chronicle, 22 July 1876).
⁵ Ibid, 17 March 1888.
⁷ A radical and republican miners' newspaper published in Middlesborough in 1873 and 1874.
by Normansell and Casey of the acceptance of the first wage reduction after the collapse of the boom in 1874. He denounced this action as 'a blunder and a disgrace', suggesting that the miners had been 'sold like cattle'.

The inclination of the district leaders not to resist wage reductions on a falling market conflicted with Rymer's belief in fighting for a minimum standard of remuneration that he saw as the miners' right. The full-time officials had been 'led astray by the old cry of supply and demand', whereas, speaking as he claimed to be for the radicals in the South Yorkshire coalfield:

We demand that all our wants be supplied from the results of our own industry, and anything short of this we hurl from us with disdain, and at once plunge into that revolution that will give justice to all men, and secure for all time the rights of the wealth creators.

In October 1872, Rymer became actively involved with a small group of republican miners (several of whom he had known before in other coalfields) and other men from South Yorkshire in the formation, first of a district federation of republican clubs, and later of a national federation known as the Republican Brotherhood. Both these bodies were short-lived: they foundered on opposition from the more moderate and influential Charles Bradlaugh and his supporters. But the flurry of activity in 1872 and 1873 does reveal the existence in South Yorkshire of a small cell of articulate, organisation-conscious, politically radical and industrially militant miners, almost unique, it seems, in the coalfields at the time. Only the Cleveland ironstone district and a few pockets of the Durham

1 Miners' Advocate and Record, 23 May 1874.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid, 12 Sept. 1874.
4 International Herald, 27 Oct. 1872
5 Ibid, 7 Dec. 1872. It was formed out of a delegate conference of republican clubs in Sheffield, in December 1872.
and Northumberland coalfields\textsuperscript{1} boasted miners in the organised republican movement. (The \textit{International Herald} and \textit{National Reformer} contained lists of republican and secularist clubs and their locations; and the \textit{Miners' Advocate and Record} occasionally reported their activity if miners were involved.) This South Yorkshire group included: Edward Rymer, who moved to Barugh Green, a mining village three miles north west of Barnsley, early in 1873;\textsuperscript{2} John Deakin, secretary of the Barugh Green Republican Club and, like Rymer, a miner at Silkstone Main colliery;\textsuperscript{3} Abraham Tibbott, who had been chairman of Barnsley Republican Club and, like Rymer, was on the Provisional Committee for the establishment of the National Federation of clubs;\textsuperscript{4} Robert Archer and Joseph Sheldon who were representatives of the Wombwell area at the district republican meeting in October.

A feature common to all these men is that they were relatively recent immigrants to South Yorkshire (Tibbott from Wales via Lancashire and West Yorkshire; Deakin from South Staffordshire; and the others from Northumberland or Durham) and all had been publicly involved in opposition to the MacDonaldites in the M.N.A. and/or their own district leadership in the mid 1860s, usually in connection with the Towers group and the Practical

\textsuperscript{1} The Franchise Associations in the North-East in 1872-4 contained some republican miners. The president of the Durham County Franchise Association regarded Rymer as the linch-pin for popularising the movement in Yorkshire. See W.M. Maehl jr., 'The Northeastern miners' struggle for the franchise, 1872-4', \textit{Int.Rev.Soc.Hist.} xx (1975), 211

\textsuperscript{2} \textit{Miners' Advocate and Record}, 24 Jan. 1873

\textsuperscript{3} \textit{International Herald}, 7 Dec. 1872.

\textsuperscript{4} Ibid, 9 Nov. 1872.
Miners' Association.\(^1\) Several of these men established themselves as union leaders at the local level. Archer was secretary of two S.Y.M.A. lodges in the 1870s, Lundhill and New Oaks;\(^2\) and Sheldon was president of the South Yorkshire Underviewers and Deputies Association in its early days.\(^3\)

Or they were public figures in less politically-charged institutions in the district. Sheldon was a member of Wombwell School Board\(^4\) and Tibbott a frequent speaker on temperance platforms in and around Barnsley. Rymer himself, at this and other times in his life, was involved in grass roots agitation for the improvement or promotion of amenities like roads, sanitation, co-operative retailing and permanent relief funds, though rarely in a formal capacity.\(^5\) This phenomenon was an indication of the openness and the tolerance of radical views that existed up to a relatively high level in the South Yorkshire social and institutional infrastructure.

But at the level of the district union, there was no room for them. Tibbott received no support in his attempt to gain nomination for district office in the election of 1876;\(^6\) and

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\(^1\) For Tibbott: Miner and Workman's Advocate, 9 and 30 July and 13 Aug. 1864; E.A. Rymer, op.cit., p.16; Miners' Advocate and Record, 31 May 1873. For Deakin: Miner and Workman's Advocate, 8 Oct. 1864. For Archer: Miner and Workman's Advocate, 30 April 1864; he was also prominently involved in the 1844 strike in Durham, see R. Challinor and B. Ripley, op.cit., pp.128, 140. For Sheldon: E. Welbourne, The Miners' Unions of Northumberland and Durham (Cambridge University Press, 1923), pp.126-7; Colliery Guardian, 11 April 1863: Sheldon was dispensed with as paid agent of the Northumberland and Durham Miners' Mutual Confident Association in favour of the more moderate Crawford, in 1866.

\(^2\) S.Y.M.A. records, Lists of Branch Secretaries, Oct. 1870 and July 1875.

\(^3\) Barnsley Chronicle, 18 Dec. 1875.

\(^4\) Ibid.

\(^5\) See E.A. Rymer, op.cit.

\(^6\) Barnsley Chronicle, 8 and 29 Jan. 1876.
Rymer was kept at arms length not only in South Yorkshire, but also, with the help of Normansell and Casey, in Durham when he attempted to return in 1873 as a full-time agent. Little or nothing was heard of Rymer's republican colleagues after the mid 1870s. Rymer himself, while on rare occasions appearing on radical opposition platforms in the later 1870s, gradually shifted his stance to one of support for conciliation, arbitration and sliding scales. In 1881, while lending support to Chappell in the Rotherham area, he advised:

South Yorkshire, therefore, should seek to mind her union constitution and her policy, and instead of pursuing the old rotten doctrine of retaliation, try to create, and carry out higher principles of mutual reciprocity, conciliation, arbitration, sliding scales or any other intelligible plan or scheme that will for ever rid us of the curse of strikes and lockouts.

The joyous tones with which, in 1873, he saluted the 'coming revolution' were exchanged for sombre warnings about the apocalypse that would be upon them if both employers and men did not mend their ways. His faith in representative democracy, too, had waned. As early as 1875 he wrote:

Joseph Arch has been here advocating the extension of the county franchise to the 600,000 working men who are unrepresented; but how can Mr. Arch, or any other patriot, defend those men successfully when so many of them are mere drunken idiots and hardly capable of understanding wrong from right in political matters?

Twelve years later, he again stressed the urgent need for self improvement to counter the approach of 'socialistic anarchy' which, he claimed, was motivated by 'the morbid lust for revenge'.

Rymer's three and a half years in the Forest of Dean were

1 Miners' Advocate and Record, 21 June and 30 Aug. 1873
2 Archer and Sheldon both soon died in colliery accidents. E.A. Rymer, op. cit., p. 21 and Barnsley Chronicle, 18 Dec. 1875.
3 Barnsley Chronicle, 5 March 1881.
5 Ibid, 5 March 1887.
controversial, involving conflict with both employers and his
own miners. Rymer, at this stage, found it impossible to
reconcile the objectives of a professional miners' leader and
his still smouldering inclination to be the mouthpiece of the
radical rank and file. The former won this tug-of-war and he
negotiated a sliding scale agreement in 1883. By the time he
returned to South Yorkshire in 1886, he had lost touch with
the changing industrial and political climate and of the mood
of the rank and file. He ran into trouble straight away while
mobilising a moderate section of the workforce at Monk Bretton
colliery against a strike. He incurred the wrath not only of
the Barnsley-based activists among the Monk Bretton colliers,
but also of the district executive, provoking an antagonistic
series of public exchanges which lasted over six months. He
finally put the seal on his divorce from his old political
roots by appearing, in 1890, on a platform with John Norman
and other members of the Tory-backed Miners Superannuation
group; and the following year spoke in favour of the
Salisbury government at a Monk Bretton Tory Association
meeting.

Rymer's increasingly thorough volte-face had as much to do
with a foundering of his radical crusade of the 1860s and
early 1870s in the harsh climate of the first few years of the
depression, as with any sudden conversion to moderate doctrines.
From his earliest days, Rymer had led a life of, even for miners
in the early Victorian years, unusual adversity. Partially
blinded and physically afflicted in his childhood, he could
never expect to make a good living as a coal hewer. While the
intermittent experiences of poverty sharpened his awareness of

1 Dean Forest Mercury, 18 May 1883.
2 Barnsley Chronicle, 18 June 1887.
3 Barnsley Chronicle, 1 Feb. 1890.
4 Ibid, 11 July 1891.
5 E.A.Rymer, op.cit., p.2.
the injustices and the insecurity in miners' lives, he eventually became obsessed with the mere survival of the one institution which, in his eyes, could bring about the social, moral and political transformation essential for the uplift of his fellow miners. His determination to shore up the union - in Dean, South Yorkshire and elsewhere - at any cost and against considerable odds, led him into the espousal of sliding scales and into partnership with men like Chappell and even with opportunist Tories.

All his life, Rymer believed fervently in the familiar pillars of self-improvement as pre-conditions of working class emancipation. Temperance, co-operation and education - though not religion - were aspects of his moral and social crusade which often led him into conflict with the miners whose cause he championed. In 1866, he harangued the Durham miners for their 'fallen condition', claiming that they were a 'thorough disgrace to the country' because of their habitual drunkenness and lack of moral fibre. In 1874, the political apathy of the South Yorkshire miners came under his scrutiny:

A little extra wage for labour has entirely obliterated any latent desire for political freedom, hence the coldness displayed by the miners here on the suffrage question.

This lack of reward for his efforts eventually brought about the collapse of his belief in change on a grand scale and he increasingly devoted his energies to local grass roots agitation on specific issues where, especially in the township of Monk Bretton, he had some success.


2 Durham Chronicle, 19 Jan. 1866.

3 Miner and Workman's Advocate, 24 June 1865.

4 Miners' Advocate and Record, 10 May 1873.

5 For example, in getting a radical Guardian elected in 1893. E.A.Rymer, op.cit., p.27.
Rymer, at certain times in his life, enjoyed a considerable following among fellow activists and the rank and file. But his peculiarly abrasive and verbose style with both the written and spoken word sooner or later cut him off from the ordinary miner to whom he appealed. His correspondence and public addresses were full of exhortations that would not have gone amiss in the sermon of the most enthusiastic Primitive Methodist preacher. His constant stress on guilt and the need for self improvement was too rigorous a regime to be embraced by the ordinary miner, especially in the early 1870s when the miners' world looked relatively benign. Moreover, Rymer's unfortunate habit of openly soliciting monetary support laid him open to attacks from his many enemies in the union in South Yorkshire and elsewhere. Normansell and Casey isolated Rymer from his mass base as easily in the 1870s as Pickard and his colleagues were able to in the late 1880s, though the ammunition with which Rymer provided them was of a different nature.

Rymer's career has been dwelt on partly because it is better documented than any other contemporary South Yorkshire leader, but also because, despite his eccentricities, he displayed many of the attitudes and tendencies of other local leaders of the period from the 1860s to the mid 1880s. Less can be said about the other two unusually vocal personalities of the pre-M.F.G.B. era; but, by the same token, less needs to be said.

(b) Isaac Haigh.

Haigh was five or six years younger than Rymer (Haigh was aged 30 on Census Day, 1871). Born at Almondbury in the thin coal district of West Yorkshire, he probably came to the Barnsley district as an adolescent along with a brother. He settled in Dodworth and married a local-born girl. He

1 Census enumerators' returns, Dodworth 1871.

2 In 1861, he was lodging, unmarried, with his brother in Dodworth. His wife, Anne, whom he married between then and 1871, was born in the neighbouring parish of Cawthorne (enumerators' returns, 1861 and 1871).
claimed to have been an active unionist since the foundation of the S.Y.M.A. in 1858, and as early as 1866 (at the age of twenty five or twenty six) he was branch secretary of the large Strafford Main lodge at which colliery he was also checkweighman. Soon after this, he chose the more influential position of delegate. He seems first to have appeared on a major district platform at the 1867 miners' demonstration where he proposed a fairly inconsequential motion and, in 1871, he was on the district Executive Committee, despite his disagreement with Normansell and Casey in 1868. In 1874, he was one of six South Yorkshire delegates to the M.N.A. conference and, in January 1875, he was appointed along with William Walsh as auditor of the union accounts. Later in the year, he was a member of the temporary committee appointed to run the Shirland colliery and also entered the contest for the new post of full-time district treasurer, losing to Broadhead.

Haigh clearly enjoyed responsibility and an executive role in the union. Yet in the early part of our period, he was the only man to enjoy consistent access to district posts while frequently campaigning against the two full-time secretaries.

1 Barnsley Chronicle, 5 Aug. 1876.
2 S.Y.M.A. minutes, 25 June 1866. He may have been an official earlier than this: he was recruiting for the district union in May 1865 (S.Y.M.A. minutes, 29 May 1865).
3 Barnsley Chronicle, 7 Sept. 1867.
4 S.Y.M.A. minutes, 18 Dec. 1871.
5 Ibid, 9 Nov. 1874.
7 Ibid, 12 July 1875.
8 Ibid, 9 Aug. 1875.
At the two pinnacles of his opposition - in 1868 and 1875 - he enjoyed mass support from rank and file miners and other local leaders in the Barnsley area, although he failed significantly to rally opposition further away from the centre of the district. 1 Despite this qualification, Haigh was at the height of his local renown in late 1875 when Normansell died and Casey, the other target of his attacks, left Barnsley. With the object of his criticism gone, Haigh returned to the executive fold, helping to set up the Testimonial Committee for Normansell's family 2 and, instead of standing for district secretary himself (as Normansell, no doubt would have expected and had feared), superintended the election, simultaneously supervising the winding up of the libel suit brought by Normansell against Charles Lodge (Haigh's colleague at Strafford Main). 3 Six months later, Haigh had left Dodworth and the mining industry to set up an accountancy business in Barnsley, 4 which he continued to operate for at least another thirty years.

A competent and dedicated organiser - the Strafford lodge was always one of the strongest, even in opposition - Haigh was a great exponent of the pragmatism that was used to good effect by men such as Casey (but which eventually destroyed the latter). In public, Haigh was always ready to praise the owners of Strafford Main for their fairness and integrity 5 and whenever possible stressed the harmony that was supposed to have existed at that pit and elsewhere in the district. In 1869, it was for conciliation that he and Peter Silk ostensibly were campaigning, not for more militancy. Yet Strafford had one of the highest strike records of any South Yorkshire colliery while he was there 6 and, if we accept Normansell's

1 See p. 141.
2 S.Y.M.A. minutes, 6 Jan. 1876.
3 Ibid, 5 Feb. 1876.
4 Barnsley Chronicle, 5 Aug. 1876.
5 See, for example, Barnsley Chronicle, 19 Oct. 1867.
6 See Table 10.
testimony, Haigh's presence on a deputation to the owners in 1875 was the reason for it not to be granted a hearing.\footnote{Barnsley Chronicle, 4 Dec. 1875.}

In view of the fact that he did not seem to be after one of the secretaries' posts - the treasurer's post was essentially a low-key, non-political one and his chances of gaining this would not have been boosted by his campaigning in 1875 - what was Haigh's likely objective in taking to the public stage on these occasions? Almost certainly, it was in genuine pursuit of democracy, as he saw it, in the union. As an ambitious and articulate spokesman for a lively body of miners at Strafford Main, he felt it incumbent on him to contribute to the union's bargaining power and yet to preserve access to that power and the way it was used for the ordinary miners he represented. He observed Normansell and Casey shifting the decision-making machinery further and further away from the grasp of the members of the union and, even if he personally was able to manipulate that machinery to a certain extent, he wanted to curtail this movement, though not the growth of the machinery itself.

Haigh, like Rymer, was self educated and was a firm believer in self-improvement for others. In 1868, he was a prime mover in founding a working men's reading and discussion room in Dodworth, which later became an informal mechanics institute.\footnote{Ibid, 4 July 1868.} He was also very active in the Barnsley British Co-operative Society, competing several times (sometimes successfully) for the position of annual auditor, from as early as 1870, and encouraging links with trade unions.\footnote{See the report of the Yorkshire Co-operative Societies' conference at Batley Carr in Barnsley Chronicle, 22 July 1876.} He was also house agent in the Barnsley area for the Leeds Permanent Building Society, at least as early as 1874.\footnote{Ibid, 14 Aug. 1875.}
Haigh ceased to have a direct influence on miners' internal politics in 1876, although he did maintain links with the union in his new professional capacity.\textsuperscript{1} In Barnsley, though, he was active in co-operative and adult educational work, and also in politics. In 1884, before the mass intervention of the miners into local politics, Haigh was a member of the Barnsley Liberal Association and was appointed auditor.\textsuperscript{2} A year later, he was one of the founder members of a splinter group of working class and lower middle class Liberals which became known as the Barnsley Radical Association.\textsuperscript{3} Under their banner he fought and lost the School Board election of 1886,\textsuperscript{4} but the same year was elected to Barnsley Town Council on which he remained throughout the period.\textsuperscript{5}

Although he showed a passing interest in the Barnsley Trades and Labour Council before its true political inclinations were revealed, Haigh remained firmly allied to the Lib-Lab tradition in politics and was never a controversial figure. He acquired many middle class trappings (he was, for example, a freemason in 1897\textsuperscript{6}) and was never, after 1875, the focal point of unorthodox opinion. He had become, by the early 1890s, indistinguishable from any of twenty to thirty members of the Liberal-Radical leadership in Barnsley.

(c)Edward Jones

Edward Jones' career differed from Haigh's in several respects, one of which was Jones' continuing presence in the

\begin{enumerate}
\item His name was put forward in 1879 as the person who should administer any sliding scale agreements which might come into force. \textit{S.Y.M.A.} minutes, 22 Dec. 1879.
\item \textit{Barnsley Chronicle}, 24 May 1884.
\item Ibid, 6 June 1885.
\item Ibid, 23 Jan. 1886.
\item Ibid, 30 Oct. 1886.
\item Registry of Deeds, Wakefield Masonic Lodge Returns, 1897.
\end{enumerate}
local mining industry for at least thirty years.\textsuperscript{1} Like Haigh, though, Jones claimed to have been a member of the S.Y.M.A. since its first meeting.\textsuperscript{2} In the 1870s, he was checkweighman at the Oaks, yet he lived in Barnsley and was a branch official at Monk Bretton,\textsuperscript{3} an example of day-to-day mobility that seems to have been quite common in the central part of the district. The wide range of contacts he must have made in his daily life, he turned to his advantage, enjoying mass support in the opposition movements of 1874, 1875, 1876 and 1879 in a wide swathe of the district from Monk Bretton to Wombwell. Jones was never as close to the executive as Haigh, although he twice acted as miners' arbitrator (in 1876 at Manvers and 1877 at Church Lane\textsuperscript{4}), a procedure he later rejected because of what he saw as the employers' repeated duplicity.\textsuperscript{5} He was also delegate to the M.N.U. conference in Manchester in 1876.\textsuperscript{6}

From 1879, however, Jones lent his support, more and more to the full-time officials at Barnsley. He supported Frith (who he had never attacked with the same vigour as he had Normansell) against Chappell and Casey in 1880\textsuperscript{7} and, in 1887, fervently defended Pickard from the perceived threat of the Miners' Superannuation group.\textsuperscript{8} Jones had a fiery tongue like Rymer, and, he draw a lot of counter-criticism from Normansell

\textsuperscript{1} The last reference I have found to his activity was in \textit{Barnsley Chronicle}, 8 Oct. 1887.

\textsuperscript{2} Ibid, 24 April 1880.

\textsuperscript{3} See especially, \textit{Barnsley Chronicle}, 6 and 13 June 1874.

\textsuperscript{4} Ibid, 15 Jan. 1876 and 6 Oct. 1877.

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid, 1 Feb. 1879.

\textsuperscript{6} Ibid, 3 June 1876.

\textsuperscript{7} See, for example, \textit{Barnsley Chronicle}, 17 and 24 April 1880.

\textsuperscript{8} Ibid, 8 Oct. 1887.
and from the press for that reason. His notoriety may also have made him a target for victimisation by local coalowners (again, like Rymer), despite his relative independence as a checkweighman. Jones was reputed to have had difficulty in gaining audiences with the Oaks management and, in 1877, he was on the S.Y.M.A.'s 'victims fund'. Soon after, however, he was working as checkweighman at Cortonwood colliery in Wombwell, where he stayed, seemingly without mishap, until 1887.

Jones' public roles were not limited to affairs in the mining industry. First and foremost, he was a temperance propagandist and, for a while, manager of one of Barnsley's temperance clubs: the British Workman No. 2 in Park Row, while working as checkweighman at the Oaks. He was also an active Wesleyan, along with a large number of the Barnsley middle class, and was one time treasurer of the Barnsley Band of Hope Union. Secondly, he was active in promoting early Lib-Lab political co-operation as an official of the Barnsley Working Men's Liberal Association, an organisation ignored, however, by the executive of the S.Y.M.A., even during Normansell's campaigns for election to the Town Council. In 1875, for example, through this organisation, Jones became involved in the movement for the assimilation of the borough and county franchise, spurred on by Joseph Arch's campaigning tour, and in Plimsoll's campaign on behalf of merchant seamen.

1 The Sheffield Independent (10 June 1874) denounced his criticisms of the executive's wage policy, claiming that, unlike Normansell and Casey, his perspective was confined to his 'pit hill'.

2 Barnsley Chronicle, 20 Nov. 1875.

3 S.Y.M.A. minutes, 19 March 1877.


5 Ibid, 28 Jan. 1880.

6 Ibid, 27 Nov. 1875.

7 See, for example, S.Y.M.A. minutes, 31 July 1875.
Looking at Rymer, Haigh and Jones, it is easy to select the first-named as the most radical and fundamentally proletarian. Yet he, like the other two, either through prolonged contact with district and national leaders, or through commitments to a special moral philosophy, displayed attitudes which prevented him and others from plunging wholeheartedly into major confrontations with the employing class—especially later in their lives. Yet each was a true democrat within his own terms of reference. One can only speculate how each might have reacted if they had been brought up a generation later with the seeds of independent labour politics in the wind. James Murray of Barrow who, in June 1894, became president of the Barnsley Labour Club, formed under the auspices of the local I.L.P., and who later came into conflict with Pickard in the Attercliffe by-election, was given a free rein by men of Rymer's generation to become the rallying point for local miners' activists like Levi Dyson, Tom Taylor and Richard Holden. They in their turn formed the vanguard of independent labour politics in the district, but without the support of the Y.M.A.

The executive's response.

The last section has suggested that, although rank and file figures like Rymer and Jones had an undeniable potential for leadership and influence over the rank and file miners, this potential in the long run was not always realised, mostly through these men's conflicting commitments to other priorities especially temperance. In this final section on the conflict between leaders and led, we return to the full-time officials and sum up their attitudes towards their rank and file and to industrial conflict, and examine their roles as agents of social control.

Referring in general to a generation of miners' leaders to which Pickard and Frith could claim, ideologically at least,

1 Barnsley Chronicle, 9 June 1894.
2 Labour Leader, 7 July 1894.
to belong, Roy Gregory points out:

> It is easy to forget that the middle-aged and elderly Lib-Labs of 1910, so vigorously denounced by the new generation of Socialists, had been well to the left of the political spectrum in their own younger days.

Even if, however, we accept the existence of such a left-right spectrum in miners' politics, what did this comment really mean in the context of rank and file consciousness? Pickard and Normansell may have given the less shrewd coalowners and propertied gentlemen of South Yorkshire a few sleepless nights after some of their less conciliatory pronouncements, but such statements, in the general public arena at least, were rare. Certainly they were aggressive in their lobbying for reform in their industry and, later, for the extension of the franchise. But in the wider political context, even of the 1860s and 1870s, their perspectives were limited and could be contained within the reformist programmes of the two political parties.

Within the context of their local industry and of the union, there is no justification for saying that any of the full-time officials were ahead of the bulk of their members in agitating for improvements in wages and conditions. The reverse was almost always the case. It is true, of course, that these men were not chosen to be full-time officials because of any excessively conciliatory tones in the attitudes they had towards their employers at the time. But once in office, they had different responsibilities and perspectives. There is evidence that, in Normansell's case, the adjustment was not immediate. His official notes reveal a certain aggressiveness which was lacking in years to follow. In November 1865, for example, when the union's 10% demand was ignored by the employers, Normansell commented: 'The employers have officially declined an interview with a deputation from our Association, so there

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is nothing left but "war" and "war to the knife".¹ Council, seemingly with Normansell's approval, selected pits to strike to test the issue, and advised others to do the same if the accompanying policy of restriction was frustrated by employers who moved strait work miners into the banks.² This was Normansell and the S.Y.M.A. at their most militant. But it was early days, the union's institutionalising effects were minimal and, other than the events of 1844 and the patchy involvement of the union from 1858 to 1864, there were no obvious lessons to follow.

Within a year, the methods of achieving the declared aims of the reformed S.Y.M.A. (which included the grandiose design of 'aiding all other associations that have as their object the emancipation of their fellows from the grasp of capital')³ were becoming firmly placed in the hands of the executive. The 'old and foolish' custom of absenteeism on 'Pay Monday' was actively discouraged as being against the interests of employers and men.⁴ Delegates to Council were to be sober and punctual in their attendances.⁵ Strikes against non-unionism were to be outlawed⁶ and several individual disputes were forcibly terminated. Richard Mitchell, too, had exercised a definite strategic selectivity in sanctioning strikes. One at North Gawber for a general rise of 10% which might have escalated and disturbed the delicate balance of industrial peace in the district, was not given union support, unlike the more specific and instrumental dispute at the Oaks.⁷

¹ S.Y.M.A. minutes (Normansell's notes), 21 Nov. 1865.
² S.Y.M.A. minutes, 27 Nov. and 11 Dec. 1865.
³ Ibid, 1 Nov. 1866.
⁴ Ibid, 5 March 1866.
⁵ There were several cases where delegates were publicly censured for this type of behaviour. See, for example, S.Y.M.A. minutes, 19 March 1866 and 18 March 1867.
⁶ Ibid, 30 April 1866.
⁷ Rotherham Advertiser, 19 June 1858.
This became the established pattern after 1865. Agitation for general advances always came from the branches and were, as often as not, resisted for a while by the executive. In 1870, Wombwell's insistence that the time was right for an advance was rejected as 'madness' in the prevailing economic climate; and Normansell continued to resist these demands until well into 1871. At the other end of the period, the process still continued. The first resolution for a 10% wage increase in 1888, which threw Yorkshire into the forefront of the joint wages movement, was said to have come from the militant Barrow lodge on June 6th and was originally looked on with disfavour by Pickard and his colleagues. They agreed, however, to a ballot which was to reveal the men's enthusiasm for the action. For the next four years, the district leaders fought a rearguard action to keep the M.F.G.B. on a steady course. In 1889, the editor of the Barnsley Chronicle recognised that the leaders had set their faces 'against any unwarrantable action. Any weakness on their part might, in the present temper of the men, lead to strikes at half the collieries in the country.' In 1891, the same phenomenon was observed, in particular in the context of agitation over price lists and victimisation.

They feel the strength of their organisation and when anything happens by which they fancy themselves aggrieved, their first impulse is to throw down their tools and set the pit idle. Against this disposition the Council have had to exercise no little authority.

Pickard, however, exercised his authority with more success than any of his predecessors and, in general, responded more positively to the demands of his members. It may well have

1 S.Y.M.A. minutes (Normansell's notes) 17 Jan. 1870.
3 Ibid, 28 Dec. 1889.
4 Ibid, 2 May 1891.
been in order to appear as a real alternative to the conciliatory Chappell, as far back as 1881, that Pickard occasionally adopted an aggressive stance. In 1882, he criticised Casey and Chappell for their lack of commitment to the campaign for an advance: 'These men have done all they could to prevent and not secure an advance for the Miners, by their vacillatory policy and their supposed gentlemanly ways.'

But it was easier to appear to be leading the tiny core of loyal members that made up the union in 1882 than the wide range of opinion represented in the mass organisation of the early 1890s. It is no wonder that Pickard at times felt intimidated by energetic men like Murray. Yet within that organisation, he found enough uncommitted miners who were impressed by the real gains of 1889 and 1890 to act as a countervailing force to the radicals, so long as he and his colleagues controlled the institution itself.

No-one was more aware of his role as a moderating influence than Normansell. His testimony to the Select Committee on Coal in 1873 reveals many insights into his personal view of a union leader's authority. Asked whether the decisions made by the executive were very largely his, he assured them: 'I am not appointed to be a servant only, but to be their adviser: it would be something like Mr. Gladstone is with you.'

He explained how he impressed his opinions on Council: 'If I think the thing is wrong, I will not take hold of it and carry it out; and I turn my heels against many a resolution drawn up, and will not carry it out'. Asked if he and the other officials ran into trouble for this denial of popular opinion, he replied:

I do not know whether we get into disgrace or not, but we get abused many a time and I may tell you this, in 19 times out of 20 in a dispute we have to go against our own men, not against the owners and managers; that is a fact.

2 S.C. on Coal (1873), Q 7497.
3 Ibid, Q 7498.
4 Ibid, Q 7499.
He proudly used, as an example of how the union exercised its authority, a recent dispute at Stubbin colliery. \(^1\) 'It was the union that brought those men of Earl Fitzwilliam's down upon their knees at the grand staircase of Wentworth House.' \(^2\)

We should also ask why, if they were so aware of opposition to their moderate policies, did the permanent officials persist with them? If we discount the notion that they selfishly used their positions of power to inflict their own whims, personal ambition and life style on the institution they controlled, then their policies must have been based on objective inputs. There is no doubt that the district leaders' perspectives differed from those of the rank and file, as Coser suggests, not only in terms of their social perspectives but also of their cognitive horizons. \(^3\) His professed greater awareness of objective conditions in the coal industry was Frith's justification for defying Council over the 1876 wage negotiations, even though this argument was rejected by the rank and file at mass meetings. \(^4\) Close contact with industrialists and Liberal politicians, combined with their reading of the national press, was bound to reinforce the officials' acceptance of bourgeois theories of the working of the market economy. As Royden Harrison points out, labour leaders had become, by the 1870s, men of business controlling large institutions, and were no longer prophets and demagogues. \(^5\) But this process of class integration did not, in the case of the district miners' leaders at least, go as far as Burgess seems to be implying generally about union officials at this time:

\(^1\) See pp. 164-6.

\(^2\) S.C. on Coal (1873), Q 7477.


\(^4\) Barnsley Chronicle, 5 Aug. 1876.

\(^5\) R. Harrison, op. cit., p.4.
At the same time, the regular contact that the union officials established with employers' representatives, often of high social standing, brought about subtle changes in attitudes and life style, as well as creating new opportunities for upward social mobility, which differentiated them from their members.  

Any observable change in life style might have occurred anyway with some of these men, through their inclinations to thrift, hard work and self education. If anything, retaining the job of full-time official halted their upward social mobility.  

Expediency also played a part. Both Normansell and Pickard, at times, emphasised that strikes were rarely successful on a falling or stagnant market, and Frith was perhaps prevented from displaying a more familiar militancy by the economic stagnation that plagued his period as secretary. In a better climate, the leaders tended to stress the need for permanent improvements, rather than for speculative wage advances. As Machin points out, this policy was successful for a while in the 1860s and 1870s, with a large part of the improved wages of those years being due to just payment for coal cut, supervised at the pit-head by checkweighmen. Also Normansell's insistence on intervention in pending disputes did enable him to establish his informal 'reference' system which was open to criticism for its lack of forcefulness, but which avoided confrontations which might have ended in arbitrated settlements (usually broken later by one side or another). As the biographer of a more modern Yorkshire miners' leader put it, when referring to Pickard and his generation:

1 K. Burgess, op. cit., Introduction (page x).

2 Witness the examples of several local leaders who left the industry: Isaac Haigh (see p. 183) and David Moulson, regular executive member, who ran a large public house in Swinton after he left the industry (see Mexborough and Swinton Times, 17 Dec. 1881).

3 See, for example, Mexborough and Swinton Times, 3 May 1878.

4 F. Machin, op. cit., p. 351.
So stark were the conditions with which they had been familiar all their lives, that when the right to negotiate on equal terms with their employers had been won, it seemed almost as though the promised land had been won.  

Ultimately, though, it was the bureaucrat's fear of the uncertainty in conflicts involving a trial of strength which dominated their decisions. Forever mindful of the state of the union's funds, they felt that a threat to the funds was a threat to the union and all it could offer in the way of security and status for the ordinary miner. They also feared the costs involved in litigation, even if it meant the defence of a principle close to those of the union. Shortly before his death, Normansell gave evidence that he was usually prepared to compromise with the prosecuting parties on behalf of accused unionists under the Criminal Law Amendment Act - to the extent of extracting a confession of guilt - in order to keep the action out of the courts. In early 1874, Normansell was sitting on £50,000, a significant sum of money, which was partly committed to ambitious projects like the Shirland Co-operative Colliery and the Miners' Offices in Barnsley. To involve the total S.Y.M.A. membership in a lockout would have wiped out the whole of that sum in little over a month. After a period of such stability and prosperity, Normansell would have loathed to take responsibility for plunging the district into a conflict which might have destroyed cherished and, seemingly, accomplished dreams of recognition and respectability for the union (to a large extent based on the deterrent effect of the union's numerical and financial power base) for the sake of a few shillings a week in the pockets of each of his members. He never seems to have given much thought to the idea that a deterrent was only effective if it was occasionally allowed to flex its muscles.

1 J. Lawson, The Man in the Cap - The Life of Herbert Smith (Methuen, 1941), p.71.

2 R.C. on Labour Laws (1875), Q 559.
and that resistance in 1874 might have put a brake on the escalation of employers' demands for reductions which all but bankrupted the union eventually.

Normansell and Frith sincerely believed that the threat of conflict could be reduced by overtures of friendship towards the employers. This was such an obvious part of Normansell's strategy that, as early as 1867, the *Barnsley Chronicle* was able to comment:

> Strikes in the South Yorkshire colliery district are fast becoming matters of history, and in their place we have gatherings, demonstrations, dinners ... at which the masters and the men vie with each other in their expressions of mutual goodwill and esteem.  

Unofficial strikes were condemned for the 'injustice done to their employers' and in disputes that erupted into violence, the leaders were the first to stress that they were for the rule of law. In 1866, Normansell escorted blackleg miners to their homes to avoid their being assaulted.

In short, the mid 1860s saw the creation of an institution which increasingly failed to respond to immediate and specific needs, but which provided its own raison d'etre and its own self-protective mechanisms. The early depression years proved that the employers' goodwill of the 1860s and early 1870s was itself an act of expediency and Frith's failure to realise this at first, jeopardised the miners' standard of living. Pickard was, at times, more sceptical of such intimacy. Nevertheless, to him the answer did not lie in socialism, which he equated with a period of ragged conflict long gone. He too espoused conciliation machinery, the preservation of which, in the long run, dominated his decisionmaking.

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1 *Barnsley Chronicle*, 13 April 1867.
2 See, for example, the example of Monk Bretton (pp.160-3) and of Denaby (S.Y.M.A. minutes, 1 Aug. 1870).
3 *Barnsley Chronicle*, 22 Sept. 1866.
CHAPTER SEVEN

Union Membership.
Joining a union like the S.Y.M.A. in the period 1858 to 1888 involved far more of a personal decision than in later years. Despite obvious pressures on miners from workmates, local officials and employers to act one way or another, there was an element of choice in the matter which had parallels with voting in a parliamentary or local government election. The miner's ability to join a union was an enfranchisement. His ability to hold back or withdraw membership was his right to stay at home on polling day: a small but personally significant vote of no confidence in his party. There are, however, important differences. There was very often no alternative 'party' to vote for, unless the employers offered a voluntary accident club, or, as in the early 1880s in the South Yorkshire coalfield, there were rival unions at large. Also, in particularly emotionally charged years, failure to join a union at some pits often invited sanctions from workmates: even to the extent of industrial action or violence. Failure to vote, even in a homogeneous voting community, like a mining village, was not such a public gesture as failure to join a union.

Membership of the S.Y.M.A. and Y.M.A., unlike support for a political party, brought immediate tangible gains in the form of social security (particularly when the Widows and Orphans Fund was in operation); but it also implied the obligation to act collectively, sometimes inviting the privations of victimisation and those involved in strikes and lockouts. Together with the cost of contributions, these factors demanded a more complex process of decisionmaking than the election analogy. This chapter will attempt to explain how the miners in the district resolved this dilemma at different times and will suggest why their collective behaviour took on the pattern that it did, and what message it carried for the social and industrial policies pursued by the leaders in Barnsley.

Branch structure and membership trends.
Which particular union branch a miner joined was determined as much by where he lived as by which colliery he worked at.
In the closely settled communities in and around Barnsley (especially to the west where the pits were smaller), this meant that any union branch may have represented the interests of some of the miners at two, or even more pits. Conversely, the miners at a particular colliery belonged to more than one union lodge. There seems to have been no successful attempt to break down this predominantly residential basis of lodge membership, possibly because of local fears of discouraging existing members and reducing participation at branch meetings and also, possibly, because of the district executive's fear of strong pit-conscious cells. The effect of this pattern must have been a diminished sense of pit-based identity and cohesion, but a heightened consciousness of the district union as an organic entity. Despite the examples of fragmentation described in Chapter Five, the latter was a relatively consistent feature of unionism in South Yorkshire in the long run of the period.

There were inevitable variations within and departures from this general rule and they are worth examining. First, there does seem to have been a tendency, in some townships with several pits, to foster a pit-based identity, multiplying the number of lodges with each pit having a union branch in its main residential catchment area. Thus, the Church Lane miners tried to establish a second branch in nearby Barnsley (their original one was in Dodworth where the colliery was sited) in January 1874; and Manvers in 1876 at Swinton Bridge. When a new pit was sunk or an old one expanded, there also seems to have been an initial move to form a new lodge despite the existence of one or more in its neighbourhood. When the Clarkes opened their New Sovereign pit, for example, the miners who lived in Dodworth insisted on having their own branch: Old Silkstone No.2. This process led, in some parishes, to

1 S.Y.M.A. minutes, 28 Jan, 1874.
2 Ibid, 30 Oct. 1876.
3 Ibid, 18 Feb. 1867.
over-fragmentation: Silkstone and Dodworth between them had eight union lodges within their boundaries in 1872, one or two of them at times having hardly any members at all. The district executive encouraged amalgamation. In 1865, it expressed the opinion that 'experience tells us that the more lodges connected with one colliery, the more opinions exist'. In 1870, it merged the three lodges associated with Day's collieries into one with 163 members; and in 1879, it encouraged the miners of Kilnhurst and Thrybergh Hall lodges to combine. The Executive Committee also turned down Church Lane's request for a second branch.

In the newly developed coalfield to the east, the situation differed. Pits were larger and less close together; and the miners tended to be concentrated in one or two communities nearby. This still did not imply a one to one relationship between colliery and lodge: there were miners belonging to Manvers and Thrybergh Hall lodges getting strike pay during a dispute at Denaby in 1875 and the Manvers workforce itself was scattered in four adjoining townships. But compared with the chaotic pattern of lodges in the neighbourhood of Barnsley, the branches in and to the east of Wombwell were more cohesive and numerically viable. This had some bearing on their ability to

1 S.Y.M.A. Balance Sheet, 30 Dec. 1872.
2 Ibid, 4 July 1870. Hallroyd lodge had eight members.
3 S.Y.M.A. minutes, 13 Nov. 1865.
5 S.Y.M.A. minutes, 2 Sept. 1879.
6 Ibid, 28 Jan. 1874.
7 Ibid, 13 Dec. 1875.
8 The average size of lodges in township groups 1 and 2 in Table 2 was 171 in 1874; in groups 5 and 6, it was 269. There were 23 and 12 lodges respectively in these pairs of groups.
survive the fallback in the post-1874 depression, on their attitude to the district executive (and the respect they received in return) and on their ability to resist abuses by employers. With this framework in mind, the analysis turns to a chronological study of variations in union membership.

(a) 1858-80.

The S.Y.M.A. under Richard Mitchell never achieved its object of establishing and maintaining branches at every major pit in the district. The attack on wages in 1858, which precipitated the formation of the permanent district union did erect a skeletal organisation of union in most pit communities in the district, extending from Woolley in the north to the borders of Sheffield in the south.¹ But, as in 1844, most Fitzwilliam miners left the organisation almost immediately on their employer's orders with nothing to show for their troubles. Those who defied the ruling were dismissed.² The Elsecar and Parkgate miners were soon joined in their isolation by those at Woolley colliery who had similar conditions of non-unionism imposed on their employment. Not until 1872 did these pits return to the union fold.³

Mitchell's lack of positive leadership and the effects of early defeats by the employers in major confrontations deflated much of the potential of the early enthusiasm for the union. In several branches on the fringe of the district, like East Gawber,⁴ membership lapsed and in December 1864 there were only 2,118 members in 18 lodges concentrated around Barnsley and the union stronghold of Rawmarsh/Swinton.⁵ The 1860 lockout

¹ See F. Machin, op. cit., Balance Sheet, 21 June 1858 facing page 281.
² Barnsley Chronicle, 18 Dec. 1858; F. Machin, op. cit., p. 288. One of the few miners at Fitzwilliam's pits who remained in the union was given a special pension by the S.Y.M.A. on his retirement; see S.Y.M.A. minutes, 12 Oct. 1864.
³ Barnsley Chronicle, 3 Feb., 4 May, 15 June 1872.
⁴ Ibid, 27 Aug. 1859.
⁵ S.Y.M.A. Balance Sheet, 30 Dec. 1864.
saw the removal of the union's toehold in the Sheffield area (at collieries in Brightside) through successful employer aggression, including techniques such as victimisation. It also saw the withdrawal of the Clarke miners through dissatisfaction with the 1860 settlement. Both groups were not to return to the union until 1866.¹

The period of Normansell's full-time office saw, except in his final year, few setbacks in the steady (and, between 1871 and mid 1874, spectacular) climb to high levels of union participation. The first task identified by Normansell during his leadership of the 1864 lockout resistance was to attract the reluctant miners of several large collieries near Rotherham.² Despite recruiting campaigns early in 1865, the first breakthrough in this district, at the recently opened Aldwarke Main colliery, was not achieved until late in that year.³ Carr House and Holmes (Low Ground) collieries followed early in 1866, along with Brightside, the first of those on the borders of Sheffield. The first successful negotiation of a general district wage increase (and of weekly pay) in January 1866 must have been an important factor.⁴ One or two gaps in the union's heartland were also filled: notably the Lundhill miners who were notoriously resistant to unionisation.⁵ But the 110-odd miners in the Newton Chambers Thorncoiffe Drift mine (known locally as 'John Newton's pets') remained outside the union during the 1866 lockout⁶ and possibly longer: a division of loyalties at that company's pits that was to emerge again in the 1880s, possibly nurtured by the management.

¹ A lodge was formed, with an initial intake of fifty members, on 4 Nov. 1865. See Old Silkstone Lodge Registration Book, in the possession of Mr. John Goodchild, Wakefield Metropolitan Borough Library.

² Rotherham Advertiser, 25 June 1864; Barnsley Chronicle, 9 July 1864.


⁵ Barnsley Chronicle, 2 Dec. 1865 and 21 July 1866.

1866 was a year of important progress. Total membership rose from 3,628½ at the end of 1865 to 6,534 in December 1866,¹ with general growth at most branches and the addition of four more lodges near Sheffield and Rotherham. This achievement, however, formed a plateau on which the commitment to union rested (despite the expanding workforce) for five years until the take-off into a much higher level of membership in early 1872. And, as we have seen, support for the district union was not entirely unflawering.² Rawmarsh lodge, for example, remained outside the union, albeit with some form of organisation of their own, for twelve months in 1868-9.³

Rawmarsh and the other defectors of 1868-9 were among the strongest and oldest-established lodges in the union. It was among new branches and new recruits that Normansell and Casey had most trouble in building strong organisation. The weakness of the new Tinsley and Sheffield colliery branches enabled the employers to introduce unfavourable terms into miners' contracts at several pits.⁴ Dissatisfaction with this state of affairs precipitated the first of the anti-union lockouts of 1869. Other victims of that three-pronged attack, the Denaby miners, were typical in one respect of the workforces at many new collieries. They did not collectively apply for union membership within weeks of the pit's opening in 1867 (as was the practice from the 1870s); but they affiliated in January 1869, as a result of a specific grievance.⁵

² See pp. 133-7.
³ Rawmarsh was accepted back at the Council meeting on February 1st 1869 (see minutes), but their first contribution was not paid until March 1st.
⁴ F. Machin, op.cit., p.357.
⁵ Ibid, p.358.
Although the successful struggles of 1869-70 served as an exercise in solidarity for two of the combatants, Denaby and the Newton Chambers pits, the majority of colliery workers still stayed aloof from the union. As late as November 1871, soon after a 5% district wage rise had been successfully negotiated, Normansell was complaining that the majority of miners in the South Ward of Barnsley, where he had unsuccessfully bid for a seat on the Town Council, were non-unionists and had voted against him. This, he claimed, was because they did not like him obstructing them from 'doing wrong to their employers'.

The tide was about to turn, however, for in the twelve months of 1873, the total membership almost doubled to 12,895; and another 10,000-odd joined in the following eighteen months. This dramatic increase was brought about first by a greatly enlarged number of miners joining existing lodges (there were increases of over 100% at several between June 1871 and June 1874, partly due to the expansion of pits and the sinking of new ones close by); secondly by affiliations from new districts (notably North Derbyshire and pits to the south-east of Sheffield); thirdly by the formation of lodges in neighbourhoods within the old unionised area which previously had held aloof (principally, of course, the Fitzwilliam pits and Woolley). The new miners at Fitzwilliam's Stubbin colliery may well have provided the initiative for this move, showing the way for Elsecar. Other lodges were formed at

1 Denaby soon became and remained one of the three largest union branches. Thorncliffe retained a strong commitment to the union for a few years after the lockout - only two of 850 men involved were said to have left the union during the seventy three weeks (Rotherham Advertiser), 20 Aug. 1870.
2 Barnsley Chronicle, 25 Nov. 1871.
4 East Gawber lodge rose from 87 to 221, and Stainborough from 59 to 213.
smaller pits (such as New Hill Main and Silkstone Main) where the miners may or may not formerly have been affiliated to other lodges not bearing the names of their pits. Finally, there were a number of large collieries sunk just before or during the boom period (Manvers Main, Monk Bretton and Roundwood, for example), which could hardly have resisted the wave of enthusiasm for organisation in those years. They wasted no time in forming their own numerically strong branches.

The years 1875 to 1880 witnessed a decline which was as rapid as, and more complete than, the growth in membership in the previous half decade. Falling wages and the loss of control by the executive over the branches plunged the organisation into near oblivion in 1880. The process had begun in Normansell's time. He noted, in October 1875, that over 5,000 members had been lost since the peak in mid 1874, 'recent controversies contributing' to the decline - a reference to the storm of criticism that had been directed against him and Casey. In 1876, Frith inherited a situation where both decline in membership and local strike incidence were accelerating. At the end of that year, membership had fallen to 9,213. From then on, total membership is difficult to gauge because lodges were failing to submit returns, because many had begun to fall behind with their subscriptions and because some had actually withdrawn from the union for short periods. Several (including Thorncliffe, Old Silkstone and Wentworth Silkstone) withdrew to manage their own strike funds after the district union got into arrears with these payments. Following a recruitment campaign in 1878, there was a slight improvement in membership; but mid 1879 saw a return of the downward trend with some of even the largest lodges (Manvers and Thorncliffe, for example) showing signs of breaking up.

1 S.Y.M.A. minutes (Normansell's notes), 27 Oct. 1875.
The splinter movements of 1879-85 both exploited and accelerated this fragmentation. Some of the lodges that abandoned the official S.Y.M.A. and Y.M.A. did not return to the union fold until the late 1880s. The last few Derbyshire miners left the S.Y.M.A. in 1880.

The early 1880s were, of course, unprofitable times for the newly formed Y.M.A. It started life with under 6,000 members in the two formerly separate union districts, an average of well under 100 members per lodge. Late 1882 and 1883, did see some improvement both in the size of individual lodges and in the number of lodges affiliated. In December 1885, membership of lodges in the study area was about 4,700, an average of about 90 per lodge (compared with an average of 31 for those lodges from which there were returns in December 1881). A few branches had been formed at new and expanded pits, but they did not achieve the high levels enjoyed by the pits opened just before or during the boom.

The years 1889 to 1894 saw the total membership in Yorkshire increase fivefold to about 55,000, thanks to the formation of the M.F.G.B. and its success in negotiating general wage increases. Membership in the study area in December 1890 was 22,573 and in December 1893, 24,684: averages of 425 and 418 per lodge. Very few pits had been opened in this period, but

1 Most of the Newton Chambers miners not until 1890, Barnsley Chronicle, 11 Jan. 1890.
2 F. Machin, op. cit., p. 489.
3 There were 46 South Yorkshire lodges and 38 West Yorkshire lodges in the Y.M.A. in January 1882 (Y.M.A. minutes, 11 Jan. 1882).
4 The Barnsley Chronicle (11 Nov. 1882) reported that 22 new lodges had formed in the 'past few weeks'. Houghton Main lodge, for example had expanded from 57 members to 280 in about a year, Barnsley Chronicle, 6 Oct. 1882.
5 Y.M.A. Balance Sheet, 31 Dec. 1885. A few lodge returns were missing that and other years.
7 Ibid, 31 Dec. 1890 and 31 Dec. 1893.
many had expanded and several (including Lundhill, Wharncliffe, Silkstone and Rockingham) had opened second branches. Everywhere lodges had increased in size by 1894; and two topped 1,000 members in 1893 (Denaby and Hoyland Silkstone). Membership of the county union was now institutionalised in Yorkshire and other coalfields of the Federation, and despite setbacks in the late 1890s and the 1900s, the days of widespread disaffiliation were almost gone. Moreover, the recruitment of surface and haulage workers seems to have been successful on a mass scale, bringing the proportion of unionists among all mineworkers to over 78% in 1890.¹

**Inter-branch differences.**

The available statistics on branch membership suggest the possibilities of three lines of comparative analysis. One is the actual size of a branch at any point in time: a factor which must have, to some degree, determined the attitudes of the miners in its catchment area towards industrial conflict and the union itself. Secondly, we can consider the absolute size of a branch in relation to the number of miners at the pit or pits from which it purported to draw its members. Finally, we should consider the relative stability of these lodges over the crucial years 1874 to 1885 when most were decimated by the disillusion of the depression. It is fortunate that the size of most pits remained relatively stable during these years, rendering comparison of membership more feasible than otherwise.

In Table 7, twenty two pits have been selected whose life spanned the twelve years from 1874 to 1885 and which were large enough to support one or sometimes two union lodges. Inevitably, comparison is hampered by the lack of a one to one relationship between pit and lodge, as explained above; and where workforces were notoriously fragmented among different lodges (in Silkstone and Barnsley, for example), no attempt has been made to include them in Table 8, which isolates

¹ See Table 6.
collieries with a high proportion of their labour force unionised in 1874 and 1893 and a few with a low proportion.

From Table 7 emerges a ranking of pits, from the most stable (Wharncliffe Silkstone, possibly Manvers Main, and Thrybergh Hall) to the most erratic (Elsecar, Clarke's Silkstone colliery and Woolley, all of which, as we have seen, were outside the union in the formative early 1860s). It should be noted at this stage that several pits with the most consistent membership were among those that formed the core either of the rebellion against Normansell in 1868 and 1875 (Strafford Main, for example) or of the major splinter movement in 1880 (Manvers, Denaby and Thrybergh Hall). This implies a commitment to unionism as a principle and not simply to the policies of the district executive. By contrast, Wharncliffe Silkstone, Aldwarke and several of the medium-stable pits were among those that remained close to the core of support for the union in Barnsley, especially when it was most under attack.

Table 8 gives some indication of relative levels of support in two years of exceptionally high membership. It introduces two collieries (Wath Main and Stanhope Silkstone) which were not included in Table 7 because they were not operating in 1874. There seems to be a high level of correspondence between the consistency rankings in Table 7 and the level of membership suggested for 1874 in Table 8. The principal exception is Monk Bretton, which, as we have seen, had a history of most volatile industrial relations and whose miners were frequently at odds with the district executive.

The high membership pits in 1893 have a less obvious fit both with the corresponding pits in 1874 and with consistency in membership. Many of these pits, such as Hoyland Silkstone, had expanded considerably, bringing in new labour with, perhaps, few of the inhibitions of their predecessors. Manvers and Aldwarke continued to figure highly (the former none the worse for its seven years of self-imposed exile), while Elsecar (and, in this case, Fitzwilliam's other pit at Stubbin) remained one
of the weakest supporters of the union. North Gawber probably figured as low as it did because many of its miners would have lived in Barnsley, some distance from the lodge headquarters, and may have been members of other lodges. For this and other reasons, it must be stressed again that the often poor correspondence between pit and union branch limits the use we can make of a comparison such as the one in Table 8.

Before attempting further explanation of the contrasts outlined above, it is important to examine other, less systematic evidence of the varying strengths and weaknesses of union commitment at different collieries. References in union minutes and local newspapers are highly selective, but often furnish valuable insights. In 1889, for example, Pickard claimed that 'Wombwell was looked to as a leading centre of the whole mining population of Yorkshire'. 1 This was echoed by a recent historian of the district, James Evison, when referring to the 1860s and 1870s. 2 He even insists that 'The further the colliery from the heart of union activity, the weaker the branch'. 3 This heartland, in Evison's terms was Wombwell and Ardsley, and while this model may have applied to pits to the north on the borders with West Yorkshire (perhaps inevitably neglected by the executive of both district unions before 1881), it certainly did not apply to pits to the east of Wombwell as Tables 7 and 8 demonstrate. The miners in townships of Mexborough, Swinton and Rawmarsh, despite their disagreements with Normansell and Frith, remained among the strongest unionists in the district. At Warren Vale, unionism was even said to have spread to banksmen soon after the lodge's formation in 1858. 4

1 Barnsley Chronicle, 2 Nov. 1889.
3 Ibid, p. 176.
4 F. Machin, op. cit., p. 289.
Nevertheless, the Wombwell district, which included pits like Darfield Main, Wombwell Main, Oaks and Lundhill, did provide a consistent level of union commitment and, after a period of principled opposition, remained loyal to the official union in 1880. One colliery on its eastern edge set an example to pits old and new of how to organise a lodge from scratch, even in the depths of an economic depression. This was Wath Main, finally opened in 1879 after several years of sinking difficulties. It established a large and solid union branch and in 1883 Daniel Halford (originally an official at Silkstone Main and later, a regular member of the district executive) proudly announced that, of 332 men at the colliery, 325 were in the Y.M.A.¹ In 1893, its proportion of members was also one of the highest.

Concern for low membership was a more common aspect of the executive's public pronouncements. The position of the Fitzwilliam miners (especially those at Elsecar) was among the most debated topics in this connection. Normansell offered an explanation for their continuing disaffection in the 1860s. In evidence to the Trades Union Commission, he claimed that it was less the strictness of the ban on unionism imposed by the Earl or his agent and more the reticence of confirmed unionists to take work at his pits that was the decisive factor. They 'prefer stopping where there are union men'.² This, and the positive incentives offered by the Earl to his employers,³ kept the pits non-unionised for thirteen years and reduced their effectiveness at other time. In 1882, the Elsecar miners had no representative at at least one of the policymaking delegate conferences in Rotherham, having only eight members in the union.⁴ Six years later, on the eve of

¹ Barnsley Chronicle, 24 Nov. 1883.
² R.C. on Trades Unions (1867-8), QQ 16262-3
³ See p. 309.
⁴ Barnsley Chronicle, 14 Oct. 1882.
the federated coalfields' joint wage movement, John Frith called a mass meeting to try to bring them into the movement. Only between fifty and sixty were said to have attended.¹

Lundhill was another pit which held back from the union in the early days. This was certainly not due to geographical isolation from union activity: the pit was in Wombwell, where Council meetings were frequently held at the time. Normansell suggested in 1866 that it was that very existence of strong union branches around them that made the Lundhill miners complacent and enabled them to enjoy 'the advantages of the Association' at the expense of others.² Lundhill did retain a semblance of organisation from the late 1860s, but in the early 1880s, it was so low that it attracted comment from Frith,³ and, like Elsecar, deprived the miners there of a seat at the Rotherham conference in late 1882.

The miners at the Clarke's pits also confirmed their early reluctance to join the union by returning a very low membership in the 1880s.⁴ Not surprisingly though the successful years of the joint wages movement saw even the Elsecar and Clarke miners organising in large numbers. This was also true of some small pits on the very fringe of the coalfield. About 100 miners from Oughtibridge in the hills above Sheffield - a traditionally unorganised district - joined the Y.M.A. in September 1889 and, eighteen months later, struck for a new price list.⁵

A different type of resistance to the union was displayed by the Monk Bretton miners, especially after 1880. Despite high membership levels in the mid and late 1870s, the branch

² Ibid, 21 July 1866.
³ Ibid, 19 Nov. 1881.
⁴ Ibid, 24 Oct. 1891. There were only 20 members early in 1889.
⁵ Ibid, 30 May 1891.
fell into disarray after a long and damaging (for both miners and the employers) dispute in 1879-80. Throughout the 1880s, the branch could rarely muster 100 members out of a workforce of almost 1,000 employees in 1887. When Edward Rymer came to work there in 1887, he found only 60 in the union, and promptly set about trying to 'reform' the lodge and dampen the miners' enthusiasm for striking. At that time, affairs at the pit were dominated by miners who lived in Barnsley and came to work on a 'paddy train' which served as an unofficial, mobile union branch. In the absence of a viable lodge in the village of Monk Bretton, it was these Barnsley residents who decided industrial policy by means of the mass meeting. Rymer was unsuccessful in his initial attempts at subduing and organising the Monk Bretton miners. In late 1889, most of them were still outside the Y.M.A. and the pit was referred to by Pickard as 'the black-leg shop of the locality'. Like the other reluctant pits, however, Monk Bretton responded to the successes of the joint wage movement. In February 1890, the lodge had 750 members.

Another large colliery with a similar record of erratic support for the union, combined with a proneness to strike, was Hoyland Silkstone. During disputes in 1877 and 1888, the low union membership at the pit was singled out as a contributory factor to both the incidence of conflict and the miners' disadvantage in the contest. The lesson does not seem to have sunk in. As late as 1891, Pickard called a meeting with the directors of the company to ask them to withdraw the recent wage advance from the non-unionists at

2 E.A.Rymor, op.cit., p.26; Barnsley Chronicle, 9 July 1887.
3 Barnsley Chronicle, 18 June 1887.
4 Ibid, 16 Nov. 1889.
5 Ibid, 22 Feb. 1890.

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their colliery. As at Monk Bretton, this disorganised aversion to unionism was a different phenomenon from that exhibited by the miners at Elsecar and Silkstone where industrial conflict was minimal. These two groups of pits, in fact, are representative of different classes in a tentative typology of union attitudes and behaviour that will be framed below.

One group of miners that fell into neither class, yet at times was more than lukewarm to union organisation, was the employees at the Newton Chambers collieries: Tankersley, Thorncliffe Drift, Norfolk, Smithy Wood and several small pits. In the 1860s and early 1870s, all but one of the pits contributed to branches that were among the strongest in the union; and twice the miners endured long lockouts on the outcome of which the fortune of the district union might well have hung. Only 150 miners at the collieries were said not to have been in the union at the start of the lockout in 1869. The extraordinary experiences of the 1869-70 lockout, however, along with the loss of their able and (at that time) audacious branch secretary, William Chappell; the muzzling of another, Edward Somerset, by the employers; and the replacement of a large section of the workforce with blackleg labour; may have fundamentally altered the nature and spirit of unionism at these collieries. Although there remained a core of support for the official union at Tankersley in the north and at the company's large new colliery, Rockingham (opened in 1874-5), the bulk of the Newton Chambers miners left the union with one or other of the splinter movements and did not fully return until 1890.

1 Barnsley Chronicle, 5 Dec. 1891.
2 Cusworth Hall, Newton Chambers MSS, Trades Disputes File.
3 See p. 351. Somerset promised the Company to keep out of trouble.
4 The 1871 Census enumerator's returns for Westwood Rows - the miners' houses built for the Thorncliffe colliery - indicate that the miners living there had almost all arrived during or after the lockout from outside the district.
Conclusion.

Between 1858 and 1890, at least, unionism as a permanent commitment for the ordinary miner was very much on trial. Unlike the movements of 1844 and before, the S.Y.M.A. and Y.M.A. lay before the miners of South Yorkshire a horizon of expectations which was not to be reached by one spontaneous, concerted thrust, but by a long-term and consistent adherence to discipline and often to compromises that were alien to many. For over thirty years, the union was judged by its results, and membership rose and fell accordingly. There is some evidence that in the initial stages - the early 1860s - it was the very stability of wages which caused a disinterest in unionism as it had in the early 1850s.¹ The fact that general wage advances accrued to unionist and non-unionist alike must have been a disincentive to the unfaithful to pay their contributions. In peaceful times, there is evidence that the union membership was basically non-participatory, miners using it as an 'insurance fund' but rarely attending meetings.²

Non-unionism was probably especially prevalent among new recruits to the mines who earned far less than adult miners for up to six years. In 1869, Normansell complained of there being 'a many hurriers (sic) who have never been in the Association at all, and still refuses (sic) to be in'.³ This is born out by an analysis of entries in the Old Silkstone Lodge Registration Book: of the fifty men who joined the union in 1865, only 11 were under 20 and the average age was almost 29.⁴ At a recruiting meeting in 1880, this complaint

¹ This is also James Evison's view, op.cit., (M.Phil. thesis), p.26.
² See, for example, Edward Rymer's letter in Mexborough and Swinton Times, 7 June 1878. 'Another collier' wrote, in 1880, that only about 10% of the miners who came to the pubs where the lodge meetings were held ever went into the meeting room (Barnsley Chronicle, 26 June 1880).
³ S.Y.M.A. minutes (Normansell's notes), 21 June 1869.
⁴ Hurriers were usually young men at this time.

Old Silkstone Lodge Registration Book.
was raised again and, in 1891, the low membership at Lidgett, a new colliery, was blamed on there being so many young men there who were less committed to the struggles of the past. The experience of conflict, whether at the local or district level, seems to have, temporarily at least, brought men into the union especially when the conflict was successful. From 1890 onwards, it was the mass inclusion of pit lads and surfacemen which boosted membership to such a high level.

One further aspect of motivation we must consider is that of persuasion and intimidation by fellow workmen. This seems to have been ubiquitous and not confined to any period. Sanctions ranged from boycotting non-unionists in the community at large, refusing to ride in cages with them, down to outright violence. At Darfield, the miners, after threatening to strike, even gained the complicity of the employers in enforcing union membership in certain cases. Normansell claimed publicly in 1868 that he upheld the 'rights of free labour' and that he did not believe in forcing a man to join a union. But on certain occasions, particularly during

1 Barnsley Chronicle, 17 April 1880.
2 Ibid, 12 Dec. 1891.
3 The contrast between the effect of the 1869 lockout at Denaby on the subsequent commitment to the union, and that of the unproductive strikes at Monk Bretton, is worth drawing.
5 There were frequent cases of this type of assault and intimidation brought before the local petty sessional courts.
6 R.C. on Labour (1892 xxxiv), Q 7856.
7 A Tankersley minor in 1870 was immersed in a pond for failing to keep up his contributions. Cusworth Hall, Newton Chambers MSS, Trades Disputes File.
8 Mexborough and Swinton Times, 7 Nov. 1890. This would not have applied to surfacemen.
9 R.C. on Trades Unions (1867-8), QQ 16275-8.
major recruitment drives and at times of impending confrontation, the rank and file took the task in their own hands. Intimidation, physical, verbal or implied, was a powerful weapon in the hands of the stronger branches.

Why then did union membership vary so much between lodges and not just over time? A lot had to do with the objective conditions of work and the relations between men and employers at individual pits. After all, most of the work of union branch officials was spent on day to day bargaining over alterations in price lists and over 'victimised' miners, not in rallying support for district action on wage percentages. Other reasons for variation may have been rooted in the communities themselves: in the social and power structures, the type of housing and the contact with other occupational groups. These and other variables will be considered later in the thesis.

What does seem likely is that, given a reasonable amount of stability and continuity in a pit's workforce and in its local leadership, traditions of commitment or of non-commitment to unionism would have persisted. Major disruptive events, such as the lockout at Newton Chambers' in 1869/70, the obliteration of the workforce at the Oaks colliery in the disaster of 1866, and the replacement of the Church Lane workforce by outside labour in 1877-8, however, did occur, creating a new environment for industrial relations. Even the removal of a key union official may have been enough: would, for example, the Monk Bretton lodge have disintegrated in 1880 if Edward Jones had still been delegate at that pit? Where conditions were favourable, especially in the more isolated and homogeneous communities like Denaby, these 'traditions' took root very quickly, often as a result of conflict with the employers, even if, at first, an immigrant workforce might have been difficult to organise as Neville suggests.¹

¹ R.G.Neville, op.cit., p.312. Denaby was similar in this respect to Hemsworth, Frickley and other large, new, peripheral pits to the north and east of the district.
Finally, from all the evidence considered so far, systematic or otherwise, four major types of union consciousness and experience suggest themselves. Each branch or pit, it is hypothesised, fell within, for a number of years at least, the boundaries of one or other of these types. First there were two types of pit which revealed an aversion to mass membership of the union: the ones dominated by a paternalistic employer and where conflict was minimal; and the pits which displayed a disorganised, even anarchic opposition to the union as an institution, an attitude often born out of unsuccessful confrontations with the employers. Secondly, there were two types of comparatively well-organised pits: those which tended to support the policies and persons of the Barnsley executive; and those which displayed principled opposition, while maintaining their local organisation. Table 9 arranges the major collieries in the district on the basis of what is known of their attitudes and behaviour towards the union, together with other background details which will emerge later in the thesis, especially in Chapters Eight and Thirteen. The four types have been dubbed (in the order referred to above): 'paternalistic', 'disorganised', 'loyalist' and 'independent'. Those pits which do not obviously fit into any of these classes, or which displayed different attitudes at different times, have been labelled 'composite'. By 1894, most pits collectively displayed attitudes associated with the first and third types, and particularly with the latter: a function of the enhanced institutionalising effect of the union after the creation of the M.F.G.B. A few pits, however, notably several amongst those classified as 'disorganised' in Table 9, initiated a new type of independent opposition: that based on the union's political commitment. This new attitude is noted, in Table 9, by appending the classification 'independent' to the relevant collieries in parentheses. A final point to note is that all the pits in the fourth class ('independent') were large collieries, opened in the 1850s and 1860s (Manvers was 1870), and working the Barnsley seam. These pits grew up with the union, wanted a voice in the shaping of the institution, and
were large enough to make those voices heard, often in opposition to the equally determined district executive who, it must be said, at times had to consider the needs of weaker, smaller and less well-organised pits. These needs often conflicted with the aspirations of the miners from collieries with 'muscle'.
### Table 7

Membership trends at union branches associated with twenty two principal collieries, 1874-85.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch</th>
<th>1874</th>
<th>1879</th>
<th>1885</th>
<th>% Fall in membership 1874-85</th>
<th>Level of stability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wharncliffe Silkstone</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manvers Main*</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>23% (1874-9)</td>
<td>(High)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrybergh Hall</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strafford Main</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldwarke Main*</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lundhill</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denaby Main</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Lane*</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wombwell Main</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stubbin</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoyland Silkstone*</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newton Chambers'</td>
<td>744</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darfield Main</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monk Bretton</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmunds/Swaihe Main</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oaks</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warren Vale</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Gawber</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Gawber</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarke's Silkstone</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woolley</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elseecar</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: S.Y.M.A. and Y.N.A. Balance Sheets, 15 June 1874, 16 April and 27 Oct. 1879 and 31 Dec. 1885. Where a colliery has two lodges associated with it, the numbers are aggregated. Collieries marked with an asterisk expanded significantly in the period, so less significance can be attached to the percentile in the final column. The same applies in reverse to the collieries marked with a dagger, which contracted significantly.

N.B. In each case, the registered fall in membership is that between the highest year and the lowest.
TABLE 8

Branch membership in relation to size of workforce at associated collieries, 1874 and 1893.
Branches/pits with highest and lowest proportions only.

N.B. The lack of correspondence between pit and lodge occasionally distorts the membership proportion grossly (at Monk Bretton, for example).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1874</th>
<th>Members of branch</th>
<th>Miners at pit</th>
<th>Members as % of miners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monk Bretton</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>(152%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrybergh Hall</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denaby Main</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manvers Main</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strafford Main</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aldwarke</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoyland Silkstone</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newton Chambers'</td>
<td>744</td>
<td>1550</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silkstone Fall</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsecar</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>1070</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1893</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aldwarke Main</td>
<td>1215</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>(152%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmunds/Swaithe Main</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>(118%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wath Main</td>
<td>618</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoyland Silkstone</td>
<td>1018</td>
<td>1205</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manvers Main</td>
<td>1758</td>
<td>2200</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warren Vale</td>
<td>534</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stubbins</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanhope Silkstone</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsecar</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>523</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Gawber</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>710</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Where a colliery had two or more lodges associated with it, the numbers have been aggregated.
TABLE 9

A typology of predominant attitudes to unionism at major pits.

N.B. For an explanation of how these types were derived and what they imply, see the text, especially p.216.

1. 'Paternalist'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>East Gawber</th>
<th>Lundhill</th>
<th>Woolley</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elsecar</td>
<td>Clarke's Silkstone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallroyd</td>
<td>Stubbin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. 'Disorganised'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrow (and 'independent')</th>
<th>Monk Bretton (and 'independent')</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Church Lane</td>
<td>Silkstone Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoyland Silkstone</td>
<td>Wentworth Silkstone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(and 'independent')</td>
<td>(and 'independent')</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. 'Loyalist'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aldwarke Main</th>
<th>North Gawber</th>
<th>Wath Main</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cortonwood</td>
<td>Rockingham</td>
<td>Wharncliffe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmunds/Swaite Main</td>
<td>Roundwood</td>
<td>Silkstone (plus most smaller Barnsley collieries)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houghton Main</td>
<td>Stanhope Silkstone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. 'Independent' but 'organised'

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Darfield Main</th>
<th>Oaks</th>
<th>Wombwell Main</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denaby Main</td>
<td>Thrybergh Hall</td>
<td>Strafford Main</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manvers Main</td>
<td>Warren Vale</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. 'Composite (and uncertain)'

| Newton Chambers' | (other small collieries) | |

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CHAPTER EIGHT

Dispute Incidence and Dispute Issues.
One of the most meaningful variables that we need to identify in a study of industrial relations is the militancy of a workforce. In both a political and a non-political context, this can be an extremely elusive and ambiguous concept: it has, for example, as much to do with attitudes as with measurable behaviour. It has many components, and the track record of a group of workers with respect to union membership can be seen as one of these in the context of this analysis. Joining a union in the early and mid Victorian years, as has been stressed, was a far more positive act than it is in most sectors of industry in Britain today. It implied a certain degree of defiance and determination to assert one's rights. Nevertheless, it has been noted that for the miners at some collieries - several of those in groups 2 and 4 in Table 9 - union membership did not always satisfy their need to correct work-centred injustices or their desire to participate in a democratic institution. Disaffiliation from the union could thus sometimes be seen as a militant action.

An analysis of local-based strikes and lockouts - those not connected with district-wide wage bargaining - however, can be seen as pointing to far more specific and relevant responses of small groups of miners to collectively-felt grievances, signifying their readiness to assert their independence not only from their employers, but also, to a certain extent, from a union that sought to regularise and contain this type of conflict.

The incidence of disputes at a particular pit consists of three main elements: the existence of objective conditions which created discontent (both long-term and immediate); the preparedness and ability of the workers to mobilise on that discontent; and either the determination of the employer to resist the agitation or his insensitivity to the warning signs. This is a composite picture requiring a composite explanation. Thus, any one variable - such as colliery size - which is suggested as pertaining to dispute incidence, could be a determining factor with respect to any of the three elements.
and perhaps even all three. Throughout the following chapters (and especially the next seven), a model of industrial relations will be isolated which the district executive (and the permanent officials in particular) held up as an example for all the collieries in the district to follow. In the prosperous years of the early 1870s and at certain other times, especially after 1888, most colliery workforces were squeezed into this mould by the combined (although often independent) efforts of the employers and the union leaders. But there were always exceptions, especially in the worst years of the depression. The next seven chapters will suggest why these exceptions existed and how they related to the central behavioural model.

Table 10, is an account of collieries in the study area with a high recorded\(^1\) incidence of disputes and of those with a low incidence - in the years 1858 to 1894. Only stoppages which were not part of one of the general district confrontations\(^2\) are included, although pits which remained out after the general cessation of one of these major disputes, for reasons specific to that pit, are included. So too are the Oaks and High Royd strikes in 1864 which precipitated the lockout of that year. Where possible, the length of the conflict has been established and this information has been attributed to the collieries concerned in the form of an 'intensity quotient' (see Table 10 for an explanation of this function). Many pits, of course, were not operational throughout the thirty seven years in question. To achieve an objective dispute rate, therefore, it has been established how long the pit was open. The number of strikes has then been divided by the number of years and the resultant number multiplied by ten to give the rate per decade.

\(^1\) See Table 10 for sources. See also Appendix 3 for list of disputes.

\(^2\) Those in 1858, 1860, 1864, 1876, 1881, 1890 and 1893.
It has been pointed out that Table 10 does not take into account the major district strikes and lockouts because, in general, there was an obligation on all pits associated with the union to become involved in those confrontations. In the vast majority of cases, both colliery owners and the miners responded collectively, but there were a few exceptions which are worthy of note at this stage. The Newton Chambers pits are perhaps the most interesting. Despite having been involved in strikes or lockouts for a total time span of three years between 1861 and 1871, most of the miners at these pits failed to act with the district in collective agitation and resistance in the 1880s. In 1885, they were the first to vote for a return to work at the 10% reduction demanded by the employers. They were soon followed in their capitulation by the miners at Elsecar and then Stubbin and one or two other pits. At the beginning of the joint wages movement in October 1888, their reluctance to act with the district was the same, although two of the pits, Norfolk and Thorncliffe Drift, eventually handed in their notices. Clarke's Silkstone miners, traditionally non-militant, surprised opinion in the district by doing likewise.

1 Barnsley Chronicle, 12 April 1884.

2 Ibid, 18 April 1885. Though not Rockingham, a large new pit (and possibly Tankersley) who deplored their decision. See Cusworth Hall, Newton Chambers MSS, 'Notes for a history ...', Newton, Chambers and Co., to Lord Wharncliffe, 21 April 1885.

3 Barnsley Chronicle, 9 May 1885.

4 Ibid, 23 May 1885. At Stubbin, some the 'older men' had not struck at all.


In March 1892 and July 1893, only Fitzwilliam's collieries were out on a limb, as they had been in the lockouts and strikes of the 1860s. They eventually joined the 1893 shut down, however, by agreement with the Earl who probably wanted to avoid being singled out for attention by the locked out miners. In 1893, the only 'defectors' in South Yorkshire were miners at three small dayholes (drift mines) around Silkstone, most of whom were non-unionists. The issue of small pits is a pertinent one, because their absence from strike statistics implies that they were generally not involved in district confrontations or in unionism at all. This seems on the whole to be true, although there are references to strikes at small non-unionised pits in the union records.

The explanation of this phenomenon belongs in a later chapter; it is probably an extreme example of the lack of militancy and weak commitment to unionism at certain medium-sized pits like Wentworth Silkstone. However, if we take it that the special relations between employer and miners at these small 'family' pits was the crucial factor in determining the men's attitude to the union and to striking, there must be another explanation - perhaps purely economic - for the fact that small pits owned by large firms tended to be less militant than the larger ones. In 1876, for example, miners at two little pits in Westwood belonging to the Newton Chambers company returned to work while the rest of the firm's employees stayed out.

Several variables will be brought to bear on these issues, and in particular, on the data in Table 10. A thorough attempt at an explanation of the contrasts will not emerge until the end of Part Two of the thesis, or even later. Although it will often be necessary to refer back to Table 10 as each new variable is discussed, the analysis in each of the following chapters exists in its own right and has a comparative value.

1 Barnsley Chronicle, 29 July 1893.
2 Ibid, 5 Aug. 1893.
3 Ibid.
4 S.Y.M.A. minutes, 29 Aug. 1870.
5 Cusworth Hall, Newton Chambers MSS, 'Notes for a history...'
beyond an implied relationship with the pits in that Table. These chapters should serve to extend, in a small way, our general understanding of trade union consciousness in the South Yorkshire mining industry during this period.

**Strike issues and other work-centred grievances.**

Coalmining was (and still is) carried on in a working environment that bears comparison with few other industries. The nature of underground workings with their irregular geology, produced an unpredictable and ever-changing environment.¹ Sources of irritation were thrown up hour by hour, and, though subject to fairly simple solution, these irritations were often aggravated by heavy-handed and insensitive management or its subordinates (deputies and banksmen) with resultant conflict. The particular outbreak of conflict may have had roots in a background of continuing antagonism or simply have stemmed from an isolated issue based on a particular work problem. Both situations would have been aggravated if, as was undoubtedly common, the management failed fully to recognise the learned and intuitive skills of the hewer's job and to grant him the necessary freedom and margin of decisionmaking to exercise this skill to good effect. Respect for the miner's control over the way he worked his stall would not have been increased by the advent of the large pit with its stricter work discipline, enforced by a generally higher proportion of deputies and underviewers. Nor would it have profited by the increase in longwall working and the dilution of the skilled labour force, especially after 1870, with men who did lack the necessary experience.

Depending on the degree of division of labour in the pit (more in larger pits), conflict was also engendered between miners with different jobs in the pit or between rival teams,²


² Ibid, p.41.
especially when competition for tubs was fierce. Unlike workers in most other industries, grievances would be thoroughly chewed over above ground as pit work groups, we are led to believe, tended to be fossilised in community life. A host of grievances may have simmered for weeks, even years, before one extra frustration (in itself insufficient to merit industrial action) or some other extraneous influence ignited the stockpile of discontent. At a meeting of Monk Bretton miners in 1885, for example, over forty grievances were aired, and even then no strike seemed imminent. Similarly, the Aldwarke miners sent fifty eight deputations to their employers on matters not relating to general wage advances between 1879 and 1888, yet they struck independently only once in those years. Many conflicts which expressed themselves in strikes or lockouts (especially the long ones), moreover, were often over several grievances, albeit with some subordinate to others. The long lockout at the Newton Chambers pits in 1869-70 was ostensibly about individual versus collective negotiation of contracts: the basic issue of union recognition. But there were at least eight other issues involved which on occasion appeared to give scope for mediation, instigated by two local magistrates.

Whether an unresolved issue erupted into a strike or not was a question hinging on a complex series of antecedent events. It depended also, as has been suggested, on the preparedness of the workforce to strike (the major component of militancy). After weeks of fruitless negotiation with Earl Fitzwilliam's agent over a wages issue in 1886, the

3 *Barnsley Chronicle*, 21 Feb. 1885.
4 S. C. L., NCB 425, Aldwarke deputation notes.
5 These negotiations ultimately foundered despite the firm conceding six of the issues. *Sheffield Telegraph*, 26 Feb. 1870.
Elsecar miners might have been expected to consider strike action. Not at all! The strongest public statements released were those intimating their intention to press for an interview with the Earl himself\(^1\) and to 'hold a demonstration to ventilate our grievances'.\(^2\) The miners at Wentworth Silkstone, another pit with a low strike incidence, demonstrated, however, that, given sufficient motivation a strike could be both practicable and effective. Their employer, Sam Cooper, persistently refused to install a weighmachine at the pit-head; so, after three months' negotiations, the miners struck for one day and got their machine.\(^3\) Their willingness to strike on this rare occasion, and the success of the action, may have been due to the specificity of the grievance, coupled, as it was, with the determined backing of the district union to secure this 'right'.

With the majority of strikes in the period, however, we can be less confident of analysing the causes. Table 11 attempts to do this on the basis of the one or (in sixteen cases) two most prominent issues. All the caveats discussed above, however, apply to the use of this data.

Not surprisingly the dominant issues in local as well as district strikes tended to be pay-based. This is even less remarkable when we consider that the mode of work in the district was not complicated by the butty system;\(^4\) that, for the first fifteen or twenty years at least, the question of hours had ceased to be a bone of contention because of successful industrial action in the first two or three years of the S.Y.M.A.;\(^5\) and that the introduction of unpopular shift

\(^1\) Barnsley Chronicle, 20 March 1886.
\(^2\) Ibid, 27 March 1886.
\(^3\) R.C. on Trades Unions (1867-8), QQ 16241-2
\(^4\) R.C. on Labour (1892 xxxiv), Q 7918; Inspector of Mines Report 1850.
\(^5\) See P.P. 1890 lxviii, p.217.
work was rare before the mid 1890s. Of the 139 issues isolated, 101 were more or less directly concerned with the pay for the job. Of these 101, the most frequent cause of conflict was a threatened reduction in the earning capacity of the underground miner, either directly through reductions in the price paid for a ton of coal cut, or less directly through reductions in prices for development or other 'deadwork' or through confiscation, underweighing, the introduction of wedging, riddles, lamps or other retarding devices. Only three times were pits found to have struck directly for a general advance in wages and on at least one of these occasions, it was to restore an advance due after a general district agreement. The principal exception to this defensive trend was found in the early years of the S.Y.M.A. when inequitable practices, such as the enforcing of twenty one hundredweight to the ton in weighing the miners' coal, unsupervised weighmachines and other traditional pit-head swindles, were gradually removed by actual or threatened strike action, 'hidden' advances accruing to the men's pay. Only in the latter years of the period were pits set down over the wages paid to daymen and lads. At most pits, hurriers were paid by the hewers, even as late as the 1890s, restricting somewhat the scope of this increasingly volatile section of the workforce.


2 Stoppages from the tubs were said by the miners to have been worth £300 p.a. at Wharncliffe Silkstone in 1859. Cusworth Hall, Newton Chambers MSS, Strike Notice, 19 Sept. 1859.

3 R.C. on Labour (1892 xxxiv), Q 7917.
If it was the case that strikes over wages were almost always rearguard actions, we should not be surprised that pit-by-pit differentials rarely became major issues (except in the negotiation of new or altered price lists). In such a mobile area as South Yorkshire, it is unlikely that glaring inequalities in real wages existed for long. Even in pits as stable as those of the Clarke family, the risk of losing a large number of their men was recognised by the manager in 1885 when nothing but a cut in wages seemed likely to have prevented the major pit's closure through economic difficulties. He did, however, suggest cutting the wages of the most stable sections of the workforce: 'a few old men and deputies'.

Even employers such as Earl Fitzwilliam who offered fringe benefits such as free tools, cheap home coal, and good housing, do not seem to have taken too dramatic a toll on cutting rates. In 1875, for example, the Stubbin miners struck for threepence a ton compensation on the introduction of lamps, despite having a higher coal getting rate than their sister pit, Elsecar; and almost the same as nearby Warren Vale who already were working with lamps and whose working conditions were said to be similar.

Strafford Main, a pit with a high strike incidence, had a better than average price list in the 1860s, but only because working conditions were more difficult than elsewhere. This variation in conditions (depth of seam, amount of water underfoot, etc.), the variability of days worked and the existence of a host of other elements in byelaws and price lists, affecting hewers' wages in particular, make long-term comparisons almost meaningless. Even data on take home pay

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1 See pp. 374-80.
2 S.C.L., CR 111, Teasdale to Clarke, 8 Dec. 1884.
3 Most observers agreed there was some difference. See, for example, R.C. on Trades Unions (1867-8), Q 16268.
4 S.C.L., Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments, WWM T 29 (f).
needs to be treated with caution. Not only did it vary greatly from week to week through short-time, accidents, industrial action and absenteeism, but it was often quoted by different parties either as gross income or income net of a multitude of dockings to which the gross sum was liable. What systematic evidence there is, indicates that where differentials occurred at certain times, they bore no relation to the tendency to strike at the pits in question. A comparison of average wages returned in April 1894 revealed that relatively high pay was earned not only at two of the most dispute-prone pits (Denaby and Edmunds) but also at two of the most peaceful (Elsecar and Lundhill). Similarly, there was a significant differential between the tonnage rates at Denaby and at Silkstone Main (both dispute-prone pits at the time) in a return of 1879. This scanty evidence probably serves only to endorse the fact that detailed wage comparisons are an unproductive device for establishing real differences in the experiences of miners from pit to pit. It may also indicate that short-term inequalities in pay were soon ironed out and that differentials in coal getting rates were usually compensated by other factors.

Different working conditions clearly did enter into the miner's assessment of how he was rewarded for his job. On the whole, with wider seams than in many other districts, the South Yorkshire miner's work was less uncomfortable than it might have been. Nevertheless, there is evidence that the ample pit room, which Evison identified in South Yorkshire pits, was increasingly whittled away when the full effects of the 1870s boom were felt. Also, as the margin of development

1. Y.M.A. records, 7 April 1894.
moved further down the dip of the seams, pits became deeper and therefore hotter, and often with more likelihood of water problems. These were certainly factors in wage negotiations at Denaby, the deepest pit in the district until the opening of Cadeby in 1893. Local faulting, the friability of the coal and other uncontrollable factors all made the hewer's job more difficult in some pits and required compensation and understanding from management. The fact that pits like Denaby were on strike so many times over methods of work indicates that management did not always respond as positively as it might have.

That wages in general in the district varied greatly over time is indisputable. It was the downward trend of wages at a colliery, particularly if the movement was unique to that colliery, that provoked most conflict - even if that particular pit had enjoyed higher than average wages and/or benefits. Even traditionally quiescent workforces like those at Stubbin (1875)\(^1\) and Clarke's Silkstone (1888),\(^2\) were stirred into action by a major downgrading of their pay, irrespective of the pre-existing level. A detailed analysis of strike issues, pit by pit, reveals no significant differences in this respect. What is certain is that most strikes occurred in periods of bad trade and falling prices,\(^3\) although there were as many non-wage issue disputes under better economic conditions as in depressed years. There is evidence that miners, at least in the third quarter of the century, perceived a certain income threshold beyond which they rarely actively aspired and consequently were not always interested in pushing claims for wage advances to their limits (no doubt to the relief of the district officials). This hypothesis is supported by evidence

1 See pp. 164-6.
2 S.C.L., CR 113, Nash to workmen, 22 Nov. 1888.
3 The owners of Church Lane colliery suggested this connection between bad trade and their high strike record. See R.C. on Labour (P.P. 1892 xxxvi, III), p.864.
of increased absenteeism following wage advances and also the comparatively high leisure-orientation of mining communities.  

The fact that wages were higher in South Yorkshire than in most other coalfields, 2 would rarely have entered into the agenda of wage bargaining at colliery level.

The success of the joint wage movement and the emergence of a new generation of miners with different experiences and expectations from Normansell's contemporaries, brought a change of attitude to levels of material satisfaction. The stagnation of 1890-2, as we have seen, brought calls for increased pressure on employers for advances. Even the miners at Clarke's pits seem to have adopted this approach. In June 1890, they were pressing their employer for price increases above the district average and for other concessions which the manager claimed were not offered elsewhere. 3 In addition, the differentials between hewers and craftsmen on the one hand and daywagemen labourers and pit lads on the other, 4 which had grown since about 1850, began to rankle especially as the union by then purported to represent the whole spectrum of colliery workers. The proliferation of disputes on this issue after 1883 5 bears witness to the increasing assertiveness of previously submerged groups. Even Earl Fitzwilliam's pit lads struck in 1892.

1 A.J. Taylor, op.cit., p.56; B. McCormick and J.E. Williams, op.cit., p.224.
2 P.P. 1890/1 lxxviii, pp. 595, 615-649.
3 S.C.L., CR 114, Nash to workmen, 30 June 1890.
4 Challinor points out that, in Lancashire at least, unskilled haulage hands' wages actually fell between 1850 and 1880, while those of hewers and engineers rose considerably, Lancashire and Cheshire Miners, p.294. In the years 1886-8, the national average rate for hewers was supposed to have been about twenty eight shillings a week; for general surface labourers, screeners and banksmen, about twenty shillings; and for boy labourers, about eight shillings and twopence, P.P. 1890/1 lxxviii, p.625.
5 There was a daywagemen's strike in 1876, at Mitchell Main.

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It has been said that 'miners, like many other kinds of workers, are conservative and do not adjust easily to new working arrangements'. If this had been a predominant response in South Yorkshire in our period, we might expect to have found strikes over the introduction of new techniques and, in particular perhaps, resistance to the institutionalising of working hours. If we accept Evison's conclusion that miners in South Yorkshire in the 1860s ended work when they felt they had earned enough, and that, by the 1890s, shift times had been regularised by contracts, then one might have expected an intervening period of resistance, symptomatic in strikes and court action. This does not seem to have been the case (although day-to-day absenteeism was both generally high and regularly proceeded against). Only against the two shift system on the rare occasions that it touched South Yorkshire (Denaby was one colliery involved) was there much overt resistance.

Apart from this and a few strikes against new byelaws, most of the thirty eight non-, monetaty strike issues seem to have been the reverse of this type of conservative response. Several were in opposition to out-dated practices, such as fortnightly pay, while others were about job security and rights that were relatively new concepts - some legislated

1 R. Challinor, Lancashire and Cheshire Miners, p. 264.
3 See, for example, S. C. L., CR 109, Teasdale to Bostwick, 30 Aug. 1883. Three employees at the Clarke collieries asked for leave of absence for one day and were obliged to make up the shift missed at a later date.
4 One exception was at Oaks where a complaint arose during the 1856 strike. The men were objecting to new byelaws which included the enforcement of a specific shift time. See Barnsley Times, 2 Aug. 1856.
5 Mexborough and Swinton Times, 24 Jan. 1890.
about, others not. The large number of strikes against victimisation of miners and checkweighmen made up the bulk of these. The first strike in the district where the issue of checkweighmen was raised was, in fact, as early as 1855.\(^1\)

The six strikes against working with non-unionists are further evidence that awareness of the power of the strike weapon to enforce progressive change existed as early as the 1860s, even though the district executive often frowned on this type of action. The five pits involved in these six strikes (Blacker Main, Thrybergh Hall, Stubbin, Oaks, and Darfield - twice), moreover, were not all among the most dispute-prone.

The emphasis on the removal of longstanding grievances and the advancement of the frontiers of mine safety by parliamentary legislation, undoubtedly gave the miners an increased awareness of their importance to the country (endorsed by the coal shortages of 1872-3 and the involvement of the government in the 1893 lockout) and of a field of rights and their status as artisans which stemmed from this. What their leaders failed to exploit, however, was the potential the miners possessed for advancing their real wages beyond the confines of the existing relationship with coal prices. This, the result of men like Normansell's negotiation of credibility for the union within the terms of reference of orthodox political economy,\(^2\) explains partly why so many of the strikes (local and district) were defensive ones.

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\(^1\) Barnsley Times, 6 and 27 Oct. 1855.

\(^2\) See R. Harrison, *op.cit.*, p. 16.
TABLE 10

Pits with the highest and lowest incidence of disputes, 1858-94.
Disputes per decade (when pit was operational). Dispute intensity.

Methods: For details of the calculation of the dispute rate per decade, see the text. The 'intensity quotient' was calculated for each pit by assigning one point to every stoppage it endured over four weeks but under three months, and two points to every stoppage over three months. The points were then aggregated to form the quotient.

N.B. Short stoppages of about three days or under were not included. Several small, short-life pits, and other pits open less than ten years in the period, were also not included. Where a stoppage involved only a small number of workers (e.g. the pit lads), it has not been included (if these incidents were common, they were rarely recorded by union or press). If a whole seam was involved, the stoppage had been included.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of disputes</th>
<th>Disputes per decade</th>
<th>Dispute intensity quotient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Stile</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denaby Main</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoyland Silkstone*</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monk Bretton</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silkstone Fall</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oaks</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Lane</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strafford Main</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrow</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmunds/Swaithe Main</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manvers Main</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- - - - - - - - - -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of disputes</th>
<th>Disputes per decade</th>
<th>Dispute intensity quotient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blacker Main</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darley Main</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsecar</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Gawber</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houghton Main</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pindar Oaks</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rockingham</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Gawber</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lundhille</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wentworth Silkstone</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The strike record of the Hoyland and Elsecar colliery, from which Hoyland Silkstone developed, is included.

Sources: Dispute incidence was noted from S.Y.M.A. and Y.M.A. Balance Sheets and minutes backed by the local press (especially in the years 1858-64, 1880, and 1886-91 when union records were missing or inadequate). Details of the length of stoppages was from the same sources. Information on pit openings and closures, as for Table 2.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reduction on coal getting rates</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other hewers' price list reductions</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weighing, confiscation and '21 cwt'.</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncompensated wedging/lamps.</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victimisation and non-recognition of union.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncompensated riddling (or over-deduction for its removal).</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lads' pay.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barring of checkwieghmen.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daymen's pay.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refusals to work with non-unionists.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shifts.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advances in coal getting rates.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other unpopular practices and byelaws.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>139</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: As for Table 10. Main publicised issues only - usually one but in sixteen cases two. Does not include general district disputes.
CHAPTER NINE

Colliery Safety,

Accidents and Accident Compensation.
Accidents and safety.

We have seen that the majority of disputes at collieries in our period were overtly concerned with monetary matters. On only two occasions did miners strike over what they saw as inadequate attention being paid by management to underground safety. We should not, however, dismiss the idea that accidents and pit safety were contentious issues at the local level - as they certainly were at district and national level - without further investigation. There is every possibility that miners at pits which proved to be more hazardous than others (whether or not this was reflected in routine accident figures or in the occurrence of a major disaster) demanded compensation, either in material terms or in evidence of an increasingly safety-conscious management. If these demands were not met, then conflict may have arisen. If a manager, underground steward or deputy obtained a reputation for incompetence or neglect, or if the employers were reluctant to invest in the equipment necessary to meet safety expectations, then every accident that could be attributed to these shortcomings would have aggravated a festering grievance which contributed to a lack of respect of, and to poor communications with management. Conversely, a well managed pit with a low accident rate would probably have generated respect and a relatively harmonious relationship between men and management. (Witness the praise heaped on the management at Wombwell Main, by the normally uncompromising Edward Rymer, for their attention to safety.)

Safety, especially adherence to the letter of every new piece of legislation in the second half of the century, was part of the rules of the game played between employers and the miners' unions. It was also a matter of public concern. That it rarely became a major issue of conflict in the industry may point to an awareness by employers of the need to eliminate public criticism of their role in this field. In comparison with seams in other districts, the Barnsley thick coal and the

1 E.A. Rymer, op.cit., p.23.
Silkstone seam were, early on, recognised as being 'specially liable to sudden and powerful emissions of gas'.

But there is no evidence to support the idea that, collectively, South Yorkshire coalowners were not sufficiently aware of the dangers or that they failed to act on them. For example, the 'bank' system of working the coal had been evolved from the Derbyshire longwall system because of the former's lower susceptibility to roof falls - even though it was more wasteful.

Even in the 'coal famine' of 1872-3, the district inspector, Wardell, reported that as far as he knew, corners were not being cut in routine safety work in order to cash in on the high prices offered for coal. It is true that examples of the use of innovations such as the patent fan were rare. But, on the whole, as elsewhere, the greatest remediable failing was in the reluctance of miners to accept the permanent introduction of safety lamps. Blame for this can partly be apportioned to the employers for not enforcing the use of the lamps and for not adequately compensating the miners for the decreased productivity that always ensued.

Table 12 is a digest of the fatal accident figures for pits in the district from the first Inspector's Report in 1851 to the last year of our period, 1894. This slightly wider time span has been used to assess the maximum impact of accidents, especially on collieries that closed early on in the period. Only collieries with accident rates of ten per operational decade and over, and those with four per decade and under have been included in order to concentrate on the contrasts. The

3 S.C. on Coal (1873), Q 805.
main statistic dealt with is the number of accidents which proved fatal to one or more men, rather than the actual number of men killed (this is given in parentheses); but this is not to say that accidents involving multiple deaths (especially serious fire-damp explosions) did not have far more emotive force than one involving only one miner. It is also likely that the impact of a 'routine' fatality (or injury) would have been greater in a small pit where the victim would have been known to all or most of his fellow employees; and the actual frequency of such accidents would have been greater in larger pits (all things being equal). Therefore, the size of the pits (in 1874) has also been considered in Table 12, and a very crude fatal accident rate per decade per 1,000 men has been estimated. An assessment of the impact of fatal accidents on industrial relations might consider the rates in both the third and fifth columns of Table 12.

The most obvious fact to emerge from these statistics is that the pits where most accidents occurred per decade were medium to large and worked the Barnsley seam. Six out of the first eight pits in Table 12 fitted that description. The fact that the majority of the larger pits did work the Barnsley seam does not sufficiently explain the second finding. The Barnsley was supposed to be the most gassy of all the seams in the district. Six out of the seven most lethal explosions in our period happened at pits working that seam (Lundhill, Edmunds, Oaks, Swaithe and two at Warren Vale. The exception was Higham). But explosions of firedamp rarely accounted for the majority of deaths in any one year in the Yorkshire coal-field (only five times between 1855 and 1894) and were never the cause of the largest number of fatal accidents (always falls of roof and coal). There is no evidence that the Barnsley seam was any more liable to engender accidents of a

1 Benson argues that there may have been about 100 non-fatal accidents involving loss of manpower to every fatal accident (op.cit., pp.28-30).

2 Inspectors of Mines Reports 1851-94.
non-explosive nature than any other of the seams: not, at least, through any intrinsic overall weakness in structure or any other property. We should, perhaps then, look at human factors for significant contrasts in the shaping of safe working environments. The fact that the four collieries with the lowest accident rate per 1,000 men/decade - Clarke's Silkstone, Newton Chambers', Wentworth Silkstone and Elsecar - were all owned by locally based men or firms, all of whom had a reputation for the close interest they showed in the running of their enterprises (and often, also, in the well-being of their workmen with a consequent low incidence of industrial conflict), suggests that the attitudes of management may have been an important factor. Whether or not the large Barnsley seam collieries, many of which tended to be looked on as speculative ventures by their shareholders, witnessed an above average laxity in observing safety precautions, is a matter for further investigation.

Many accidents were fortuitous events and were recognised as such by the Inspectors of Mines. Nevertheless, certain practices, though not illegal, might have aggravated the dangers. Mistaken signals between cage and banksmen, the employment of inexperienced labour, and changes in routine following a prolonged cessation of work, were all identified as general hazards. Inadequate supervision or neglect by underground stewards and deputies were often cited as contributory factors in accidents examined before coroners. There were, in this period, several marginal acquittals on manslaughter charges; one or two managers were prosecuted and, on one occasion, a manager was forced into early retirement for his incompetence.

1 Ibid, 1885 and 1887.

2 Nine examples stand out: High Green colliery (1855), Mount Osborne (1856), Strafford Main (1857 and 1882), Westwood (1862), Edmunds Main (1862), Manvers Main (1869 - while sinking), Warren Vale (1874), Wharncliffe Silkstone (1876).

3 Warren Vale, 1874.
On the whole, a standard approach was adopted by coroners and Inspectors, by which, after a serious accident, the general principle of improved safety was strongly urged, but where accusing fingers were rarely pointed at anyone higher than deputy or occasionally the understeward. It was this failure to recognise management liability and responsibility that enraged Edward Parker, a Barnsley linen agent and one of the jurymen at the Edmunds Main explosion inquest in 1862. Parker dissented from the coroner's decision to omit a paragraph from the jury's verdict which considered 'the mode of blasting with powder' to have been 'highly injudicious and dangerous' and which specifically blamed the underground viewer. Parker accused the coroner of influencing the verdict and of suppressing evidence, and blamed the colliery's managing partner for negligence in entrusting the management to an incompetent steward. Parker's, however, was almost a lone public voice of criticism outside the miners' ranks when it came to accusing senior management and employers. The Barnsley Chronicle endorsed the typical majority establishment view at the time of the Edmunds explosion stating that Edmunds was 'always considered one of the safest pits in the district'.

More typical, perhaps, of the 'processing' of evidence was the example of the prosecution of Walton, a deputy at Strafford Main, who was fined for neglect in causing two deaths at the pit in 1882. The manager, C.J.Seward, on one of the owners' instruction, saw the prosecuting counsel (Parker Rhodes, later the secretary to the local coalowners' association) and got him to agree to 'alter his line of argument before the bench' to avoid prejudicing the company.

1 See his obituary, Barnsley Chronicle, 9 Aug. 1874. Like most other large entrepreneurs in the linen industry in Barnsley, Parker was an active Liberal.
2 The Times, 2 Jan. 1863.
3 Ibid, 30 Dec. 1862.
5 Lincoln County Record Office, Strafford MSS, Seward to Peake, undated.
The type of conflicting evidence produced after the Edmunds explosion was a common feature of the debates after such events, and hinders us from drawing objective conclusions from the documentary details behind the statistics. The Oaks colliery, the scene of the worst disaster in the history of the coalfield (361 men were killed in two explosions on consecutive days in December 1866), was said to have been the first pit to employ safety lamps, in about 1852. The official report of the disaster praised the ventilation, the stringency of the rules and the use of lamps. Lundhill and Aldwarke, both scenes of firedamp explosions with multiple casualties, were said to have had, at the time and later, reputations for good management and safety. Other pits revealed their relatively safe environment only when outbursts of gas did occur. Strafford Main in 1870 and Thrybergh Hall in 1879 both escaped major explosions through their use of safety lamps. A similar disaster was averted at one of the Clarke pits in October 1857, through 'excellent' ventilation. In the first two examples, evidence of a tradition of managerial competence is tarnished by other incidents at those collieries. But in the case of the Clarke collieries, the very low accident rate endorses other evidence of good management administered by two

2 P. Jeffcock, _op. cit._, p. 86.
5 Inspectors of Mines Reports, 1870 and 1879.
7 The only multiple death accident at Clarke's was a freak roof fall in a 'very well timbered' place. Inspectors of Mines Report, 1880.
enthusiastic and technically competent men.¹

Earl Fitzwilliam's pits also suffered no major disasters in this period. The Earl, no doubt, was aware of the damage to his credibility such an occurrence might inflict and used his resources accordingly. In the 1840s, the fifth Earl supported the then not widely accepted demands for colliery inspection, while a few years later, his stewards pioneered the use of two types of mechanical ventilation system.² In 1870, it seems to have been partly for safety reasons that the merging of his Parkgate pits into the Stubbin colliery was initiated.³ It was, of course, in the long-term interest of any large coalowners to enforce safety standards if only to avert the cost of rebuilding his pit after a major explosion. The cost of bringing Lundhill back into production was about £23,000, while the Oaks proprietors incurred a bill of from £60,000 to £70,000.⁴ Small employers were less likely to have had the resources, incentive or need to install expensive ventilation equipment. If corners were cut at these pits, it does not seem to have resulted, except at Mount Osborne (an old Barnsley seam pit), in excessive accident rates or major disasters.

¹ Edwin Teasdale followed by H.B.Nash. See the Colliery Letter Books in the Clarke MSS (Sheffield City Library) for this evidence. Nash went on to manage a large colliery group: Fountain and Burnley's North Gawber and Woolley collieries, and was on the Council of the Midland Institute of Mining, Civil and Mechanical Engineers. See F.W.Hardwick (ed.), Colliery Handbook for the Counties of Yorkshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and Warwickshire (Sheffield, c 1900), p.43.


³ S.C.L., WWM T 29 b, T.G.Hurst and T.Foster's Report.

⁴ Barnsley Chronicle, 15 Feb. 1868.
After 1874, there was only one accident involving the death of ten or more workmen in the district. And, despite the large influx of new labour, much of it reported to have been inexperienced, there was a general decline in accident rates relative to the number of men employed.\(^1\) This may explain the decline in urgency of the national union leaders' efforts in securing further safety legislation; but it does not explain why there was a distinct lack of argument throughout the period, at district union level in South Yorkshire over the cause and prevention of accidents and major disasters. This debate was taken out of the hands of local officials and exalted to the realms of parliamentary lobbying. Mass agitation on these issues was rare in the district. Individual miners would, from time to time, publish their anxieties in the press, especially after a major explosion. Their ideas were often very practical and sound, and their advice heeded by employers.\(^2\) On rare occasions, miners made their presence and opinions felt at inquests: Levi Dyson of Barrow, for example, walked out of court once as a protest at the suppression of his questions.\(^3\) On a few occasions, branches took the initiative in pressing for more searching inquiries into pit disasters (Church Lane and Higham branches on behalf of the Oaks miners in 1867, for example).\(^4\) But on only two occasions (in the 1882 and 1890 Annual Reports) did the district union take up matters like these with any enthusiasm. In the 1882 Report, they took up the case of the exoneration of the Strafford Main manager and the light penalty imposed on the offending deputy.\(^5\) In the executive's opinion, the

\(^1\) J. Benson, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 2.

\(^2\) See, for example, 'a working miner' in Barnsley Chronicle, 1 Feb. 1868. He opposed the introduction of double shifts because of the danger of gas accumulation, an opinion that was to be echoed later in several other circles.

\(^3\) Ibid, 11 May 1889.

\(^4\) S.Y.M.A. minutes, 4 Feb. 1867.

\(^5\) See p. 241.
Inspectors 'seek to brand the workmen with carelessness and neglect, and to trail a red herring across the want of care and bad management of mines by those in authority'. But one looks in vain for further evidence of indignant agitation on the basis of this or other safety matters by the district executive. Moreover, safety may have been too general and, at the same time, too intangible an issue to have contributed to significant long-term differentials in employer-employee relations.

Compensation for accidents.

Miners seem to have devoted considerably more energy to the provision of relief after the event than to influencing the prevention of accidents. Here was an area in which ordinary miners could become active in the best collective traditions of self-help or could solicit the exercising of paternalistic responsibilities from the more amenable coalowners. The success the miners and the employers achieved in establishing a comprehensive buffer against extreme poverty and the workhouse for the disabled victims of accidents, or bereaved dependents, was rather mixed, yet sufficient to dampen mass dissatisfaction. Two formal agencies were established by the miners in this period (one with the help of the employers): the Widows and Orphans Fund of the S.Y.M.A. and the West Riding Miners' Permanent Relief Fund. The former, according to Benson, was always in trouble because it had never been based on actuarial calculus. As a result of its over-generosity in years of high membership, it failed to prepare for the drastic decline in income in the late 1870s. There were 158 more widows and 244 more children on the Fund in October 1875 than there had been two years before (including about 100 dependents remaining from the Oaks disaster over ten

2 J. Benson, op.cit., p.356.
years earlier). As we have seen, the administration of the Fund came under attack from the lodges on more than one occasion.

The Permanent Relief principle began to attract the interest of the secretaries of the South and West Yorkshire unions (Frith and Pickard, at least) as their local union schemes fell into disarray. It was also espoused by many rank and file leaders like Rymer and Jones (some of whom had witnessed at first hand the Fund that had been operating in the North East since 1863) and was never actively opposed, except from the small, Tory-backed group in the mid 1880s. Like the union itself, it had a struggle at most pits to attract the majority of miners to share in its benefits, especially when the base contributions were raised in 1884. But, as Benson points out, membership of the Fund was often a condition of employment (at least seven large collieries in the district). Control was also exercised through the basic and ubiquitous form of relief, the union funeral fund, which may have served both to strengthen organisation and to discipline the men into avoiding strikes. When the S.Y.M.A. Widows and Orphans Fund was raided by the executive to finance their lockout pay obligations, the leaders lost a most important control over the increasingly discontented branches.

South Yorkshire miners and their dependents seem to have relied less on public relief agencies than many other important occupational groups in the district (especially the handloom weavers). Young widows were often given outrelief for a

1 S.Y.M.A. minutes, 6 March and 1 Oct. 1876.
2 See pp. 136 and 145.
3 See, for example, Barnsley Chronicle, 7 June and 13 Sept. 1884
4 J.Benson, op.cit., p.327.
5 Ibid, p.346.
6 The Census enumerator's return for 1871 shows that there was one miner in the Barnsley workhouse compared with eleven male linen weavers. The chairman of the Barnsley Guardians claimed, in 1867 that if 'half-a-dozen of (the Oaks widows) are ordered into the House, probably not one of these women will go', Barnsley Chronicle, 26 Jan. 1867.
a while by the Barnsley Guardians to avoid institutionalising their poverty in the workhouse. The deterrent effect of the workhouse was compounded by the penny-pinching attitudes adopted by the Guardians after the Edmunds and Oaks disasters. On both occasions, they cut down on the customary relief payments by assessing income from the voluntarily elicited disaster funds. Criticism of this course of action came not only from the miners, but also from the leading members of the relief committees, including Earl Fitzwilliam. Even some of the major coalowners (as the largest contributors to the local poor rates as well as to the disaster funds) thought that relief should not have been reduced in 1867. The independence gained by the miners and their families from the structures of the local Guardians (even if they were not, perhaps, as harsh as those elsewhere) was diluted by the reliance of many, especially in the early years, on employers' accident clubs. These had similar social control effects, except to a greater degree, to the union funds. The employers' schemes, above all, did not provide for transfer of entitlement when a miner left or was sacked from the colliery. The organisers and treasurers were invariably managers or deputies, thus helping to spread the employers' webs of influence. The Newton Chambers company set one up during the lockout of 1869-70, although it was not compulsory. And in 1890, 3,673 of their employees (including the ironworkers) were members of an independent Permanent Relief Society which may partly explain the lack of interest shown by the miners there in the Y.M.A. up to that date.

1 J. Benson, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
3 Ibid, 9 Feb. 1867. Others agreed with the final verdict of the Guardians to halve the amount of disaster fund relief received when assessing the outdoor relief entitlement.
4 There were 530 members in October 1871, *Barnsley Chronicle*, 9 Oct. 1871.
Edmunds and Mitchell Main, Strafford Main and Clarke's collieries all possessed such funds, the latter two employers also providing medical aid as well. Membership of the Clarke's fund, begun in 1851, was compulsory and may well have contributed to the stability and passiveness of the workforce there. Sam Cooper of Worsborough and Stainborough, and Earl Fitzwilliam made non-contributory payments to injured and bereaved. In the Earl's case (and, most likely in others'), it is probable that, as Benson suggests, he was motivated 'not solely by the doctrines of noblesse oblige but also by hostility toward the Trade Union movement'. Fitzwilliam attempted to establish a viable alternative.

The Clarkes, Newton, Chambers and Co., and the Earl were probably the only employers in the district to successfully establish a comprehensive system of social security which seriously deterred union inroads at their pits. (Huntsman at Tinsley and Sheffield also established a compulsory accident fund as part of his anti-union policy in 1869.) In general, the South Yorkshire miner, as in other areas of his life, had a choice between competing alternatives, perhaps settling more and more for the most independent of all: the friendly society. This inevitably took the steam out of the miners' dissatisfaction with any one of the options. There was no possibility of a repeat of the effects of the inadequacy of the local poor relief on the weavers' militancy before 1850.

2. See, for example, Barnsley Chronicle, 9 March 1872.
3. J. Benson, op. cit., p. 216; Rotherham Advertiser, 13 Nov. 1875.
5. Barnsley Chronicle, 5 June 1869.
6. J. Benson, op. cit., p. 340. Thirty four of the miners killed at the Oaks in 1866 were with the Royal Liver Friendly Society alone.
TABLE 12

Collieries which had the highest and the lowest fatal accident rates per operational decade, 1851-94.

**Accidents per 1,000 employees per decade.**

N.B. Only pits with about 100 men or more, and which were operational for at least ten years of the period 1855-94, are included. The size of pits has been taken as the published figures for 1874. In the case of Rockingham and Barrow, opened after mid 1874, a figure of 500 each has been estimated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manvers Main</th>
<th>68</th>
<th>60</th>
<th>23</th>
<th>600</th>
<th>38.3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denaby Main</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monk Bretton</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>69.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oaks</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newton Chambers'</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1550</td>
<td>8.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>(excl. Rockingham)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mount Osborne</td>
<td>43</td>
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<td>13</td>
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<td>30.0</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>23</td>
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<tr>
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<td>43</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
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<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>500</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>10.5</td>
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<td>Elsecar</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1070</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Warren Vale</td>
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<td>92</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>300</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>30.0</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Clarke's Silkstone</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>500</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Accidents/ Size decade (1874) Accidents/ 1000 men/ decade**

**Sources:** Accidents - Inspectors of Mines Reports.
Length of operation and size of pits - as for Tables 2 and 10.
CHAPTER TEN

Entrepreneurship and Competition in the Local Coal Industry.
Relative viability.

Pages 76, 77 and 90 gave an account of collieries which fared badly in the deflationary years from 1875 to 1888, and mention was also made of a few that survived better than others in those years. The point was made that, in general, the large Barnsley seam collieries were relatively more profitable (or suffered smaller losses) than their narrower seam contemporaries. Manvers Main, for example, seems to have benefited from the commercial advantages of working a virgin area of that rich seam, coupled with the economies of a very large scale of operations and the best of new equipment.¹ Older Barnsley seam pits, older pits working the narrowest seams,² and pits like Willow Bank,³ which opened in the 1860s and 1870s to work out intervening areas of the major seams in densely-mined neighbourhoods, suffered far more from the consistently depressed coal prices. There were also technical problems associated with the Silkstone and other, narrower seams which prevented more efficient operation. In particular, the Silkstone could not adapt to longwall mining (more labour saving and less wasteful of coal) under existing technology, because of the tenderness of its roof.⁴

The two outstanding cases of entrepreneurial mishap were Hoyland Silkstone and Church Lane (although the rise and collapse of the Silkstone Fall company between 1872 and 1875 was perhaps the most dramatic example of the adverse effects of coal boom speculation). The bankruptcy in 1883 of John Ryde, one of the proprietors of the 1876 partnership which

¹ See, for example, Barnsley Chronicle, 20 March and 11 Dec. 1869.
² This affected even the most stable firms, like that of the Charlesworths. In 1878, they had to close the Kents' Thick pit at Warren Vale, despite the fact that the colliery as a whole was said to have had 'the highest productivity per head in South Yorkshire', Barnsley Chronicle, 10 Jan. 1874. See Mexborough and Swinton Times, 5 April 1878.
³ Said to have been the cause of the failure of the whole of the Thorpe's Gawber Hall Collieries enterprise in 1881, Barnsley Chronicle, 6 Aug. 1881.
⁴ P. Jeffcock, op. cit., p. 86.
developed Hoyland Silkstone into a major enterprise,\(^1\) was only one symptom of that colliery's failure to enter the realms of profit.\(^2\) In 1884 it was on offer for £50,000, but Newton, Chambers and Co., the most likely purchasers, eventually withdrew from negotiations because of the colliery's unprofitable history.\(^3\) In 1888 it was up for sale again, while being worked by a liquidator and in danger of closure.\(^4\)

Church Lane colliery, another relatively late entrant into the Silkstone seam, also proved an embarrassment to its owners from its earliest days. In a five year spell in the 1860s, it lost £9,000 for its owners, the Charlesworths.\(^5\) In 1873, they sold it to a group of Manchester businessmen and industrialists who formed a limited company and squeezed very large profits out of it during the first three or four years.\(^6\) But in 1879, and 1881, and three times in the 1890s, it was reported to have been in deep financial difficulty, frequently laying off all or part of its workforce.

Church Lane, Hoyland Silkstone and Silkstone Fall were all strike-prone pits and there is a temptation to conclude that their financial problems must have caused excessive downward


\(^2\) Barnsley Chronicle, 15 Sept. 1883.

\(^3\) Cusworth Hall, Newton Chambers MSS, Dawson's diary, 26 Jan. 1885, and Minutes of Directors July 1884. Newton Chambers eventually bought it in 1925 for £202,500, but it was a financial disaster and was closed in 1928. See 'Notes for history ...'


\(^5\) J. Goodchild, op.cit.

pressure on wages\(^1\) (particularly through the introduction of economy measures like riddles and nibbling at price lists).\(^2\) But what was probably more important for industrial relations than overall profitability was the degree to which employers thought they could get away with transferring the impact of declining profitability or increasing losses onto their workforce in the form of wage cuts and layoffs. This seems to have been true of Hoyland Silkstone and Church Lane and also of Denaby and Strafford Main. A comparison between Strafford and the Newton Chambers' enterprise gives us a small insight into the effect of the differing responses of employers to declining profits on industrial relations at their pits. Strafford Main, in the 1860s was running at a loss (about £5,750 net in the last six years of the decade).\(^3\) The beginning of the boom, however, brought profits which wiped out those losses in a matter of months. The colliery did not grow appreciably through re-investment in the boom years, however, and in 1877 and 1879, the company laid off large numbers of its men.\(^4\) The strike record at Strafford no doubt reflects this lack of concern for long-term financial stability and for the job security of the workforce.

1 All the evidence on disputes points to the predominance of defensive action on pay issues by the miners, even at the most militant pits. It is unlikely therefore that it was upward pressure on wages which caused low profitability and a consequent circularity involving disputes and profits.

2 The long strike over riddles at Church Lane in 1877-8, for example, coincided with the new company's first year of zero dividend. It was also reported that the Denaby Main company had lost many contracts through inadequate screening in the boom years. Their attempt to install more effective screens in 1885 provoked another bitter conflict, Barnsley Chronicle, 10 Jan. 1885.

3 Lincoln C.R.O., Strafford MSS.

4 S.Y.M.A. minutes, 9 July 1877;
   Barnsley Chronicle, 22 March 1879.
Newton, Chambers and Company had a different approach. In the 1860s, their mines were still largely tied to production at their ironworks, and bad trade in 1866 and 1868 resulted in short-time working.\(^1\) This and the company's arrogant early conviction that it could do without the miners' union resulted in several years of conflict at its collieries. The firm expanded coal operations considerably in the early 1870s, but avoided the rebounding layoffs that were forced on other enterprises when depressed trade returned. In general, the firm seems to have been affected as badly as others working the lower coal beds. Pit closures and other economic difficulties were reported in 1877, and in the 1880s and early 1890s.\(^2\) Newton, Chambers and Co., however, were in a position to stave off the worst implications of short-term unprofitability by the fact that they had good markets for their coal, especially in their own ironworks. Secondly, bad feeling that usually followed layoffs was avoided by the absorption of much of this surplus labour in forward thinking expansion at others of their pits.\(^3\) Few other enterprises in the district enjoyed this diversity; and Newton Chambers was among the last dispute-prone companies after 1870.

The speculative drive of 1871-3 trapped many entrepreneurs into thinking that expansion or new sinkings, even in difficult physical and geological conditions, would be rewarded by profits over a considerable period of time. The new company at Woolley seems to have been a good example. Long haulage roadways, tender coal and short banks (due to faulting) conspired, in Chappell's opinion, to ensure that it would 'never pay a profit on the purchase money',\(^4\) and would be

\(^1\) Barnsley Chronicle, 27 Jan. 1866 and 1 Feb. 1868.

\(^2\) See Cusworth Hall, Newton Chambers MSS, Partnership Memoranda and Barnsley Chronicle, 7 July 1877.

\(^3\) Barnsley Chronicle, 7 July 1877.

\(^4\) Sheffield Independent, 26 July 1878. Woolley was closed for a while in the late 1870s, J. Evison, op.cit., (M.Phil. thesis), p.120.
worked out before it repaid the capital invested in expanding it. The inflated cost of capital equipment in those years was another factor contributing to insolvency for some. This was especially true if the sinking operations ran into difficulties, pushing costs way above the estimates and delaying the pits' opening dates until coal prices had begun to fall.¹ Capital was plentiful in the early 1870s when men like Holden and Whitworth² invested their profits from other industries and commercial operations in coal. Several companies floated before 1874, however, failed to raise enough capital before the downturn came and investors began to look elsewhere. The owners of Hallroyd colliery in Silkstone, for example, floated as a limited company (under the title of the South Yorkshire Coal and Iron Company) in 1873 at £100,000, had sold shares worth only about a third of this by 1876³; Bankruptcy followed.⁴

At times in the 1880s, too, when there were signs of an improved market (even if coal prices did not rise), few were willing to invest in collieries, even at sums a fraction of those a decade before. Profits, not output, were the guiding criteria,⁵ and even Newton Chambers and Co., were not willing to overcome the capital shortages by such a rigorous ploughing back of profits as had been practiced by the first generation of partners.⁶ These tendencies delayed recovery for several years.

¹ Mitchell Main, Houghton Main and Wath Main, for example, Mitchell Main ran into particular difficulties. See also A.J.Taylor, op.cit., p.54.
² Proprietors of Church Lane colliery.
³ P.R.O., B.T. 31, 1864.
⁴ S.C.L., CR 111, Teasdale to South Yorkshire Coal and Iron Company, various dates.
⁵ A.J.Taylor, op.cit., p.66.
⁶ A.Birch, op.cit., p.199.
Some pits did take bold steps with the use of their capital, especially before 1875. The Denaby Main company stands out for its enterprise in sinking to the Barnsley seam in what was virtually a virgin coalfield in the 1860s. Only a few of the uppermost seams had been worked in that neighbourhood and no-one knew of the depth or the quality of the Barnsley coal there. In 1889, they pioneered another venture, sinking through the limestone covering the coal measures at Cadeby.\(^1\) Both pits took about four years to sink, operations which involved large capital outlay.\(^2\) The company's decision to promote the South Yorkshire Junction Railway\(^3\) motivated the Mexborough and Swinton Times to suggest that 'The aggressiveness of the Denaby Main Company seems to know no bounds'.\(^4\) Monk Bretton too was owned by a pioneering firm. They were the first to sink in an untested zone to the east of the Dearne faults, and it was well over two years before that colliery was fully operational.\(^5\) The Hoyland Silkstone and Barrow companies revealed what the Mexborough and Swinton Times described as their 'energy and enthusiasm' in being the first to sink to the Silkstone seam east of the Barnsley outcrop when there was much scepticism about the commercial viability of such a venture.\(^6\) These companies' achievements, however, had almost been pre-empted nearly a decade earlier. It was revealed that Parkin Jeffcock, the pre-eminent South Yorkshire mining engineer, had been negotiating to sink to the Silkstone seam through the Barnsley when he was killed in the Oaks disaster in 1866.\(^7\)

\(^1\) Barnsley Chronicle, 13 April 1889.
\(^2\) Cadeby, especially, met problems with water, faulting, etc., See Barnsley Chronicle, 28 Jan. 1893.
\(^3\) See p. 81.
\(^4\) Mexborough and Swinton Times, 13 June 1890.
\(^6\) Mexborough and Swinton Times, 24 Aug. 1877: Barnsley Chronicle, 1 Jan. 1876.
\(^7\) Barnsley Chronicle, 28 Jan. 1871.

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We have some justification in referring to the owners of Denaby, Monk Bretton, Hoyland Silkstone and Barrow as industrial leaders in the district, although most of them proved to have garnered less profits than the acclaim that greeted their initial successes might have suggested. Three of them were among the six or seven largest collieries in the district, producing over half a million tons of coal per annum and involving capital valued at up to and over a quarter of a million pounds. In every case, the management seems to have been tougher than most of their neighbours; but some of this approach rebounded on them when they attempted to apply it to the field of industrial relations - witness the high incidence of disputes at all these pits.

Leases, competitors and markets.

As in the Lancashire coalfield, the larger colliery companies formed the dynamic sector of the industry. As a general rule, the larger the colliery, the more necessary it was for it to maintain production, even if the enterprise was showing a current account loss. Very few large collieries shut down even temporarily in the depression. The investments in plant; the pumping and ventilation, all needed servicing in their own way whether coal was being produced or not. In a similar way, colliery owners had to meet demands for local rates (even though they were sometimes re-assessed at a lower level in periods of stagnation) and lease royalties, which were almost always based on acreage and depth of the seam.


3 R. Challinor, Lancashire and Cheshire Miners, p. 50.

4 The Dodworth Board of Health refused, however, to reduce the rate liability of the Clarkes and the Church Lane company after the 1893 lockout, and summoned the latter for arrears of payment. Dodworth B.H. minutes, 18 Dec. 1893 and 29 Jan. 1894.

This varied greatly for the Barnsley bed, and less so for the Silkstone. But it is certain that leases negotiated in the boom period, like the borrowing of capital and the purchase of equipment, were fixed at inflated prices. The Charlesworths, for example, though coalowners themselves, seem to have driven a hard bargain with the company running the Church Lane colliery on their land in Dodworth. They even imposed a wayleave rent of £3,400 p.a. - a rent that was usually negligible in Yorkshire if imposed at all.

In general, there does not seem to have been any major disruption of mining activity by landowners who refused to grant leases or who imposed impossible restrictions on the colliery operators. Earl Fitzwilliam's interest in mining may have persuaded any reluctant landowners that a vigorous mining industry would on balance be beneficial to themselves and to the economy of the district. As J.T.Ward points out, many landowners became increasingly dependent on royalties to support their existing standard of living, especially after 1879, and they saw it as in their interests to promote the expansion of mining and to help secure its profitability. Leases sought to balance the interests of landowner and colliery proprietor. They contained, moreover, complex clauses that not only protected the landowners' surface stock (buildings, roads, drains, etc.) but also attempted to ensure continuity of underground exploitation by encouraging practices of 'good husbandry'. As the century neared its end, however, several proprietors found that landowners, often the

1 Between £120 and £375 per acre for the Barnsley bed and between £25 and £30 per acre per foot width of the Silkstone. J.T.Ward, in J.Benson and R.G.Neville, op.cit., p.46.


3 J.T.Ward, in J.Benson and R.G.Neville, op.cit., p.47; R.C. on Mining Royalties (1890), Q 1474.

4 J.T.Ward, 'Landowners and mining', p.82.
same ones they had leased from amicably for ten, twenty or 
more years, were asking too much of their shrunken profit 
margins. When they came to renegotiate leases in the 1880s 
and 1890s, they found that royalties were to rise or that 
leases contained more restrictive clauses. The Clarke colliery 
enterprise came to its virtual denouement in 1900 because the 
Charlesworths refused to negotiate a reduction in the royalty 
to compensate the extra cost of working the inferior end of the 
seam.¹ The owners of nearby Strafford Main were inhibited, in 
1877, from investing in expanded plant because they had good 
reason to believe that Frederick Vernon-Wentworth might not 
extend their lease in 1880 when it expired.² Their fears 
proved groundless; but the new leases, negotiated in 1881 and 
1887, contained clauses which provided for higher royalties 
(£350 per acre in the Silkstone seam: well above the district 
norm) if pit-head prices reached nine shillings per ton;³ and 
secured the landowner's right to purchase the enterprise at a 
contemporary valuation, if he desired.⁴

The South Yorkshire coal industry, on balance, gained from 
the fact that the land needed for leasing was concentrated 
in relatively few hands. But there was some conflict of 
interest which would have been overcome if the coal 
proprietors had been local landowners or had subsequently 
bought the land under which they mined. The coalowning squire 
was, however, rare in this district.⁵ Many proprietors were

¹ S.C.L., CR 114, Nash to Charlesworth, 28 Aug. and 
3 Oct. 1890.
² Lincoln C.R.O., Strafford MSS, Armstrong to Strafford 
Main Colliery Company, 22 March 1877.
³ Based on a six monthly moving average. 
Ibid, Lease, 13 April 1881.
⁴ Ibid, Lease, 2 May 1887.
⁵ See Chapter Nineteen.
too concerned with the short term profits of the industry to be bothered with acquiring the land, especially once agricultural rents had begun their long decline in the late 1870s. More important, large landowners seemed reluctant to break up their estates for this type of sale. Even such a large and relatively permanent firm as Newton, Chambers and Co., were unsuccessful in their several attempts to buy freehold land off Fitzwilliam and Lord Wharncliffe both for their surface operations and to eliminate royalty payments. An exchange transaction on the ironworks' freehold was eventually concluded after nearly four years of negotiations. But as late as 1899, the firm held only about 1,850 acres freehold out of over 10,000 in their mineral 'take' (Earl Fitzwilliam owning half of this). Back in 1867, they had no freehold land in Tankersley and only a little over 100 acres in Ecclesfield, their other home parish.

It was, however, the very fact of this absence of an important landowning coal proprietor class which helped to preserve certain freedoms enjoyed by the miners in our district. With the exception of Earl Fitzwilliam, the large estate owners of the district - Lord Wharncliffe, the Spencer-Stanhopes, the Vernon-Wentworths, the Fullortons and several less well-endowed families - had no direct involvement in coal mining, other than in the odd drift pit serving their domestic needs.

The diversity of the coal industry in South Yorkshire undoubtedly fostered a high degree of competitiveness, with no one employer dominating labour supply or coal marketing. No oligopoly controlled the local coal industry in the second half

2 Ibid, 'Notes for a history ...', Principal lessors in Newton Chambers' take.
of the nineteenth century and employers' restrictive practices seem to have been rare. Men like Samuel Cooper and Robert Clarke, owners of medium-sized collieries, were, at times, dominant voices in the coalowners' associations. But it was several years before the first of these associations buried the most basic differences among its members, managed to form an effective defence fund and formulated a cohesive policy. Even then, Earl Fitzwilliam and the Charlesworths remained aloof for many years. The beginnings of closer co-operation were obviously a response to the growth of miners' unionism but were also necessary for technical and commercial reasons. In the 1870s and 1880s, for example, large pits in the Barnsley area had to contend with increasing drainage problems due to the exhaustion of old workings. To reduce the threat of inundation of their coal in Dodworth (on lease to the proprietors of Church Lane colliery), the Charlesworths paid £700 p.a. to Mrs. Clarke to continue pumping her abandoned New Sovereign colliery. Lack of co-operation between the management of the Clarke and the Church Lane enterprises, however, had persisted for some years as the Clarke letter books frequently reveal. The owners of the Church Lane colliery were absentee, with no obvious roots either in the locality or in the coal industry; and their workforce was far more dispute-prone and mobile than that at the neighbouring Silkstone pits, emphasising even more the lack of common ground between the two enterprises. In 1887, some Church Lane workmen unwittingly drove through the fault that separated their colliery from the abandoned Clarke

1 S.Y.M.A. minutes, 3 Nov. 1865.

2 See, for example, Cusworth Hall, Newton Chambers MSS, 'Notes for a history ...'.

3 S.C.L., CR 112 Clarke to Charlesworth, 30 Sept. 1886.

4 See, for example, S.C.L., CR 109, Teasdale to Hartley, 24 Jan. 1884. The Clarke colliery management resented Church Lane using the title 'Old Silkstone' on its wagons as it led to confusion with their own rolling stock which had a similar inscription (a title which the Clarke's rightly claimed as their own).

5 See P.R.O., B.T. 31, 1864.
workings, flooding a significant part of the former with the accumulated water.\(^1\) This accident would never have happened if the two enterprises had exchanged plans beforehand; and the result was a bitter High Court action six years later.\(^2\) Similar flooding hazards were caused in the late 1890s and early 1900s by the abandoning of seams at Swaithe and Oaks collieries.\(^3\)

As a further illustration of the imperfect state of accord among coal proprietors in the district, the Clarke's relations with other neighbouring firms can be assessed. There was often friction, for example, between them and the company which operated the small Silkstone colliery, Hallroyd. In 1885, Mrs. Clarke threatened to prosecute for contravention of a lease.\(^4\) The Strafford Main company, though owned by outsiders, had been established for longer than most other of the Clarke's neighbours, and a better rapport had grown up. Teasdale, the Clarke's manager offered Strafford special rates on purchase of coking fuel as it was 'a neighbour'.\(^5\) Nevertheless, the continuing depression frustrated attempts to co-operate on selling prices. In 1879, Teasdale wrote to the manager at Strafford, warning of the folly of their tendency to undercut the Clarke prices.\(^6\) This type of 'reckless competition between

1 S.C.L., CR 95, Teasdale to Rawlinson, 12 June 1877. During a disagreement over the price at which small coal was purchased by the Church Lane company from the Clarke's, Teasdale wrote to the manager at Church Lane: 'I take very little notice of your letters for they are generally so full of misstatements that I do not think them worthy of reply'. See also CR 112, Teasdale to Hartley, 14 Jan. 1887.

2 S.C.L., Clarke MSS, Court Transcript, High Court of Justice Queens Bench Division, Manchester, 4-8 Nov. 1893. Old Silkstone and Dodworth Coal and Iron Company Limited versus Clarke.

3 See Cusworth Hall, Newton Chambers MSS, 'Notes for a history ...'.

4 S.C.L., CR 111, Teasdale to Silkstone Coal Company Limited, 27 April 1885.

5 Ibid, CR 99, Teasdale to Seward, 28 June 1878.

6 Ibid, CR 100, Teasdale to Seward, 7 March 1879.
owners which leaves them without profits and miners without living wages' was recognised and condemned in one of the motions put at the South Yorkshire miners' demonstration later that year.\(^1\) In 1883, Pickard claimed that the Wharncliffe Silkstone company were selling at ruinously low rates to companies in which they had a financial interest, thus depressing the whole market.\(^2\)

Perhaps the only important example of effective commercial co-operation in this period was the coal marketing scheme described in Chapter Three.\(^3\) It was set up in 1860 and was still operating in the 1880s. Marketing the coal was obviously one of the main areas of competitiveness, both within the district and between the district and others. The district's first major collective success in the field was the throwing open of the London market as a result of Samuel Plimsoll's agitation and publicity. Shortly after the publication of his paper 'Coals of South Yorkshire with reference to the Export Trade',\(^4\) for example, several London gas companies sent for samples of South Yorkshire coal,\(^5\) where previously they had relied solely on shipments from the Tyne and Wear. By late 1859, the Great Northern broke with some of the restrictive practices criticised in Plimsoll's paper\(^6\) and began to carry South Yorkshire coal as freight. This resulted in a rate war with the Midland Railway in their carriage of Derbyshire coal to London. It did damage to the trade, especially at the height of competition in 1860-4,\(^7\) but

1. S.Y.M.A., Bill advertising agenda of Miners' Demonstration, 1 Sept. 1879.
2. Barnsley Chronicle, 24 Nov. 1883.
3. See p. 70.
4. Barnsley Times, 7 Feb. 1856
5. Ibid, 14 March 1857.
6. Especially their purchase of coal at the pit-head and the conducting of their own retail operations.
7. G.D.B.Gray, op.cit., p.35. Coal carried from the Barnsley district to London was lower in 1862 (at 905,471 tons) than in any year since 1858, Barnsley Chronicle, 21 Feb. 1863.

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ultimately was settled to South Yorkshire's advantage.

At first, the winners of this new fillip to the industry were the Silkstone pits. The success of Silkstone coal at the Great Exhibition ensured that it was often asked for by name, hence the tendency of so many companies in the district to incorporate the word into their names or as insignia on their letterheads. Coal sent to London in the first seven months of 1859, for example, was dominated by the Silkstone collieries - Newton Chambers', Clarkes', Wharncliffe Silkstone and Sam Coopers' - and by Elsecar (all of whom were to become involved in the marketing company set up the following year).¹ By the early 1870s, however, some of the larger Barnsley seam pits had begun to rival the Silkstones in the London market, as the Midland Railway carried more and more of their coal. Oaks and Lundhill, in the first half of 1872 had overtaken most of the medium-sized Silkstone pits in volume carried, and were even rivalling Wharncliffe Silkstone and Newton, Chambers and Co.² Although London chiefly demanded house coal (accounting for Silkstone's early dominance), the growth area had been in gas coal which was found in the upper and lowermost layers of the Barnsley bed. In the early 1870s, moreover, many customers could not afford to be choosy about what type of house coal they got.

In early 1872, the largest tonnage sent to London by any colliery was at the rate of about £40,000 p.a. (for the Newton Chambers' pits). This was no real increase on the highest individual totals of the previous decade and a half, and

¹ See Barnsley Chronicle, 20 Aug. 1859. A similar pattern occurred in the first half of 1860, although Elsecar was selling a significant amount more than before, Barnsley Chronicle, 28 July 1860. S.C.L., CR 153, Cooper had an arrangement to sell his coal through Clarke's agent, C.A. Roberts.

² Ibid, 12 July 1873. Strafford was then the third largest supplier with over 16,000 tons.
compared with a total output of coal which, in Newton Chambers' case, had grown to about 350,000 tons in 1872.¹

The relative decline of the importance of the London market must, to a certain extent have reflected the decline of Silkstone coal in relation to Barnsley. Nevertheless, the total volume of coal sent to London in the first eleven months of 1888 had increased sevenfold on the total for 1860,² reflecting the overall growth of that market and of the South Yorkshire coal industry's capacity to supply it. Newton Chambers and Co., dominated this traffic more than before.

The other main outlet for Barnsley seam coal, other than local consumers, was, increasingly, the Humber. In the first eleven months of 1888, 1,631,360 tons of South Yorkshire coal were sent from Hull alone (a 26% increase on the average for the full twelve months of 1881 and 1882)³ - less than a quarter of the total traffic to London from the same coalfield, but for a few large collieries to the east, it was the main market.⁴ The four most consistent users of Hull were Denaby, Manvers, Elsecar and Thrybergh Hall, with Houghton Main and Wharncliffe Silkstone often rivalling the last two. Only Wharncliffe Silkstone did not mine the Barnsley seam. As we have seen, Denaby was effectively penalised for several years by the pricing policies of the M.S. and L. Railway.⁵ And it is an indication of the competitiveness that existed in this, as in other markets, that the owners of Manvers Main actively opposed

¹ S.C.L., NCB 836.
² Newton, Chambers and Co., were, by 1888, consistently sending four to five times their nearest rival. Barrow was second in 1888. (Barnsley Chronicle, 29 Dec. 1888).
³ Compare with Barnsley Chronicle, 13 Jan. 1883.
⁴ See p. 80.
⁵ Barnsley Chronicle, 18 Dec. 1880, See also pp. 79-81. The losses incurred were given as the reason for shutting down the pit for a while in Dec. 1880. The Barnsley Chronicle suggested, however, that it was more likely a move to pre-empt a wage demand from the men, Barnsley Chronicle, 24 Dec. 1880.

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Denaby's attempts to get the rates altered by the Railway Commission. ¹

In view of these disadvantages, it is surprising that Denaby survived the depression as well as it did, especially with such close competition in her main markets from the successful Manvers company. The proprietors of Denaby Main also owned pits in West Yorkshire and at least two of the men involved had major interests in other collieries in South Yorkshire.² Some degree of cross-subsidisation may, therefore, have operated in order to keep active the huge amounts of capital invested in Denaby. In the long run, the fact that Denaby was forced to find other markets for her coal (even at the peak of its trade with Hull, only about half of its output went through that port) proved beneficial in that it avoided the full impact of the fluctuations of the export market on which it might otherwise have been more dependent (with all the implications for pressure on wages and industrial conflict that were entailed).

The South Yorkshire coal industry as a whole benefited even more from diversity,³ thanks to a choice of outlets and a great variety of indigenous coals. In 1892, about one third of South Yorkshire coal was consumed within the county.⁴ The iron and steel works in South Yorkshire consumed a variety of steam coals from both the Barnsley and Thorncliffe seams,⁵ while the lack of a market in the depression for small coal

¹ See Barnsley Chronicle, 2 and 23 July 1881.
³ In 1900, 14% of Yorkshire coal was exported as opposed to 28% of Northumberland and Durham's and 47% of South Wales's. See R.G. Neville, op. cit., p.31.
⁴ Barnsley Chronicle, 5 March 1892.
⁵ Thorncliffe coal was particularly favoured by C.Cammell and Co., for example, Barnsley Chronicle, 13 July 1872.
(a significant by-product, in particular of the Parkgate and some parts of the Barnsley bed) convinced many colliery owners that installing their own coke ovens would be profitable. About twelve firms were operating them in 1881 and several more followed in the ensuing decade.¹

Other local industries, both iron-based (forges and foundries at Swinton, Worsborough, Barnsley and Chapeltown) and otherwise (glass, linen, brewing, pottery, etc.,) must have buoyed up the market in the worst years, favoured as they were, with minimal freight costs. This factor was given by coal-owners as a reason why some pits and not others were able to raise their prices towards the end of 1865.² Some of the Silkstone collieries, moreover, were able to rely on long-established and stable home coal markets in non-industrial areas of the East Riding and Lincolnshire,³ as did the Charlesworths both at their West Yorkshire and Kilnhurst/Rawmarsh pits,⁴ taking advantage, like the Clarkes, of being one of the first major suppliers to those parts of the country.

Further afield, some coal went to Garston by the M.S. and L., bound for Liverpool;⁵ Barrow supplied its parent company's steelworks; and gas companies and municipal corporations up and down the country often favoured South Yorkshire coal. Church Lane, in 1874, secured a contract to supply Bradford Corporation with 30,000 tons,⁶ while Newton Chambers, the

¹ See pp. 78-9.
² S.Y.M.A. minutes, 3 Nov. 1865.
³ S.C.L., CR 91, Cash Book.
⁴ See J. Goodchild, op.cit.
⁵ Barnsley Chronicle, 6 Aug. 1859.
Wharncliffe Silkstone company and the Clarkes supplied gas companies as far afield as Hitchin (Hertfordshire), Cheltenham and Norfolk, as well as several in West Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire, despite the existence of more local sources. Coal for railway tenders was another large market, but a fluctuating one. Reliance by Wharncliffe Silkstone on railway company contracts was said to have aggravated its financial problems in 1893 when two major contracts were lost due to under-cutting by four other collieries in the district.

Without more detailed and comprehensive information on marketing and other types of accounts, it is impossible to say with assurance how individual collieries used the advantage of South Yorkshire economic diversity and how they overcame excessive competition locally and from other districts in the less buoyant years. What we can say, however, is that the overstocking of the market as a result especially of the 1870s' expansion, might have had more disastrous results for many firms if it had not been for this diversity. As it happened, no large colliery was prematurely and permanently closed during this period. As was stressed in Chapter Three, it was mostly small or worked out pits which closed for good in these years, while the larger enterprises that ran into serious trouble were victims more of unwise investment than of mismanagement or natural disadvantages in isolation. The fact that the South Yorkshire coal industry continued to provide more and more jobs in the long run of the late 1870s and of the 1880s also took the edge off any discontented response from the miners.

1 S.C.L., CR 89, 91; NCB 887, Wharncliffe Silkstone Balance Sheets; Cusworth Hall, Newton Chambers MSS, 'Notes for a history ...'.

2 Barnsley Chronicle, 3 June and 8 July 1893.
CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Structure of Colliery Ownership.
This chapter looks at the backgrounds of South Yorkshire coalowners. Systematic information of this nature is wholly lacking (unless the colliery concerned was registered as a joint stock company), but scattered information, mostly in local newspapers, enables us to draw up a fairly comprehensive picture of the type of employers in the industry, at least at the larger collieries. This information has been collated in Appendix 4. Most of it comes from isolated references and a few of the leading figures in colliery firms are only assumed to live outside the district (one of the most important distinctions drawn in Appendix 4) because of their absence from electoral registers, trade directories and from public mention in general in the local press. Owners of small pits were more difficult to trace, partly because many of these pits never attracted public attention - they rarely struck independently and were not renown for pioneering new colliery equipment: two common reasons for the attention of the local press - and partly because the proprietors were usually referred to in official publications as colliery companies bearing simply the name of the pit. Few, moreover, became joint stock companies. Detailed research on the three parishes of Swinton, Silkstone and Dodworth, however, has produced a profile of the whole range of collieries and colliery owners that might have existed elsewhere as well. For this reason, those parishes are treated separately in Appendix 4.

Of the 35 major collieries or colliery groups with co-ownership for which hard information has been found, under half were, at any time, owned by companies or partnerships, the majority of whose most important members habitually lived outside the study area and its immediate surroundings (including Sheffield and Rotherham). Only eleven were owned wholly by units of this type. Where there was an important change of ownership (almost always in the period 1871-80), it was always, however, from a local-based firm to an outside-based one, except in the case of the absorption of the

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1 This obviously applies to individually and family owned pits.
Silkstone Main colliery (on the boundary of Cawthorne and Dodworth parishes) by the new Stanhope Silkstone colliery, which substituted one local consortium for another. Monk Bretton, Hallroyd, Silkstone Fall, Strafford Main, Hoyland Silkstone and other, smaller pits changed hands in the former way, whole Church Lane colliery exchanged a West Yorkshire family proprietor (the Charlesworth brothers) for a South Lancashire-based limited company. This was all part of the process by which capital flowed into the South Yorkshire coal industry, especially between 1870 and 1874.

The largest class of collieries, with respect to residence of proprietor, was the locally owned (fifteen in all out of our main total of thirty five). These cover the whole size range of pits from the smallest to the very largest, but only six of the proprietors were joint stock companies in our period. All but one of the predominantly or wholly outside-owned collieries eventually came under the control of joint stock companies in this period.

If we then look closer at some of the smallest pits in our district (the dayholes in Silkstone and Dodworth were probably typical of small pits in parishes through which a seam outcropped), we find that the relationship between size and origin of proprietor becomes biased in favour of local-based individuals or partnerships. In the case of the owners of small short-life pits, there was obviously a reluctance to become involved in complex legal/commercial dealings. The dichotomy between the outside-owned, limited liability colliery and the local-based, privately-owned pit becomes even clearer.

Despite this evidence of a significant number of local-based colliery firms, it must be stressed that most were small and that, compared with most other coalfields, the proportion of locally-owned pits was actually not high. Also, in view of the fact that most of these local proprietors' contributions to the local economy were very small, their voice was not a loud one. It is clear that the South Yorkshire coalfield was, from the
1860s, a significant importer of outside capital, much of which (certainly more than in West Yorkshire) was formally tied up in limited liability concerns. This was especially true of the deeper pits in the eastern half of the district; but even in one or two of the early developed neighbourhoods around Barnsley, the old, local coalowning families (the Coopers, Craiks, Thorps, Sutcliffes and Days) became overshadowed by a few large limited liability collieries.

There did remain, however, an intermediate group of resident capitalists and professional colliery director/managers (some of whom had roots in the area and some who went to live there when their collieries opened) - Tyas, Bartholomew, Mitchell, Baxter, Huntriss, Davy, Walker, Ellis, and the Newtons and the Chambers - who performed a stabilising role, often in partnership with outside capital. It was these men more than any who attempted to carve out a power base for coalowners in the area, especially from the late 1880s onward. Several of them had interests in more than one large colliery, although the first major amalgamation did not occur until 1894.

There were very few medium-sized and large colliery firms that were essentially family concerns and for whom coalmining was their sole economic interest. The Clarke family, the Charlesworths and the Days stand out as survivors of a brief period in the first half of the nineteenth century when the South Yorkshire coalfield was able to support (with help from rents or - in the case of the Charlesworths - mining profits from elsewhere) a few wealthy entrepreneurs operating collieries for their livelihood. This occurred before the mobilisation of the local capital market coincident with the coming of the railways. This small group of men and women must be distinguished from a larger proprietorial group -

1 The amalgamation of Mitchell Main, Darfield Main and the new pit at Grimethorpe. See J. Evison, op. cit., (M. Phil. thesis), p. 133.
mostly in the form of limited companies - whose individual members also seem to have confined their interest to coal mining. This interest often breached the bounds of the particular enterprise around which the company or partnership had been formed: thus one or more members of fourteen proprietorial units analysed in Appendix 4 were involved in other colliery concerns. Nevertheless, these employers, unlike the Clarkes and the Charlesworths for example, were not actively involved in the operation of their collieries and should be seen more as people who chose to invest in coalmining rather than as active coalowners.

Coal proprietors with interests in other local industry (especially manufacture, bleaching and iron manufacture and founding) or with capital to invest in coal from local commercial and professional activities had been at large from the beginning of our period. This group and the small number of coal merchants who ventured into colliery owning maintained an important presence throughout the period. The really important newcomers, however, were industrialists and merchants from outside the district seeking to invest capital (like the cotton manufacturers of the company at Church Lane or the timber interest among the directors of Hoyland Silkstone) or, as was probably the case with the big iron and steel manufacturers, seeking to secure supplies of coal for their enterprises. C. Cammell's at Oaks, the Barrow Haematite company at Barrow, John Davy of Manvers Main, John Brown at Aldwarke (and Carr House), the Old Silkstone and Dodworth Coal and Iron Company at Church Lane, Mark Firth at Silkstone Main, and Newton, Chambers and Co., at Thorncliffe were all more or less connected with large scale iron and steel manufacture. The growing interest of iron and steel manufacturers (both from the Sheffield area and elsewhere) in the local coal industry had been noticed by the Barnsley Chronicle. In 1872, a year of coal shortage and high prices, regular supply was all the more important to them.¹

¹ Barnsley Chronicle, 28 Dec. 1872.
The economies to be gained from this diversification operated on a smaller scale for a few other coal consumers in and around the district. The coal merchants were the second largest group of this kind, after the ironmasters. As if to illustrate this trend, a new colliery, Silkstone Main, was created in 1872 (on the site of an older, smaller pit, Furnace Main) for a consortium of steel manufacturers and coal merchants, entitled the Coal Consumers' Association. Despite these examples though, the majority of the larger collieries remained independent units as far as the marketing of their coal was concerned. They were neither subsidiary to other industries, nor were they their proprietors' sole livelihood. They were vehicles for investment (whether with limited liability or not).

In the light of these special features of ownership in the local coal industry, we must now examine the relationship between the type of owner and dispute-proneness at their respective collieries. In a coalfield where the butty system was almost non-existent, this relationship assumes all the more importance, even if delegation of day-to-day affairs to managers was the rule at most pits.

Robert Neville suggests that pits with a reputation for militancy in the Yorkshire coalfield as a whole in the late nineteenth century, were almost exclusively confined to the area south of Pontefract. He draws some general conclusions about the differing types of pit in South and West Yorkshire, claiming that, in general, pits in South Yorkshire were much larger and more impersonal, with a heightened atmosphere of alienation and proletarianisation. By contrast, 'The companies in (West Yorkshire) ... were usually smaller and

1 S.C.L., Spencer Stanhope MSS, 60617/168; Barnsley Chronicle, 28 May 1870.
2 R.G.Neville, op.cit., p.308.
3 Ibid, p.310.
often family businesses. In such circumstances personal contacts between miners and management were maintained and mutually fostered'.

Neville's distinction between types of pits in South Yorkshire and those in West Yorkshire is a vastly overgeneralised one. The average size of pits in South Yorkshire may have been considerably higher than in the neighbouring coalfield, but, as we have seen, there were at all times a large number of small collieries with just those characteristics attributed to West Yorkshire as a whole. Nevertheless, distinctions between pit relations based on criteria of workforce size are valid ones to raise; although in isolation, size does not seem to have been a necessary criterion of conflict. A more potent factor seems to have been the nature of the colliery firm itself. Contemporary observers were fond of distinguishing (perhaps with more than a trace of nostalgia) between the more traditional type of 'family' proprietor and the new outside-owned companies. Ned Cowey, at a public meeting late in 1888, passionately threw himself into this debate:

There were humane men amongst the owners, who would like to do right as far as lay in their power towards their men, but these limited companies had been a curse to the miner. They had no mercy, had no touch of feeling for their workmen. All they thought about was 'Dividend! Dividend!! Dividend!!!'

A principal cause of resentment against the new limited companies was their contribution to overproduction in the 1870s and 1880s. John Frith singled out such firms which, he claimed, were 'a hindrance in every shape and form to legitimate trading', as well as the ones most likely to lead the attack on wages. Five years earlier, the Barnsley Chronicle had offered a more detailed analysis of the role

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1 Ibid, p.309.
2 Barnsley Chronicle, 17 Nov. 1888.
3 Ibid, 7 Feb. 1885.
of the new, large limited companies in disturbing what it saw as the traditional economic balance in the local coal industry and promoting industrial conflict. These colliery companies came into the labour market offering higher wages than the small, family-owned pits:

So soon as the pits were opened, good miners were induced by the offer of high wages to leave other collieries in the district at which many of them had regularly worked for years. Two consequences - both of them disastrous - resulted from this. Those who had been working contentedly at the regular wages of the district demanded advances, and where the demands were not conceded, feelings of dissatisfaction and unsettlement were created.¹

The Chronicle went on to claim that, when wages were reduced in 1874, these miners found that they could not go back to their old pits where traditionally peaceful relations with the employers had also been jeopardised. But the worst conflict was reserved for the limited companies which 'have so frequently been at variance with their men'.² It was, moreover, conflict between two groups of outsiders - both miners and employers - who lacked roots in the locality and its traditionally peaceful labour relations (in the coal industry). The contact between men and employers at these new collieries was focused on the price list and it was here that conflict was seated.³

Table 13 brings together data from Tables 2 and 10, and Appendix 4, setting out the relationship between size, age and type of owner at the most dispute-prone pits and the least dispute-prone. At first glance, it seems that there is little doubt that the contemporary observations were correct. Nine of the eleven most dispute-prone pits were owned predominantly or wholly by men from outside the district and its immediate surroundings, either throughout the period or

¹ Ibid, 16 Oct. 1880.
² Ibid.
for a significant part of the period. All but two of these pits (plus the locally owned pit in the first eleven) had limited liability status for a decade or more; and Silkstone Fall was a limited company for four years (which happened to be the years of greatest conflict at the pit). In contrast, nine of the eleven most dispute-free pits were wholly or predominantly owned by men living locally. (Lundhill, moreover, had as its senior partner a representative of a well-established local family, the Taylors.) And if we take into consideration the ten or twenty small, short-life pits not included in this analysis (because of insufficient data), the relationship between local ownership and freedom from disputes becomes even more marked. Needless to say, these small pits, like all but two of the eleven most dispute-free pits in Table 13, never became limited companies.

The relationship between type of owner and dispute-proneness seems to be the most striking found yet in this study, but we must still be on our guard against assuming a causal relationship. There were several factors associated with differences in ownership which might have been underlying influences on strike tendency. The size factor does have some bearing on the type of company involved. Limited companies did tend to be larger than family or private partnership pits, particularly towards the end of the period, although there is no such general distinction between limited companies locally based and those whose leading shareholders lived outside. The fact that most limited companies were not locally based is the factor most relevant to this analysis. When we relate size to dispute-proneness in Table 13, we find that the least dispute-prone pits were smaller on average than the most dispute-prone, both in 1874 and 1893.¹ Large pits probably did, on the whole, as Neville suggests, promote a more acute sense of

¹ The average size of the least dispute-prone pits in 1874 was 324 and in 1893, 773. The averages for the most dispute-prone were 489 and 1,183 respectively.
proletarianism. Channels of communication between miner and employer (or his senior representative) were longer and more complicated, with more chance of friction en route. There are even cases of small mining enterprises showing positive sympathy towards the miners in dispute with the larger employers. Sam Brown, a small employer of Keresforth in Worsborough parish, donated free coal to the Worsborough miners during the 1876 lockout. And a longstanding firm of pit sinkers, F. Jagger and Sons, contributed to the lockout funds of 1869. Miners at large pits were far more likely to identify with the local union organisation than with the firm as a corporate entity and the former, though not always an agent of militancy, would claim the miners' loyalty.

There were many exceptions that can be found to this maxim: Earl Fitzwilliam's collieries were large but the miners were traditionally loyal and showed little enthusiasm both for the union and for striking. Special factors (which will be examined in detail in Chapter Thirteen), however, operated at these collieries, as with other exceptions to the size-militancy maxim. One that must be mentioned here was that of the age of the enterprise. Pits sunk before the big expansion of the 1860s and 1870s tended to grow steadily from small beginnings, recruiting their labour, no doubt, from local sources at a rate that perhaps reduced the extent to which the workers became alienated from the owners. If the colliery owner wanted to establish a paternalistic regime at the workplace or in the community (and most of the larger early employers seem to have attempted one or both of these options,) there was no union or local tradition of militancy in the coal industry to stop them. Once established, the traditional approach of the employers and the response of the workmen became

1 *Barnsley Chronicle*, 20 May 1876.
2 S.Y.M.A. minutes, 29 March 1869.
almost fossilised unless subjected to a major extraneous shock such as a particularly contentious dispute or the sinking of a new pit with a resultant influx of new, unconditioned labour (as at Fitzwilliam's Stubbin pit and Robert Clarke's New Sovereign).

The pits sunk in the 1860s and, more especially, the 1870s, had to recruit largely from outside the district often bringing large numbers of newcomers together in a very short space of time. Many of these men and their families already possessed what might be called a built-in sense of alienation, having uprooted themselves from another district for the sake of higher wages or freedom from unemployment or victimisation. It was more likely that the wage nexus dominated industrial relations at those pits from then on, with little chance of the employers establishing the sort of paternalistic regime existing at several of the more 'organically' developed, older collieries. Looking at the data on age in Table 13, we find that the distinction between the most and least dispute-prone in this respect is not striking, but does seem to exist. Only two pits from the bottom half of the table, both of them small, were opened either in the 1860s or in the boom years of the 1870s, compared with five of the dispute-prone pits (most of them large). It is true that two of the less dispute-prone were opened in the mid-1870s, but by this time, many of the variations in employers' practices and in miners' responses and behaviour in industrial conflict situations had been ironed out, largely through the institutionalising affect of the union. Rockingham, moreover, though overtly more militant than her sister pits around Thorncliffe, was part of a colliery complex owned by a firm (Newton, Chambers and Co.,) with a fairly traditional approach to recruitment and to industrial relations in general. This approach rewarded them with industrial peace, as we have seen, from the 1870s onwards. A further point to make is that most of the disputes at two of the collieries in the upper half of Table 13 - Hoyland Silkstone and Silkstone Fall - took place after they had changed hands and substantially expanded in the 1870s.
One popular assumption that is scotched by examination of Table 13 is that most industrial conflict took place in the big pits to the east of Barnsley and adjacent townships. It is true that there were some very bitter and well publicised disputes at Denaby throughout the period, and at a few other pits in the east in the ten or twenty years after 1894 (at Thrybergh Hall, Hickleton and Cadeby, for example). But, as the evidence shows, the large limited liability collieries at which so much conflict seems to have occurred spread themselves fairly evenly across the coalfield. Only Denaby and Manvers, amongst the eleven most dispute-prone collieries, can truly be said to lie in the eastern half of the study area. The least dispute-prone collieries, moreover, differ little from those eleven in their overall distribution. The type of township in which the miners lived may well have had something to do with their responses to industrial grievances; but, as will be shown later, many community variables in the east were no different from those in the townships around Barnsley and even from Barnsley itself in some respects.

One last entrepreneurial factor needs mentioning. That is the particular influence, if any, that the iron and steel manufacturers had on collieries that they owned. In several coalfields, such as South Staffordshire and Lanarkshire, the relationship between coal and iron was an intimate and crucial one. Alan Campbell demonstrates how the elaborate structure of social control that the Coatbridge ironmasters were able to establish through their economic power in the locality, fundamentally stunted the growth of trade unionism among the miners there for many years.1 In South Yorkshire, however, although the entrepreneurial links between coal and iron and

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steel became more direct in the 1870s, they were never a dominant feature of the coal industry in the study area, and markets for its coal remained diverse and fairly ephemeral. Nevertheless, the presence of the iron and steel companies cannot be ignored. Newton, Chambers and Co., usually played a prominent role in the coalowners' associations, and in 1893, their managing director, A.M. Chambers was chairman of the national organisation that struggled with the Miners Federation through the lockout of that year. In 1890, J.D. Ellis, the chairman of John Brown and Co., was also chairman of the South Yorkshire Coal Owners Association and gave evidence to the Royal Commission on Mining Royalties.¹

Iron and steel was one of the most cost-sensitive industries with respect to coal. A steady supply of cheap coal was essential to its profitability. Naturally then, the iron and steel manufacturers stridently opposed the miners' plans for restricting output (in 1883, for example);² and throughout the period, they stacked coal prodigiously as a bulwark against strikes.³ Pickard considered, in 1890, that it was a small number of ironmaster-coalowners in the two 'warlike districts' of South West Lancashire and South Yorkshire who were agitating other employers into resisting wage demands in order to maintain relatively cheap coal for their own furnaces.⁴ He accredited the movement for a wage reduction in 1893 to the same cause.⁵ The role of Newton, Chambers and Co., John Brown's and C.Cammell's in district and even national employers' policymaking was undoubtedly an influential one and one that was not altogether uncontroversial. But in terms of militant responses at their own coal faces, these companies seem to have

¹ R.C. on Mining Royalties (1890), QQ 1393-1496.
² Barnsley Chronicle, 10 Feb. 1883.
³ See, for example, Mexborough and Swinton Times, 21 March 1890.
⁴ Barnsley Chronicle, 15 March 1890.
⁵ Ibid, 1 July 1893.
had an easy ride into the 1890s. Aldwarke Main miners struck only twice (in 1875 and 1885)\(^1\) independently, Oaks miners struck only twice (in 1874 and 1883)\(^2\) after the pit was bought by Cammell's — unlike its militant record under previous owners — and there were no independent strikes at Newton Chambers' collieries after the stormy confrontations of the 1860s, other than a short one at Rockingham in 1878. Except perhaps in certain corners of Newton Chambers' territory around Chapeltown there was no evidence that this industrial peace was a result of overwhelming controls exerted by the employers. The communities around the Oaks, Aldwarke (and Brown's other South Yorkshire pit, Carr House) and Rockingham collieries were as free from employer domination — in terms of ownership of housing and control of institutions, in particular — as most in the district.\(^3\) This cannot be said with such conviction about the communities in Ecclesfield and Tankersley over which the shadow of the Newtons and the Chambers fell fairly heavily, producing anti-union responses from the miners throughout the 1880s.

Finally, it is important to make a few suggestions about why the pits owned by outsiders and particularly the large ones sunk in the late 1850s, the 1860s and the early 1870s, should be more liable to troubled industrial relations than pits with owners living nearby (especially those small enough for the owners to be reasonably familiar to and with the whole workforce). First, there was the proneness to rash investment, which, as has been shown, jeopardised the economic viability of many of the former class of collieries (putting undue pressure on wages). Second, local owners were more likely to be sensitive to the moods of the miners at their pit and of the union executive in Barnsley which could usually make or break a

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1 There was a strike in part of the colliery in 1894.
2 The pit lads struck briefly in 1894.
3 There was company housing at the Oaks, but the controls were not imposed with such severity as the previous employers who made a habit of evicting their miners during every dispute.
strike by its decision whether or not to recommend financial support. This type of owner was far less likely to make hasty and ill-informed decisions — like imposing coal riddles with insufficient compensation — without measuring the effect on the miners' response. The further the decisionmakers lived from the coalfield (and every coalfield had a mood of its own), the less feedback they received from their workmen, the more likely they were to misjudge subtle changes in the local or district temperament and to underestimate the need to remain on good terms with the district executive. Normansell, especially, was more likely to be sympathetic to an employer's viewpoint if he met him regularly in an industrial or non-industrial context; and there was plenty of opportunity for local employers and local union officials to meet on fairly amicable and relatively equitable terms on school boards and in temperance associations. This was rarely true of the Manchester-based directors of Church Lane or Hoyland Silkstone. Even to the rank and file, the residence of their employer in the district was far more likely to provoke feelings of respect than of lasting antagonism; unlike London merchants and Lancashire cotton magnates who the press and union officials alike assured the miners were responsible for the economic difficulties of the coal industry in the depression.
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*No trace of the proprietors of the pit has been found in the district.

**Silkstone Fall was constituted as a limited company in 1871, four years before it was forced to close. All but one of the strikes occurred in this period.

Sources: as for Tables 2 and 10, and Appendix 4.
CHAPTER TWELVE

The Colliery Hierarchy.
In all but the smallest pits, the owners delegated day-to-day authority and supervision to managers, deputies or even a whole differentiated structure of men each with control over his special area of operation. The fact that at many collieries the manager was the son of the principal proprietor does not negate the fact that we are dealing, in the coal industry of the second half of the nineteenth century, with a two, three or more tiered authority system. With larger and larger pits and more complex legislation came more management responsibility both for the commercial and administrative aspects of the business and for what went on underground. In addition, at all levels below that of the manager (or agent as he was sometimes known), there developed a dual hierarchy of daywage workers and piece workers (hewers and sometimes trammers) which shaped the way that authority and control were exercised, and the way that certain types of mineworker built up their job and status identification. The latter in itself became a form of control: a bulwark against competition from below.

The top of the colliery hierarchy contained a confusing range of job titles, some of which were interchangeable and some not. 'Manager', 'viewer', or 'agent' in some firms signified the man with overall responsibility while in other firms all three titles appeared. Also, there was often no conventional priority, at least in the early part of the period, of the commercial field over that of production and safety or vice versa. At Strafford Main, a colliery of little over 300 men, in 1867, there were a commercial manager, a book-keeper (and an underbook-keeper) and a cashier in the commercial and administrative area; and a viewer, an underviewer and at least two stewards in charge of underground workings. It is not

1 See Home Office List of Mines, 1880 (P.P. 1881, xxv).
2 See A.R.Griffin, Mining in the East Midlands 1550-1947 (Cass, 1971), p.31, for parallels with Nottinghamshire. At Fitzwilliam's collieries for much of the second half of the century, control was in the hands of Admiral Douglas, the Earl's land agent.
3 Barnsley Chronicle, 13 April 1867.
obvious from the reporting of events at Strafford who had final responsibility for the interpretation of the absentee owners' collective will. Strafford's high strike incidence may, in some respects, reflect the problems inherent in such a long and confusing chain of command.

Most other collieries did have one figure to whom complaints were eventually referred. This was ensured particularly if one of the leading proprietors or shareholders took the job of manager (as at Denaby and West Silkstone) or vice versa (as at Church Lane and Manvers). In either case, it was often likely that the managing director (as he would be titled if the firm was joint stock) would have no practical experience of underground mining (the case with Hartley at Church Lane and Joseph Cheatter at Monk Bretton)¹ and the man with responsibility for this area (usually a viewer) would have considerable freedoms. As legislation became more plentiful and complex, especially after the 1872 Mines Regulation Act specified that underground managers had to be certified mining engineers, the importance of the viewer increased. This group of men, after the precedent set in the Northumberland and Durham coalfields, became a highly professional and close knit body, formalised by the Midlands Institute of Mining, Civil and Mechanical Engineers which was based in Sheffield.² They met to discuss common problems and new techniques even at times of the fiercest competition when the employers found little common ground on which to meet.³ Some of the most highly regarded viewers, such as the Kell brothers and T.W. Embleton,

¹ Court Transcript, Old Silkstone and Dodworth Coal and Iron Co. Ltd., versus Clarke, 4-8 Nov. 1893, para. 2; Barnsley Chronicle, 23 March 1912 (Cheatter's obituary).
² Formed out of the South Yorkshire Coal Viewers Association (in existence since 1857) in 1869.
had supervision of several pits, not always under the same ownership.¹ As early as 1856, underground supervision of the Oaks pit was in the hands of a Mr. Woodhouse of Derby who was often away from the pit for long periods and delegated these responsibilities to an assistant:² a system which Normansell could not condone.³

By the end of the period, a totally separate sphere of authority - that of managing director/general manager/agent - was recognised by the official literature of the trade. These spheres were separate in most large and medium sized collieries. By 1894, moreover, the practical manager risen from the coalface was a shrinking breed, either because many had been refused certificates (the case with Samuel Steer of Strafford, despite having been a manager for twenty two years),⁵ or because a new generation of trained viewers and managers had replaced many of them through natural wastage. Some of these new men had been trained locally and some in other coalfields (particularly the North East). Many were sons of existing coal proprietors (Horace Walker at Wharncliffe Silkstone and Thomas Mitchell at Edmunds and Mitchell Main, for example).

Nevertheless, for a major part of the period, the old type of upwardly mobile miner-viewer-manager (mostly Yorkshire born)⁶

¹ Embleton was consulting engineer for Wharncliffe Silkstone, Monk Bretton, and the Charlesworths collieries. See Preliminary Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into Accidents in Mines (1881), Q 9781.
² Barnsley Times, 2 Aug. 1856.
³ Sheffield Independent, 17 Feb. 1873.
⁵ Barnsley Chronicle, 22 Feb. 1873.
⁶ Silkstone was a particularly prolific exporter of senior colliery personnel; see G.H. Teasdale, op. cit., p.20. Sam Padget of Swaithe, Thomas Ford of New Gawber, John Sutcliffe and George Holling, both of Barnsley, were all Silkstone-born men working as underviewers in 1871 (Census enumerators' returns).
persisted. Typical of this class of manager was James Wilson, viewer at Darfield Main and at the Oaks, and finally, manager of Hallroyd and Stanhope Silkstone for John Haynes. Wilson had worked his way up from the lowliest job of all: that of trammer.¹ George Watson, manager of Blacker Main, had originally been a trammer at Clarke's collieries in Silkstone before leaving to learn the business of pit sinking.² William Hargreaves worked his way up from the coal face under his father's supervision at the Charlesworths' West Yorkshire collieries to become manager of Warren Vale in 1874 and general manager of all the Charlesworths' operations in 1889.³

At a time when skilled faceworkers at least perceived the possibility of this type of upward mobility (even if only a tiny minority achieved it), the formation of rigid class distinctions in the underground work society was limited. That many literate and ambitious faceworkers dreamed of becoming viewers is clear from the espousal by both the Miner and Workman's Advocate and the more radical Miners' Advocate and Record of at least one book on practical mining. Such a book by William Hopton, a mine manager of the St. Helens district of South Lancashire, was promoted by both those newspapers and also by Edward Rymer in the 1860s, as a means of equipping the skilled miner for becoming a certificated manager.⁴ There was no contradiction here with the radicalism of those papers and of Rymer himself. They would have endorsed the belief of W.H.Riley, the republican editor of the International Herald, that the active employer and manager was not the worker's enemy:

¹ Barnsley Chronicle, 10 Oct. 1868 and 15 Dec. 1894.
² Ibid, 6 Jan. 1894.
³ J. Goodchild, op. cit.
⁴ E. A. Rymer, op. cit., p. 16; Miner and Workman's Advocate, 6 May 1865; Miners' Advocate and Record, 27 Sept. 1873.
the man 'who organises and superintends labour, and buys, and sells, is really a working man, and, as such, his interests are identical with those of his employees'. The 'enemy of the worker was the monopolist of land and money'.

As Evison points out, the upwardly mobile practical miner died out not through evidence of blatant managerial neglect on his part, but through lack of technical knowledge and conservatism in dealing with new processes, equipment and with large numbers of men. Complaints about illiterate underviewers and deputies, such as those in the local Mines Inspector's Report for 1869, were more common, although the miners' leaders tolerated their lack of technical knowledge if they were 'good practical men'. By the 1880s, the uncertificated deputy could get no further.

The commercial and administrative side of colliery operations had its long ladders of upward mobility. Joseph Bennett, colliery cashier at Fitzwilliam's pits had originally been an ironminer in the family's pits and was given a junior cashier's position because of his diligence over the years. William Batty rose from being a book-keeper at Darley Main to become a partner in the pit (and one time President of the South Yorkshire Coalowners Association). William Kirk, born into a pauper family, was at first a railwayman, later became weighman at Newton Chambers' and, after winning favour with Arthur Chambers because of his religious convictions, rose to become manager of the Tankersley and then the Rockingham colliery.

4 Barnsley Chronicle, 1 Dec. 1883.
6 Cusworth Hall, Newton Chambers MSS, 'Notes for a history...'.

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More and more colliery managers, as opposed to underground viewers, however, seem to have been clerks or trainee managers from their first employment. This group probably spawned the managers of most of the largest concerns: George Huntriss (originally a bank clerk), Matthew Habershon (originally a management trainee in the steel industry), and William Allott (a colliery clerk at Newton, Chambers and Co., who later rose to be managing director of the firm), are good examples.

Whether a dwindling few working men successfully climbed these ladders or not, a wedge was beginning to be driven between aspiring miners and the employers and top management, which, although far less pronounced than in larger, more occupationally heterogeneous communities, undoubtedly made miners more aware of their position on an increasingly insurmountable pyramid. The fact that this process was more marked at the large joint-stock collieries is significant.

The managers at many of these large collieries did not necessarily have more independence than their contemporaries at local, family-owned concerns. Hargreaves at Warren Vale complained, at the time of the 1874 explosion there, that he was not able to introduce lamps 'on (his) own authority'. And W.H. Chambers, though responsible for all aspects of the day-to-day running of Denaby Main, claimed that he hadn't the power to act independently on more than one occasion when a point of major conflict with the workmen was reached. As at Strafford, this situation may have created bottlenecks in

1 Managing proprietor at Darfield, Barnsley Chronicle, 10 Oct. 1868.
2 Manager at Newton Chambers', Cusworth Hall, Newton Chambers MSS, 'Notes for a history...'.
3 Ibid, Partnership Memoranda.
5 Inspector of Mines Report, 1874.
6 Mexborough and Swinton Times, 2 Jan. 1885.
negotiation processes which may have escalated into strike action unlike in places where the decisionmaker was on the spot. At Warren Vale, either the alert ears of the Charlesworths (not so far away in the Wakefield district) or the considerable freedoms granted to the miners themselves, neutralised the harmful effects of a relatively impotent management.¹

By contrast, deputies, underground stewards and even banksmen, were often given ill-defined yet wide ranging powers of daily supervision and control, especially in the larger pits and the ones that employed the longwall system.² The underground steward, apart from supervising the implementation of safety routines, would direct men into coal getting at specific places in the mine and had the power to transfer men into deadwork (and even into tasks that were considered humiliating to an adult hewer, like grooming the ponies).³ This often had the effect of lowering a miner's take home pay; but there was also scope for them to alter the rates for particular jobs and to extract fines,⁴ as well as to discharge and sign on. There must have been considerable abuse of this power, judging from the number of men on the union's victim fund who had been discharged for refusing to do what they considered as more than their fair share of deadwork or work in difficult places. (There seems to have been no systematic sharing of work places as in the 'cavilling' system of the Durham coalfield.)⁵

¹ See p. 628.
² See D. Douglass, op.cit., p.4.
³ This was a bye law at Mount Osborne, for example, Barnsley Chronicle, 18 Sept. 1860.
⁴ Ibid, 9 Oct. 1875.
⁵ D. Douglass, op.cit., p.16.
There is plenty of evidence in the 1842 Royal Commission of the perceived tyrannies of deputies. The worst excesses, like those of the deputies at Cooper's Stainborough pit in 1844, who went 'slinking about in the pit with a large nob stick, with a shilling's worth of steel at the end' were obviously over by the time of permanent unionism. And there were pits where the deputies and underviewers maintained a just and not overbearing regime (such as the one found by Rymer in the pillar and stall workings of Wombwell Main).

But the unpopularity of deputies and some daymen with the hewers was definitely a feature of relations in the pits in our period. In many respects, deputies and senior daymen (especially banksmen) probably identified with management rather than with the ranks of ordinary mineworker from whom they had only just managed to drag themselves. The daywage surface workers had their own unions - the winding enginemen and the general surfacemen, for example - and the deputies and underviewers combined in 1874 in the South Yorkshire Deputies and Underviewers Association which had its own widows and orphans fund and retained the services of a solicitor.

In strikes, more than at other times, loyalties were polarised. Deputies, enginemen, banksmen and even many ordinary surface workers usually stayed at work, partly through the need to keep the pits in safe working order, but inevitably identifying them in the strikers' minds with senior management.

1 Northern Star, 23 March 1844.
2 E.A.Rymer, op.cit., p.23.
3 The latter combined in the South Yorkshire Colliery Operatives Association, probably only for skilled men, Barnsley Chronicle, 6 July and 17 Aug. 1872. It had 3,863 members in the very favourable conditions of 1874, Barnsley Chronicle, 11 July 1874. See also R.G.Neville, op.cit., pp.894-5.
4 It was reputed to have been modelled on a similar association in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, Barnsley Chronicle, 30 May and 29 Aug. 1874. There were 162 financial members in September 1876 (Barnsley Chronicle, 16 Sept. 1876).
and the employers. In the 1893 lockout, the arrangement was formalised by common agreement at most pits, but in mid September, after a week of clashes between strikers and supervisory and other personnel, the Y.M.A. voted to demand the withdrawal of enginemen from the pits, with the latter's disapproval. The unwillingness of the deputies at Strafford Main to contribute to the lockout fund led to a demand for their withdrawal too.

During the two major instances of civil disorder at collieries in our period, deputies and underviewers, more than the employers themselves, became targets for violence and intimidation. In 1870, during the disturbances at Newton Chambers' collieries, there were several such incidents. George Walker, an underviewer at one of the collieries twice had his house on Hoyland Common attacked, while a friend of his was assaulted. The following week, one of the Tankersley pit banksmen's house was besieged. In the 1893 lockout, during the mass picketing of the 5th and 6th September, deputies and daymen at Rockingham colliery were bombarded with stones, while the verbal barracking of one particularly unpopular deputy at Manvers escalated into an attack on the colliery offices. Later, in October, one of the offending deputies at Strafford has his house assailed and windows smashed. Similar scenes

2 Barnsley Chronicle, 16 Sept. 1893.
5 Ibid, 5 Feb. 1870.
6 Ibid, 9 Sept. 1893.
8 Ibid, Memoranda under Riot Damages Act.
took place under less contentious circumstances (for example, during the 1856 strike at the Oaks, when Minto the underviewer had his house attacked).  

It would be an exaggeration to assume that ordinary miners on the one hand and deputies, underviewers and senior daywagemen on the other had no points of contact, even during industrial confrontations. In 1869, twenty six deputies and senior surfacemen wrote to Newton, Chambers and Co., expressing their concern at the lack of skill of the labour imported during the lockout that began early in that year:

... we feel we cannot in safety to the firm and to ourselves carry out those duties the laws of the realm and your regulations direct with the present class of workmen you are employing.

They later wrote to the employers to plead for the re-employment on amenable terms of the locked out miners.

Here, however, relations between the firm and the surfacemen and stewards had been soured by the demand that at Tankersley at least, they should work a twelve hour day, supervising both shifts of underground miners. This they had refused to do unless they were compensated with higher wages, and many seem to have joined the locked out miners.

This was a rare instance of joint identification, but there were certain affinities that did exist between skilled underground workers and hewers, deputies or underviewers that sometimes transcended the hewers' resentment of daily intrusions on their work. The possibility of job advancement through skill was the key to this neutralising of antagonism. Two pointers to this tendency are, first, the fact that William Chappell had been a deputy almost immediately before being elected as assistant district secretary in 1876; and, second, that the first president of

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1 Barnsley Times, 26 July 1856.
2 Cusworth Hall, Newton Chambers MSS, Trades Disputes File, Deputies, etc., to Newton, Chambers and Co., 19 Oct. 1869.
5 See p. 125.
the Underviewers and Deputies Association was Joseph Sheldon, former miners' union agent in Northumberland and Durham and active republican in the early 1870s. This interchanging of 'hats' would certainly have been less common later in the period.

The special relationship between supervisory staff on the one hand and employers and senior management on the other was cultivated by the latter. Very often, key employees like weighmen, surface stewards, enginemen and underviewers were given good colliery-owned houses near the pit; and suppers for this type of employee were a common event. It is also likely that many of these men followed their employers into church or chapel and possibly into the polling booth. Normansell recognised this polarisation at Strafford Main in 1865, where 'Sammy' Steer, the manager, seems to have manipulated these divisions in the workforce. 'Sammy is treating his men like a sweep treats his donkey, except a few Pets who are used as tools to set others at defiance.'

There were suggestions that attempts to introduce buttying, probably on the 'little butty' scale of collective piecework without any capital commitment, were occasionally made in South Yorkshire. Buttying was opposed by the miners as an

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1 See pp. 176-7 and 590.

2 The case at Thrybergh Hall, Strafford Main and Monk Bretton, for example, See Census enumerators' returns, 1871.

3 See the example of William Kirk (p.287). George Watson self-made manager of Blacker Main was a Tory churchman, unusual allegiances for a faceworker in South Yorkshire. See Barnsley Chronicle, 6 Jan. 1894.

4 S.Y.M.A. minutes (Normansell's notes), 16 Oct. 1865.

unmitigated evil (many had undoubtedly left the Midlands coalfields to escape it) and attempts to enforce it at Manvers and at Denaby must have soured relations at those pits. Rymer, in line with the Mines Inspector in 1850, was convinced that it frustrated the resolution of conflict between men and employers. Although buttiring was virtually non-existent, it is quite likely that the immigrants from the Midlands draw many parallels between the attitudes of the buttymasters and those of the deputies in South Yorkshire. Only in South Yorkshire, the control over wages and recruitment exercised by the latter was insufficient to cow the miners' antagonism.

Clarke's Old Silkstone Collieries: a case study.

A study of the workings of the colliery hierarchy at a colliery in a stable, occupationally homogeneous mining community will illustrate how workforces were split and developed along different lines. The Old Silkstone Collieries of the Clarke family had steadily grown from small beginnings around the turn of the century. Up to about the mid 1870s, the collieries were managed directly by various heads of the Clarke family; although in the late 1850s, the elder Robert Clarke's widow, Sarah, delegated some of the duties to her energetic brother, James Farrar. By 1871, Edwin Teasdale, originally a practical miner born locally, had been elevated to the position of colliery cashier, and was manager of the firm from the mid 1870s, taking over from a man called Southern whose duties seem to have been circumscribed by the

1 Barnsley Chronicle, 25 May 1872; Mexborough and Swinton Times, 30 Aug. 1878.
3 S.C.L., CR 152, various correspondence; Barnsley Chronicle, 28 July 1860.
4 See Census enumerator's returns, Silkstone, 1871.
5 S.C.L., CR 154.
direct intervention of Robert Clarke the younger. Teasdale enjoyed a free rein after the death of Robert Clarke in 1875, for both his widow Emily, and the Trustees, who were effectively owners of the operations, rarely interfered. He continued to enjoy this relatively unfettered authority over the 300-500 men at the collieries until his retirement through ill health in 1885.

His assistant for several years was a man called Lawson,¹ whose duties included collecting rent from the tenants of Mrs. Clarke's cottages; but on the several occasions that Edwin was taken ill in the two or three years before his retirement, his son George (employed as a bricklayer in 1871)² who was, by then, colliery surveyor,³ took over despite only being in his twenties. It was later suggested by someone connected with the collieries that he was 'shewn some more indulgence than he would have been if he had been an ordinary workman'⁴ on account of his father's position. In 1885, however, when Edwin retired, George left the firm in personally controversial circumstances⁵ and a professional colliery manager, H.B.Nash, took over control of the operations.⁶ This was the first time that an outsider had been brought into the senior executive position in the firm which, like Earl Fitzwilliam, believed in promoting from among its most stable, long-serving employee families.

The next in command in the late 1870s and early 1880s, after the Teasdales, was a man called Uriah Mason, the underground viewer at New Sovereign, the largest pit in the enterprise.

¹ S.C.L., CR 110, Teasdale to Lawson, various dates; Barnsley Chronicle, 30 Oct. 1869.
² See Census enumerators' returns, Silkstone, 1871.
³ Court Transcript, Old Silkstone and Dodworth Coal and Iron Co. Ltd., versus Clarke, 4-8 Nov. 1893. para.11.
⁴ Ibid, para. 179.
⁵ Ibid, para. 11.
He too had been an employee at least as early as the 1850s. In 1858, he was employed as a woodtaker: a dangerous, skilled and relatively well paid daywage job. \(^1\) He was kept in employment, moreover, until his death in 1894, despite his physical inability to go underground, as Mrs. Clarke wanted to reward his loyalty by retaining 'his services as manager so long as he lived'. \(^2\)

With several small pits in their colliery complex, the Clarkes naturally had a larger number of enginemen, banksmen, weighmen, fire triers and stewards than at a single large colliery employing a similar number of miners. \(^3\) These men may have largely superseded the need for the employment of others specifically as deputies (there is no mention of employees with this function in the colliery wage books). It is also likely that, in the labyrinthine workings of these pits, worked entirely on the pillar and stall system, the hewers enjoyed an above average freedom from supervision.

A concentration on family ties, facilitated by a residentially stable workforce, was obvious throughout the firm. But it was particularly marked in our period among the higher grades of daywage work. Amongst the forty five fire triers, woodtakers, banksmen and enginemen employed in 1858, there were twelve surnames (none of them normally very common) which occurred twice or more. \(^4\) The most extreme example was the large number of mineworkers called Bostwick. By scrutiny of wage books and other data on employees in the Clarke MSS, and of the 1861 and 1871 Census enumerators' returns for Dodworth and Silkstone, it has been possible to

\(^1\) S.C.L., CR 152, Wages Papers 1858.
\(^2\) Ibid, CR 121, Nash to Wardell, 9 April 1894.
\(^3\) The ratio of daywagemen to hewers on December 11th 1884 was 101 to 120. A large number of the daywagemen, moreover were in higher grade jobs. Ibid, CR 125, Check Wage Book.
\(^4\) Ibid, CR 152, Wages Papers 1858.
trace eight adult male Bostwicks in the two parishes, five of whom held top daywage positions in the 1850s, 1860s or 1870s (one rising to become underground viewer). The other three male Bostwicks were an underground miner, a road labourer (possibly in the mines) and a surface haulage hand who later left the collieries and ran a grocery shop in Dodworth.\textsuperscript{1}

Another Silkstone family produced a weighman, a leading banksman and an engineman (who later opened his own colliery in partnership with a local blacksmith, John Haynes)\textsuperscript{2} all of whom were employed by the Clarkes. The Jubb family produced the steward at the small Clarke pit at Silkstone Cross, a colliery blacksmith and a leading banksman.\textsuperscript{3} The Mellor family produced an underviewer in the 1840s, the steward of the Nopie pit in 1888 and another banksman.\textsuperscript{4} The Longthorne family had a colliery clerk and a banksman;\textsuperscript{5} the Horsfields, a coal leader\textsuperscript{6} and a weighman; and Uriah Mason's son, Thomas, was underviewer in what was left of the New and Old Sovereign workings from 1884 onwards.\textsuperscript{7} The coal hewers too had their 'dynasties' - the Daltons, the Hornes, the Wilsons and the Coopers all furnished the Clarkes with four, and the Stringers with six. Yet there seems to have been few families which supplied both piece and daywage workers and few men seem to have changed their roles in this fashion.

\textsuperscript{1} Ibid, CR 122, 125-6, Check Wage Books; Census enumerators' returns, Silkstone and Dodworth, 1861 and 1871.

\textsuperscript{2} Census, 1861 and Barnsley Chronicle, 29 April 1911 (Haynes' obituary).

\textsuperscript{3} See Check Wage Books and CR 117, Teasdale to Jubb, various dates.


\textsuperscript{5} Ibid, Check Wage Books.

\textsuperscript{6} Ibid, CR 100, Teasdale to Horsfield, 25 April 1879.

\textsuperscript{7} Court Transcript, Old Silkstone and Dodworth Coal and Iron Co. Ltd., versus Clarke, 4-8 Nov. 1893, paras. 16 and 121.
Edwin Teasdale certainly seemed to enjoy the trappings of his new-found status. In the 1880s he lived in a substantial house on Silkstone Common\(^1\) and in every way publicly identified with the family who employed him. He was active in the church (as churchwarden and choirmaster)\(^2\) and in local government (as member of Dodworth Board of Health and overseer for Silkstone).\(^3\) His son, moreover, seems to have had even more pretensions. He had only taken over from his father for a few days in 1884 when he was insisting on the maintenance of a horse and trap for his own use.\(^4\)

Some of Clarke’s leading daymen, too, acquired status in the community. C.A. Roberts (an early manager) and Charles Bostwick (an underviewer) both held positions in the Silkstone vestry; while others helped to run the pit accident club, the independent co-operative society at Silkstone and were prominent in subordinate roles at less regular functions. One former engineman, George Walton, contributed to the community in another way: he left £140 to several Dodworth institutions in his will.\(^5\) Others remained close to their employers in other ways. A higher proportion of daywagemen than of pieceworkers lived in tied cottages;\(^6\) and in pending

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2 See, for example, Barnsley Chronicle, 7 Jan. 1871.

3 He usually acted as spokesman for Mrs. Clarke in these roles. See, for example, S.C.L., CR 111, Teasdale to Penistone Board of Guardians, 5 June 1885.

4 Ibid, CR 110, Teasdale to Clarke, 1 May 1884.

5 Barnsley Chronicle, 18 Nov. 1882.

6 S.C.L., CR 125, Check Wage Book, 1884: 51 of the 99 daywagemen as opposed to 38 of the 121 hewers. This would only apply to heads of households.
and actual industrial disputes, they tended to accept the employers' offers rather than strike.¹

It is important to stress that the Clarkes, as elsewhere, did not buy this type of loyalty with higher wages. Only the very top of the daywage pyramid in 1884 (the Teasdales, the underviewers and three or four enginemen and fire triers) earned as much as or more than the hardest-working hewers, while most of the rest earned considerably less than the average hewer. In a six week period of 1884, fifteen hewers consistently earned over £3 per week and 44 earned over £2 per week; only 43 earned less than £2.² In contrast, only eight of the daywagemen (excluding the Teasdales and Uriah Mason who were paid salaries) earned over £2: the highest being earned by Abel Mellor, a full-time development worker (or 'stonecutter'). Nevertheless, daywages in 1884 were in some cases, almost 100% higher than in 1858, when the highest daily wage was 4/4d earned by the senior fire triers and wood-takers.³ One important distinction must, however, be made. The great differential between the highest paid hewers and both the lower paid ones and the daywagemen can partly be explained by the fact that most hewers had to pay a trammer out of their wages, while some paid two or even three.⁴

¹ For example, in 1889 all but three daywagemen agreed to an alteration in the colliery pay system, whereas most of the hewers would not (S.C.L., CR 113, Nash to Roebuck, 26 Jan. 1889); and 'very few' daywagemen gave notice to strike in November 1883, unlike almost all the hewers (S.C.L., CR 109, Teasdale to Mason, 14 Nov. 1883). Many daywagemen were members of the S.Y.M.A. in the late 1860s and early 1870s, however (see Old Silkstone Lodge Registration Book and compare with names in Wages Books).

² S.C.L., CR 125, Check Wage Book. Some earned over £4 in a week in the 1890s (see CR 128).

³ S.C.L., CR 152, Wages Papers.

⁴ S.C.L., CR 128, Colliers' Averages.
Many of these hewer-trammer combinations came from the same nuclear family, in which case, the gross hewer's wage probably was equivalent to the family income (there being little employment for women in Silkstone or Dodworth).

Clarke's collieries probably did not differ markedly, except in the extraordinary stability of sections of its workforce (particularly the daymen), from most others in the coalfield. The pits were smaller and more paternalistically supervised than the larger, newer enterprises; but there were still several colliery concerns in South Yorkshire which resembled the Clarkes' in these respects (Earl Fitzwilliam's, for example). Wages, in particular were probably similar even to those at the larger pits.¹ Until Teasdale retired, the complete ladder of authority was potentially accessible to any ambitious, intelligent and favoured miner, although only hewers and other skilled underground workers were likely to become underviewers. Each area of work had its own 'aristocracy', although in the case of the hewers, it was top heavy and accessible to any young man set on as a trammer (and, occasionally to surface workers) after a minimum of about two and a half years' unofficial apprenticeship.² In the case of the higher grade daywagemen, there were factors other than pure skill operating in the attainment of status.

One of the factors that distinguishes mining from the classic aristocratic trades, like flint glass making and forging, is the existence of this large, counterbalancing area of labour - the daywagemen - who both identified more

¹ The average national rates of wages given in a return for 1886/7 (P.P. 1890/1, lxxviii) reveals a similar wage structure - though different in volume - to that of Clarke's collieries in 1858, with only deputies and fire triers topping average hewers' rates pf pay (in a full week) and even trammers topping that of many adult surface workers.

² S.C. on Coal (1873), Q 7371.
closely with the employers and who did not always acknowledge the skills of the hewers in relation to their own status. This must have reinforced the hewers' determination to retain their own working class identity in the long run. The hewers, in the early part of the period, must have felt reasonably secure in this independence, because they were quite successful in fending off infiltration from the unskilled pool at the bottom of the daywagemen's ladder. From the early 1870s onwards, however, there was considerable dilution of the underground workforce by adult unskilled labour from several sources, stimulating an ongoing debate between national union leaders and employers about the formalisation of apprenticeship and eliciting 'aristocratic' responses from some miners.

Throughout the period, the dual hierarchial system tended to operate in the employers' favour. The distances between grades of both underground and surface workers enabled them

1 See A.J. Taylor, 'Labour productivity and technological innovation ...', p.63. In 1873, the process had not really got under way, The Manchester Guardian (30 May 1873) reported that 'In Yorkshire as in Lancashire, the high rate of wages is attracting men from other industries to the mine; but they do not find the process of conversion into colliers an easy one.' It concluded: 'the number of colliers (in Yorkshire) is not very largely increased from outside sources'.

2 See, for example, Rymer's letter to the Miner's Advocate and Record (27 June 1874), 'Would it not be socially, politically and economically right to make the coal getting trade the same as the mechanics (sic); and thus restrict to intelligence and experience the labour of the coal miner?'
to delegate control in the manner Hobsbawn described as 'co-exploitation'. The antagonism that did occur as a result enabled the employers to divert some of the miners' aggression in times of industrial conflict. The fact that the mobilisation of the surface workers over wage issues in the 1890s coincided both with the accelerating extinction of the self-made manager and the beginnings of a politically-oriented mass labour consciousness carried a significant message for employers who were struggling to maintain old forms of control at their collieries.

1 E.J. Hobsbawn, *Labouring Men*, p. 297. Viewer supervised underviewer; underviewer supervised deputy; deputy supervised hewer; and the hewer dictated to trammer. Above ground, surface steward supervised banksman, banksman supervised hangers-on and other surface labour.
CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The Employers:
Policies of Responsibility and Control.
This chapter looks at the web of responsibilities that employers saw in varying degrees as incumbent upon them and of controls that they perceived as to their advantage to implement. The line between responsibility and control—in the field of housing for example—was often a thinly drawn one; but both among employers who actively involved themselves in the lives of their miners in and out of the workplace (like the Clarkes, the Earl Fitzwilliams and the Denaby Main Colliery Co.,) and among those who maintained a low profile at work and in the miners' communities (the Charlesworths and many other absentee owners, for example), there are important distinctions to be drawn. This chapter will examine the responsibilities and controls exercised in the district, assess the underlying policies of the employers and draw contrasts where they are to be found, while keeping in mind the figures on dispute incidence at these pits.

**Employers' involvement in the provision of amenities.**

Colliery owners in the study area tended not to build large numbers of houses for their employees (at least not before 1894). As will be shown in Chapter Sixteen, there were other resources available to meet most of the demand. Pits were usually sunk in or close to existing centres of population which were able to absorb the newcomers within the existing built settlements or in straggling appendages. Apart from a few peak years (in the early 1870s and the early 1890s in particular), population growth was not too dramatic for an 'organic' expansion of the existing communities to take place, largely developed by small self-financing building firms and individuals. Dodworth and Swinton were typical of many townships in the district in that the major colliery proprietors—the Charlesworths, the Church Lane company and the Strafford Main company—at no time in the period owned more than a few houses around the pits (largely provided for senior colliery personnel).¹ Miners were rarely averse to

¹ See Dodworth B.H., Rate Book, Minute Books and house plans.
walking two, three or more miles to work from one or other of the many mature communities in the district where they could enjoy amenities that might have been denied them in company-built hamlets. Central South Yorkshire's early, mixed industrial base served the miners well in this respect.

There were important exceptions to this rule. On the outer edges of the coalfield, large pits were sunk where there was clearly no ready-made accommodation and insufficient local non-mining finance to generate the necessary building. At Woolley, and to a certain extent in the neighbourhood of the Newton Chambers' pits, company housing was erected through necessity, as was the case further out (beyond our district) at pits like Shireoaks, Kiveton Park, Hemsworth and Frickley; and, of course, even more so in the late 1890s and the early years of the twentieth century as the coalfield pushed eastwards into the basically agricultural Doncaster area.

Another form of employers' intervention in the local housing market took place in the early nineteenth century, at times when it was too static to absorb the small but significant increases in population brought about by expansion of colliery operations of men like the Earls Fitzwilliam in Rawmarsh, Elsecar (in Hoyland township) and Wentworth, and the Clarkes in Silkstone. This was the conclusion of A. Fletcher,

1 There were mass evictions at Woolley in 1861 (Barnsley Chronicle, 16 March 1861) and they were building new houses in 1884 (Barnsley Chronicle, 16 Feb. 1884).

2 M.H.Habershon, Chapeltown Researches (Sheffield, 1893), p.147, reports 165 cottages owned by the firm plus 85 under lease. Some of these would have been for their ironworkers. See Barnsley Chronicle, 6 Jan. 1894.


4 R.G.Neville, op.cit., p.311.
referring to both the Duke of Norfolk's and the Earls Fitzwilliam's enterprises in the early nineteenth century: 'both the numbers recorded and the infrequent mention of housing, suggests less the deliberate creation of a community but more the provision of accommodation for a growing labour force'.

Clarke's housing stock in Silkstone, too, grew in a piecemeal fashion, from twenty five in 1834 to eighty nine in 1884, both by slow additions to the existing village (the family retained a small team of masons and carpenters for this and other purposes) and by buying up old houses when they came on the market.

Two colliery companies that did build large, almost self-sufficient communities on virgin soil for their miners were those at Wharncliffe Silkstone (from 1854) and Denaby Main (from about 1868), the latter being the most determined attempt of all. The owners of Wharncliffe Silkstone claimed, in 1859, that 'everything has been done to make the vicinity of the colliery a little community in itself' and that the pit was too isolated to be served by existing settlements. This latter argument clearly broke down when we consider that the pit community hardly grew from its level of 1860, as opposed

1 A. Fletcher, op. cit., p. 102.

2 Silkstone Parish Church, Silkstone Rate Book; S. C. L., CR 125, Check Wage Book, 1884.

3 See various Clarke Wage Books.

4 See Silkstone Rate Book and S. C. L., Clarke Records, various leases and deeds.

5 Virtually the entire village of Denaby Main was built by the company from the late 1860s and continued to expand under their control throughout the period. See J. MacFarlane, 'Denaby Main: a South Yorkshire mining village'; Barnsley Chronicle, 24 Aug. 1889.


7 Ibid, 13 Aug. 1859.

8 Wharncliffe Silkstone owned 97 houses in the colliery yard in 1867, 124 in 1883 and the same number in 1899 (plus 30 in nearby Pilley), see Wortley R. D. C. Offices, Tankersley Rate Books.
to Hoyland Common, a largely speculatively built village to the east which housed a large number of Wharncliffe Silkstone miners as well as men from other nearby pits. This more open community was preferred by John Normansell and other Wharncliffe Silkstone union officials who had 'objection to be huttoed like pigs at the works'.

Aside from these examples, there seems to have been only a few other companies and individual employers who built or purchased a significant number of houses for their workmen, and these on a much less ambitious scale than those at Denaby and Wharncliffe Silkstone (even those companies housed only a minority of their workforces). The Oaks, Carlton Main, Lundhill, Cortonwood, Monk Bretton, and to a lesser extent, Edmunds Main and Manvers Main, were the collieries concerned.

The Barrow Haematite company announced their intention of building a large number of houses in Worsborough, but probably fell back on letting the mushrooming township of Hoyland meet

1 A.K. Clayton, Hoyland Nether, p.70. The local union branch meetings were also held in Hoyland Common.

2 See S.Y.M.A. records, lists of addresses of branch secretaries.


4 Barnsley Times, 28 June 1856; Barnsley Chronicle, 13 Aug. 1859, 15 July 1871, 7 Oct. 1876, 5 June 1880; Swinton B.H. Rate Book.
the housing needs of most of their men.  

Even on this limited scale, the provision of houses by these firms was an effective weapon in their armoury of controls. Fear was expressed by the Wharncliffe Silkstone miners in 1892 that their employers' control over part of the workforce through the threat of eviction would jeopardise their ability to take part in industrial action and they recommended the Y.M.A. bought some vacant Primitive Methodist school buildings nearby to provide shelter in the event of a strike.  

Normansell, in 1873, declared himself opposed to the system of providing tied cottages. Eviction was the most obvious threat in colliery owned communities and was proven to be real on one or more occasions at the Oaks, Barrow, Wharncliffe Silkstone, Manvers Main, Monk Bretton, Woolley, Clarke's and Newton Chambers' collieries and Denaby Main.  

Earl Fitzwilliam used the threat of eviction

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1 See Y.M.A. minutes 30 May 1892; Barnsley Chronicle, 14 Nov. 1885. Although the non-provision of houses by other colliery companies cannot be proved (the loss of most of the township rate books has not helped this design), the singling out by the local press of those who did build for their employees as unusual phenomena, combined with frequent references to speculatively built miners' houses, topographic evidence and local witnesses lead me to believe that the quoted examples were probably the only important ones. An article in The Times of 24 Sept. 1929 claimed that, at that time, the following communities contained company-built colliery housing: Darton (100 houses); Dodworth (700); Wombwell (150); Hoyland (400); Brampton (950); Tankersley (300); Thorpe Hesley (500); Wath (200); Denaby (800); and Conisborough (1000).

2 Y.M.A. minutes, 30 May 1892.  

3 S.C. on Coal (1873), Q 7 416.  

effectively more than once; and in 1873, selected the secretary and treasurer of one of the union branches at Stubbin as examples.\(^1\) At Denaby, eviction occurred with monotonous regularity and great accompanying bitterness. Newton, Chambers and Co., came alive to the benefits of this type of control in the lockouts of the 1860s, and began to build from a small base (forty one houses in 1867).\(^2\)

In most cases, the small stock of colliery housing in South Yorkshire was no worse and no better than much of the property erected by or for other interests. The housing at the Oaks and Wharncliffe Silkstone collieries was cramped and mostly lacking in gardens and good paving,\(^3\) but so was much of the speculatively built property, especially on the edges of the larger townships or in villages not supervised by local boards of health. At Denaby Main, however, the haste and meanness with which the village was erected, gave rise to an unhealthy,\(^4\) unpleasant environment that must have rancoured with the workmen and their families at all times, and perhaps ensured that they were in no great hurry to return to them after they had been evicted in the course of one or other of the disputes.

In contrast to Denaby Main and one or two of the other less exemplary company-rows and communities, there was the housing belonging to Earl Fitzwilliam and the Clarke family. This was

\(^1\) Barnsley Chronicle, 24 May 1873; Rotherham Advertiser, 18 Sept. 1875.

\(^2\) Tankersley Rate Book, 1867.

\(^3\) Ibid, Barnsley Chronicle, 13 April and 13 Aug. 1859. In a letter in the latter edition, Richard Mitchell compared the Wharncliffe Silkstone houses unfavourably with those provided by the Lundhill company.

\(^4\) See, for example, the report of the Doncaster Rural Sanitary Authority for 1884 (Barnsley Chronicle, 24 Jan. 1885).

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not arranged in the form of a miners' enclave, but usually intermixed with and indistinguishable from other dwellings in the three or four neighbourhoods concerned. Richard Mitchell, the secretary of the S.Y.M.A., in 1859, praised the Earl's 'good and in many cases handsome cottages', many of which had sizeable gardens. He also provided a large lodging house for single men. What is more, the Earls, in line with other of their family-oriented policies, allowed their miners' widows to live on in their homes.

Earl Fitzwilliam, as Mitchell also hinted, offered his employees more than just good housing as his part of the bargain. Aspects of a traditional, stable rural environment were preserved by his encouragement of the hiring of land plots adjoining the cottages on which both pigs and vegetables thrived. They were said to be relatively cheap. There was free home coal; a widows, orphans and sick fund (said by some to be free and by others not); a savings bank; gifts of meat two or three times a year and other timely reminders of the family's bounteouness and concern for their employees' moral and physical welfare. This was endorsed, later in the period, by Lady Alice Fitzwilliam's interest in colliery safety (resulting in her design for a new type of colliery ambulance at Elsecar). The fringe benefits at the Earl's pits were very real, although the authenticity of several were questioned

1 Barnsley Chronicle, 27 Aug. 1859.
2 Ibid, 20 Nov. 1858.
3 G.Mee. op.cit., p.139.
4 F.Machin, op.cit., p.393.
5 See Rotherham Advertiser, 13 Nov. 1875.
6 Barnsley Chronicle, 24 March 1888.
at one time or another by employees with grievances. Also, as we have seen, enjoyment of these benefits as an employee was conditional on, at first, renouncing the union, and, after 1872, abnegating collective negotiating rights.

By comparison, most other attempts at establishing paternalistic regimes at collieries in the district were either lukewarm or mishandled. At Denaby Main, the whole community superstructure was provided by the company, but with such a paucity of feeling and such overt intentions to control, that it produced a reaction from the miners, very different from that of Fitzwilliam's employees. The independent spirit of the Denaby miners thrived, moreover, in the open community of nearby Mexborough, where many of them lived, and to a lesser extent in Conisborough.

At Wharncliffe Silkstone, too, there is evidence of an initial attempt to overawe the resident miners by, for example, banning Primitive Methodist meetings in the company chapel. But it is unlikely that they persisted, as little more was heard of non work-based grievances at this strongly unionised colliery. Any long-term policy of control would have been undermined by the existence of nearby alternate sources of accommodation and of employment. In slightly more isolated communities to the south of Wharncliffe Silkstone, Newton, Chambers and Co., were active in the institutional if not

1 The land plots were said to be 10/-d to 15/-d per acre more than contemporary farm prices, Barnsley Chronicle, 20 Nov. 1858. The 1873 strike at Stubbins was ostensibly about the deteriorating quality of home coal. The republican viewpoint on Fitzwilliam's paternalism was expressed by Abraham Tibbutt at the time of the 1873 Stubbins strike: 'We would say that Fitzwilliam is not an exception to the clique to whom he belongs, we expect nothing from the lords and will never be disappointed.' Miners' Advocate and Record, 14 June 1873.

2 The implications of this will be discussed in Part Three.

3 Barnsley Chronicle, 20 Aug. 1859.
domestic aspects of their employees' lives. They provided essential funds for the support of local churches, chapels and schools, built a workmen's hall at Warren and frequently preached and gave lectures among the miners, ironworkers and the local population in general.¹ In the straggling and thinly settled communities of Tankersley and north Ecclesfield, the firm's presence was an imposing one, but it was an exaggeration to say, as Normansell did in the lockout of 1869, that they had 'the whole district of High Green, Chapeltown and Mortomley under finger and thumb'.² Their stock of company housing, for example, though expanding at the time with the building of the Thorncliffe and Westwood Rows (the former for their ironworkers and the latter for miners), it was still nothing like the scale of Denaby Main or Wharncliffe Silkstone. Nevertheless, the firm can be classed as one of the more paternalistic, falling somewhere between Earl Fitzwilliam and the Denaby company in terms of the response they got from their miners.

Elsewhere, if community control was attempted, it was essentially piecemeal and stood little chance of succeeding in the more open, occupationallly heterogeneous townships, especially as, in many, the coalowners had a limited share in the local hegemony. Concessionary home coal was taken for granted where it was given;³ Sunday schools and reading rooms were provided on occasions (at Woolley, Wombwell Main and Barrow, for example);⁴ and many employers donated sums of money to other educational and religious institutions

¹ See Cusworth Hall, Newton Chambers MSS, Partnership Memoranda; M.H. Habershon, op.cit.,
² Barnsley Chronicle, 3 April 1869.
³ This seems to have been at the majority of pits. See S.Y.M.A. records, 'comparing list of prices paid at the various collieries in the district', Feb. 1879.
⁴ Barnsley Chronicle, 3 July 1858, 21 Feb. and 14 Nov. 1885.
(especially the mechanics institutes), as well as to colliery disaster funds. Others, like Church Lane (on the initiative of the managing director), chose to try to influence their workmen through lectures on temperance. But it is unlikely that these attempts to influence the souls and minds of their employees (and their children) had as much effect as, for example, those of the local Primitive Methodist ministers, although they may have engendered a certain amount of respect. One exception was the regime of the Clarke family (at least until the death of the last truly active member, the younger Robert Clarke in 1875) in Silkstone parish where the occupationally homogeneous and rural nature of the community, combined with the imposing presence of the family in all its institutions, created a stable, loyal and relatively passive workforce.

The 'treat' or 'feast', an ancestor of the works outing, was a commonly practiced and more effective vehicle of a firm's ostentatious benevolence. In its most traditional form, it involved little more than high tea in the grounds of the local 'big house' and therefore its use was necessarily restricted to the few substantial residential coalowners. The Clarkes excelled at this, not feeling obliged to remain as aloof from their workmen as Earl Fitzwilliam, yet having the resources at Noblethorpe Hall to provide for an impressive display of squirearchical largesse. Such occasions were particularly lavish when the family had something to celebrate, such as the winning of Royal Assent to the M.S. and L. Railway branch line to Barnsley (a boon to the Clarke enterprise), or the coming of age and marriage of the heir to the firm. At these events, not just the miners, but the tenants and virtually the whole village would be involved, eagerly identifying with the good fortune of the Clarkes.

1 Ibid, 21 March 1874.

2 J.F. Prince, Silkstone: the History and Topography of the Parish of Silkstone in the County of York (Penistone, 1922), p.112.

3 Barnsley Chronicle, 10 Sept. 1859 and 14 Nov. 1863.

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Earl Fitzwilliam also instigated these types of gathering, which in the early 1860s were extended in the form of excursions as far away as London and Liverpool. ¹ These trips, at times involving over 1,000 men and women, were beyond the budgets of the smaller employers, although amongst a few local and absentee proprietors, the precedent was set in the prosperous early 1870s and continued at intervals from then on. ² By the mid 1860s, following tentative recognition of the S.Y.M.A. at most major pits in the district, the colliery supper or tea meeting became far more of an institution, the provision of one by the employers often being quickly reciprocated by the miners. At the latter type, district and local union leaders would sit alongside managers and even proprietors, each attempting to outdo the other in their expressions of respect and delight in current prosperity and harmonious relations. Rarely did the employers use their sponsored gatherings as forums for decrying the unions, as had been the case at Elsecar in 1856 when one of the workmen publicly urged his fellows 'never to be led away by the wicked and designing men who were generally at the head of these strikes'. ³ The stress was on partnership, and conflict was pushed under the tables. At the annual Denaby lodge supper in October 1870, to which the viewers and other colliery officials were invited not long after the bitter lockout over union recognition, the chairman, a man called Smith, claimed:

¹ Ibid, 30 June 1860 and 16 Aug. 1862; Rotherham Advertiser, 31 July 1886. There was occasionally a nominal charge.

² Wombwell Main, Blacker Main, Strafford Main, Monk Bretton, the Charlesworths', Craik's and Coopers' collieries, for example, (Barnsley Chronicle, 1 Sept. 1871, 23 Aug. 1873 and 21 July 1888); Midland and Northern Coal and Iron Trades Gazette, 19 Aug. 1871; Mexborough and Swinton Times, 3 May 1890. Wombwell ran a trip to Thorne as early as 1858 (Barnsley Chronicle, 25 Sept. 1858).

³ Barnsley Times, 1 Nov. 1856.
There had been little matters of contention between the masters and the men but they had been easily settled by their meeting together and talking things over quietly as he hoped they always would do.¹

John Normansell, at the same meeting, ventured that 'If all employers and managers were like those at Denaby Main, all differences could be easily and amicably settled'.²

These gestures of conciliation were made at all types of colliery, from the small, local-owned like Mount Osborne,³ to large limited liability pits like Denaby and Manvers.⁴ There were, moreover, as many of these occasions at dispute-prone collieries like Strafford Main as anywhere else. Both sides gained in some respects from them. The owners from the publicity and prestige and possibly from an at least temporary improvement in communication; the miners from the boost to the collective ego that these occasions provided in their assertion of prosperity tinged with more than a trace of independence. Even in the troubled years of the later 1870s, at dispute-prone pits like Denaby Main, Hoyland Silkstone and Church Lane, they continued to be sponsored from both sides of industry, albeit with more guarded and less optimistic public acclamations.⁵ But the continuing depression of the 1880s proved too harsh a climate and the honeymoon terminated. Little more was heard of these events thereafter and some miners' spokesmen publicly exposed what they saw as the hypocrisy of the conciliatory gesture. At a public meeting at Manvers Main in 1879, attended by Davy, the managing proprietor, John Cooper, a branch official, curtly

¹ Rotherham Advertiser, 15 Oct. 1870.
² Barnsley Chronicle, 15 Oct. 1870.
³ Ibid, 1 June 1867.
⁴ Rotherham Advertiser, 5 March 1870.
⁵ Barnsley Chronicle, 30 June 1877 (Denaby), 17 May 1879 (Church Lane) and 22 Nov. 1879 (Hoyland Silkstone).
pointed out: 'Mr Davy has told us that we are a good looking lot of men, but I cannot see what that has to do with a reduction in our wages'.

Attempts at either paternalism or mutual congratulation at large absentee-owned collieries were laid bare by the depression. Yet, for a while, they were effective in helping to establish Normansell's 'reference' system of bargaining at these pits, as well as improving the image of both sides of the coal industry in the eyes of the longer standing interests of the district. The incoming employers had to establish their credentials of respectability as much as did the recognition-seeking district and community miners' leaders.

Far more permanent was the deep-rooted paternalism of the Fitzwilliam-Clarke type, which had less audible echoes at several other locally-owned pits, including Lundhill, Wentworth Silkstone and those of Newton, Chambers and Co. Just as, in Griffin's opinion, the better company housing in the East Midlands attracted workers to certain collieries there, the trappings of the Earls' paternalism had maintained a stable workforce for decades. Normansell, in 1868, recognised this phenomena when discussing the reluctance of the Fitzwilliam miners to unionise: 'they make up a nice living out of the land and one way and another. That keeps them at the place.' It did not seem to matter that the tea gatherings, for example, were always on the Earl's terms and that district union leaders were never invited. The newly-recruited miners at Elsecar and Stubbin made a fundamental decision to abandon the union watchdog for the benevolent guardianship of their employer; while many of the older miners and the sons they no doubt influenced from an early age were

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1 Ibid, 4 Oct. 1879.
2 A.R.Griffin, op.cit., p.112.
3 R.C. on Trades Unions (1867-8), Q 16268.
so deeply involved in the life style that went with the Earls' employ that when the choice arose in 1858, it was never a real one. At Clarke's collieries, the choice was a less dramatic one. Employment there did not imply divorce from the union's bargaining machinery (although the Clarke miners seem to have made that decision partly on their own initiative in 1860 and for six years after). But there is no doubt that traditions of paternalism and non-militancy in Silkstone were established sometime in the first half of the century and continued, albeit weakened by the death of the last active member of the family, until the concern was run down at the end of the century.

**Employers' attitudes to the S.Y.M.A. and Y.M.A.**

As a general rule, the closer an employer involved himself in the lives of his workforce, the more he met their needs for accommodation and amenities, and the more he tried to influence them with his particular brand of moral suasion, then the more likely he was to be hostile to a rival institution which offered security and an improved or defended standard of living by different means.

Individual employers' opposition to the union in 1858 was predictable as the S.Y.M.A. was born in a conflict situation. Many of the prolonged disputes of that year were about membership of the union\(^1\) or were direct challenges by the employers to its policies.\(^2\) Fear of the union's potential was the main motive behind these stands. One important employer decided to resort to subterfuge rather than confrontation to halt the early tide of organisation and

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\(^1\) At Day and Twibell's Mount Osborne colliery (*Sheffield Independent*, 17 April 1858). Twibell was chairman of the loosely constructed Yorkshire Coalmasters Association in 1856 (*Barnsley Times*, 2 Aug. 1856).

\(^2\) The Charlesworths sought to question the miners' unwritten right to an eight hour day won, temporarily at least, as a result of the strikes early in 1858.
propaganda in 1857. J.C.D. Charlesworth wrote to one of his representatives at Warren Vale:

I see a great deal of harm done amongst the pitmen by delegates going about preaching and advising the men to resist the masters in every way they possibly can. . . To counteract this, what do you say to our employing a delegate to preach common sense and reason to them (and the men and the delegates not to know that we as masters have any knowledge of the thing). 1

The employers' 'delegate', who was said to be 'not in very good feather' at the time, was to be paid anything up to £100 for his troubles.

The Charlesworths, like many other owners, soon changed their mind after the first trials of strength in 1858 and those of the early 1860s. And it is fair to accept Normansell's testimony to the Trades Union Commission that, by mid 1865, union recognition had progressed to the extent that, with a few exceptions (notably at Fitzwilliam's, the Clarkes, 2 and at Woolley), district delegations had access to negotiations at pit level. 3 It may have progressed to the extent described by Normansell to the same audience: 'the great bulk of owners now say that they would rather treat with the Association than with the men; they find us more reasonable as an association'. 4 Typical, perhaps, of the employers' viewpoint at this stage was that of P. Cooper, manager of Holmes colliery, a large local-owned pit on the edge of Rotherham (just outside the study area). When asked by the Trades Union Commissioners what he felt about the interference of the union, he replied: 'We suffer it but not by preference'. 5 When pressed further, he admitted that it

2 See R.C. on Trades Unions (1867-8), Q 16314.
3 See R.C. on Trades Unions (1867-8), Q 16119.
4 Ibid, Q 16243.
had no 'mischievous effect' and that some issues were settled by the union which might have led to strikes.

1869 and 1870, of course, nearly proved to contain stumbling blocks when three important South Yorkshire employers\(^1\) fought rearguard actions against union representation and collective negotiation, more through confidence in their own power\(^2\) than any real fear of John Normansell and what he stood for. These confrontations reached a head in the strategic violence of January 1870 which demonstrated the determination of the rank and file to preserve this institution, with all its faults.\(^3\) This violence, however, might have generalised the backlash if large sections of the controlling interests in South Yorkshire had been as blind to the normally effective self-policing role of the S.Y.M.A. as was some outside opinion. The Times was convinced that here was 'a Trades' Union outrage on a larger scale than those of the Sheffield grinders and the Manchester brickmakers'.\(^4\) It claimed that there may have been some justification for union representation in the more skilful and intelligent trades . . . but when one comes to colliers and brickmakers the case is very different . . . what, then, are we to expect from men who gain their bread literally by the sweat of their brow, at the hardest kind of labour, and who from their habits of life are almost of necessity prone to lawless acts? We cannot believe this has been merely an outbreak of irritability . . . It plainly shows that this Association at least contemplates achieving its objects by active persecution.\(^5\)

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1 Some other employers took advantage of the three-pronged attack on the union to re-assert their own authority. The Silkstone Fall company, for example, refused to negotiate with district deputations in their dispute over confiscations. See, S.Y.M.A. minutes, 20 March 1869; Barnsley Chronicle, 26 June 1869.

2 Some of the leading figures in the Denaby Main Colliery Co., also owned a pit at Altofts in West Yorkshire where they were reputed to have had a tight control over their men. See, for example, S.Y.M.A. minutes (Normansell's notes), 1 Feb. 1869.

3 See pp. 343-53.

4 The Times, 27 Jan. 1870.

5 Ibid.
The Evening Standard defended the principle of 'free labour', seeing in the Thorncliffe conflict that 'it is the birthright of the working man, to sell his labour which is at stake'.

Newton, Chambers and Co., economically competitive and full of Wesleyan fervour, no doubt echoed these fears. George Dawson, one of the partners in the enterprise, was privately convinced that both Normansell and Samuel Plimsoll M.P., a close associate of the latter, had contemplated an outrage a month or so before the event. At the beginning of the lockout, the firm, like the one at Denaby, saw the union, mistakenly perhaps, as a hindrance to more competitive trading. A letter was written to another colliery proprietor in February 1869, stating that they had instigated the lockout because the S.Y.M.A. was becoming 'a perpetual nuisance' and, if allowed to continue would be 'ruinous in its effects on capital employed'. Little had changed in this firm's attitude since 1864 when John Chambers put his name to a circular classing the union alongside 'Government inquisitorial interference and railway monopoly' as being among their 'numerous enemies', having 'a tendency to depreciate our property'. The newly formed Coal Owners Association was designed to fight these intrusions and Newton, Chambers and Co., were its dominant firm. The 1866 lockout at Thorncliffe, too, had been something of a test for the rights of unionism as Normansell recognised, and appeals went out from the firm to their former employes, advising them:


5 The *Barnsley Chronicle* (27 Jan. 1866) considered that the 'coalmasters' Association practically consists of Messrs Newton, Chambers and Co.'.

6 S.Y.M.A. minutes (Normansell's notes), 19 Feb. 1866.
not to be led away by a class of men who are guilty of making most gross and deliberate misstatements from time to time, and continuously keeping men in agitation to suit their own purposes. 1

Asked by the Trades Union Commissioners whether he found, in 1866 (his first joint negotiations with the S.Y.M.A. officials), them 'sensible, well intentioned men', John Chambers replied: 'No not in the onset', although 'I found that I could manage them tolerably well'. 2

In 1870, wiser counsels prevailed. The Barnsley Chronicle, for example, at the beginning of the lockouts of 1869, had high hopes of peace and harmony, having witnesses the 'sober and efficient policy and organisation of the S.Y.M.A.' 3 It went on:

The men of Tinsley and Denaby were forced into the union in consequence of the arbitrary and tyrannical conditions imposed by their employers, and the men of Thorncliffe are only strengthened in their adherence to union principles by the attempts of their employers to compel them to abandon these principles.

For a few years, apart from at the Fitzwilliam collieries and some of the smallest pits, the S.Y.M.A. was recognised as legitimate spokesman for the employees. The willingness of firms to submit issues to arbitration was an indication of such recognition. Even at places like Denaby, official opinion supported the moderate counsels of Normansell and Casey, being sure that 'if the men follow their advice, they would never get far wrong'. 4

In 1874, however, when the first major attack on wages for six years was made, the thinness of the joint counselling ice at some collieries was revealed by, for example, a

1 Barnsley Chronicle, 10 Feb. 1866.
2 R.C. on Trades Unions (1867-8), QQ 14534-5.
3 Barnsley Chronicle, 24 April 1869.
4 Ibid, 29 June 1872. The speaker was the viewer, Smith.
communication between William Stewart, owner of Lundhill (and chairman of the South Yorkshire Coal Owners Association) and F. Hartop, Fitzwilliam's manager.

Everything depends on united action ... If we fail, we may look for a long continuance of trouble from the men. If we succeed we shall have broken the neck of the union. 1

Yet the more public viewpoint was expressed by a colliery owner in the Sheffield Telegraph at the time:

I believe the large majority of the colliery owners of South Yorkshire would prefer the continuance of the Union under its present judicious management to any other state of things. 2

William Stewart was prominent among the contributors to the appeal for the support of Normansell's family after his death in 1875. 3

As has been suggested, the relationship between union and employer from the mid 1870s was more of a functional one, with most of the pretence of cordiality stripped away. The coalowners in general still needed the union's mediating capacity, but some were not averse to attempts to re-establish total control. In 1877, it was reported that the Denaby Main company and one or two others, were attempting to break up the union at their pits; 4 while elsewhere, in the 1880s, there were several refusals to treat with district delegations. 5

Some colliery proprietors exploited the divisions in the union of the early 1880s in order to avoid treating with Pickard. The chairman of John Brown and Co., in June 1885, turned down requests for a pit-head notice of a wage reduction in line with normal practice, because it implied recognition of the

1 S.C.L.; WWM T 29 d, Stewart to Bartop, 4 June 1874.
2 Sheffield Telegraph, 17 July 1874.
3 Midland and Northern Coal and Iron Trades Gazette, 5 Jan. 1876.
4 S.Y.M.A. minutes, 19 Feb. 1877.
5 Barnsley Chronicle, 18 Aug. 1883 (Wath Main) and 6 Oct. 1888 (Wharncliffe Silkstone).
Y.M.A. The company would have 'nothing to do with the miners' association and it wasn't fair to acquaint Pickard of their intentions and ignore other unions and non-union men'.¹ The proprietors of Wombwell Main were realistic about their attitude to the union in 1892. To talk of a 'cordial relationship is nonsense, it is a question of supply and demand, and any conditions brought in to upset this are unreal and imaginative'.²

Nevertheless, when it suited them, the coalowners made overtures to the unions. Two who had been hostile to the S.Y.M.A. in the 1860s, both enlisted the theoretical and practical support of the Y.M.A. when they were in trouble in the 1880s. Denaby's chairman, J.B.Pope, enmeshed in his struggle with the M.S. and L.R., claimed that it was the railway monopolies and not the trade unions that were damaging the country's trade;³ while, in 1888, Mrs. Clarke's manager wrote to William Parrott, enlisting his intervention in a dispute at his pit. 'I am writing this letter in the hope that you will use your influence with them before it is too late'.⁴ F.Parker Rhodes, secretary of the South Yorkshire Coalowners Association, put into words before the Royal Commission on Labour in 1892, what was already an accomplished fact (in the shape of a joint district negotiating committee): 'I think that the more you get the

¹ S.C.L., NCB 425, Aldwarke deputation notes.
³ Barnsley Chronicle, 17 Jan. 1885.
⁴ S.C.L., CR 113, Nash to Parrott, 22 Dec. 1888. He approached Parrott despite confidentially expressing his belief in the complicity of the district union in distorting earnings figures at the colliery before the strike, CR 113, Nash to Clarke, 12 Oct. 1889.
two parties into a condition to negotiate sensibly together, the more likely you are to avoid dispute'.

He was right of course, but the coalowners as a whole only used that option that the unions almost invariably held out to them when it appeared to them to be expedient. The three coalowners' associations of the period were aggressive organisations, the last two with large amounts of capital for their members' defence. But they were essentially unrepresentative; only about eighteen firms were members in 1860, about twenty two from South Yorkshire in 1879, and about twenty five in 1892. Only large pits had an effective voice (those producing over 100,000 tons per annum alone could vote in the association set up in 1874, for example). Naturally they appealed to the large limited companies whose directors were so often absent from the scene of operations. The firms of Newton, Chambers and Co., and John Brown and Co., were their standard bearers, while Davy of Manvers Main and Bainbridge of Wharncliffe Silkstone were seen by the Barnsley Chronicle in 1893 as 'ringleaders'. Yet an active role in these associations does not seem to have singled out its performer for particularly troubled industrial relations at the local level. Amongst the major voices in the Association of the 1880s and 1890s, only Manvers had even a moderately high local strike record. This evidence supports the contention that it was in day-to-day dealings at the pit and in the community at large that conflict arose or was dampened.

1 R.C. on Labour (1892 xxxiv), Q 8038.
2 They operated from 1860 to about 1876, from 1874 to 1884 and from 1884 onwards. See R.G.Neville, op.cit., p.94.
3 P.R.O., BT 31 2044; Sheffield Independent, 13 Nov. 1883.
4 F.Machin, op.cit., p.295; P.R.O., BT 31 2044; R.C. on Labour (1892 xxxiv), QQ 7834-5.
5 P.R.O., BT 31 2044.
6 Barnsley Chronicle, 15 July 1893.
and that local-based owners (as most of the active members of the Association were) were far better placed to monitor the mood of their miners and brief their managers accordingly. Two of the most powerful employers in South and West Yorkshire, Earl Fitzwilliam and the Charlesworths, remained aloof from the owners' association for some years, almost certainly benefiting from their disassociation from the worst aspects of their competitive philosophy. The Earl's attitude to industrial relations was unique and must be treated as a special case.

The Fitzwilliams' insistence on treating individually with their men without the interference either of local or district union delegations, or of directives from the coalowners associations, was so consistent that it can only be explained in terms of the survival of a sense of aristocratic superiority amid their keen interest in the most modern aspects of the coal industry. The 1844 struggle had seen the fifth Earl as critical of the 'mischievous' combination of coalowners as he was of 'those misguided men in the inferior ranks of society'.

Typical of the sixth Earl's attitude was his reply to John Normansell after the latter had delivered, by hand to his London residence, an apology from the Stubbin miners in the hope of ending a dispute at that pit:

I have to acknowledge the receipt of a letter forwarded to me by you from my workmen lately employed at the Low Stubbin Coal Pit, written at the recommendation of the South Yorkshire Miners' Association. However ready I may be to receive any direct communication from my workmen, I am not prepared to admit the intervention either of the South Yorkshire Miners' Association or any one else in the management of my affairs. Therefore I regret that I cannot give any further reply to the letter you placed in my hands.

1 Sheffield Independent, 7 Sept. 1844.
2 S.Y.M.A. minutes (Normansell's notes), 27 May 1873.
The Earl's attitude in disputes, both local and district, seem to have grown more hawkish from the early 1870s onwards, perhaps as second thoughts after relaxing his ban on union membership at his pits in 1872. In August 1874, he refused to be bound by the district wage adjustments made by the Coalowners' Association following their decision to submit the contentious 2 1/2% to arbitration. He claimed that the other employers had 'tied their own hands' by that decision and would be unable to reduce their wages for another three months. In 1875, during another dispute at Stubbin, he simply closed the pit and refused to negotiate, even with his own workmen, incurring the displeasure of the Barnsley Chronicle:

although an excellent employer his lordship has ideas of the relationship which ought to subsist between himself and his workpeople which, to say the least, are a century behind the age ... Lord Fitzwilliam, by his treatment of his miners during the last three or four years, has alienated from the party of which he is the nominal head in this district, the sympathy and support of hundreds of intelligent working men ... Instead of bowing to the inevitable increase in union intervention in wage and conditions bargaining after 1889, the Earl seems to have become even more entrenched in his opposition, and over-confident in the loyalties that bound his miners to him. At the end of the 1893 lockout, he wrote from Ireland, via the local press, to his workmen:

1 S.C.L., WWM T 29 (d), Fitzwilliam to Hartop, 4 Sept. 1874. See also T 29 (f), Notice to Stubbin workmen, 31 Aug. 1874.
2 Rotherham Advertiser, 11 Dec. 1875. Fitzwilliam's secretary wrote: 'a deputation such as you propose would be practically useless, there being no terms to arrange'.
3 Barnsley Chronicle, 11 Sept. 1875.
I am ... driven to believe that it was intimidation only which caused you to leave your work, and those who led you to do so are responsible for the whole of the suffering which you and your families have endured for so long.  

This suggestion was publicly denied by a large body of Elsecar miners. 2 It was not until 1910, however, during a strike at the New Elsecar Colliery, that the Y.M.A. was finally allowed to negotiate on behalf of the miners at the Fitzwilliam collieries. 3

The employers' offensive.

Resistance to the union's growing role in industrial decisionmaking was a rearguard and sometimes counter-productive defence of the traditional master-servant relationship. Many employers abandoned these tactics early on and resorted to less contentious means of control. There remained, however, several weapons in the coalowners' armouries which directly bolstered their crumbling authority, even, as will be shown in the next chapter, use of the weapons occasionally set off a violent reaction that posed some of the greatest threats to the status quo that this district witnessed in the period.

(a) The courts.

One of these weapons was honed by the Master and Servant Laws and to a lesser degree, by their successors under the Employer and Workmen Act. These laws were probably never so widely in use as in the first few years of the S.Y.M.A., employers often choosing to prosecute a handful of miners as a test case in the event of a mass walkout. The Charlesworths were at the forefront of this offensive in May 1858 when they

1 Ibid, 2 Dec. 1893.
2 Ibid, 18 Nov. 1893.
3 A.K. Clayton, Hoyland Nether, p. 84.
prosecuted three pit lads for refusing to work the number of hours they laid down.¹ This was a crucial challenge to a recent union victory and with W.P. Roberts, the radical attorney, as their defence counsel, the Warren Vale miners fought off the attack. But many other cases were lost. Clearly, a number of applications of these laws were no more than the assertion of the rights of contract over a mobile workforce in an industry notorious for its absenteeism, often (especially in times of high coal prices) with a sound economic rationale. But some employers were apt to use the mass or selective summons as a weapon against unofficial strike action. Of the firms in the study area, Denaby was probably the most prolific user of the law in this respect.²

Despite the support of the union's counsel in most important cases, the courts were still unfamiliar territory for most miners, dominated as they were by the employing class. Roberts in his defence of the three Warren Vale lads, pointed out to the magistrates at Rotherham the unfairness of the law that the Charlesworths were seeking to implement. One of the Charlesworth brothers was indeed a magistrate, but Roberts was referring to coalowners more generally when he asserted that they were

men belonging to your own order, sitting on the same bench, dining with you, hunting with you and meeting with you at all seasons . . . It is unheard of that parties, wishing to signalize their rights, select for that purpose the weakest member on whom they can lay their hands.³

¹ Rotherham Advertiser, 15 May 1858.
² See, for example, Rotherham Advertiser, 10 April 1875, when a whole shift was summoned for not attending work. The company was clearly the most persistent user of the courts amongst the South Yorkshire coalowners in the twenty-odd years after the end of the period; see R.G. Neville, op.cit., p.334.
³ Barnsley Chronicle, 15 May 1858.
Prosecutions under special and general colliery rules had a similar over-awing effect. Fines were harsh and imprisonment not uncommon,\(^1\) although the majority of cases probably never reached the courts.\(^2\) Viewers and deputies too, as we have seen, were often prosecuted for neglect. But a miner's redress for unfair dismissal or for damages due to others' neglect were extremely rare occurrences.\(^3\)

The line between an assertion of discipline and an attack on organisational advances or basic militancy among the miners by the employer, became an increasingly blurred one.

(b) Victimisation.

The South Yorkshire miners did have the option of voting with their feet after they had served their customary period of notice (usually two weeks). But their employers could peremptorily dismiss them on the slightest excuse. As the Clarke letter books reveal, dismissal was often for causes which reflected the employer's attitude towards his workmen.

Paternalism, as has been suggested,\(^4\) was not just about social security and fringe benefits, but also about interference in and control over diverse aspects of employees' lives. Just as the Pease partners in County Durham sought to enforce their temperance codes on their miners by sacking habitual drunkards,\(^4\) so too the Clarkes enforced their control over

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\(^2\) See S.C.L., NCB 983, Wombwell Main fines for breach of rules. Fighting, piercing the gauze of the safety lamps and taking pipes down the pit were the most common there.

\(^3\) J. Benson (op. cit., p.129) records only five cases of payments of damages under common law between 1860 and 1897.

their men by threatening or executing dismissal (often accompanied by eviction) for such conduct as absenteeism, the persistent questioning of price lists and wage rates, keeping livestock in their tied cottages, or trespassing on the colliery property after working hours. ¹

These were minor and individual cases of the assertion of authority and were not sufficient to antagonise the whole workforce or to gell the malcontents. This was more likely to happen if the dismissal was construed as an attack on unionism. The Barnsley Chronicle commented, after a dismissal notice was given to one of the union branch officials at Mitchell Main: 'There is nothing . . . that so excites the feelings of a mining community as a fancied case of injustice to one of its leaders'. ² Such cases became institutionalised by the practice of the union to grant financial support to men classed as 'victims'. Under a revised rule of 1881, they were defined thus: 'If a member or members be discharged from their employment because of adhering to the Yorkshire Miners' Association rules or for holding office' or for certain other duties connected with the union or for furthering its objects 'without interfering with the employers or the liberty of their fellow workmen' ³ then they would be granted support. It was, however, a defence with little chance of counter attack. Cases were carefully vetted and often rejected; ⁴ and there is little evidence of the pursual of the reasons for dismissal by the district union, except where a strike was threatened by the lodge itself.

¹ See Clarke MSS Letter Books. There were several letters referring to the backgrounds of men asking for employment, implying the existence of a vetting process.

² Barnsley Chronicle, 7 and 14 June 1890.

³ Y.M.A. records, Rules 1881, No.68.

⁴ Normansell asked the lodge to be careful in returning cases in June 1868 (S.Y.M.A. minutes, 22 June) and in July, pay was limited to a maximum of 13 weeks (minutes 6 July). Cases would not be considered unless forwarded within seven days of dismissal, R.G.Neville, op.cit., p.888.
The most frequent cause of 'victimisation' was the dismissal of men for refusing to work at what they considered an unfairly altered contract (reduced prices, longer hours or in uncompensated abnormal places, for example)\(^1\) or through fear for their own or their workmates' safety.\(^2\) As such, the grievances were similar to those which, if collectively felt, might have escalated into strike action. The support of victims by the union thus had the effect of localising the grievance and avoiding a major dispute. The suppression of such affairs, however, was less likely if the dismissal was implicitly anti-union. This was self-evident if it took place on a mass scale, such as at Denaby in 1875\(^3\) and at Houghton in 1885,\(^4\) although Fitzwilliam's discriminatory dismissals during and after disputes rarely provoked more than an exchange of correspondence between the district union and the Earl, as late as 1892.\(^5\)

More common than the mass dismissal was the isolation of individual activists. The secretaries at Oaks, Thorncliffe and Mount Osborne in 1860,\(^6\) the branch chairman at Denaby in 1885\(^7\) and the whole committee at Monk Bretton in 1887\(^8\) (followed by the chairman and delegate in 1890),\(^9\) are cases in point, as was that of Deakin at Mitchell Main which was

1 S.Y.M.A. minutes, 27 April 1868 (Strafford), 10 March 1873 (Strafford) and 10 Dec. 1877 (Manvers).
2 *Barnsley Chronicle*, 10 Nov. 1888.
3 *Rotherham Advertiser*, 29 May 1875.
4 *Barnsley Chronicle*, 12 Sept. 1885.
5 Ibid, 2 April 1892. See also *Rotherham Advertiser*, 18 Dec. 1858.
7 Ibid, 26 Sept. 1885.
8 Ibid, 4 June 1887.
9 Ibid, 1 Nov. 1890.
mentioned above. But as the official data on disputes reveals, few of these incidents alone provoked strike action. Even the ejection of checkweighmen (who were often branch officials too) often failed to goad the district into granting official support.\(^1\) It is very likely, though, that victimisation, especially of active unionists, was an indirect or publicly understated cause of a large number of local strikes as well as the direct cause of a number of short unofficial strikes. The district union preferred to emphasise the monetary aspects of disputes as by this means, a compromise could more easily be reached. There were no publicised cases of reinstatement, although the evicted Vaughan was retained in Earl Fitzwilliam's employ after the dispute at Stubbin in 1873.\(^2\)

Collectively, it was the large joint stock collieries which returned the largest number of victims. An analysis of these cases between 1866 and 1879 (the longest uninterrupted run of publicised returns) for the union lodges in the parishes of Swinton (with Kilnhurst), Silkstone and Dodworth (with Stainborough),\(^3\) shows that the three most victimised workforces were at large limited liability, outside-owned pits, which also happen to be among the most dispute-prone in the district:

\(^1\) For example at Oaks, Denaby, Edmunds and Silkstone Fall which have been referred to already; and at Hoyland Silkstone (Barnsley Chronicle, 4 Sept. 1880), Monk Bretton (Barnsley Chronicle, 4 June 1881) and Cortonwood (Barnsley Chronicle, 11 Feb. 1882).

\(^2\) See p. 165.

\(^3\) Victims were returned by lodges; and therefore the problems noted above in linking pits to lodges are relevant here. Swinton township had no large pits within its boundaries, but the Thrybergh Hall and Manvers Main collieries are mentioned here in connection with this township.
Strafford Main, Manvers Main and Church Lane. By contrast, locally-owned, low striking pits – Clarke's Old Silkstone collieries, Wentworth Silkstone and Hallroyd – returned few victims. The same was true of the Charlesworth pits on the edge of Swinton, which had a moderately low dispute record and where relations were reputed to be good. In the 1880s too, Strafford Main was singled out as being among the worst collieries for victimisation; while Denaby Main, Church Lane, Monk Bretton, and Oaks also suffered more than most.

To a certain extent, the phenomenon was endemic in large impersonal pits where much authority was delegated to men who perhaps did not have the continuity of production as their prime objective. This was the same if we look at the wider causes of strikes. Victimisation was both a cause and a symptom of discontent aggravated by poor channels of communication. It was also an effective means of removing troublemakers which was the explicit intention of the widespread use of the clearance note – a tactic that went hand in hand with discriminatory dismissals. This form of blacklisting was in use at least from the early 1850s, despite the lack of co-operation between employers in other respects. It emerged, especially, during the disputes of 1858 and 1860, the Thorncliffe lockout of 1866 and other local

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1 Strafford – 28; Manvers – 23; Church Lane – 18.
2 Clarke's – 12; Wentworth Silkstone – 12; Hallroyd – 6.
3 Thrybergh Hall, a large pit which operated throughout the period 1866 to 1879, returned only six victims.
4 Y.M.A. Annual Report 1883; Barnsley Chronicle, 23 March 1889 and 19 July 1890.
5 See, for example, S.Y.M.A. minutes (Frith's notes), 12 June 1876; Barnsley Chronicle, 23 July 1887.
7 Rotherham Advertiser, 4 Dec. 1858 (Charlesworths).
8 Barnsley Chronicle, 7 July 1860 (New Gawber).
9 Ibid, 3 Feb. 1866.
disputes. It was also used to frustrate the progress of notorious local activists, as Rymer's early life testified. Here was a potentially powerful weapon but one which could not have been effective on a mass scale, especially in times of labour shortage. The fact that a good proportion of locked out or striking miners would relinquish their right to union support in the course of a dispute, implied that many found work elsewhere.

(c) Evictions and blacklegs.

We have seen how evictions often accompanied the more lengthy strikes at pits where some of the miners' houses were owned by the employers. It seems likely that these communally shared experiences not only jeopardised employer-employee relations at those pits, but also helped to weld a heightened sense of labour consciousness, shared in several of the incidents by members of the local non-mining community. Nowhere was this more apparent than at Denaby, where evictions created a great deal of sympathy for the miners in the communities of Mexborough, Denaby Main and Conisborough. The support of local groups and institutions was mustered to relieve the hardship faced by the miners' families. In 1885, for example, relief was organised by a radical Congregationalist minister, T. J. Leslie, aided by the local curate at Denaby, T. Horsfall. Families were billeted in chapels, the Salvation Army Hall, and local homes. Furniture was stored in farmers' barns and many local tradesmen provided free food or generous credit. Earlier, in 1869, the local glassbottlemakers had provided indispensable support in the form of food and of contingents of pickets. There were

1 Mexborough and Swinton Times, 2 Aug. 1878 (Manvers). See also Barnsley Chronicle, 12 March 1887 (Y.M.A. Annual Report 1886/7).
2 E. A. Rymer, op. cit.
3 Barnsley Chronicle, 11 and 18 April, 9 May 1885.
4 See p. 451.
similar scenes at Oaks in 1860 and 1864. Far from overawing the miners, eviction for short periods in the summer carried with it something of a carnival atmosphere. As the Barnsley Chronicle commented in 1864, the Oaks miners were 'old veterans' at eviction; 'they knew what camp life was and they were quite ready to renew it'.

Evictions served another purpose for the employers, other than yet another sanction against a troublesome labour force. They cleared company houses for a potential influx of new 'blackleg' labour, which, if it succeeded, must have heightened the evictees sense of dispossession, especially in occupationally homogeneous little mining villages like Denaby Main. Scrutiny of the local press and the local union records reveals that the importing of blackleg labour on a significant scale during strikes and lockouts was confined almost exclusively to collieries where housing was owned by the firm. Moreover, nearly all such firms at some time or other did import blacklegs, usually preceded by evictions. This might seem like a truism, but it is an important point to stress, for it is a significant one for our understanding of the conduct of strikes and lockouts in this district and, particularly, the ability of very few owners to function economically during disputes.

The three greatest exponents of the lockout in the period were Newton, Chambers and Co., the Denaby Main Colliery Co., and Firth, Barber and Co., (the owners of the Oaks in the 1860s). All three imported labour on a mass scale and all three evicted. Newton, Chambers and Co., it is true, had only a limited stock of housing; but it was mainly the Tankersley pit that had to be manned during the lockouts (the other large pit, Thorncliffe Drift, being operated by non-unionists), and it was here that housing was hastily built in 1869 for the incoming labour.

1 Barnsley Chronicle, 14 May 1864.
There were three publicised exceptions to the blackleg-company housing duality. Two are not really significant. The Charlesworths at Warren Vale were recruiting during the 1858 disputes, but it was reported to be local farm labour, presumably with little need for new accommodation. The other minor example was that of a small pit at Darton belonging to a local proprietor, Henry Lodge, which was said to have been filled with new labour during a strike. The numbers involved here were probably too small to have caused accommodation problems. The third case was that of the company at Church Lane which imported labour during the 1877 riddle strike and, because of the acute shortage of housing in the neighbourhood (the company owned little or none themselves) they billeted their recruits in the colliery offices. This strategy, however, fell foul of the occasionally vigilant Dodworth Board of Health who demanded an end to the practice on health grounds; but, by then, many of the old miners had drifted away, making their homes vacant in the process.

This constraint on employers' power to replace locked out labour forces undoubtedly had an important effect on industrial relations in the district, restricting the length of strikes and lockouts and ensuring that a large proportion of the miners would return to their employers after the trial of strength. As Table 10 showed, most disputes lasted under four weeks. On the other hand, most of those collieries at which 'total confrontations' - implying the mass import of blacklegs and often evictions too - occurred, had the worst records of labour relations in the coalfield. The exceptions were the local owners - the Clarkes and Newton, Chambers and Co., - who blended these rigid controls with a more amenable variety of paternalist gestures and benefits.

1 Barnsley Chronicle, 4 Dec. 1858; Rotherham Advertiser, 11 Dec. 1858.
2 Barnsley Chronicle, 25 April 1868.
3 Ibid, 17 Nov. 1877.
On the whole, the imported labour policy did not achieve its object, unless it was intimidation that was intended. But this was not through lack of effort. Several employers hired agents to recruit in the main donor areas—especially Staffordshire\(^1\)—often with the pretence that no conflict was in progress.\(^2\) The fact that these areas mostly had lower wage norms (in the coal industry at least) was enough to attract men at existing or even lower wages.\(^3\) But some employers, like Firth, Barber and Co.,\(^4\) initially were prepared to offer higher wages than those offered to their old employees in a determined effort to replace them. Paternalistic inducements, such as free beer, tobacco and playing cards, were another ploy.\(^5\) But despite these efforts, employers' success in filling the collieries, even temporarily, was rare. Bearing in mind the tendency to exaggerate, it does seem from the surviving union records that both the quantity and quality of new recruits was insufficient to maintain the pits at an economically viable

\(^{1}\) North Staffs and the Walsall area were favoured by Denaby in 1885 (Mexborough and Swinton Times, 1 May 1885; Barnsley Chronicle, 11 July 1885). Church Lane recruited in South Staffs in 1886 (Barnsley Chronicle, 2 Oct. 1886); Woolley in the Bilston area in 1861 (Barnsley Chronicle, 30 March 1861); Robert Clarke also in Bilston in 1869 (S.C.L., CR 154); Oaks in Staffs. and Notts. in 1864 (Barnsley Chronicle, 28 June 1864). Other areas included Wales (Wharncliffe Silkstone in 1859) and 'the North' (Newton, Chambers and Co., in 1866).

\(^{2}\) See, for example, Barnsley Chronicle, 13 March 1869.

\(^{3}\) For example, at Church Lane, the newcomers were working at 6d to 8d a ton less than the figure the strikers had turned down, Barnsley Chronicle, 11 Jan. 1879.

\(^{4}\) Ibid, 28 June 1864.

\(^{5}\) Rotherham Advertiser, 20 Nov. 1858; Barnsley Chronicle, 13 March 1869; S.C.L., CR 154.
level of production.¹ This was certainly true of Denaby (except in the later stages of the 1885 dispute), and Oaks; and even Newton, Chambers and Co., had some difficulty.² Monk Bretton and Church Lane seem to have been more successful, probably because of the large surplus of labour that had built up in all the coalfields at the time of the disputes in question.

Again taking account of an element of exaggeration and optimism in union reports, it does seem that organisation and vigilance on the part of the local and district union was mostly responsible for frustrating the plans of the importing employers. During the 1866 Thorncliffe lockout, notices were circulated 'in the North', warning potential recruits of the firm's subterfuge in not disclosing their name when advertising for labour.³ In 1869, a union agent was sent to Bilston in Staffordshire to publicise the lockouts in progress in South Yorkshire and to persuade the miners there to stay away.⁴ Those recruits who reached South Yorkshire were often met by a reception committee of unionists and their supporters and persuaded by various methods to return. The union was

¹ The newcomers were often depicted by the unionists as being half savage; for example, the Staffs. men bound for Denaby in 1869 were described as 'men with one arm, one leg, and one eye with not a shoe on their feet, or a clog either, who did not know what it was to lie upon a comfortable bed'. (Barnsley Chronicle, 20 March 1869).

² In June 1869, there were said to be only about twenty blacklegs at Newton Chambers' (Barnsley Chronicle, 26 June 1869). A year later, near the end of the lockout, the union's estimate was '333 plus a few at Norfolk', including the non-unionists who had not been involved in the lockout, Barnsley Chronicle, 9 July 1870. The production at Tankersley colliery was running at about half the normal rate and the coal was sent out unriddled.

³ Cusworth Hall, Newton Chambers MSS, Trades Disputes File, Notice, March 1866.

⁴ S.Y.M.A. minutes, 1 March 1869.
prepared to pay their rail fares home and presumably for the suppers and beer that was often provided as extra inducement. These incidents were usually free from violence: a large, organised reception committee on 'foreign soil' was usually intimidation enough for the newcomers.

Once blackleg miners had established themselves and their families in work and accommodation, however, far more intense pressure on the part of the local unionists was necessary to remove them or to dissuade further additions, especially if they were guaranteed the protection of the police (as was often the case). Violence was the miners' last weapon on these rare occasions which threatened both the local miners' livelihood and, ultimately, the continued existence of the union as an effective institution.

1 They would not do this for some of the Newton Chambers blacklegs who left after the disturbances at Westwood Row in January 1870 (S.Y.M.A. minutes, 31 Jan. 1870).

2 There were isolated cases of assault of blacklegs on arrival, at Birdwell, for example, (Barnsley Chronicle, 5 Nov. 1859).

3 At Thorncliffe in 1870, and at several collieries in 1893, the military also provided protection.
CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Violence in Disputes

(and Conclusion on Pit-based Labour Relations).
(a) General occurrences.

Violence and intimidation in disputes seems to have been almost entirely directed against blackleg labour. Exceptions were isolated attacks on colliery premises, assaults on colliery officials or their property,¹ and the escalation of mass picketing into violence in the 1893 lockout. There were also assaults during strikes and lockouts involving two or three parties (including the victim) at pits which did not seem to be employing blacklegs. These were usually early in the period,² indicating that at this time strikes were not always 100% solid. These latter types of attack tended to be the most violent, often resulting in serious injury.

Mass or repeated clashes, however, were confined almost exclusively to the pits where blackleg labour had been recruited; and, in fact, were an attendant feature of the majority of the disputes at such places. They were, moreover, as likely to occur at the end of the period as at the beginning (or at any other stage). The three collieries which witnessed the most violence were, not surprisingly, those which were involved in lockouts twice or more: Oaks, Denaby Main, and the Tankersley colliery of Newton, Chambers and Co.

At the Oaks colliery, there were disturbances in 1856, when about 100 special constables were sworn in after attacks on blacklegs and the house of the underviewer.³ The neighbourhood quietened down, however, when the pit was closed for the duration of the strike. In 1858, blacklegs' houses at Hoyle Mill (owned by the Oaks proprietors) were singled out for special attention with painted crosses⁴ and, a few weeks later, were stormed by a stone-throwing mob.⁵

¹ See p. 291.
² For example, at Edmunds Main, Barnsley Chronicle, 10 Nov. 1860.
³ Barnsley Times, 26 July 1856.
⁴ Sheffield Independent, 28 Aug. 1858.
⁵ Ibid, 2 Oct. 1858.
after the employers had insisted on recruiting more. In 1864, the story was similar. After two days of rioting, several miners and their wives were given short prison sentences for offensive behaviour, assault and riot.1

If the Denaby miners had not been new to the district and the Oaks miners had not been wiped out in the disaster of 1866, we might have said that the former had learnt their tactics from the others. In the 1869 lockout, the blacklegs' houses were similarly identified and the newcomers suffered daily barracking on their journeys to and from work.2 Just over a month after the beginning of the lockout, this behaviour escalated into a mass assault with missiles on the colliery houses, despite the presence of police.3 Several other individual assaults followed, more than one involving a notoriously provocative non-unionist named Martin O'Malley, dubbed 'King of the Blacks' by the locked out miners. O'Malley, strangely enough, was no inarticulate rough culled from one of the out-of-the-way Midlands mining villages, as the S.Y.M.A. liked to portray most of the other blacklegs. He had been an occasional correspondent in the Miner and Workman's Advocate, in 1863, writing from South Staffordshire about, among other things, the prejudice he found exercised against the Irish by his fellow miners,4 and the iniquities of the butty system.5 By mid 1864, he had become involved with the Towers group, and defended one of the MacDonaldites' opponents (A.O. Tibbott, later one of Rymer's South Yorkshire republicam colleagues) against Brown and Holmes, the West Yorkshire leaders.6 By this time O'Malley was living in Yorkshire where his views

1 Rotherham Advertiser, 23 July 1864; Barnsley Chronicle, 30 July 1864.
2 Sheffield Independent, 3 April 1869.
3 Ibid, 13 April 1869.
4 Miner and Workman's Advocate, 22 Aug. 1863.
5 Ibid, 10 Oct. 1863.
would have excluded him, like Rymer and Tibbott, from union office. Normansell and MacDonald were in no doubt in 1869 who he was. They triumphantly used the example of his resort to nihilistic tactics\(^1\) (through frustration, revenge or whatever cause or motive we might like to ascribe) to publicly expose the downfall of the Practical Miners Association 'which has long since disappeared amid their tools'.\(^2\)

O'Malley was clearly being used by the employers at Denaby as a form of agent provocateur, and his antics did succeed in getting two miners convicted for assault, with sentences of ten months apiece.\(^3\) But this did not deter the lockouts from keeping up their pressure, aided by the local glass workers; and the company's object of filling the pit with new labour was never remotely near being achieved.

In 1881, during a short strike at Denaby, blacklegs were stoned and a policeman prevented from making an arrest and 'persuaded' not to draw his truncheon. As in 1869, the women were 'very boisterous, and, rearing themselves up - many with babes in their arms, they vowed that the "blacksheep" should feel their vengeance'.\(^4\) Although the police had no qualms about arresting women for assault or, as in 1864 at the Oaks, under the Vagrancy Acts, it was clearly a tactical decision to have them at the forefront of a picket as any counter-attack by the blackleg miners would have given the locked out men an excuse for meting out less restrained treatment.

In 1885, the early stages of the dispute were peaceful, despite the evictions, in accordance with resolutions passed

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\(^1\) He had also been a blackleg during another South Yorkshire strike and had been in gaol for perjury. See Glasgow Sentinel, 1 May 1869.

\(^2\) Ibid,

\(^3\) Barnsley Chronicle, 29 May 1869.

\(^4\) Mexborough and Swinton Times, 28 Jan. 1881.
at pit meetings.\(^1\) The employers were finding it difficult to get men to fill the pit and many of the new recruits returned the way they came, as in 1869.\(^2\) Summonses for intimidation, however were issued against several men including two branch officials\(^3\) and, although no violence had been committed, they were bound over to keep the peace, an imposition which might have effectively muzzled these men.\(^4\) Early in July, however, six months after the beginning of the strike, the company managed to recruit some Staffordshire men who decided to stay.\(^5\) The striking miners resorted to firmer persuasion. As the Mexborough and Swinton Times put it, 'Discouraged at losing ground, the men retaliated by riotous tactics'.\(^6\) The blacklegs, the colliery itself and the police were all the objects of assault by a number of men who were further goaded on by the shooting of a fellow unionist by one of the blacklegs.\(^7\) Several men who were said to have 'acted with the utmost deliberation' in marching to the pit,\(^8\) were committed for trial, including Cooper the branch treasurer and others who had been bound over in May. He and three others were given four months detention for unlawfully wounding.\(^9\) There seemed no doubt in the company's and the judiciary's minds that here was an attempt at mischief, premeditated and organised by a few ringleaders.

\(^1\) Barnsley Chronicle, 11 April 1885.  
\(^2\) Ibid, 23 May 1885.  
\(^3\) Ibid, 16 May 1885.  
\(^4\) Mexborough and Swinton Times, 29 May 1885.  
\(^5\) Barnsley Chronicle, 11 July 1885.  
\(^6\) Mexborough and Swinton Times, 1 Jan. 1886.  
\(^7\) Ibid, 17 July 1885.  
\(^8\) Ibid, 14 Aug. 1885.  
\(^9\) Ibid.
As far as this 'mischief' was a determined attempt to frighten the blacklegs and their families into leaving - the essential object of virtually all violence in colliery disputes - they were near the mark.

(b) Thorncliffe 1869-70.

The 1866 lockout at Newton Chambers' collieries produced a number of assaults and a major disturbance outside the house of Henry Cooke, a part-time miner/publicam turned blackleg. The crowd, on this occasion, had been mustered, according to John Chambers, by a group of men including one blowing a horn, at five a.m. Again, a pre-meditated plan was assumed. Six men were given one or two month sentences for breach of the peace.

The 1869-70 lockout, however, provoked what was arguably the most serious threat to civil order in the district throughout this period. The lockout began quietly, but in late April 1869, there were clashes at High Green and Chapeltown, where the station was besieged. William Chappell (then one of the Thorncliffe lodge secretaries) tried to play the incident down, considering it as no more than 'a lark'. But as the year progressed, the increasing influx of blackleg miners needed police escorts as, in the management's opinion, 'The whole neighbourhood is in a state of constant terror'. Rumours of an impending riot in October, fed by news of threatening letters received by senior Newton Chambers personnel, convinced the firm that the eighteen armed police

1 Barnsley Chronicle, 3 Feb. 1866.
2 R.C. on Trades Unions (1867-8), Q 14654
3 Barnsley Chronicle, 1 May 1869.
5 Sheffield Telegraph, 23 Oct. 1869.
6 Cusworth Hall, Newton Chambers MSS, Trades Disputes File, Dawson and Newton to Fitzwilliam, 12 Jan, 1870.
were an inadequate guard and motivated Spencer Stanhope, the senior magistrate in the district, to ask the Home Secretary for a military detachment. 1 This was declined, although troops at Sheffield were put on alert. Two days after Stanhope wrote to the Home Office, what many saw as the anticipated riot took place. A mob of about seventy miners approached one set of the cottages in Westwood, built to house the blacklegs and their families, but were turned away by the police. Meanwhile, a large crowd of about 200 'threatened' to march on the pit at Tankersley in what the firm regarded as a pre-concerted attack. 2 The locked out miners claimed, however, that these movements were no more than a crowd of fellow lockouts from Huntsman's pits at Tinsley, arriving for a joint meeting at nearby Thorpe Hesley Primitive Methodist Chapel. 3

The firm's fears were not allayed. On December 4th, their solicitors wrote to the Home Office:

Our clients received secret information some two months ago of what was intended. Men from other collieries in the district, whose faces were unknown at Thorncliffe, were to come, as if casually, and concentrate on the new houses. And this attempt was actually made shortly after; but some-one had observed an unusual number of men armed with sticks all making their way in the direction of Thorncliffe, and the alarm was given and the undertaking nipped in the bud. 4

The attack, they were convinced, would come again. It was 'openly talked of'. The privations suffered by the lockouts and the impatience of miners' unionists elsewhere were said to be 'working up the passions of the people to such a pitch that however desirous the leaders of the union may be to avoid a

1 P.R.O., HO 45 os 8370, Stanhope to Home Secretary, 19 Oct. 1869.
2 Sheffield Telegraph, 23 Oct. 1869.
3 Ibid.
4 P.R.O., HO 45 os 8370, Burbeary and Smith to Home Secretary, 4 Dec. 1869.
breach of the peace, they will be unable to prevent it'.

(This incidentally, was a rare recognition of the value of the union from such an anti-union firm.) The letter concluded by asking for a detachment of troops to guard the colliery, convinced that if the attack came 'the men in the houses will fight for their lives and those of their families - and long before any military can be brought from Sheffield - irreparable mischief and bloodshed will have been wrought.' Why such a bloody attack should have been contemplated by a normally quiet and good-natured workforce was perceptively analysed at the beginning of the letter.

Our clients have never had any difficulty in obtaining hands from other districts. Their difficulty has been in finding lodging and house room for the hands. To remedy this they have recently built 50 cottages - portion of which are actually occupied - and the remainder are rapidly approaching completion. It is well known that if the men who come from other districts are allowed to occupy these houses without molestation, Messrs Mewton, Chambers and Co. will be able to carry on their collieries without the unionist men. Hence the object is to destroy the houses, and so beat and terrify the occupants that no-one will dare to take work again under our clients in opposition to the union.

Another clash with the blacklegs occurred near the Tankersley pit on December 10th, but was put down by the police. But the attack that everyone had been waiting for came on Friday, January 7th. Police, strategically placed and able to scrutinise the faces of men approaching all the pits, recognised small parties of outsiders and alerted their headquarters. Meanwhile, a crowd had formed which made for the houses in Westwood, but then headed off to the Tankersley

1 Ibid.
2 Ibid.
   Five men were charged with riotous proceedings.
4 Sheffield Telegraph, 10 Jan. 1870.
pit where they destroyed the cage (rendering the pit temporarily inoperative) before escaping when the police arrived. The blacklegs, meanwhile, had armed themselves with 'revolvers and bowie knives' and as the Sheffield Telegraph asserted, 'there is not the slightest doubt that they are prepared to use them'.

Far from being put off by the perceived failure of the attack of the 7th and by the danger of bloodshed, the local miners seem to have redrawn their plans. Sykes, the Barnsley police superintendent wrote to Newton, Chambers and Co., on January 9th telling them that 'from information I have just received', the unionists intended to meet one morning, smash the headgear at Tankersley and nearby Newbegin pits, thus stranding the blacklegs underground. They would then make for the Westwood Rows, drive out the families and destroy their property.

The attack on Friday, January 21st bore out the validity of his evidence. A crowd assembled at about 6.30 a.m. in Tankersley Park and moved off towards Tankersley, where, however, they were driven away by a number of police, reinforced after the assembling crowd had been sighted.

The crowd, by then about 400 strong, made for the Westwood Rows where, in fifteen minutes' rioting, most of the houses had their glass and window frames smashed and bedding and other belongings destroyed or stolen. They then made a second assault on the pit but were thwarted by the advancing police. A skirmish followed in which police used cutlasses. One man was arrested and another badly wounded and arrested in his home in the yard at Wharncliffe Silkstone.

1 Ibid,
2 P.R.O., HO 45 os 8370, Sykes to Newton, Chambers and Co., 9 Jan. 1870.
3 Barnsley Chronicle, 22 Jan. 1870; P.R.O., HO 45 os 8370, Dixon to Home Secretary, 22 Jan. 1870.
4 Barnsley Chronicle, 29 Jan. 1870.
This incident, apart from virtually being a foiled carbon copy of the rumoured attack, showed other signs of being well conceived and organised. The 'various detachments of men arrived at the entrance to Tankersley Park almost simultaneously'. Their faces were blackened or they wore masks. Local witnesses agreed that most of the assailants were miners from other pits 'some ... being at least 7 miles apart'. The Times declared:

There is good evidence to show that some hundreds of the men belonging to the Oaks, Darley Main, Edmunds Main, Swaith and Denaby collieries were stopped by leaders as they were going to work on Friday morning and marched off to destroy the houses of the non-unionists and also the colliery works.

The Barnsley Chronicle claimed that six pits in the Worsborough area had to be closed for the day owing to so many of their miners being absent. Of the twenty two men later committed for trial at York for their part in the disturbances, all were 'in good work' at other pits and none had ever worked at Newton Chambers. Most came from Worsborough, but also from Wombwell, Hoyland, Pilley, Barnsley and Denaby (and there was even a grinder from Sheffield involved in a follow-up attack on the Sunday following).

1 Ibid.
2 P.R.O., HO 45 os 8370, Dixon to Home Secretary, 22 Jan. 1870.
3 The Times, 24 Jan. 1870. The involvement of men from one pit in the dispute of another was not uncommon; see, for example, Barnsley Chronicle, 18 July 1885 (Manvers miner at Denaby), Barnsley Chronicle, 22 June 1878 (miners from Worsborough and Hoyland attacking Church Lane blackleg), Mexborough and Swinton Times, 14 Dec. 1877 (miners from Rawmarsh also involved at Church Lane).
4 Barnsley Chronicle, 16 Feb. 1893.
5 P.R.O., HO 45 os 8370, Marsdon to Home Secretary, 14 March 1870.
7 Ibid, 29 Jan. 1870.
Many of these men had gone to their respective pits early on Friday morning to establish alibis, and in their trial, called over 500 defence witnesses.

The Times assumed that this was part of the strategy: men from outside would be less easily recognised and only 'a select number of Thorncliffe men, who were to act as pioneers' took part. The police agreed that 'some of the ringleaders were known to be connected with the Thorncliffe men', but could not prove that any had been employed there. The unionists among Newton Chambers' lockouts put out a statement 'to the effect that the riot was organised without their knowledge or consent, and that not more than a dozen of the most disaffected of their number took any part whatsoever in the proceedings'. That the police and the firm had better information than the lockouts about the impending attack is, however, very unlikely. While locked out these men had close connections with other unionists in, for example, the distribution of relief. They must have been fully aware of plans to attack the colliery, especially as it was organised on such a large scale. That they did not fully agree to the attack is perhaps nearer the mark. They may well have wanted support in intimidating the blacklegs, but an all-out confrontation with the authorities on their home territory might have led to serious repercussions had they been suspected of implication. The men from Worsborough, on the other hand, had every reason to become involved. The lockout at Newton Chambers' had lasted for over nine months and there were increasing signs of the firm's ability to do without their old employees. More blacklegs than ever were employed

1 Ibid, 19 Feb. 1870.
2 P.R.O., HO 45 os 8370, Marsden to Home Secretary, 14 March 1870.
3 The Times, 24 Jan. 1870.
4 Barnsley Chronicle, 29 Jan. 1870.
5 Ibid.
with little effective resistance from the lockouts themselves. A company victory at Newton Chambers' might have proliferated and would have destroyed the balance of job control achieved since 1858. The tactics, if not the strategy, were probably taken out of the lockouts' hands.

The attack of the 21st, moreover, had overtones of the type of calculated planning one might have expected from parties less directly affected by the lockout than the Thorncliffe men. The Sheffield Telegraph, like the employers, were aware, after the early January attack, of the objectives:

*It is well known fact that in many instances where violence has been inflicted on colliers working at places where strikes have been in existence, that their labour has been stopped, and that others have not dared to go to the place for fear of similar injury being done to them.*

The assailants on the 21st, however, were probably aware of the risks involved in a pitch battle with armed blacklegs (a few of the assailants were said to have carried firearms too) and they seem to have decided that damage to their property and homes was sufficient intimidation as well as frustrating to the firm's plans to accommodate them. The assault on the Westwood houses involved a minimum of violence to the people inside. Several blacklegs did in fact leave the district with their families after another skirmish on Sunday 23rd.

*The Times* concluded: 'Looking at the whole of the circumstances of the attack, one is irresistibly drawn to the

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1 *Sheffield Telegraph*, 10 Jan. 1870.
3 Although one woman died later of shock (ibid). The three men given the longest prison sentences were convicted of 'unlawfully rioting and damaging property' not of assault, *Barnsley Chronicle*, 11 June 1870.
conclusion that there must have been a central committee who planned and directed all that occurred'. 1 If this was true, it begs the questions of who composed that 'committee' and how near to the union machinery they were. Certainly, the S.Y.M.A. had everything to lose by implication in the assaults. Not surprisingly, it put out a statement deploping the riotous proceedings which took place at Thorncliffe on Friday morning last . . . such conduct will do more injury to the cause of the men locked-out than anything our worst enemies can do against us. 2

The Times took care to emphasise that one of the arrested men, Joseph Yardley, was a branch official at Wharncliffe Silkstone. 3 But no other connection could be drawn. The Sheffield Telegraph exonerated the local and district unions from blame for the assault of the 7th. 'The leaders of the union stationed at High Green and the Warren were not aware that any attack on the dwellings of the "knobsticks" was mediated'. 4 One of them (possibly either William Chappell or Edwin Somerset), moreover, got a telegram (presumably from the district union executive) when the Barnsley police were dispatched:

His instructions were to stop the men from entering upon any lawless undertaking. The man to his credit, started upon his errand . . . To his influence is to be attributed in a great measure, the abstaining by many of the colliers from any brutal acts of violence. 5

This phenomenon was explained by the Sheffield Telegraph by outlining a popular contemporary dichotomy:

Amongst these men there are two sections, one, than whom a more respectable and well-disposed set of persons there is not to be found, and the other a shade rougher in character and less averse to being a little turbulent. 6

1 The Times, 24 Jan. 1870.
2 S.Y.M.A. minutes, 24 Jan. 1870.
3 The Times, 24 Jan. 1870.
4 Sheffield Telegraph, 10 Jan. 1870.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
Was this a fair explanation of distinctions between those who took part in or sympathised with the disturbances and those who did not? The argument was weakened by the fact that, later in the dispute, both William Chappell and Edwin Somerset, the two lodge secretaries, fell on the wrong side of the law for the same 'turbulence' that had been attributed to the 'less respectable' section of the workforce. Chappell, as we have seen, was prosecuted for criminal libel, while Somerset was arraigned for assault and threatening language against two blacklegs. Both men, however, retained connections with the union, Chappell achieving district office and Somerset returning as checkweighman at Newton Chambers (despite some opposition from within the firm) and to his branch post.

There seems little doubt where the loyalties of working class people in the neighbourhood of Thorncliffe lay. When the question of using the civil power open to them arose in October 1869, Newton, Chambers and Co., recognised the barriers they were up against:

The whole district immediately surrounding Thorncliffe is inhabited by families deriving their support from Thorncliffe Collieries and Ironworks... The great majority are either Unionists or are in favour of the unions. To talk of swearing in special constables under these circumstances is like mockery.

Earl Fitzwilliam, the Lord Lieutenant, expressed a similar opinion even after the riots. He wrote to the Home Secretary: 'I must not conceal from you that among the class from which the bulk of the special constables would be drawn there exists considerable sympathy with the unionists, consequently with the rioters.' Three men, Beevor, Darley and Tipping, were

1 See p. 124; Barnsley Chronicle, 23 July 1870.
2 He was discharged with a caution, Rotherham Advertiser, 25 June 1870.
3 Cusworth Hall, Newton Chambers MSS, Dawson's diary, 19 Aug. 1870.
4 P.R.O., HO 45 os 8370, Burbearry and Smith to Home Secretary, 4 Dec. 1869.
5 Ibid, Fitzwilliam to Home Secretary, 21 Jan. 1870.
eventually given sentences of five years for their 'leading' roles in the assault on Westwood Row,¹ considerably less than if Marsden, the West Riding prosecutor (and proprietor of the non-union Woolley colliery), had had his way and turned the trial into a State prosecution, implying that the incident had political overtones.² In February 1872, a petition for their release of about 7,000 signatures was got up, with the active support of the Sheffield Independent and the approval of A.J.Mundella, Samuel Plimsoll, Walter Spencer-Stanhope and even Newton, Chambers and Co.³ The following month, the Home Office announced remittal of their sentences⁴ and the three men's return was occasion for a festival at Worsborough Dale sponsored by the Edmunds and Swaithe lodges of the S.Y.M.A. and attended by, amongst others, Philip Casey, the assistant S.Y.M.A. secretary, and the vicar of one of the Barnsley parishes.⁵

These events were unprecedented in the study area since the Chartist period. They show conclusively the extent to which the mining rank and file were prepared to take the initiative away from the moderate district executive when they perceived a real threat (if only an indirect one in the case of the assailants from Worsborough and beyond) to their livelihoods. The degree of organisation and support revealed the potential size and assertiveness of this body of opinion,

¹ Barnsley Chronicle, 26 March 1870. Nineteen others were each given fifteen months.
² P.R.O., HO 45 os 8370, Marsden to Fitzwilliam, 25 Feb. 1870.
³ Sheffield Independent, 14 Feb. 1872; Barnsley Chronicle, 17 Feb. 1872; S.Y.M.A. minutes, 8 April 1872; S.C.L., WWM T 29 (c), Stanhope to Fitzwilliam, 16 Jan. 1872.
⁴ Barnsley Chronicle, 30 March 1872.
⁵ Ibid, 11 May 1872.
even if, at other times, it was most restrained. It also reveals the single-mindedness and determination with which these 'roughs' were prepared to stick to a strategy which they were convinced would be successful in the end. The impact of the incidents on the popularity of the union - the S.Y.M.A. were not excessively non-committal: they did criticise the Barnsley Chronicle's reporting of the affair - and on industrial relations generally were minimised by the ensuing upturn in trade which submerged differences on all sides, temporarily at least.

The events also show how a large and powerful company could, in full awareness, alienate and go against the overwhelming tide of opinion in the neighbourhood over which they had economic control. Nevertheless, the relative isolation of the scale of antagonism at Thorncliffe in those months suggests that few other employers in the district had the resources of the inclination to emulate Newton, Chambers and Co., especially as they were ultimately unsuccessful.  

(c) The 1893 lockout.

No violence of similar proportions occurred until 1893. On this occasion, unlike 1869-70, the entire district was directly involved: nearly 50,000 miners in South Yorkshire were out of work and on the look-out for strike breaking. This time, there was no danger of large contingents of blacklegs being employed to operate the pits, almost inevitably provoking a mass confrontation. The only real threats to civil order were the practice of coal filling on a large scale by daywagemen, or by outsiders such as railwaymen or the sheer frustration and deprivation endured by the miners (this was the view of Durnford, Earl Fitzwilliam's agent, in September).

1 S.Y.M.A. minutes, 14 Feb. 1870.
2 Only the Denaby Main Colliery Co., the Woolley Colliery Co., and Earl Fitzwilliam mounted a similar offensive against the union.
3 S.C.L., WWM T 29 (g), Durnford to Lady Fitzwilliam, 13 Dept. 1893.
The first men to draw the miners' fire were some coke workers at Hoyland Silkstone who were threatened and immediately left work, before their notices had expired. A locomotive at the same colliery was also bombarded by some of the young colliers. Despite widespread filling of trucks and removal of small coal from the tips by the railway companies, only minor incidents occurred in August. The behaviour of the miners was described as 'exemplary' by the Barnsley Chronicle on August 26th.

The 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th of September, however, were occasions for mass picketing at several South Yorkshire pits, degenerating on most occasions into violence (as well as the shootings at Ackton Hall colliery, Featherstone in West Yorkshire and an attack on the M.S. and L. Railway depot in Sheffield). On the first day, men suspected of coal filling at Barrow were chased by a large group of miners to a beerhouse whose windows were smashed. The assailants were promptly dispersed by the police. That evening, a crowd smashed the windows of Rylands Main colliery buildings (owned by a particularly abrasive local Tory entrepreneur) in Ardsley and returned to Barnsley inflicting what was reported as indiscriminate damage to property along the route.

1 Barnsley Chronicle, 5 Aug. 1893.
2 Especially at Aldwarke, Barrow, Darfield, Denaby, Newton Chambers' and Wharncliffe Silkstone, Barnsley Chronicle, 12 and 19 Aug. 1893.
4 Sheffield Telegraph, 8 Sept. 1893.
5 Registry of Deeds, Wakefield, Riots MSS, Memoranda under the Riots Damages Act; Barnsley Chronicle, 9 Sept. 1893.
6 Barnsley Chronicle, 9 Sept. 1893.
Meanwhile, at midday, windows at Manvers Main were broken after a deputy had taken refuge from verbal and physical assault, in the colliery offices.¹

On the 5th, after a mass meeting of about 2,000 persons at Wombwell had broken up, about 700 mostly young men marched off to Hoyland Silkstone where twenty five men were filling trucks.² Reinforced by other groups, they attacked the offices, the engine house, the fillers themselves and the pit manager, and then moved off towards Newton Chambers' Rockingham colliery after police arrived. At Rockingham, they ransacked the office, tried to break open the safe, set the coal stack on fire and bombarded deputies and police.³ As Clayton puts it: 'For two hours the rioters were in complete control while several thousand spectators looked on'.⁴ They then moved off to Barrow where they were intercepted by police. At the same time, Barnsley was said to have been 'in a very disturbed state';⁵ the police consequently were stretched and failed to give assistance at Rockingham.

Perhaps encouraged by this, a crowd gathered the following day, again attempted an attack on Barrow, were frustrated by the police, did more damage at Hoyland Silkstone and then moved off to Earl Fitzwilliam's Simon Wood colliery (near Elsecar) where the police guard was attacked and a lamp cabin burnt.⁶ Meanwhile, another crowd left Wombwell, it was said

2 Barnsley Chronicle, 9 Sept. 1893.
4 A.K. Clayton, Hoyland Nether, p. 82.
5 Registry of Deeds, Wakefield, Riots MSS, Kane to Russell, 10 Sept. 1893.
6 Barnsley Chronicle, 9 Sept. 1893.
bound for Denaby, but were tipped off that filling was going on at Wath Main. They changed course and there did the most damage of the three days, as well as attacking workmen and another of Fitzwilliam's pits on route. 3,000 were said to have been involved in the Wath attack. This was the last mass assault in the district (though the arson at the Sheffield coal depot occurred on the 7th), but for several days after, the air was thick with rumour of further attacks and general lawlessness was said to have existed along the roads of the district.

There are several features of these attacks which point to a far more indisciplined and spontaneous eruption than the incidents at Thorncliffe in 1869 and 1870, despite the independent testimonies of the managers of both Hoyland Silkstone and Rockingham that they were preconcerted. First, there were no precautions taken to avoid confrontation with police and to escape identification (except the sheer weight of numbers). Second, the targets selected were not necessarily the ones which offered a great threat to the breaking of the miners' resistance. Wath was chosen for attack only through last minute information; considerable damage was done at Fitzwilliam's pits even though no filling was taking place; the same was true of Rylands and Mitchell Main, the former being attacked twice; and the crowd of the 6th September did not bother to follow up their intention of visiting Denaby even though filling was taking place there. A third point is that

1 Over £7,180 damage (Registry of Deeds, Wakefield, Riots MSS, Memorandum for West Riding Finance Committee on claims for compensation, 16 Oct. 1893).
3 Ibid, Wharncliffe to Russell, 10 Sept. 1893; S.C.L., WWM T 29 (g), H.W. Fitzwilliam to Lady Fitzwilliam, 9 Sept. 1893; Barnsley Chronicle, 9 Sept. 1893.
4 Barnsley Chronicle, 9 Sept. 1893.

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the incidents took the district, and the police in particular, by surprise; the police ranks were considerably weakened by large contingents being assigned to the race meetings at Doncaster.\(^1\) Fourth, the subsequent court hearings gave no hints of ringleaders or conspiracies.\(^2\) Indiscipline was rife during the assaults, with often indiscriminate damage, pilfering and drinking.\(^3\) The assailants were said to have been mostly young men and boys.\(^4\)

These incidents, unlike those in 1869 and 1870, were expressions more of sheer frustration and anger directed against not only the strike-breaking companies, railways and their employees, but also other perceived symbols of oppression. They were largely perpetrated by a generation brought up in the period of depression who could not remember the harmonious industrial relations or the unions' optimism of the early 1870s. That this new aggression amongst the miners was not welcomed by Pickard and some of the older local leaders was evident. His condemnation of the incidents from Belfast, where he was attending a T.U.C. conference, was more vehement than was Normansell's of the Thorncliffe riot, and he sought to isolate these youngsters from the 'responsible'

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1 Registry of Deeds, Wakefield, Riots MSS, Russell to Home Secretary, 8 Sept. 1893.

   Convicted along with the miners, however, was a professional photographer, Edwin Warren, given eighteen months for incitement to riot.

3 A local brewer supplied the mob at Wath with barrels of beer to appease them. They dispersed soon after, ignoring their original target: Denaby Main, Barnsley Chronicle, 9 Sept. 1893.

4 Most of the men arrested were given fourteen day sentences for assault and wilful damage; very few were over twenty five years old. Registry of Deeds, Wakefield, Riots MSS, Return showing persons charged or convicted for being engaged in the colliery riots in July, August and September 1893; Barnsley Chronicle, 23 Sept. 1893.
unionists who had, passively at least, been on the side of the law. Frith, at a meeting at Barnsley, went as far as to say that it had been no more than some youths 'larking', and was sure that few, if any members of the Y.M.A. were involved. Pattison of the Barnsley Trades and Labour Council also washed his hands of the matter in the hope of protecting the good name of trade unionism. The violence had not been perpetrated by 'legitimate trade unionists' but by those who were 'propping street corners up during the day, and begging and drinking beer at night'. These exaggerations no doubt fooled no-one; but several lodges, including Barrow and Kilnhurst, and mass meetings, including one of 3,000 at Wombwell, condemned the violence. Frith was said to have 'rendered good assistance to the police' during the rioting on the 4th; and there were even incidents when ordinary miners identified with the employers in the face of the mobs. At Hoyland Silkstone, Fincken, the manager, was protected from further injury by some of his own employees; thirty Newton Chambers' miners set off for Rockingham to try to divert the rioters from that colliery (but bolted when the crowd arrived); and a body of Elsecar miners, armed with

1 Barnsley Chronicle, 16 Sept. 1893.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid, 9 Sept. 1893; Mexborough and Swinton Times, 15 Sept. 1893. Manvers Main miners, however, dissented almost unanimously from a resolution put by their branch officials at a mass meeting 'regretting the action of the men in doing damage' at the pit on the 4th September.
5 Registry of Deeds, Wakefield, Riots MSS, Memoranda under the Riots Damages Act.
6 Barnsley Chronicle, 9 Sept. 1893.
7 A.K.Clayton, Hoyland Nether, p.82.
pick shafts, guarded Simon Wood colliery after the attack on the 6th and, later, were said to be ready to defend Wentworth Woodhouse after rumours of an impending attack.

One aspect of the incidents of those days, however, united the miners and their leaders, as well as a section of radical opinion in Barnsley and the surrounding district. During and after the rioting, detachments of troops and police reinforcements were drafted to the area on the request of Halton, the mayor of Barnsley, after pleas from several coalowners. They took up positions at several key collieries in the district, including Denaby Main, Manvers Main, Wombwell Main, Woolley, Darfield Main, Wharncliffe Silkstone and Newton Chambers'. Halton's action was condemned outright by Pickard and other Y.M.A. spokesmen, as well as by representatives of the Barnsley Trades and Labour Council. The matter was exacerbated by another magistrate's prohibition of a motion demanding the military's withdrawal that was to be put at a mass meeting in Barnsley. The argument then widened into a critique, by members of the Y.M.A. executive and others, of police policy and included claims of wrongful arrest and of police perjury.

In the circumstances, the miners' leaders had no choice but to lend their voice to these criticisms. The initiative had been taken by the Trades Council and had mass support

3 Barnsley Chronicle, 23 Sept. 1893.
4 Registry of Deeds, Wakefield, Riots MSS, Russell to Home Secretary, 8 Sept. 1893.
5 Barnsley Chronicle, 16 Sept. 1893.
6 Barnsley Chronicle, 23 and 30 Sept. 1893.
from the rank and file miners. They could not be seen to be aligned with perceived policies of repression against their own members, even though these policies had been executed by a member of the Radical wing of the local Liberal party. The Y.M.A. Council was firmly condemnatory of the authorities who drafted hundreds of police to protect the 'gamblers' at Doncaster, while using this and other arms of the law to police the miners.

In the welter of negotiations and political activity - local and national - all the incidents except the one at Featherstone were conveniently forgotten. No parties gained much from the affairs. For Pickard, a warning had been sounded about the mood of some of his younger members, although it was never ultimately a real threat. For the coalowners too, there was a lesson that perhaps the less direct methods of social control (including the union itself) were no longer to be relied upon, endorsing what a few employers like the Denaby Main Colliery Co., had believed and practised for years. The outcome of these realisations, however belongs to a different period from the one we are examining here.

Conclusion on Pit-based Labour Relations.

In the last six chapters, we have been looking at a number of structural constraints that affected colliery firms operating in the study area, as well as aspects of their social and industrial policies. We have related them to an index: dispute frequency. This index by itself cannot claim to be an accurate measure of militancy. Indeed, militancy could have existed among a group of miners without a high

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1 The first meeting called to question the role of the military in the affair was chaired by R. Holden, a miner from Monk Bretton and an active member of the Barnsley Trades and Labour Council. Barnsley Chronicle, 16 Sept. 1893.

2 S.Y.M.A. minutes, 13 Sept. 1893.
incidence of strikes at their place of work and vice versa. Even the most habitually conciliatory workmen would strike if conditions were bad enough. The index, therefore, is more a record of the number of times relations at a particular pit deteriorated to the extent that the miners decided to assert their perceived rights in the form of strike action. Nevertheless, in the course of examination of the employers' policies and attitudes and also specific examples of labour activity and the traditions that built up around them, I hope that the crudity of the index has been refined somewhat, particularly to the extent of suggesting that not all strikes were undertaken with the same degree of bitterness or determination. The last chapter should have emphasised this more than any.

To come to a really objective conclusion about labour relations at particular pits and about the relative militancy of particular groups of men, we would have to know far more about the interaction of groups at those pits than just the number of times a series of grievances happened to tip the balance of containment and express themselves in strike action. We would need to digest far more information than that given in reports of two or three miners' meetings and in the odd retaliatory letter from the employers. We would also need to know far more about day to day relations at the pits when they were not engaged in disputes. We would need to know something about the communities in which the miners lived - whether they were dominated by the employers or by other members of a tight local power group, or whether the miners had opportunities to dissipate their frustrations by real involvement in aspects of their non-working lives. We should also bear in mind that as industrial relations became more institutionalised, local differences in constraints and responses were either removed or became covert.

Attempts to meet some of these requirements, particularly those relating to the outside community, will be made in
Part Three. Meanwhile, one or two qualifications must be made about labour relations in general in the context of this study. One is that tolerably good relations between miners and employers, or at least managers, could co-exist with a high incidence of disputes. The readiness of a workforce to strike was not necessarily a function of poor channels of communication. There is evidence that at least three of the pits with the highest dispute incidence - Manvers, Strafford and Edmunds Main - relations were normally good, strikes were short and ended reasonably amicably. At Strafford, the testimonies to normally good channels of communication - from both sides of the operations and from the local press - were too numerous to be dismissed as whitewash. The management had 'very little trouble with representative delegates' and were 'generally on good terms with unions' and settled 'any dispute without the intervention of the (district) union, or any other body'. ¹ There was said to be 'no better discipline and relations than at their pit'. ² Miller, the manager in the 1870s, and the men 'have always been on the best of terms'. ³ When Miller left in 1882, after sixteen years at the pit, Thomas Haigh, a local and district executive union leader, chaired the testimonial meeting which was thick with mutual praise and congratulation. ⁴ Similarly, Charles Lodge, an earlier and more militant branch official, presented Parry, the senior partner among the employers, with an illuminated address at a testimonial meeting in 1878. ⁵

Evidence of a similar type of mutual respect between miners and, in particular, the manager is found in reports of

¹ R.C. on Labour (1892 xxxvi, III), p.821.
² Barnsley Chronicle, 11 Nov. 1882.
³ Ibid, 22 March 1879.
⁴ Ibid, 11 Nov. 1882.
⁵ Ibid, 26 Jan. 1878.
industrial relations at Manvers Main. Thompson, the manager, accepted the principle of union intervention at all levels of collective bargaining and was always willing to accept arbitration. A hint of what relations at the colliery were like was given in 1893 after the brief disturbances on September 4th. Thompson claimed to have been surprised at what had happened; the presence of deputies at the pit had been agreed upon in consultation with the union, and only one guard had been posted at the pit, unlike the elaborate precautions elsewhere. Furthermore, Thompson asked the police who arrived from Dewsbury to withdraw and pressed no prosecutions, even though he recognised several of the assailants. Thompson played alongside his workmen in the colliery cricket team, except during disputes!

Edmunds Main, another dispute-prone colliery, did not differ much from the other two in terms of evidence of a relatively realistic approach to industrial relations on behalf of the management. At Edmunds, however, it was a sensitive proprietor, Joseph Mitchell (a local ironfounder), rather than relatively enlightened managers who provided the basis for the re-establishment of effective communication after the disputes they experienced. In the first two cases, the fact that the important decisions on price lists and wage rates were taken at a distance did not always jeopardise relations between the workmen and the managers. But the miners at these two collieries were not prepared to allow any sentiment they might have had, prevent them from striking when decisions were taken over their managers’ heads. In fact, strikes may not have damaged relations at these pits at all, in the long run. As Ross Stagner suggests, ‘The phenomenon of catharsis and the morale boost provided by joint membership

1 Registry of Deeds, Wakefield, Riots MSS, Memoranda under the Riots Damages Act.

2 Mexborough and Swinton Times, 26 July to 23 Aug. 1878.
activity mean that a short strike may actually benefit a union, if not the union-management relationship.\(^1\) Witness the fiesta atmosphere during the first few days of some strikes (for example, at Denaby in 1869).\(^2\) Long strikes, however, led to frustration, violence and deepening mistrust. It was collieries that endured these episodes (see, for example, the collieries with a high dispute intensity quotient in Table 10) whose relations became soured, perhaps indefinitely. In most cases, one or two long and acrimonious struggles probably created an irreversible deterioration of the type witnessed at Denaby in particular.

In the course of the last six chapters then, a number of structural and behavioural constraints operating on collieries, have been tested for what effect they might have had on labour relations there. Of these, the location and commercial status of the proprietors, the existence or not of controls on housing and community institutions, economic performance (particularly between 1875 and 1888), and the likelihood of attempts to replace striking or locked out labour with blacklegs appear to be the most significant variables associated with dispute incidence. Any one of these variables in isolation may not have produced a particularly marked response one way or another. Control over a relatively large proportion of the miners' houses by an employer, for example, occurred at pits with both high and low dispute incidence.

Most pits in the district were experiencing a mixture of beneficial and prejudicial constraints, with an overall response similar enough to enable us to talk about two central models combining constraints and responses. The first was the


\(^2\) In the first few weeks, regular parades, accompanied by a tin whistle band, were held; *Rotherham Advertiser*, 12 April 1869.
small-medium pit owned by a locally based family or private partnership - examples might be: Blacker Main, Victoria, the Cooper family concerns and several pits which do not figure in any of the statistics owing to their small size - but without the controls exercised on them by employers like the Clarkes. These pits were rarely in the news. Most experienced one or two independent strikes in the period (or in their life-span, which was generally much shorter than that of larger collieries), but mostly the miners got on with the job of making modest profits for their employers who usually took an active interest in the operations, partly to avoid the cost of employing a manager. The miners most likely lived fairly unconstrained lives in one or other of the villages not far from the Barnsley or Silkstone outcrops, or in Barnsley itself.

The second model colliery was really a logical outgrowth of the first, stimulated by the demand created largely by the railways, and obliged to look outside the district for much of its capital. This model is typified perhaps by Wombwell Main, Darfield Main and the Charlesworth collieries in South Yorkshire. The employers were either a mixture of outsiders and local men or were outsiders with strong interests in the district, other than of simply an investment portfolio. These collieries survived the worst rigours of the depression without financial disaster, but with their share of short time working. There were few controls exercised by the employers in the non-working lives of their miners, although there might have been some token provision for their moral and educational welfare, or that of their children. The miners probably struck two to four times in the period, not counting their automatic participation in district wages action. The overt reasons for striking were usually connected with price lists or the survival of archaic liberties that employers used to take, particularly in connection with the weighing of coal. There were usually stable union branches at these pits, after early attempts at resistance by the employers. Each side knew their
own ground and territory was added or eaten away according to the state of trade and of the power of the district union. The proprietors of Wombwell Main had nothing to fear, it seems, from employing a man like Edward Rymer; and its disputes it was said, 'always end in conciliation'. In a similar vein, Richard Mitchell, the first S.Y.M.A. secretary testified in 1863 that at Warren Vale, 'The combination scarecrow has no terrors for (J.C.D.Charlesworth) or his managers, and if ever a man was benefited by a colliers' union, J.C.D.Charlesworth is that man.' In 1858, the Charlesworths tested the strength of the commitment of their miners to the new union, on the industrial front and through the courts. Having lost the battle, the senior partner was reputed to have told the men in the presence of the managers (as Mitchell paraphrased it): 'the fight had been a fair one - the men had proved victorious, and that he would not have any man annoyed for the part he had taken in the contest'.

To a greater or lesser degree, this type of respect for the union existed among the bulk of employers in the district and helped to shape the second of the two models in particular.

The majority, perhaps as much as 80% of the collieries in the district fitted fairly closely the two models outlined above. Some collieries might have strayed from the models in one respect (Strafford, for example with its high dispute-proneness), but in most respects, they were compelling models to follow. The particular combination of constraints and responses seems to have provided common ground on which the union and the employers could meet. The collieries that fell

3 Miner and Workman's Advocate, 18 July 1863.
4 Ibid.
outside the models suffered in one way or another. The paternalistic non-union environment at Fitzwilliam's pits, for example, isolated his miners more and more from their fellow workmen; and there was a danger of this happening at Thorncliffe. Denaby Main suffered from too much catharsis, as did Church Lane, Barrow, Monk Bretton and one or two other pits with a combination of abrasive employers and large but disorganised workforces.¹ At Church Lane, according to the company's testimony, 'The smallest chance is seized upon by the employees of obtaining an advance in wages or a diminution of labour, or the obtaining of any concession which it is believed may be obtained by fair or unfair means.'² It is not surprising that the communities around these latter pits produced the first signs of interest in the independent labour movement in the early 1890s; and that Wombwell was the heartland of resistance to these tendencies.

¹ See Table 10. Denaby was the exception with a strong and relatively stable union branch.