Community, De-industrialisation, and Post-industrial Regeneration in a Merseyside Town: 
*St. Helens, 1968-2018*

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# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements i
Dedication ii
Declaration iii
Abstract iv
List of abbreviations v
List of figures vii

Introduction 10

0.1: Historiography and key concepts
  0.1.1: Community 15
  0.1.2: De-industrialisation 22
  0.1.3: (Post-industrial) regeneration 26

0.2: Argument and key historical questions 30

0.3: Why St. Helens?
  0.3.1: St. Helens’ industrial background and development 35

0.4: Thesis structure, sources and methodology, chapter outlines 42
  0.4.1: Sources and methodology 43
  0.4.2: Chapter outlines 46

Chapter 1: Community and de-industrialisation 48
  1.0: Introduction 48
  1.1: De-industrialisation in St. Helens, 1968-2000
    1.1.1: Early decline? 52
    1.1.2: Comparison with the national picture and internal disparities 56
    1.1.3: Accelerating decline 61
  1.2: The Pilkington’s Strike, 1970
    1.2.1: ‘The trend of strikes’: rank-and-file militancy in the 1960s 70
    1.2.2: Deference and paternalism in St. Helens 72
    1.2.3: ‘A rugby league town, a man’s town’? 78
    1.2.4: After the strike 83
  1.3: The Parkside Colliery pit camp, 1992-1994
    1.3.1: National context 89
    1.3.2: Pit camp origins 91
    1.3.3: Support for LWAPC 93
  1.4: Conclusion 99

Chapter 2: Work and work-based community 102
  2.0: Introduction 102
  2.1: From John Wayne to J.R. Ewing: a tale of two ranches?
    2.1.1: Typical employment possibilities in St. Helens 107
Acknowledgements

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my grandad, Gordon Metcalfe, whose collection of history books on St. Helens set me off on this research journey, and to my grandma, Marie Metcalfe, whose stories of growing up in St. Helens were an endless source of enjoyment.
Declaration

I declare that this thesis is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for examination for a degree at any other university.
Abstract

This thesis explores the impact on community of de-industrialisation and (post-industrial) regeneration, via a case study of St. Helens (Merseyside, England) from the late 1960s to the present day. The main argument is that community has transformed from being centred around the working-class and industrial work to a less tangible but still present multiplicity of micro- and personal communities. This contrasts existing scholarship which often associates industrial and community decline.

The thesis tends towards long-term analyses and explanations of its main themes: community, de-industrialisation, and regeneration. It offers these in the context of a large, formerly industrial town, a category often overlooked in favour of bigger cities, ‘new’ towns, or mono-industrial places. This long-termism is an existing trend in de-industrialisation studies, and the thesis endorses Jim Tomlinson’s proposition of de-industrialisation as a ‘meta-narrative’ for post-war Britain and Sherry Lee Linkon’s de-industrial ‘half-life’ theory. The thesis argues regeneration is similarly an important meta-narrative: towns like St. Helens have been constantly redeveloping and regenerating across the thesis’ time period, with similar aims and objectives recurring.

The thesis adopts what Robert Colls calls an ‘inside-out’ approach. In studying community’s development, the thesis embraces its messiness as a concept, with each chapter offering a different perspective on community. It seeks not to neatly define or measure community but to explore how it was experienced by the people of St. Helens. To this end, it uses various approaches including oral history interviews, surveys, ‘imagined futures’ essays, and close analysis of materials produced by local grass-roots groups and the local press. It examines the role local industries and local/national government play in community, an important consideration for a town so influenced by its paternalist industries even today. Ultimately, it argues that community both evolves and persists in towns like St. Helens, despite the challenges of de-industrialisation and regeneration faced in recent decades.
List of abbreviations

AEF: Amalgamated Union of Engineering and Foundry Workers
BARLA: British Amateur Rugby League Association
BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation
BCE: British Coal Enterprise [originally NCB (Enterprises)]
BICC: British Insulated Callendar’s Cables
BITC: Business in the Community
BLDS: British Library Document Supply
BREL: British Rail Engineering Limited
BSA: British Social Attitudes
BSI: British Steel (Industries) Limited
CAD: (St. Helens) Central Area Development
CALS: Cheshire Archives and Local Studies
CBI: Confederation of British Industry
CLD: (St. Helens) Community Leisure Department
CSHT: Community of St. Helens Trust
DSC: Duke Street Committee
ECRA: Eccleston and Windle Community Residents Association
FROGS: Friends of Operation Groundwork
GCV: Groundwork Conservation Volunteers
GMWU: General and Municipal Workers’ Union [quoted as NUGMW in some sources]
GSKBA: Glaxo SmithKline/Beecham Archives
IMF: International Monetary Fund
INDEX: Industrial Experience Projects Limited
JIC: Joint Industrial Council (Pilkington’s)
KUSCA: Keele University Special Collections and Archives
LET: Local Enterprise Trust
LWAPC: Lancashire Women Against Pit Closures
MP: Member of Parliament
MRC: Modern Records Centre
NCB: National Coal Board
NCMM: National Coal Mining Museum
NHS: National Health Service
NIMBY: Not In My Back Yard
NOMIS: Official Labour Market Statistics (Office for National Statistics)
NUM: National Union of Mineworkers
NVQ4: National Vocational Qualification (Level 4)
OPEC: Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries
RFSC: Rank and File Strike Committee (Pilkington’s)
RIBA: Royal Institute of British Architects
RLFC: Rugby League Football Club [‘RFC’ is some sources]
SHLHA: St. Helens Local History and Archives
TCDP: (St. Helens) Town Centre District Plan
TGWU: Transport and General Workers’ Union
TNA: The National Archives
TUC: Trades Union Congress
UGB: United Glass Bottlemakers [quoted in some sources as ‘UG’]
WAPC: Women Against Pit Closures
WCML: Working Class Movements Library
WI: Women’s Institute
YMCA: Young Man’s Christian Association
YOP: Youth Opportunity Programme
YWCA: Young Women’s Christian Association
List of figures

All maps are drawn by the author unless stated in the footnotes.
All photographs are taken by the author unless stated in the footnotes.

Introduction

Fig.0.0: map of St. Helens and the Merseyside area
Fig.0.3.1: extract from Greenwood’s Map of Lancashire (1818) showing St. Helens and environs
Fig.0.3.2: map of St. Helens today

Chapter 1

Fig.1.1.1: map of St. Helens in the 1960s, showing colliery locations
Fig.1.1.2: colliery output and manpower, 1970s
Fig.1.1.3: economically active population and unemployment, 1981-2001
Fig.1.1.4: St. Helens unemployment, 1981
Fig.1.1.5: St. Helens post-18 degree/vocational qualifications, 1981
Fig.1.1.6: St. Helens job type, 1981
Fig.1.1.7: 1981 ward-level statistics for socio-economic category, arranged by unemployment rate
Fig.1.1.8: evolution of major employers
Fig.1.2.1A: photograph showing domination of St. Helens skyline by Pilkington’s
Fig.1.2.1B: photograph showing Pilkington’s former Grove Street and Prescot Road head offices
Fig.1.2.2: map of Pilkington’s plants in St. Helens
Fig.1.2.3: timeline of 1970 Pilkington’s strike
Fig.1.2.4: photograph showing crowds of striking workers attending an RFSC meeting at Queen’s Park
Fig.1.2.5: service length of Pilkington employees, 1978
Fig.1.2.6: photograph of police leading away protesters at Grove Street
Fig.1.2.7: Pilkington plants in Britain on strike in 1970
Fig.1.2.8: photograph of strike meeting at the Triplex plant
Fig.1.3.1: timeline of 1992-1994 Parkside pit camp
Fig.1.3.2: photograph of Parkside pit camp women
Fig.1.3.3: photograph of Parkside women chained to colliery gates

Chapter 2

Fig.2.2.1: evolution of employment at Pilkington’s and major St. Helens collieries
Fig.2.2.2: employment levels in St. Helens
Fig.2.2.3: employment levels in England

Chapter 3

Fig.3.1.1: industrial social clubs and a selection of their events/activities, c1950s-1970s
Fig.3.1.2: ‘Sections’ of the Pilkington Recreation Club
Fig.3.1.3: teams and players for various inter-works tournaments
Fig.3.1.4: map of rugby league teams (England)
Fig.3.1.5: Super League-era rugby league honours (1996-2021)
Fig.3.2.1: examples of micro-communities at various churches in St. Helens
Fig.3.2.2: micro-communities at community centres and residents’/tenants’ associations in St. Helens
Fig.3.2.3: micro-communities in Rainford, according to the Women’s Institute, 1960s-2000s
Fig.3.2.4: micro-communities in Eccleston, 1991-2016
Fig.3.2.5: micro-communities in St. Helens, 2021
Fig.3.2.6: activities and micro-communities at community centres in St. Helens, 2021
Fig.3.4.1: photograph of ‘The Miner’ statue
Fig.3.4.2: photograph of ‘The Landings’ statue
Fig.3.4.3: photograph of ‘The Workers’ Memorial’
Fig.3.4.4: photograph of the former Beecham’s factory
Fig.3.4.5: photograph of the frontage of the former Greenall-Whitley brewery
Fig.3.4.6: photograph of the Pilkington’s Head Office on Prescot Road
Fig.3.4.7: photograph of the ‘Dream’ statue
Fig.3.4.8: photograph of the original Sutton Manor colliery gates
Chapter 4

Fig.4.2.1A: St. Helens town centre – artists’ impression of the 1960s Central Area Development
Fig.4.2.1B: photograph of St. Helens town centre today
Fig.4.2.2: maps of the St. Helens Central Area Development
Fig.4.2.3: two-stage public participation in the Town Centre District Plan
Fig.4.2.4: map of the Town Centre District Plan ring-road extension
Fig.4.3.1: social media support for regeneration campaign groups
Fig.4.3.2: map of pro-ECRA signs and placards in Eccleston (2018)

Chapter 5

Fig.5.5.1: percentage of 2017 leavers entering further education, apprenticeships, or employment
Fig.5.5.2: percentage of 2016 leavers going on to university study
Introduction

![Fig.0.0: St. Helens and the Merseyside area](image)

22.09.2000, Knowsley Road, St. Helens: rugby league Super League V Play-offs Qualifying Final, seconds remaining...

Having finished the regular league campaign in second place, three points behind arch-rivals Wigan Warriors, St. Helens had secured a home play-off tie against third place Bradford Bulls. Deep into the final minute of the match, with Bradford narrowly leading 11-10, St. Helens were awarded a penalty. Paul Sculthorpe took the tap and drove the ball into Bradford’s defensive line as the away fans began counting down the final ten seconds. The tackle complete, Sculthorpe wrestled free of the defenders and just squeezed the play-the-ball in before the hooter sounded.
‘Kick and chase now!’ cried co-commentator Mike ‘Stevo’ Stephenson. Kick they did – but sideways off Sean Long’s boot to Kevin Iro on the right-hand side, the excitement palpable in commentator Eddie Hemmings’ voice. ‘This is the last play… Long, kicks it wide to Iro, Iro to Hall, Hall is trapped, back it goes… to Hoppe, over the shoulder to Hall, there is Jonkers, here is Long’ – the ball worked back across midfield – ‘and Long fancies it, Long fancies it’ – running diagonally towards the left touch line – ‘it’s wide to West, it’s wide to West’ – fending off two tacklers – ‘Dwayne West… inside to Joynt, Joynt, Joynt, JOYNT! OHHHH! OHHHH! FANTASTIC! THEY’VE WON IT! […]’.

‘Wide to West’ is perhaps the most dramatic of many improbable comebacks which have given rise to the phrase ‘never write off the Saints’. Rugby league is a focal point for (working-class) community in St. Helens, as later chapters demonstrate. Though the official attendance who witnessed Wide to West was under 9,000, ‘many more would claim to be there’. Rugby league is the town’s predominant sport, lacking professional sides in football, cricket, or rugby union (though all are popular at amateur level). St. Helens has seen rising match attendance in recent seasons and the opening of its new stadium in 2012, campaigned for ardently by fans, is consistently cited as significant to the town’s revitalisation.

Not being written off is a key theme of this thesis. As outlined further throughout this Introduction, when a town like St. Helens loses its industries, it loses its economic ‘purpose’ and its community and social networks can be weakened. Maintaining and

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1 Although their final-second victory in the 2020 play-off Grand Final, which happened during the writing of the first draft of this Introduction, runs ‘Wide to West’ very close. Similarly feted is the 1996 Challenge Cup victory over Bradford Bulls, where St. Helens overcame a 26-12 deficit in the final 20 minutes to win 40-32: Mike Critchley, ‘The ultimate comeback… it’s 25 years on since famous cup win’, St. Helens Star, 29.04.2021, p.11. Various videos of the footage of ‘Wide to West’ are available on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PtcPcoQgAfU>, accessed: 05.04.2021.

2 Rugby League is a 13-a-side sport, popular in England mainly in the North. Many readers may be more familiar with the 15-a-side code Rugby Union. Entire books could be written on the differences and rivalries between the two, and this is not the place to enter into a long discussion on their respective rules and tactics. For a scholarly history of Rugby League, see: Tony Collins, *Rugby League in Twentieth Century Britain: A Social and Cultural History*, (Routledge, London, 2006). For an appreciative recollection of both codes by a former player and coach, see: Ray French, *My Kind of Rugby: Union and League*, (Faber & Faber, London, 1979).


4 Charles Nevin, Alex Service, *So Long Our Home: Knowsley Road 1980-2010*, (St. Helens Rugby League Football Club, St. Helens, 2010), pp.188-191. Local support for the new stadium was channelled through the pressure group Supporters Backing the Stadium, who organised events such as a peaceful protest outside Morrisons supermarket (who opposed the stadium plans), a march from the Town Hall to the old stadium at Knowsley Road, and a petition signed by over 11,000 locals by May 2008: Andrew Kilmurray, ‘Saints fans to march for new stadium’, St. Helens Star, 01.05.2008, <https://www.sthelensstar.co.uk/news/2237292.saints-fans-to-march-for-new-stadium/>., accessed: 31.12.2020.
reinvigorating these are important elements in carving out a new (post-industrial) ‘purpose’ through regeneration. This thesis focuses on community in particular, using it as a lens to study two key processes – two key meta-narratives – of post-war British history: de-industrialisation and regeneration. It confronts the de-industrialisation as decline narrative, placing it alongside recent trends in wider scholarship on twentieth-century Britain, and brings the study of de-industrialisation into direct contact with the study of regeneration and community. The community lens is particularly prescient amidst the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, which has emphasised community support and solidarity (contrasting contemporary fears of social atomisation and community decline), and underlined the harsh inequalities of class, gender, geography, income, race, etc., which pervade British society.\(^5\)

In focusing on St. Helens, a large town previously home to a diverse range of industries situated in one of Britain’s former industrial heartlands, this thesis speaks to the contemporary political interest in towns. This can be seen in the current Conservative government’s ambitions to ‘level up’ the country\(^6\), through policies like their Towns Fund initiative which St. Helens bid for\(^7\); the emergence of think-tanks like the Centre for Towns (St. Helens is one of the 894 towns their research draws on\(^8\)); and calls by MPs like David Hanson and Yvette Cooper for a ‘Town of Culture’ award to enable towns to benefit from the investment, job creation, and tourism afforded to ‘City of Culture’ winners.\(^9\) The “left behind” label attached to places like St. Helens pervades popular

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commentary and scholarship on contemporary British society, alongside older notions of a ‘north-south divide’ resurrected during the Covid-19 pandemic due to its greater impact on northern England, particularly Liverpool and Manchester (either side of St. Helens). Places like St. Helens receive insufficient coverage in both popular and academic discourse. Writings by commentators like Owen Jones successfully question the exaggeratedly negative media portrayal of such places and their inhabitants but often fail to look beyond Thatcherism and/or neo-liberalism for the causes of their problems. Some academic studies are in fact guilty of portrayals as grim (albeit less sensationalist) as some elements of the media. A current tendency in academia, despite the political relevance of towns, is to talk of cities. This is a long-standing bias in regeneration studies, whose other focus is the ‘new towns’ much beloved of post-war planners. A turn to cities (and places beyond the industrial heartlands) is increasingly visible in de-industrialisation studies, a jump in scale from many previous works on smaller – often mono-industrial – towns and villages which overlooks larger towns.

This thesis places the focus firmly on such an overlooked, multi-industrial town: St. Helens. This tight focus brings this thesis into contact with local history. The insufficient coverage of places like St. Helens may stem from lingering disdain for local studies/history in academia. This comes partly from the vivacity of ‘amateur’ local history, criticised as too concerned with ‘the places where [its authors] live or work’, rather than showing how localised studies speak to wider events or trends.


12 Two particularly negative academic studies of de-industrialised towns (Featherstone and Rotherham, respectively) are: Royce Logan Turner, Coal Was Our Life: An Essay on Life in a Yorkshire Former Pit Town, (Sheffield Hallam University Press, Sheffield, 2000) and Simon J. Charlesworth, A Phenomenology of Working-Class Experience, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000).


emergence of Global History, particularly the ‘world-spanning canvas’ of some high-profile works which suggest the appellation ‘global’ is literal, no doubt reinforced the unfashionable status of the ‘local’.\textsuperscript{16} Local historian David Hey somewhat bitterly reflects on fashionability when noting that a university research output assessment called a local history of an English community ‘parochial’ but one of a Mediterranean community ‘of international importance’.\textsuperscript{17} Perhaps the latter was better than the former; perhaps it reflects the appeal of studies which move beyond British (and, ideally, European) perspectives. Ultimately, as global historian Sebastian Conrad points out, global history is not about writing histories of the whole world but about situating history in ‘alternative’ spaces.\textsuperscript{18} One such alternative space is ‘micro-histories of the global’, i.e. the use of the ‘local’ to analyse, explain, and reflect wider processes (the ‘global’).\textsuperscript{19} The essor of the global does not necessarily mean the end of the local – even if some local historians fear as much, as globalisation imposes uniformity on previously distinct ‘locals’, rendering moot the specific study of them.\textsuperscript{20} Micro (local) perspectives can reveal (or not) heterogeneity, nuancing (or not) more macro (global) perspectives. This is reflected by the term ‘glocalisation’, i.e. the constitution and experience of ‘global processes’ by ‘local constellations’.\textsuperscript{21} The potential of the local to exhibit distinctiveness or typicality (or some combination thereof) is why the ‘end’ of local history has quickly been contested.\textsuperscript{22} Whether approaching history as a global or a local historian (or somewhere in between), there is a need to be simultaneously attentive to local \textit{and} wider (regional, national, global) processes. T.C. Barker and J.R. Harris were attentive to this in the 1950s when writing their seminal history of St. Helens’ industrial development, itself filling a vacuum of academic coverage of the development of mid-sized industrial towns and what they revealed about industrialisation in Britain (and beyond).\textsuperscript{23}

Ultimately, this thesis explores from multiple angles the extent to which community persists in St. Helens, despite the undeniable socio-economic challenges of de-industrialisation and regeneration. This thesis reveals the continued existence of a

\textsuperscript{17} Hey, ‘Reflections on the regional and local…’, 155.
\textsuperscript{18} Conrad, \textit{Global History}, p.117.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., p.129.
vigorous collection of (local) communities in St. Helens, some linked to industry, some not, some emerging after or alongside de-industrialisation, some long-standing, very often overlapping with one another. It takes recent scholarship on the evolution of community and applies it to the setting of de-industrialisation and regeneration, contrasting the narratives of community decline often associated with towns like St. Helens. Further, this thesis suggests that this evolution is ongoing. As the town’s industrial past and decline recede, and new generations grow up lacking direct memories of them, the basis/bases of (local) community in St. Helens will evolve again. Currently, there remains a distinct influence from the town’s industrial past – the ‘half-life’ of this world and its decline – but this influence tends to weakening as time passes. Conventional narratives have been very quick to write off towns like St. Helens but this thesis does precisely the opposite. ‘Never write off the Saints’, never write off St. Helens, and never write off industrial towns.

This Introduction elaborates on the historiography related to community, de-industrialisation, and regeneration, situating the thesis within these fields and explaining how the thesis defines, uses, and links such concepts, before stating in more detail its core arguments and historical questions. The choice of St. Helens is justified both in relation to trends in the literature and its own characteristics, alongside a brief history of its development to situate the reader. The Introduction finishes with an overview of the structure, sources, and methodology.

0.1: Historiography and key concepts

In his 2020 book *This Sporting Life*, about the centrality of sports/sport to individuals and communities in England, Robert Colls is deliberately loose with his parameters:

> not exactly 200 years because cultures are no respecters of historical periods, and not definitively ‘sport’ or ‘sports’ because I have not spent too long on definitions. I have tried instead to follow what contemporaries meant, whether or not they were consistent.\(^\text{24}\)

He describes this as ‘working from the inside-out rather than the outside-in […] nearer to how most people see their lives’. He hopes to ‘communicate’ rather than ‘apply’, quipping that ‘academics are quite capable of applying descriptions far less useful than those that

were used by the people they study’. This thesis attempts to channel this approach, studying as it does something so fluid and subjective as ‘community’ with its myriad sources, forms, and expressions. Though impossible to capture the views of all the ‘contemporaries’ in a town so large as St. Helens across a fifty-ish year time period, the thesis endeavours to study community – from multiple angles and through the lens of a (formerly) industrial and (still) rugby league-obsessed town – from the ‘inside-out’. Before proceeding any further, the thesis’ position vis-a-vis its main themes – ‘community’, ‘de-industrialisation’, and ‘(post-industrial) regeneration’ – is established. All three reflect significant changes over time – the cause(s) of which being, as Selina Todd says, what ‘historians are interested in’ – but the thesis conceives of them as processes of evolution rather than, like much literature, as divided by turning points and ruptures.

0.1.1: Community

Andrew Marr’s latest work on modern Britain, Elizabethans, published amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, describes the centrality of community – communities – in combatting the virus and its consequences:

> across Britain, it brought people more together for a common purpose. For many of us it was the first time in which the demands of community and common purpose clearly outstripped the daily prodding for profit and self-advancement. People did start to look to their neighbours, buying and delivering food to the vulnerable, performing innumerable acts of kindness.

When the government asked for volunteers for food and medicine deliveries to support the vulnerable, around 750,000 signed up within days. Solidarity was demonstrated, symbolically at least, with the ritual Thursday evening ‘clap for carers’. On a local scale, community support groups formed across the country to deliver food, pick-up prescriptions, and combat social isolation amongst the elderly and ill. In St. Helens, for example, the Eccleston Community Support Group had 400 registered volunteers and 3,000 members on its Facebook page. Players from the town’s rugby team took turns to

25 Ibid., p.8.
27 Marr, Elizabethans, p.xv.
28 Ibid., p.xiv.
29 ‘Focus: News and action from your Eccleston & Eccleston Park Liberal Democrat FOCUS team’, (Autumn 2020).
telephone isolated elderly residents. A partnership between St. Helens Council and voluntary groups delivered nearly 1,300 food parcels between March and June and raised over £85,000 in donations. The Eccleston Arms pub delivered over 6,500 meals across two lockdowns, whilst The Victoria pub in Newton-le-Willows set up a food bank and delivered food parcels to 150 houses per week. The Hope Centre delivered nearly 10,000 meals and its foodbank supported over 2,500 people between April and October 2020. People found themselves finally getting to know neighbours properly, for instance in Thatto Heath where residents transformed their shared entry behind their houses into a bright and colourful social space complete with benches and flowers.

Equally visible alongside this community spirit, however, were the manifest fractures and inequalities which divide community in Britain: the disproportionate impact on certain regions, ethnicities, and age groups; the division between people trapped in ‘gardenless apartments or tower blocks’ and ‘the more affluent with gardens or even second homes’; between those working from home versus those furloughed or made redundant; between those more or less able to access remote schooling, etc. By early 2021, it was noted that during Covid-19, rates of loneliness were highest in de-industrialised areas. In St. Helens, initiatives such as foodbanks were targeting particularly the town’s less well-off areas, the same areas in which Covid-19 rates remained stubbornly high into spring 2021. These divisions are not new – they are common in popular commentary on contemporary Britain – but recent events have placed the concept of community in the public eye.

31 Kelsey Maxwell, ‘We showed what we can all do when faced with a real crisis’, St. Helens Star, 17.12.2020, p.40.
34 Kelsey Maxwell, ‘Painted entry idea giving neighbours a community’, St. Helens Star, 06.05.2021, p.22.
35 Marr, Elizabethans, p.xvi.
This thesis sees community as changing, fluid, and multi-faceted. Though starting, like much literature on industrial towns, from the premise that the main source of community in St. Helens was the diverse industrial employment, it accepts that community in St. Helens was not exclusively industrial or work-based. There is no one community in any given town or neighbourhood, and different ones often overlap. Individuals can belong to multiple communities with a greater or lesser sense of attachment. Some are more tangible, like colleagues in the workplace, some are more diffuse, like fellow supporters of a sports team. Even when rooted in a specific place, communities are not permanent in composition.

Community can be defined as ‘a body of people who live in the same place, usually sharing a common cultural or ethnic identity’ and ‘a group of people who share the same interests, pursuits, or occupation’. There is the potential for community to emerge wherever and – in an increasingly inter-connected world – however individuals come into contact with one another, particularly when those individuals share experiences, interests, values, etc.. There are similarities with E.P. Thompson’s seminal definition of ‘class’, a ‘social and cultural formation’ based on ‘common experiences (inherited or shared)’. Even where these commonalities exist, community remains a messy and difficult to measure concept, hence this thesis’ view of it as changing and multi-faceted. Benedict Anderson’s classic description of national/political communities as ‘imagined’ holds true at the level of the town: no one member knows all the other members, yet within that community there is a sense of ‘communion’. Anderson sees community as bonded by a ‘deep horizontal comradeship’, and whilst many of the communities uncovered in this thesis are horizontal and, particularly with workplace activism or (anti-)regeneration campaigns, involve strong comradeship, not all attachment to them could be described as ‘deep’. His recognition of communities as ‘limited’ on the basis that no community will ever include everyone, by contrast, is true for this thesis. This inherent limit to community, the varying depth of attachment, and the potential for a person to belong to multiple communities contribute to the challenges in measuring it.

Working together, earning similar wages, living in similar houses and neighbourhoods, and socialising in similar pubs or clubs (perhaps even workplace ones)

generated the shared experiences necessary for a work-based community to form. This is certainly what Barker and Harris saw in St. Helens as the town’s industries grew and developed during the nineteenth century.\footnote{Barker and Harris, \textit{Merseyside Town}, p.412.} It remained so when sociologists Tony Lane and Kenneth Roberts came to investigate the conditions surrounding the 1970 Pilkington strike.\footnote{Tony Lane, Kenneth Roberts, \textit{Strike at Pilkingtons}, (Collins/Fontana, London, 1971).} Charles Forman, interviewing residents about life in the 1920s, painted a similar picture, as did oral history interviews with former industrial workers conducted in the mid-1980s by the town’s library service.\footnote{Charles Forman, \textit{Industrial Town: Self-Portrait of St. Helens in the 1920s}, (Paladin, London, 1979) ; \textquote{St. Helens Oral History Recordings}, OH, St. Helens Local History and Archives (SHLHA).}

Industrial work as the main source of community in towns like St. Helens is reproduced across the literature.\footnote{This is the case in classic post-war studies of industrial towns like Dennis Norman, Fernando Henriques, and Cliff Slaughter’s \textit{Coal Is Our Life: An Analysis of a Yorkshire Mining Community (2nd ed.)}, (Tavistock, London, 1969) and continues in recent publications such as Tom Hansell’s \textit{After Coal: Stories of Survival in Appalachia and Wales}, (West Virginia University Press, Morgantown, 2018).} These communities are perceived as place-based and work-based, hence the common association in traditional academic narratives, generalist accounts, and popular discourse between de-industrialisation and community decline.\footnote{See footnotes 11, 12, and 38.} Alice Mah, writing about de-industrialisation and ‘placed-based communities’, cautions that community is a potentially nostalgic and romantic term, evoking golden-age conceptions of ‘social cohesion’ and dividing society into neatly bordered units.\footnote{Alice Mah, \textit{Industrial Ruination, Community, and Place: Landscapes and Legacies of Urban Decline}, (University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2012), pp.4-5.} As alluded to already, community – or, rather, communities – are far messier, best understood from the ‘inside-out’ rather than the ‘outside-in’. This thesis challenges the notion that de-industrialisation spelled the end for community in towns like St. Helens. It shows that community does not just stem from one source (like industry) and that the link between industrial and community decline is complex. It sits alongside and develops recent scholarship arguing for the persistence of associational and community life where it has previously been denied, including Stefan Ramsden’s work on the immediate post-war period (the time when Richard Hoggart was bemoaning the end of working-class community and culture) or Mark Clapson’s study of vigorous community life on council estates well into the twenty-first century.\footnote{Stefan Ramsden, \textit{Working-Class Community in the Age of Affluence}, (Routledge, London, 2017) ; Richard Hoggart, \textit{The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-Class Life}, (Penguin, London, 1957, 2009) ; Mark Clapson, \textit{Working-Class Suburb: Social Change on an English Council Estate, 1930-2010}, (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2012).} Both Ramsden and Clapson explore the diverse ways in which community manifests itself and persists in the context of under-represented
categories in British urban history: the small town (Ramsden) and the council estate (Clapson). This thesis tackles a similarly under-represented category: the large, formerly multi-industrial town.\(^{49}\)

If community persists beyond de-industrialisation, the question is how? Part of the answer, already mentioned, is that community stems from multiple sources, not all work- or place-based. Another part is that communities do not simply disband or disappear when their source (e.g. a factory or mine) is weakened or destroyed. A sense of community persists beyond this amongst those directly linked to that community and even, with communities so central to a place’s identity, those only indirectly linked to it. Mah evokes ‘place attachment’ based on ‘social and economic processes’ (including industrial work and its related activities) and an ‘affective bond between people and landscape’, i.e. a sense of belonging, of ownership over, ‘place’. This attachment – this sense of community – has been shown to ‘function as a form of social and community cohesion’ in depressed areas, such as those hit by industrial closure.\(^{50}\) Just as a community is made up of individuals with shared experiences, sense of community results from individuals sharing a ‘sense of place’, i.e. sharing attachment to it.\(^{51}\) As this thesis shows, attachment and connection to place, influenced by the town’s industrial past, remains a source of community in St. Helens today, particularly when it comes to the town’s (post-industrial) regeneration.

This sense of community, in addition to existing and persisting amongst the individuals who make up the community (from ‘below’), can be imposed on a place or a group (from ‘above’). As Lane and Roberts said, St. Helens is a product of both its industrial workers and its industrialists.\(^{52}\) The town’s paternalistic industrial employers, in providing jobs, housing, recreational facilities, and improving local amenities in the nineteenth century, created a framework for community reflecting their conception of society – though ultimately they had little control over how this framework was subsequently used. As several chapters touch upon, late twentieth century neo-liberalism witnessed the emergence of ‘government through community’ (as opposed to the social-democratic notion of government for community). Various largely unsuccessful initiatives aimed at combatting the job losses and economic decline of de-industrialisation


\(^{50}\) Mah, *Industrial Ruination*, pp.154-155.


fall under this umbrella term, where the term ‘community’ is a political label or tool. The need for interventionist policies to replace lost (industrial) jobs and sustain or invigorate community reveals paradoxical attitudes towards society and state intervention by governments like Margaret Thatcher’s. Some such policies were inspired by successful localised initiatives by employers to protect their employees and towns from decline, still very much for community at the local level. The unsuccessful nature of these policies of government through community reflects the term ‘community’, in its positive sense associated with authenticity, belonging, and togetherness (even by the paternalistic employers), becoming a mask for policies promoting individualism as part of the enterprise culture. Part of the complexity of the relationship between community and de-industrialisation is the legacy of the paternalistic framework even as the industries declined, just one example of the ongoing influence of St. Helens’ nineteenth century industrial development on its present and recent past that this thesis touches on.

Ultimately, sense of community is no more permanent than community. It requires enough individuals sharing a same or similar sense of place, often an emotional tie stemming from ‘memorable or important events’. With industrial- or work-based communities, the subsequent sense of community is founded on former workers’ and other local residents’ memories of that workplace, its place in local identity, its decline, and its aftermath. Such direct memories are what Maurice Halbwachs terms ‘autobiographical’ memories. As time passes, people move away or die, new people move in, or new generations grow up who did not witness the ‘memorable or important events’, these autobiographical (direct) memories fade and weaken, leaving people reliant on ‘historical’ (indirect) memories. Accordingly, the thesis shows the influence of industry and industrial decline on community lessening over time.

It is for this reason that the thesis looks beyond industry and memories of it to trace community in St. Helens. This not only reveals the wider sources of community but highlights a move away from place-based community, particularly amongst those lacking autobiographical memory of the town’s industrial past. The thesis engages with recent concepts such as Jon Lawrence’s ‘micro-communities’ and Liz Spencer and Ray Pahl’s ‘personal communities’, bringing them into contact with similar concepts related to de-industrialisation and regeneration. Both emphasise the increasing degree of choice in

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54 Ibid., 332-333.
community belonging, something Lawrence argues was lacking from traditional place-based communities: ‘people may have been obliged by economic necessity and overcrowding to live on intimate terms with their neighbours, but privacy was always jealously guarded’.\textsuperscript{57} Though his ‘micro-communities’ are often place-based, centred ‘on shared interests or on their specific stage in the life cycle’, they are predicated more on choice than need or obligation.\textsuperscript{58} Spencer and Pahl, in addition to choice, underline that community need no longer be rooted geographically, as it becomes increasingly easy to maintain contact with people through communications technology\textsuperscript{59}; Covid-19 has underlined the importance of this. Spencer and Pahl dub these personal communities ‘hidden solidarities’ because they are less obvious, less tangible, than a place- or work-based community – but they are still very much there.\textsuperscript{60} Personal communities and place-based local communities are not mutually exclusive – they may co-exist or overlap as people tend to still have ‘local sources of fun, support and intimacy’ – but, based on choosing who constitutes them (usually friends or family), personal communities tend increasingly to take precedence.\textsuperscript{61} Community in St. Helens has not just evolved following industrial decline but its evolution is ongoing, with micro-communities and personal communities increasingly prevalent in the absence of large work-based ones. The thesis attempts to explore and understand St. Helens’ diverse communities from the point-of-view of those who constitute them.

\textbf{0.1.2: De-industrialisation}

De-industrialisation became an object of academic study in the 1970s as structural economic changes in Western industrial nations like America and Britain became increasingly apparent. An early definition described it as ‘a widespread, systematic disinvestment in the nation’s basic productive capacity’.\textsuperscript{62} In Britain, it was suggested the

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[58] Ibid., p.243.
\item[60] Ibid., p.191.
\item[61] Ibid., pp.193-194.
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\end{footnotesize}
term had ‘gatecrashed’ academic literature to describe the manufacturing sector’s inefficiency in terms of employment, output, and growth.\textsuperscript{63}

Though basically adequate, such economic definitions are at least partly why popular discourse associates de-industrialisation with governments such as Margaret Thatcher’s (who wielded policies moving the economy away from industry without, at least from the perspective of those losing their jobs, any obvious fallback) rather than searching for its longer-term origins.\textsuperscript{64} As this thesis illustrates, de-industrialisation is far more complex; otherwise, it would not still provoke such keen academic study. Since the 1970s, the field of de-industrialisation studies has broadened and lengthened, taking in wider geographies, greater social and cultural after-effects, and longer temporalities. The ‘focus’ of de-industrialisation studies has moved ‘away from a “body count” of manufacturing jobs’.\textsuperscript{65} Some criticise this ‘well-meaning’ approach for ‘fracturing’ the collective history of former industrial workers.\textsuperscript{66} De-industrialisation’s impact, though, is far wider and deeper than initial job losses, ‘a historical transformation that marks not just a quantitative and qualitative change in employment, but a fundamental change in the social fabric on a par with industrialization itself’.\textsuperscript{67} This might explain current interest in exploring de-industrialisation through cities, which have a more complex social fabric than smaller mono-industrial places. These evolutions are discussed in more depth in a recent historiographical article.\textsuperscript{68}

This thesis conceives de-industrialisation in terms of these wider social/cultural impacts and its longer temporality. Starting in the late 1960s, the thesis broadly agrees with Jim Tomlinson’s suggestion of de-industrialisation as a ‘meta-narrative’ for post-war

\textsuperscript{64} Both Jones’ \textit{Chavs} (pp.xxix-xxx) and Toynbee’s \textit{Hard Work} (p.3), for instance, unapologetically lay the blame at Margaret Thatcher’s door. This point-of-view appears in generalist accounts written by more academic scholars, too, including David Edgerton’s recent \textit{The Rise and Fall of the British Nation: A Twentieth Century History}, (Allen Lane, London, 2018), p.454. On Thatcherism, Edgerton comments, ‘the power of organised workers was broken by high unemployment and the collapse of unionised industries. The changes were palpable – the heads of the TUC diminished in stature, the names of union leaders were increasingly unknown, the industrial correspondents disappeared from television and newspapers. From the late 1980s the working class disappeared from the public sphere. The poor, the unsuccessful, were stigmatised in the media in ways which would have been unthinkable earlier’.
\textsuperscript{67} Cowie and Heathcott, \textit{Beyond the Ruins}, p.6.
Britain. In this conception, and in this thesis, ‘meta-narrative’ conveys de-industrialisation’s status as an overarching theme in recent British history due to the sheer scale of its impact. Tomlinson considers industrial employment to be ‘manufacturing plus mining plus construction’, i.e. economic sectors which ‘offered large amounts of regular, relatively well-paid employment’ and ‘underpinned the existence of a distinctive industrial working class’, which matches St. Helens’ industrial landscape. In conceiving de-industrialisation as a meta-narrative, Tomlinson inevitably sees it as a longer process, which this thesis agrees with; for him, this begins following industry’s peak in the 1950s with ‘crescendos’ at the beginning of Margaret Thatcher’s premiership and in the mid-1990s, again consistent with St. Helens. However, Tomlinson, even when drawing on place-specific examples, tends towards an economic overview. This is good for mapping de-industrialisation’s impact on jobs, unemployment, inequality, etc., but less useful for studying how it is experienced and lived by those it affects. Using community as a lens enables access to this experience, attempting an inside-out analysis to test the meta-narrative on the ground. Tomlinson defends a focus on cities as de-industrialisation ‘began’ in them and, until the 1980s, affected cities disproportionally compared to towns of all sizes. Cities, though, tend to have more innate facility to reinvent and regenerate themselves compared to towns, as the current political urgency around ‘levelling up’ and revitalising towns hints at. As the Centre for Towns points out, towns have ageing populations whereas cities are getting younger due to their more attractive array of employment and leisure opportunities, leaving towns in increasing danger of being truly left behind. A similar sentiment was expressed around the proposed Town of Culture award, emphasising how cities have higher rates of growth in terms of jobs and of funding from bodies like the Arts Council. Tomlinson seems insensitive to the regeneration

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70 Ibid., 79. Tomlinson does not appear to engage with concepts like Hayden White’s ‘metahistory’, albeit his conception/presentation of de-industrialisation is in a sense ‘a narrative, by which to explain the process of development leading from one situation to some other situation by appeal to general laws of causation’. (See: Hayden White, Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe, (John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1973), p.12). This thesis very much takes the term in the sense that it is used by Tomlinson.
71 Ibid., 86.
72 Ibid., 87.
73 Ibid., 76. A subsequent article in which he revisits his meta-narrative idea is similarly economic in focus: Jim Tomlinson, ‘De-industrialization: strengths and weaknesses as a key concept for understanding post-war British history’, Urban History, 47:2 (2020), 199-219.
76 Sandford, ‘Establishing a Town of Culture award’, p.2.
argument, not suggesting it amongst his alternate meta-narratives for post-war Britain. Yet, as this thesis argues, de-industrialisation must be looked at alongside regeneration due to their ongoing, overlapping impact on society, particularly on communities in towns like St. Helens where significant barriers exist to recovery from de-industrialisation and successful regeneration.

Given the importance of regeneration, de-industrialisation’s temporality extends forwards, too, beyond closures and job losses. Already in 1987, Des McNulty talked of industrial closure’s ‘multiplier’ effects – ‘linkage’ multipliers (the knock-on effect on other companies and industries) and ‘income’ multipliers (the knock-on effect on local spending power and the local economy) – which condemn a community ‘to a slow and lingering death’. Sherry Lee Linkon’s recent concept, the ‘half-life’ of de-industrialisation, similarly encapsulates after-effects. De-industrialisation’s ‘half-life’ manifests itself negatively in terms of health (industry-related disability and illness, alcohol and substance abuse, suicide); questions of identity, place, and value; failed or underwhelming economic restructuring and regeneration; strained community ties; and the shadow it casts over those growing up amidst these circumstances. More positively, though, it ‘hold[s] people together’ as those who witnessed and suffered the decline and those growing up amongst it seek ‘opportunity and a sense of community’, influenced by memories of the past working-class community and culture. De-industrialisation’s ‘influence may be waning, slowly, over time, but it remains potent, and it cannot simply be forgotten or ignored’.

Linkon studies half-life through the under-exploited prism of post-industrial literature instead of the more common approach of placed-based case studies. This thesis takes her framework back to a case study to explore the dual impact of de-industrialisation and regeneration on community from various angles. It engages closely with this de-industrial aftermath and its ongoing but gradually weakening influence over St. Helens. It looks particularly at some of the half-life’s more positive aspects, notably the influence of shared experiences and memories of industrial/working-class community on attempts to maintain and revitalise community despite industrial decline. There are similarities with the recent analyses of community by Lawrence or Spencer and Pahl

77 Tomlinson, ‘De-industrialization: strengths and weaknesses…’, 208. In fact, the word ‘regeneration’ does not feature in either of his articles referred to here.
80 Ibid., p.8.
discussed above: the subsequent influence of de-industrialisation on community is not always tangible but it is present. Linkon’s ‘half-life’ suggests de-industrialised places are not yet post-decline, that there is no definite ‘post-Fordist’ or ‘postindustrial’ rupture following closures.\(^{81}\) In doing so, she builds on Tim Strangleman’s ‘industrial residual structure of feeling’ and his call for researchers to be ‘more attentive to continuities and more subtle change’ over time, not just more obvious ruptures.\(^{82}\) In seeing de-industrialisation as a process of evolution, this thesis concurs with Linkon and Strangleman; the lack of a clear rupture between the de-industrial and post-industrial is why the thesis often puts parentheses around ‘post-industrial’ when discussing ‘regeneration’.

### 0.1.3: (Post-industrial) regeneration

Successful regeneration is important to an eventual transition to a post-industrial world. It is challenging for both a town and its inhabitants: economically as the town’s ‘purpose’ shifts broadly from production-based industry to consumption-based services (retail, professional, leisure, tourism, higher education, etc.); and emotionally for the residents, for whom the excitement and promise of an end to decline and dereliction may be tempered by concerns over regeneration’s impact on community cohesion. Mah notes that this is particularly pronounced where regeneration risks dislocating existing residents by removing traces of the area’s past (industrial) ‘purpose’ and/or by preferring the interests of ‘outsiders’ to those of locals.\(^{83}\) This is an example of place attachment and sense of community influencing responses to de-industrialisation and regeneration. There is a discernable link between resistance to de-industrialisation and attitudes towards regeneration, ‘a yearning for stability and continuity amidst disruptive social and economic change’, which this thesis spotlights at several points and which contributes to the persistence of (a sense of) community in St. Helens – hence the focus on community.\(^{84}\)

This thesis deals with regeneration both in its physical sense – the changes and developments to the urban environment over time – and its human sense, particularly the transition for industrial workers away from industrial jobs to new forms of labour and/or unemployment, and the emergence of new generations growing up in the aftermath of de-

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81 Ibid., pp.5, 7-8.
83 Mah, Industrial Ruination, pp.162-167.
84 Ibid., p.163.
industrialisation with no direct memories of the industrial past or closures. Both human and physical regeneration impact directly on community and, when studied together, underline the intimate links between the processes of de-industrialisation and regeneration.

Regeneration, in terms of urban development, is most commonly applied to post-1980s developments. During Thatcher’s premiership, urban regeneration became a flagship policy tool, championed by Ministers like Michael Heseltine – more about whom later. In broad terms, regeneration applies to ‘any development that is taking place in towns and cities’. Regeneration is often differentiated from previous approaches to urban development: ‘distinguished from pragmatic ‘redevelopment’ […] offers more than the ‘revitalisation’ of old structures and processes by promising a more radical urban rebirth and ‘sustainable’ self-renewal’. Some view regeneration as a Thatcherite invention, laden with Judeo-Christian values and notions of moral improvement and self-help. The 1960s ‘public sector-driven’ and slum clearance-focused ‘urban renewal’ and the 1980s market-oriented urban regeneration ‘focused on economic growth and property development’ are often contrasted. Two recent publications on regeneration in Britain hint at such turning points – and underline the field’s aforementioned focus on cities and new towns. Guy Ortolano suggests development and planning – particularly new towns – are central to the emergence of ‘core Thatcherite policies’, whilst Otto Saumarez-Smith writes that ‘the rebuilding of British city centres during the 1960s is arguably among the single most dramatic moments in British urban history. It is certainly one of the most controversial’.

Rather than a rupture, this thesis situates regeneration as an evolution of the various ‘urban re-’ attitudes and policies which have emerged over the years, and examines it within the context of a town, rather than a city or a new town. Simon Gunn and Charlotte Wildman both emphasise urban development and planning’s continuities between post-war ‘reconstruction’ and inter-war ‘redevelopment’. As Gunn puts it:

1945 did not represent an historical caesura, despite the mass destruction of many European cities, but rather a continuation of policies and practices already instigated in

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87 Ibid.
88 Tallon, *Urban Regeneration*, pp.4-5.
89 Ortolano, *Thatcher’s Progress*, p.3; Saumarez-Smith, *Boom Cities*, p.3.
the 1930s in domains such as housing, new towns and microdistricts (or neighbourhood units).91

This thesis extends this, suggesting these continuities go into and beyond the 1980s. The various redevelopment/regeneration plans for St. Helens studied in this thesis, stretching from the 1960s to the present day, share aims and policies – improving the retail offer, attracting new employers, improving leisure and recreation facilities, better housing – and ultimately seek to prevent the town being left behind. What changes is the social, economic, and political context in which the plans are shaped, plus – importantly for this thesis – the extent and nature of community or public participation in their shaping.92 In focusing on this participation, the thesis answers Wildman’s call to show ‘greater concern with how inhabitants experience and respond to development’, in keeping with the desired inside-out approach.93

(Post-industrial) regeneration in this thesis is thus presented as part of a longer history of urban (re-)development, intertwined with that of planning. If de-industrialisation, as Tomlinson suggests, is one meta-narrative for post-war Britain, this thesis suggests planning and urban development is a strong contender for another. The two are certainly linked, with post-war urban development having a ‘destabilising and destructive impact on the established industrial activities’ and inner cities, and de-industrialisation producing ‘new geographies of economic activity (and inactivity) which continue to shape the experience and prospects of urban areas today’.94 Tomlinson, above, does not consider urban development/regeneration when listing alternative meta-narratives to de-industrialisation.95 Recent regeneration scholarship similarly stops short of doing so. Though Ortolano suggests that development and planning ‘provide a vantage point from which postwar Britain looks changed’, Saumarez-Smith sees urban development as ‘part of the de-industrialisation story’.96 In suggesting urban development/regeneration could itself be a meta-narrative for post-war Britain, the thesis does not deny the links and overlap between regeneration and de-industrialisation; on the contrary, it demonstrates their intimate links whilst wishing to avoid the importance of one being subsumed by the other.

93 Wildman, Urban Redevelopment, p.193.
96 Ortolano, Thatcher’s Progress, p.17 ; Saumarez-Smith, Boom Cities, p.4.
Given the issue of participation, planning and urban development is also bound up with the question of community, which lies at the heart of this thesis. Both Ortolano and Saumarez-Smith highlight the optimism which surrounded post-war planning, particularly until the 1960s as belief in continued economic growth and material prosperity fuelled expansive, modernist schemes catering for mass car ownership and increased shopping and leisure.\textsuperscript{97} Planners at this time felt they could literally build community.\textsuperscript{98} Ortolano contrasts a ‘physical approach’ to community development, where expert planners created built environments and neighbourhood units around which a community could coalesce, and its replacement by a ‘social approach’, which placed people – ‘yeasty citizens, catalysed by state agents’ – ‘at the centre of [planners’] attempts to build community’.\textsuperscript{99} Saumarez-Smith notes the competitive nature of redevelopment between different towns and cities in the 1960s, as well as attempts to secure private investment to fund projects.\textsuperscript{100} Both are often identified as trends of post-1980 regeneration so their visibility earlier supports this thesis’ suggestion of continuity over rupture in planning and development.

Alongside community construction, the defence of community and local interests through participation in planning and urban development pervades recent literature, with examples across the thesis’ time period from Gunn’s study of grass-roots campaigns against ring-roads and intra-urban motorways or Sara Mass’ study of ‘save the market’ campaigns in the 1960s and 1970s, to Mah’s association of industrial closure and (post-industrial) regeneration in the 2000s.\textsuperscript{101} As the thesis shows, community construction and community defence feature heavily in St. Helens’ redevelopment/regeneration. Community construction linked to urban development can arguably be traced to St. Helens’ nineteenth century growth, another legacy of the town’s industrial development pertinent to this thesis’ story.\textsuperscript{102} Community defence emerges particularly strongly alongside and following de-industrialisation, a manifestation of de-industrialisation’s ‘half-life’ and the desire for ‘stability and continuity’ in the face of change and decline.\textsuperscript{103}

\textsuperscript{97} Ortolano, \textit{Thatcher's Progress}, p.53 ; Saumarez-Smith, \textit{Boom Cities}, pp.14-16.
\textsuperscript{98} Ortolano, \textit{Thatcher's Progress}, p.144 ; Saumarez-Smith, \textit{Boom Cities}, pp.100-101.
\textsuperscript{99} Ortolano, \textit{Thatcher's Progress}, p.146.
\textsuperscript{100} Saumarez-Smith, \textit{Boom Cities}, pp.102, 115.
\textsuperscript{102} Barker and Harris, \textit{Merseyside Town}, passim.
\textsuperscript{103} To quote Saumarez-Smith’s \textit{Boom Cities}, ‘in the early 1960s even the most radical schemes could be passed through with barely a murmur […] by the 1970s opposition was widespread, instinctive, and often well-organised’ (p.10.).
Community, de-industrialisation, and (post-industrial) regeneration, the three concepts at the heart of this thesis, are inextricably and intimately wrapped up together.

0.2: Argument and key historical questions

The thesis’ focus is community and how it, or the sense of it, has evolved in St. Helens during the ongoing processes of de-industrialisation and (post-industrial) regeneration. The thesis tackles several historical questions:

- to what extent was industry/work historically the main source of community in St. Helens?
- to what extent has this sense of industrial/work community been weakened by de-industrialisation?
- have other source(s) of community emerged in its place and, if so, what form(s) do they take?
- as St. Helens’ industrial past recedes further, to what extent is its influence over the town and the people who make up its communities declining?
- to what extent does a persistence of community in St. Helens disprove narratives associating de-industrialisation with community decline and question the negative portrayals associated with such towns by outside observers?

Studying de-industrialisation, regeneration, or community is not new. All are areas of extensive and evolving scholarship. This thesis nonetheless makes a pertinent contribution in the following ways:

- by studying St. Helens, it shifts the focus onto a large, formerly multi-industrial town, in contrast to de-industrialisation studies of smaller mono-industrial places or bigger cities and regeneration studies of post-war new towns or bigger cities, a particularly relevant choice given contemporary political debate and interest around towns
- it centres its analysis on the impact of de-industrialisation and regeneration on community, a concept given new relevance during the Covid-19 pandemic. Combining scholarship on all three allows for a rounded analysis of the case study (for instance, regeneration in both its physical and human senses) and a
simultaneous application of relevant concepts from each domain (the de-industrial ‘half-life’ alongside evolutions in community formation, for example)

- it argues for de-industrialisation and regeneration as long-term processes of evolution rather than dividing them into stages/ruptures. Whilst de-industrialisation has already been proposed as such (Tomlinson’s meta-narrative), the analysis goes beyond the economic to examine how the process was experienced. Regeneration, typically presented as distinct from other forms of urban (re-)development, is proposed as another meta-narrative for post-war Britain. In keeping with this long-termism, the thesis demonstrates the continued influence of St. Helens’ nineteenth century industrial development on events in its present and recent past

- it focuses on a town yet to be studied in the light of industrial decline and regeneration, despite the dramatic impact of both on it, contributing a new case study with various interesting characteristics to the rich literatures on community, de-industrialisation, and regeneration.

Ultimately, the thesis’ multi-angle study of community in St. Helens reveals, despite the decline of industrial work and the associational/community life associated with it, an ongoing vigorous collection of (local) communities, some linked to industry, some not, some emerging after or alongside de-industrialisation, some long-standing, many overlapping with one another. Industrial work was historically the main – but far from the sole – source of community in St. Helens. Industry’s influence spread beyond the workplace, as shown with widespread support for industrial workers during times of industrial activism and in the face of impending closures, or in the nature of some – but far from all – local associations/communities based around leisure and recreation. Elements of this social world persist today despite de-industrialisation, albeit often in modified form. The legacy of this industrial past and work-based community can also be seen in attitudes towards St. Helens’ (post-industrial) regeneration, another process which influences community building. The thesis further argues that community in St. Helens is still evolving, decreasingly circumscribed by place or work. The influence of the industrial past – its ‘half-life’ – is weakening over time and, as new generations grow up lacking direct memories of this past, the basis/bases of (local) community in St. Helens will evolve again.
0.3: Why St. Helens?

The case study approach is common in community, de-industrialisation, and regeneration studies. This section justifies the choice of St. Helens and briefly outlines its development.

Thinking about works drawn on for this thesis, Mah focuses on three international case studies, Clapson on Whitley (Reading), Ramsden on Beverley (near Hull), Pahl on the Isle of Sheppey (Kent), Ortolano on Milton Keynes, Wildman on Liverpool and Manchester, Strangleman on the Guinness brewery (London), Jonathan Warren on Teesside, and Tom Hansell on Appalachia (USA) and South Wales. The routine use of such localised case studies might reflect the growing acceptance of local history in academic/professional settings – in spite of, or perhaps because of, the ongoing vigour of the amateur scene. However, as Hey remarks, many works ‘that are in effect local studies are presented as detailed studies of a national [or international, for Mah and Hansell] topic rather than local history per se’, the wider resonance of the case justifying its selection; this thesis is a case in point, being both a detailed study of St. Helens and a reflection on the wider themes of community, de-industrialisation, and (post-industrial) regeneration.

Seen in terms of wider resonance, a case study is a ‘detailed examination of a single example’ which, if well chosen, can provide more broadly applicable insight. They have been described as the ‘phenomenology of human learning’, enabling context-based learning and real life direct testing rather than just a reliance on theory. They facilitate the incorporation of the where into the why of history’, allowing access to people’s experiences and the places where these experiences took place – history, as Colls advocates, from the ‘inside-out’. They should be both ‘typical’ and ‘contextually specific or unique’, this ‘combination of locally specific and typical features’ enabling them to advance the field in question.

106 Hey, ‘Reflections on the local and regional…‘, 155.
109 Mah, Industrial Ruination, p.17.
Why, then, St. Helens? Readers, save fans of rugby league, will be unfamiliar with it. It is partly a personal choice. It is my home town, where I was raised and schooled until leaving for university. My family and close childhood friends still live there. This personal attachment, plus a general awareness of its industrial past, influenced my choosing it for my Masters dissertation on de-industrialisation – as did the practical appeal of combining archive visits with trips home.\textsuperscript{110} It was also a chance to learn more about the town. As Ian Kershaw recently remarked, writing about periods and places one knows first-hand reveals the fickleness and fallibility of memory, as well as just how much one never knew.\textsuperscript{111} Even now, several years on and at the end of the PhD process, I am aware there remains more to discover about St. Helens than can be learned in a lifetime.

Academically, St. Helens has numerous characteristics which make it an interesting case study. Industrially, it was very diverse. It has been described as ‘a product of the industrial revolution’ and as ‘built literally and metaphorically on coal’.\textsuperscript{112} Large employers, several with local roots, existed across sectors including glass-making (Pilkington, United Glass Bottlemakers, Rockware), coal mining, brewing (Greenall-Whitley), pharmaceutics (Beechams), engineering (Vulcan foundry). The factory-based nature of employers like Beechams and elements of glass-making (plus, at times, employers in industries associated with female labour like textiles) means St. Helens’ industrial workforce had a sizeable female contingent so the work-based community was not just masculine.\textsuperscript{113} The wide range of large industrial employers means the overall numbers involved in industrial employment were significant. Much of this industrial base collapsed quickly and simultaneously during this thesis’ time period, justifying the examination of this decline on \textit{community} in St. Helens.

In terms of community, St. Helens is a large town – just over 100,000 people (nearly 180,000 in the wider Metropolitan Borough) – giving scope for a broad range of communities and networks. These are largely ethnically undiverse communities so the


\textsuperscript{112} Barker and Harris, \textit{Merseyside Town}, p.ix ; Forman, \textit{Industrial Town}, p.12.

\textsuperscript{113} Women made up 36.7% of economically active residents in 1971. In 1981, they represented 38.5% of economically active (national average 38.9%) and 39.9% of people in employment (identical to the national average). In 1991, they represented 42.3% of economically active (national average 42.7%). In 1981, over 66% worked full-time (as opposed to just over 60% nationally). See: 1971 Census, Small Area Statistics (Ward Library): 100% Population (St. Helens C.B) ; 1981 census – small area statistics ; 1991 census – small area statistics.
thesis admittedly does little to advance understanding of industrial work and decline from the perspective of immigrant populations.\textsuperscript{114} St. Helens’ main migrant population, Irish, arrived in the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{115} Post-war colonial immigration to the United Kingdom had little impact: in 1971, from 104,340 residents, only 792 men and 800 women had been born outside the United Kingdom.\textsuperscript{116} In 2011, nearly 97% of residents listed their ethnicity as ‘white British’.\textsuperscript{117} St. Helens’ local communities bore – and still bear, to a degree – the influence of the town’s various industries (and industrialists). In 1970, Lane and Roberts suggested modern St. Helens was the twin product of the industrialists and their workers.\textsuperscript{118} Despite geographical proximity to large cities (Liverpool and Manchester) and other industrial towns (Warrington, Widnes, Wigan), St. Helens was long quite distinct from these. In the 1960s, around 14,000 workers commuted into the town and just 9,000 out, and those in-commuters came from a twelve-or-so mile radius.\textsuperscript{119} A later commentator suggested ‘St. Helens is its own place, belonging to itself more certainly than anywhere else’, though the thesis shows the distinctions between St. Helens and its surrounding region are not always so marked.\textsuperscript{120}

St. Helens is also conspicuously absent from the literature – particularly for this thesis’ time period. Saumarez-Smith notes the same can be said of the North-West generally, despite it being a ‘locus’ for de-industrialisation.\textsuperscript{121} As alluded to, there is a tendency in recent de-industrialisation literature to focus on ‘cities’ and/or on places outside Britain’s industrial heartlands, with smaller, mono-industrial towns also regularly studied. Regeneration literature similarly focuses on cities or ‘new towns’.\textsuperscript{122} Saumarez-Smith examines predominantly cities even when studying the North-West, a place not short of towns like St. Helens – places which underwent, perhaps more modestly, changes akin to those in cities and which are similarly absent from twentieth century historiography, understood either as products of industrialisation or doomed victims of

\textsuperscript{114} A recent thesis which does deal with the issue of de-industrialisation and race is: Christopher M. Lawson, ‘Nothing left but smoke and mirrors: deindustrialisation and the remaking of British communities, 1957-1992’, (PhD Thesis, University of California Berkeley, 2020). On pp.11-12, he notes that whilst American scholarship on de-industrialisation has accorded reasonable attention to the issue of race, British scholarship has been slower to do so, and lists studies which specifically tackle this question.

\textsuperscript{115} Barker and Harris, Merseyside Town, pp.280-284, 453-454.

\textsuperscript{116} Census 1971, Small Area Statistics (Ward Library): 100% Population (St. Helens C.B.).


\textsuperscript{118} Lane and Roberts, Pilkingtons, p.26.

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., pp.29-30.


\textsuperscript{121} Saumarez-Smith, Boom Cities, p.4.

\textsuperscript{122} See above footnotes for scholars including Tomlinson, Saumarez-Smith, Ortolano, Gunn, Mass, etc..
Given the aforementioned political interest in towns – particularly those in “left behind” areas often portrayed as synonymous with de-industrialisation – it is appropriate to analyse two major processes in recent British history (de-industrialisation and regeneration) through a town like St. Helens.

Barker and Harris authored the definitive history of St. Helens’ industrial development, hailed as ‘an outstanding product of St. Helens, as remarkable in its way as sheet glass and Beecham’s pills […] the first full-scale nineteenth-century history of a small industrial town as distinct from the bigger and better-known cities’. Prefacing its 1993 reprint, they called for someone to write St. Helens’ twentieth century story, which this thesis does for the 1960s onwards. Forman’s oral history of 1920s St. Helens fills some of the gap between Barker and Harris’ work and this thesis, as does Barker’s official history of Pilkington’s. For this thesis’ period, academic literature on St. Helens is confined to specific studies of particular events, such as Lane and Roberts on the 1970 Pilkington strike, Ian Hamilton Fazey on the Community of St. Helens Trust, or Karen Beckwith on the Parkside Colliery pit camp. Like with most towns, there are sources produced by local/amateur historians, particularly relating to the town’s industries. St. Helens boasts an extensive local archive, with plenty of relevant primary material readily available. A wider study of the town across the latter twentieth century is still lacking, something this thesis remedies.

0.3.1: St. Helens’ industrial background and development

The choice of St. Helens explained, a brief overview of its industrial development prior to this thesis’ period is necessary to situate the reader. The full story is found in Barker and Harris’ book, whilst specific aspects of the town’s earlier development are returned to periodically throughout the thesis to demonstrate the ongoing influence of its

123 Saumarez-Smith, *Boom Cities*, pp.1-13. For example: ‘this book covers a constellation of ideas about the radical renewal of the central areas of British cities in the 1960s’ (p.1); ‘the years surrounding 1963, however, are a peak point in the actual physical changes to cities […]’ (p.2); ‘the rebuilding of British city centres during the 1960s is arguably among the single most dramatic moments in British urban history’ (p.3); etc..

124 Asa Briggs review, quoted in Barker and Harris, *Merseyside Town*.
125 Barker and Harris, *Merseyside Town*, p.xv.
nineteenth century industrial and urban growth. Developments during the thesis’ time period are detailed and analysed in Chapter 1.

Scrolling the story back to St. Helens’ eighteenth and nineteenth century industrial development reflects the long-term – evolutionary – nature of the thesis’ central themes: community, de-industrialisation, and regeneration. The town’s industrial development becomes relevant when its legacy and, particularly, the legacy of its key industrialists recurs in subsequent chapters. This ongoing influence and relevance is an extension forwards of recent trends in scholarship on industrialisation, increasingly attentive to its long-term evolution and highly variegated nature as a process rather than a pinpointed revolution. These trends are encapsulated in a major new textbook which emphasises industrialisation’s expanded geography, local-global interactions, and longer and mixed temporality (earlier and later than the classic late eighteenth century lift-off, and not homogenous either).129 Such attitudes increasingly influence more popular historical discourse, a recent special edition of L’Histoire magazine devoting a whole section to industry and industrialisation’s long development from the Middle Ages.130 Just as the temporality of de-industrialisation studies has lengthened and its geography broadened, so too have the temporality and geography of industrialisation studies. The overlap between industrialisation and de-industrialisation (demonstrated by the ongoing legacy and influence of St. Helens’ industrial development and industrialists) and their nature as long-term processes rather than neatly delineated stages cannot be overlooked – akin to Linkon’s argument for the ongoing influence (‘half-life’) of de-industrialisation in areas

130 L’Histoire : Les collections – L’Age industriel : 200 ans de progrès et de catastrophes, (91, Avril-Juin 2021). See in particular: ‘Avant-propos : lame de fond’, 3 and Catherine Verna, ‘Industrieux moyen âge’, 14-17. Verna does specify that the medieval word had well-developed industry but was not industrialised, insofar as industry did not yet ‘model society or space; it did not dominate the economy’. Building on the work of medievalists such as Philippe Braunstein (who argued medieval industry and artisans were differentiated by the reach of their markets, the former being broader than the latter), she does however highlight the technological innovation, the organisation and management of production, and the entrepreneurial spirit of medieval industry, particularly in the sectors of drapery, metallurgy, and glass-making. The progressive nature of modern industrialisation, meanwhile, is explored through the gradual adaptation of steam engines/power (in contrast to the traditional perception of steam as the motor driving the revolution): Liliane Hilaire-Perez, François Jarrige, ‘La machine à vapeur démythifiée’, 24-31. Seeking the origins of industrialisation in the Middle Ages appears in numerous French language works, most obviously Jean Gimpel’s La révolution industrielle au Moyen Age, (Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1975). Gerard Noiriel takes his ‘popular history’ of France back to the 100 Years War: Une histoire populaire de la France de la guerre de Cent Ans à nos jours, (Agone, Marseille, 2018). Denis Woronoff takes his history of industry back to the sixteenth century, even if he admits that by even the late eighteenth century France remained dominated by peasantry and agriculture: Histoire de l’industrie en France du XVle siècle à nos jours, (Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 1994). A recent work on industrial pollution, meanwhile, begins its story in 1700: François Jarrige, Thomas le Roux, La contamination du monde : une histoire des pollutions à l’âge industriel, (Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 2017).
of decline instead of an obvious post-industrial rupture, or recent industrialisation scholarship’s blurring of the pre-industrial/industrial divide.  

St. Helens takes its name from a chapel-of-ease at the boundary of four manors which remain visible today as parishes within the town: Eccleston, Parr, Sutton, and Windle. The town’s broad contours were clear by 1800 or so, and ‘if you look at a modern Ordnance Survey map, you’ll still be able to pick out the villages from which it grew’. Comparing an extract from Greenwood’s 1818 Map of Lancashire (Fig.0.3.1) and a modern map of St. Helens (Fig.0.3.2) demonstrates this clearly: the main road from Prescot (orange on the 1818 map, now the A58), for instance, is visible on both. Earlier historians, though, warn against ‘calling St. Helens a town too soon’ as it was still separate from those four manors with which it eventually merged. Its governance and amenities remained ‘rural’: highways looked after by a township surveyor, the poor by an overseer, no fixed water supply, no drainage beyond an open sewer, and no street lighting.

Fig.0.3.1: extract from Greenwood’s Map of Lancashire (1818) showing St. Helens and environs

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131 Bruland et al., Reinventing, p.4.
132 Forman, Industrial Town, p.11.
133 Barker and Harris, Merseyside Town, p.169.
134 Ibid., pp.170-171.
True to the idea of industry’s protracted development, mining was recorded in 1540 at Sutton Heath, 1610 at Windle, 1655 at Parr, and 1660 at Eccleston. Industrialisation, though, as a process which dominates the economy and models space
and society, only truly began when the Sankey Canal – Britain’s first – opened in 1757. The impetus for the canal was the combination of St. Helens’ raw materials (coal, sand, and fireclay) and the concomitant economic expansion of Liverpool’s port and Cheshire’s saltfields. From 1700 to 1750, Liverpool’s population and trading potential grew threefold, increasing domestic and industrial demand for fuel, i.e. coal. Liverpool had relied on collieries at Prescot and Whiston which, being nearer than St. Helens, entailed lower transportation costs. Liverpool’s growth meant supplies from these collieries became insufficient so the road, turn-piked to Prescot in 1726, was extended to St. Helens in 1749. Aware of this increasing competition and demand, Prescot Hall Colliery raised prices by 20% and the Turnpike Trustees reimposed a road toll previously lifted in 1746. The Liverpool Corporation looked to a water link to St. Helens to circumvent these costs and the improvement of the Sankey Brook was given Royal Assent in 1755. Linking St. Helens to the River Mersey (and Liverpool), the canal complemented the Weaver Navigation link to Cheshire’s saltfields on the Mersey’s opposite bank. The resultant ‘internal triangular trade’ between Liverpool’s port, St. Helens’ coal, and Cheshire’s salt launched St. Helens’ industrial development.

St. Helens’ economic potential unlocked, entrepreneurs began exploiting it. In the 1760s and 1770s, John Mackay developed the Ravenhead district, a site industrially active even today. Mackay established coal mines and began attracting the furnace industries, capitalising on the raw materials and canal link. He created the British Cast Plate Glass Company’s site in 1776 and the Ravenhead Copper Works in 1780. Firms which became major local employers developed in various industries, including brewing (Greenall’s, 1762), glass-making (Pilkington, 1826), and pharmaceutics (Beechams, 1859); again, a development over time, a process, as the town and its industries took shape. The Liverpool to Manchester railway, opened in 1830, further increased St. Helens’ interconnectedness with surrounding industrial areas, boosting its development. By the mid-nineteenth century, St. Helens possessed 15 glassworks, 11 chemical works, and 35 collieries. Five glassworks belonged to Pilkington who, with two other manufacturers, were producing 70% of British glass by 1870. The chemical works were largely relocated

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137 Barker and Harris, Merseyside Town, pp.4, 11-14; Forman, Industrial Town, p.12.

138 Barker and Harris, Merseyside Town, pp.15-23.

139 Ibid., pp.35-36, 46-47.

to nearby Widnes in the early twentieth century, only employing around 500 people by 1920. By then, though 24 towns on the South Lancashire coalfield had a higher proportion of miners within their workforce, St. Helens’ 10,000 mining workers gave it the coalfield’s largest mining population. Colliers represented 27% of the town’s workforce, and a further 16% were involved in the glass industries.

Industrial development went hand-in-hand with urban development. An early concern for industrialists was housing. This dispensed workers from travelling long distances each day, making the work more appealing. By 1768, Mackay offered lodgings to workers unable to return home at night, promising cottages with gardens in the near future. Pilkington initially built 37 cottages beside their works and by the 1840s offered their men a £10 annual ‘living out’ allowance. Many prominent local businessmen were landlords. The provision of housing continued into the twentieth century, notably near to collieries. Pilkington even attempted, unsuccessfully, to construct a ‘garden city’ similar to Port Sunlight on the Wirral or Bourneville in Birmingham. The project envisaged 4,000 houses and a 500-capacity school, but only 31 houses were built. These developments contributed to the town’s increasing size and created associations between certain areas and industries.

Beyond housing, better provision for water, drainage, roadways, lighting, and law enforcement was necessary to support the growing population. The provision of such amenities, alongside housing, represents the creation by the town’s industrialists of a framework for the growing town and its community. In 1824, Peter Greenall installed pipes along the main streets to provide unpolluted water, expanded to outlying houses in the 1840s. Greenall was treasurer of the town hall opened in 1839, commissioned partly to accommodate the magistrates who met in the town from 1838 and the town’s police force, established in 1840. Unsurprisingly, Greenall was also the driving force behind the Improvement Commission formed in 1845. Upon his death, a succession of similarly prominent industrialists, including David Gamble and William Roby Pilkington, took his place. By 1855, significant progress had been made in terms of sewerage for over half the

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141 Ibid., pp.12-13, 77.
142 Ibid., pp.27-28, 60.
143 Ibid., p.35.
144 Barker, Glassmakers, p.92.
145 Barker and Harris, Merseyside Town, pp.290-291.
146 Barker, Glassmakers, pp.397-398.
147 Ibid., pp.84-85.
148 Ibid., pp.86-87.
149 Barker and Harris, Merseyside Town, pp.299-304.
houses and three-quarters of the roads, of which 6.5 miles had been paved. More importantly, under Gamble’s stewardship, St. Helens pushed for Incorporation, as its growth overwhelmed the Commission’s capacities. In 1865, a request was made to the Privy Council and Gamble became mayor when Incorporation was granted in 1868.

By 1901, St. Helens boasted over 84,000 inhabitants, up from 45,000 in 1871 and 11,800 in 1845. Barker and Harris describe it as going ‘from an outsized village to a large and flourishing borough’, arguing figures such as Greenall, the Pilkington’s, and Gamble ‘had every reason to have pride in [their] generation which had accomplished so much’. The developments spurred by industrialisation forged a sense of community amongst the inhabitants. Residents increasingly identified both to the specific area of the town where they lived and the town as a whole, with old rivalries and prejudices between colliers and those in other industries or between Irish immigrants and local people beginning to weaken. Providing housing stopped trades such as glassmaking being ‘nomadic’ in nature, helping workers become fixed in the town. Identification with the town was perhaps best demonstrated with the emergence of the town’s rugby clubs – St. Helens Recreation, formed by Pilkington’s in 1879, and St. Helens Football Club, formed in 1873 – who quickly drew large crowds, especially when playing rivals such as Wigan. Residents, however, still associated strongly with their own part of town, a legacy perhaps of the separate nature of St. Helens and its surrounding townships but also of the sporadic housing development adjacent to particular industrial developments.

Whether at neighbourhood or town level, people’s sense of community and identity owed much to industrial development; without it, there might not have been a town to identify with. Whilst internal divisions between workers gradually disappeared, alongside industrial development came a separation between the workers and the industrialists, two classes formed by industrialisation both contributing their respective ideas, attitudes, and institutions to the town. The shared experiences of work and similar living conditions, both consequences of the presence of industry, allowed workers to construct their own sense of community, alongside, against, but not necessarily separate from, the top-down community forged by the industrialists. The industrialists’ framework provided building blocks for community development but ultimately they could not

150 Ibid., p.400.
151 Ibid., p.467.
152 Ibid., p.412.
153 Barker, Glassmakers, p.181.
154 Forman, Industrial Town, p.11.
control how the workers would use them. Returning again to Lane and Roberts, modern St. Helens is a product of both its industrialists and its workers.\textsuperscript{155}

\textbf{0.4: Thesis structure, sources and methodology, chapter outlines}

The main body of this thesis comprises five chapters: ‘community and de-industrialisation’, ‘work and work-based community’, ‘community beyond the workplace’, ‘community and regeneration’, and ‘looking to the future: communities of choice’. Each is a different angle or lens from which to study community, reflecting its multi-faceted nature. The chapters are thematic rather than strictly chronological, although the analysis within each chapter proceeds chronologically. They are five spokes on a wheel, coming out from the Introduction in the centre and contributing to the Conclusion(s) on its rim, which (hopefully) ties the thesis together. A consequence of this structure is that each chapter uses at least partially distinct source bases and methodologies, outlined in the Appendix.

The thesis mainly covers the period 1968 to 2018. As mentioned, the thesis’ core concepts are longer processes which defy neat temporal classification, as shown with the relevance of St. Helens’ nineteenth century industrial development to the thesis. In part, the boundaries of the thesis were chosen as convenient “book ends”, coinciding with two notable years in St. Helens’ history: the 100\textsuperscript{th} and 150\textsuperscript{th} anniversaries of its Incorporation. They enable the foregrounding of the long-term nature of community, de-industrialisation, and regeneration, the thesis starting over a decade before Margaret Thatcher’s 1979 election so often presented as a turning point in British historiography (particularly regarding de-industrialisation, the working-classes, and regeneration).\textsuperscript{156} In extending its analysis up to the present, the thesis shows the ongoing impact of these processes on towns like St. Helens. The unfinished nature of these processes makes this thesis more a work of ‘histoire du temps présent’ (‘present history’) as opposed to the history of the recent past.\textsuperscript{157} It captures what French historian François Hartog has called ‘présentisme’. This shift away from ideas of optimism and progress, from looking at the present as a stepping-stone to the future – this ‘présent omniprésent’ – is particularly pronounced for those at the lower ends of society, who live ‘un présent en pleine

décélération, sans passé [...] et sans vraiment de futur non plus [...] le futur perçu non plus comme une promesse, mais comme menace'.\(^{158}\) Hartog associates this past-less, future-less existence with the ‘precariat’ (a recently coined social class or category, covering those with unstable employment or income) and traces its origins to the various crises of the 1970s, the erosion of the Welfare State, the growth of consumption and technology, and, especially, the growth of mass unemployment.\(^{159}\) Hartog is not specifically addressing de-industrialisation but his analysis touches on features commonly associated with it. Each chapter engages with developments and events from across this time period.

### 0.4.1: Sources and methodology

The intended methodology is simply, in Colls’ words, history from the ‘inside-out’. It is a common approach in case studies of community, de-industrialisation, and regeneration, with oral interviews and ethnographic techniques often employed. The ambition is to understand how these processes were experienced by those who lived them. It is in the spirit of approaches like history from below which seek to expand the historical narrative to include the voices of previously silent actors. Oral history, notably, shines the spotlight on ‘people normally considered as no more than ‘things’ […] illiterate peoples or social groups whose history is either absent or distorted in the written record […] interviews often reveal unknown events or unknown aspects of known events, and they always cast new light on unexplored sides of the daily life of the non-hegemonic classes’.\(^{160}\) As Forman noted in his oral history of 1920s St. Helens, ‘the working class are the object of records, not the subject’ because ‘most history is written from the viewpoint of the class of people in control’.\(^{161}\) A successfully conducted inside-out study contributes to redressing that balance.

Scholars work ‘inside-out’ in various ways. Mah combined ‘in-depth qualitative interviews’ with ‘walking and driving tours of old industrial areas with research participants’.\(^{162}\) Hansell used ‘live public forums’, ‘facilitated conversations between’ Appalachia and South Wales, and created ‘radio reports and a documentary film’

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159 Ibid., pp.155-156.
162 Mah, *Industrial Ruination*, p.16.
alongside his book.\textsuperscript{163} Laura Balderstone used individual interviews and ‘group mapping workshops’ in which participants ‘gathered round a table-sized street map, annotating it with notes and drawings to identify locations that had been in some way important to them, and to situate those places in time’ to construct a history of Liverpool’s waterfront area.\textsuperscript{164} Strangleman’s study of the Guinness brewery saw him work with a photographer to capture through interviews and photographs the ‘spirit of the people who worked on the site’, augmented by detailed trawling of the company’s archives.\textsuperscript{165} Warren used semi-structured individual interviews and group sessions where photographs of his case study, Teesside, were used to stimulate debate amongst participants.\textsuperscript{166} Many use existing oral history and/or local history projects, as with Strangleman’s work or Christopher Lawson’s recent multi-case study thesis into de-industrialisation in Britain.\textsuperscript{167}

These studies often require protracted and/or repeated visits to the case study locations. The extreme of this was Pahl, who spent almost a decade on the Isle of Sheppey and bought a property as a research base.\textsuperscript{168} Barker and Harris, despite growing up in St. Helens, began by exploring ‘on foot every part which we did not know really intimately, so that throughout our studies the topography should be vividly in our minds’.\textsuperscript{169} These fieldwork approaches sit alongside the trawling of archives, local and national, for documentary sources. If used well, they generate an understanding of how processes like community, de-industrialisation, or regeneration are conceived of and experienced by the people who live them, an understanding which can then be placed alongside wider developments or narratives gleaned from more “official” documentary sources.

This thesis combines documentary sources with oral history and various fieldwork activities (see Appendix). Despite the widespread use of ‘inside-out’ approaches in such studies, it can be challenging to access the necessary voices to gain such an understanding (see Appendix). As mentioned, St. Helens is fortunate to have an extensive and easily accessible local archive, containing “unofficial” collections deposited by other researchers (professional and amateur), local associations and groups, and individual residents. It also houses a collection of oral histories with former industrial workers and

\textsuperscript{163} Hansell, \textit{After Coal}, p.1.
\textsuperscript{164} Laura Balderstone, Graeme J. Milne, Rachel Mulhearn, ‘Memory and place on the Liverpool waterfront in the mid-twentieth century’, \textit{Urban History}, 41:3 (2014), 480-481.
\textsuperscript{165} Strangleman, \textit{Guinness}, pp.2, 7.
\textsuperscript{166} Warren, \textit{Teesside}, pp.23-25.
\textsuperscript{167} Strangleman, \textit{Guinness}, p.7 ; Lawson, ‘Nothing left but smoke...’, p.19.
\textsuperscript{169} Barker and Harris, \textit{Merseyside Town}, p.xii.
other local residents from the 1980s. Archives like the Working Class Movements Library in Salford are further vital sources of such material. Like Barker and Harris, I grew up in St. Helens but I do not know all of it, and even with local knowledge it is impossible to study experiences of community, de-industrialisation, or regeneration without access to documentation and testimonies from the local perspective. This historical ‘ephemera’ provides a crucial window onto the case study.\(^{170}\)

However, this documentary ephemera, even coupled with interviews, is often an incomplete source-base. It is necessary to compare and contrast this bottom-up evidence with more “official” or top-down sources, for instance those produced by central or local government and local employers; again, St. Helens’ archive contains many such sources, as do major archives such as the British Library and the National Archives. Using these does not inherently contradict or undermine the inside-out approach. Developments locally in St. Helens do not occur independently from broader economic, political, or social developments, often more easily traceable through government papers, official statistics, legislation, etc.. Moreover, in a place where so many major employers developed locally and remained locally-rooted for so long, and where the industrialists behind them contributed so much to the town’s development, to not account for their perspective through sources created by and/or about them would be to miss a key element of the inside-out story. Again, St. Helens is a product both of its industrial workers and its industrialists.\(^{171}\) Industrialists may be one of the groups who typically control the historical narrative but in St. Helens they are crucial actors and their perspective cannot be ignored.\(^{172}\)

An inside-out or ethnographic approach is inevitably both limited and shaped by the practicalities of conditions on the ground.\(^{173}\) Notably, I wanted to do more interviews with former industrial workers, especially as I began with the ambition to chiefly study experiences of industrial decline. I was fortunate that existing oral history collections on St. Helens talked extensively of work. Re-using existing interview collections has attracted controversy, particularly the different questions a new researcher asks of the material or the way interviewees might answer had someone else interviewed them. Oral interviews create a personal relationship between the interviewee and the interviewer: ‘in the most successful oral history, there is no distancing but a continuing sense of

\(^{170}\) Lawson, ‘Nothing left but smoke…’, p.19.
\(^{171}\) Lane and Roberts, Pilkingtons, p.26.
\(^{172}\) Forman, Industrial Town, p.22.
\(^{173}\) Colls, Sporting Life, pp.2, 5-6, 9.
partnership and shared endeavour'. When re-using interviews, it is important to understand their original intention. Here, the existing interviews were life stories about living and working in St. Helens, similar in intention to my own interviews, enabling me to approach both collections in the same way. The fieldwork difficulties also benefited the thesis by pushing me to broaden my approach, for instance focusing on community and regeneration, rather than just experiences of de-industrialisation. This resulted in a more rounded analysis of my case study and forced me to exploit more varied source-bases and research techniques.

There were also archives I was unable to access. Covid-19 stopped me from visiting the Rugby Football League archives at the University of Huddersfield. Pilkington’s own Archive and Record Service requires permission from the Directors for access and I was unable to obtain permission; fortunately a good deal of material related to Pilkington’s exists elsewhere. I was unable to access much related to Beecham’s in the final decades of the twentieth century, in particular its closure in 1994. This was partly due to some items being restricted but mainly due to a large amount of material having been inadvertently destroyed.

0.4.2: Chapter outlines

Chapter 1, ‘Community and de-industrialisation’, begins by exploring St. Helens’ industrial sector across the thesis’ time period, showing how it fits Tomlinson’s de-industrialisation meta-narrative. It then uses two case studies to examine work-based/industrial community in St. Helens: firstly, the emergence against a backdrop of previous docility and ongoing paternalist influence of an active work-based/industrial community at the 1970 Pilkington’s strike and, secondly, the persistence of this community in the face of de-industrialisation with the 1992-1994 Parkside colliery pit camp.

Chapter 2, ‘Work and work-based community’, also looks at this work-based community. First, several generations of workers present a shared and stable conception of what work was, what it meant to work, and of community based around this. Work is

seen to be the historic lynchpin of community in St. Helens but this changed and weakened over time. The chapter then explores economic regeneration initiatives designed to smooth the transition away from industrial work. These have their origins in St. Helens with the Community of St. Helen Trust but ultimately fail to replace the lost jobs or maintain work-based community – despite an apparent emphasis on this.

Having established work is no longer the centre of community in St. Helens, Chapter 3, ‘Community beyond the workplace’, looks at where else community is found across the thesis’ time period. Split into four parts, it examines the social side of work-based community (pubs, workplace clubs, sports like rugby league), non-work micro-communities (residents’/tenants’ associations, community centres, etc.), “state-sponsored” community via municipal leisure/recreation provision and community participation in this, and finally the community-building role played by the town’s industrial heritage.

Chapter 4, ‘Community and regeneration’, also searches for community outside of work, this time through the lens of urban redevelopment/regeneration and the desire for public participation in this. It begins with the 1960s political focus on increasing legislative (“official”) scope for participation, using two examples of development plans in St. Helens to show the impact of these efforts. As the government focus on participation blurs from the 1980s, the chapter turns to the environmental regeneration initiative Operation Groundwork (also originating in St. Helens) as an example of successful community-building through regeneration. It then examines the growth of grass-roots (“unofficial”) participation in response to the insufficient “official” opportunities for participation, showing how this is also linked to the impact of de-industrialisation and its aftermath on St. Helens.

Finally, Chapter 5, ‘Looking to the future: communities of choice’, turns to the future of community. It uses mixed quantitative-qualitative surveys and ‘imagined futures’ essays to engage with current school leavers and their attitudes towards key thesis concepts like social class, community, and place attachment. In so doing, it shows community remains an important concept even for younger residents but that the make-up and understanding of community is definitely changing with time.
Chapter 1: Community and de-industrialisation

1.0: Introduction

In 1968, St. Helens’ strong and diverse industrial sector provided employment to many of its inhabitants – and, increasingly, to workers commuting from surrounding Lancashire towns. Into the new millennium, barely thirty years later, only traces remained. This chapter examines the disappearance of St. Helens’ industries, analysing the communities linked to them and the changing circumstances with which these communities were confronted.

As discussed in the Introduction, de-industrialisation is an important meta-narrative for post-war Britain. St. Helens is no exception and part 1.1 charts the town’s dramatic de-industrialisation during this period. Jim Tomlinson, responsible for the de-industrialisation-as-meta-narrative, has since suggested this long-term process originated in cities rather than towns. However, 1.1 shows that de-industrialisation was already visible in towns from the 1960s, even one with as diverse an industrial landscape as St. Helens. More than a ‘body count’ of job losses, the section outlines the community, or even communities, around which the thesis centres. For a town considered isolated and male-dominated (‘a rugby league town, a man’s town’), its industrial workforce always had a strong female contingent (even before female employment expanded in the late twentieth century) whilst employment rates, qualifications, and job type differed across the town. The section makes clear that ‘St. Helens’ is not one homogeneous community. Even if, as later chapters emphasise, its inhabitants identify with it or if St. Helens can be broadly characterised as ‘industrial’ or ‘working-class’, there have always existed a plethora of smaller communities within it. To quote Charles Forman’s 1979 oral history of St. Helens, ‘even today, people identify with the smaller unit’.

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These communities are the focus of the two case studies – the 1970 Pilkington’s strike and the 1992-1994 Parkside Colliery pit camp – which comprise the remainder of the chapter. The Pilkington’s strike was St. Helens’ first major industrial unrest since the 1926 General Strike – and the first at Pilkington’s, the town’s largest employer, since 1870. The Parkside pit camp, meanwhile, fought to save the town’s – the region’s – last coal mine, when the writing seemed on the wall for its industries. These are not definitive narratives of the two events, available elsewhere. Instead, these case studies demonstrate the persistence of industrial work-based community in St. Helens and the role of community in advancing (Pilkington’s) or protecting (Parkside) ‘local’ interests against ‘outside’ ones, a dichotomy observed by Alice Mah in places like Newcastle in reaction to industrial closure and subsequent regeneration. At Parkside, this was the case even despite de-industrialisation and contrary to popular narratives which see Thatcherism and events like the 1984-1985 Miners’ Strike as the death knell for working-class, industrial community. The togetherness displayed in cases such as Parkside reflects the enduring ‘place attachment’ of the affected communities, and their desire through their own actions to regain some ‘stability and community’ amidst the changes and uncertain future occasioned by closure.

In both cases, community is multi-faceted, transcending industrial, gender, and geographical boundaries. Both saw support from other industries and outside St. Helens. Women were present in the Pilkington’s strike as workers or as workers’ wives (and sometimes both), whilst women were the driving force behind the Parkside pit camp under the banner of Lancashire Women Against Pit Closures (LWAPC). Alongside its relevance to St. Helens, the Parkside case study answers Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite and Natalie Tomlinson’s call for more study of local Women Against Pit Closures (WAPC) groups, to supplement their work on its national body.

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6 I have written fairly narrative (albeit far from ‘definitive’!) pieces on both in recent issues of *North West History*: ‘Strike at Pilkingtons: 50 years on’, *North West History*, 45 (2020), 53-59 and ‘Queens of the coal age: Lancashire Women Against Pit Closures and the Parkside pit camp, 1992-1994’, *North West History*, 44 (2019), 12-16. For Pilkington’s, Lane and Roberts’ *Pilkingtons* is perhaps the most definitive account. For Parkside, see: Karen Beckwith, ‘Lancashire Women Against Pit Closures: Women’s standing in a men’s movement’, *Signs*, 21:4 (Summer 1996), 1034-1068.


values, and beliefs in working-class institutions like trade unions. They attracted sufficient support and sympathy to acquire a certain legitimacy and force those with outside interests (management, union leaders, politicians, etc.) to take notice of them.\(^\text{11}\) Des McNulty suggests that campaigns which ‘mobilise a considerable cross-section of the community’ are more likely to fulfil their ambitions.\(^\text{12}\) McNulty was focusing on anti-closure campaigns, like Parkside, but similar logic applies to Pilkington’s where the strike had ramifications beyond the workplace. Anti-closure campaigns are not just about jobs but fighting the ‘economic dereliction and social dissolution’ of communities – what later scholars, notably Sherry Lee Linkon, call de-industrialisation’s ‘half-life’.\(^\text{13}\) Existing literature, particularly on Parkside, overlooks the importance of this wider support and participation of community beyond the workforce, something this chapter corrects.\(^\text{14}\)

Both case studies engage with Sutcliffe-Braithwaite’s notion of declining working-class deference from the late 1960s, i.e. changing attitudes towards social elites, identity, and traditions due to post-war economic improvements and changing cultural norms, manifesting themselves in increased demands for agency and participation in shaping one’s own life and society – in protecting ‘local’ interests against ‘outside’ ones.\(^\text{15}\) Declining deference was ‘demanded and achieved’ by people themselves, it ‘could only be enacted from the grassroots’.\(^\text{16}\) The Pilkington’s strike was the first major challenge to the industrial paternalism so central to St. Helens’ development since the nineteenth century.\(^\text{17}\) An important stimulus was the decreasing isolation of the town’s workforce with the arrival of workers from outside St. Helens, less inherently loyal to Pilkington’s and veterans of more militant workplaces elsewhere. Existing literature shows such rank-and-file activism present in other industries and areas throughout the 1960s, making St. Helens a relative latecomer.\(^\text{18}\) This chapter suggests this was due to the ongoing influence of employers like Pilkington’s over the town and its people, in line with the persistence of paternalism into the mid-twentieth century, a paternalism seen by contemporary


\(^{14}\) Beckwith, ‘Lancashire Women Against Pit Closures…’, 1034-1068.


commentators as a key target of rank-and-filism. The strike shared many characteristics with Sutcliffe-Braithwaite’s declining working-class deference (increasing militancy, combatting management and unions, decreasing engagement with left-wing politics, collectivism as a means for self-interested ends), but these were not uniform attitudes across the workforce. Some Pilkington’s workers were neutral towards the strike, seeing work ‘simply as a job’; others outright opposed it. That humans are inherently loss averse, unwilling to gamble what they have (their ‘reference point’) on insufficiently tempting potential gains, may explain the detachment and opposition to the strike despite the strength of labour at the time. At Parkside, by contrast, with labour weak, trade unions decimated, and unemployment endemic, the ‘just a job’ detachment of 1970 was gone. Unlike the Pilkington’s strike, Parkside’s closure was a sure loss for the workers and the wider community: inaction or resignation would only guarantee it whereas fighting might cause a different outcome. Declining deference seems to depend on the stakes: people are more afraid of redundancies or closure (losses) than they are excited by uncertain wage increases or workplace control (gains), so only gamble with unfavourable odds when there is ultimately nothing to lose (as at Parkside).

In sum, the chapter underlines the persistence of community linked to industrial work and ideas of the working-class despite St. Helens’ de-industrialisation. Both case studies show community protecting local interests against outside ones. The Pilkington’s workers demanded change, using the power they – and employers and politicians – believed they had to obtain working and living conditions they felt entitled to. Parkside was conversely an attempt to resist, to prevent change, to secure the community against an uncertain post-closure future. Moreover, far from being isolated and male-dominated, community transcends gender, geographic, and industrial boundaries. Analysing St. Helens’ industrial decline and the two case studies thus raises a variety of issues pertinent to the experiences of industrial towns and communities in the face of de-industrialisation and (post-industrial) regeneration, themes central to this thesis.

20 Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, Decline of Deference, pp.29-33.
23 Howell, Trade Unions, pp.15-19.
24 Kahneman, Thinking, pp.280-281.
1.1: De-industrialisation in St. Helens, 1968-2000

1968 saw the centenary of Queen Victoria’s granting of St. Helens’ Charter of Incorporation. The Charter replaced the overstretched Improvement Commission and, to its advocates’ delight, gave St. Helens ‘a form of urban government to which centuries of tradition had lent dignity and prestige’. A century later, beneath the summer sun, crowds filled Victoria Square outside the town hall and lined the streets to Sherdley Park for a commemorative parade. The procession featured marching bands, cheerleaders, and floats. One depicted a gigantic cake, topped with candles and a proud ‘100 years’ banner. Another juxtaposed a respectable 1868-style sitting room with a modern 1968 equivalent, contrasting demure Victorian ladies taking tea with short skirts and rock’n’roll.

This outpouring of celebration and civic pride seemed well justified. St. Helens had grown enormously in the intervening century. Its flagship coal and glass industries had expanded and its employment and amenities had benefited from the endeavours of prominent local families like the Pilkington’s, Beecham’s, Gamble’s, and Greenall’s. The town’s cherished rugby league team, long overshadowed by bitter rivals Wigan, was enjoying a period of dominance in Lancashire and, at last, regular national league and cup success. In the 1960s, ‘The Saints’ won six Lancashire Leagues, seven Lancashire Cups, a Challenge Cup in 1961, and a Championship and Challenge Cup double in 1966.

Dependent, however, on its industries for employment (both male and female) and also for culture, leisure, and urban development, St. Helens was highly susceptible to industrial decline, as this section details. This did not affect the whole town equally and, at least initially, was offset by the cyclical nature of industries like mining, the size of employers like Pilkington’s, and to a degree by the arrival of new industries, before

27 St. Helens Centenary Parade (Video), <https://www.sthelenscommunityarchive.org.uk/item/93/St_Helens_Centenary_Parade_(video)>, accessed: 02.01.2019. The Centenary Parade is returned to in Chapter 3, along with more recent expressions of civic pride and attempts at community building through it. Just as in this chapter industrial paternalism is seen to exert an influence on the people (the community/ies) of St. Helens, so too in Chapter 3 it influences civic celebrations and wider leisure/recreation in the town. Civic celebrations and pageantry as examples of this persisting paternalism into the mid-twentieth century (and even beyond) are explored in-depth here: Angela Bartie, Linda Fleming, Mark Freeman, Tom Hulme, Paul Readman, ‘Performing the past: identity, civic culture and historical pageants in twentieth-century English small towns’, in: Lud’a Klusáková et al., Small Towns in Europe in the 20th and 21st Centuries: Heritage and Development Strategies, (Karolinum Press, Prague, 2017), pp.24-51.
accelerating from the 1980s, broadly following the trajectory of Tomlinson’s meta-narrative. More than just a de-industrialisation ‘body count’, though, the section introduces the communities at the heart of the subsequent case studies which persisted in spite of the decline.

1.1.1: Early decline?

By the 1960s, the glass industry dominated St. Helens. Pilkington’s, for example, employed around 15,000 people. In mining, 10,596 were employed across twelve pits producing daily 12,853 tons of saleable coal in 1960. Other local industrial firms such as Beecham’s, Greenall-Whitley, United Glass Bottlemakers, and Vulcan foundry also employed large numbers (Fig. 1.1.8).

Mining illustrates how the industrial sector, despite its size, was not necessarily solid or secure. In 1960, though the St. Helens area overall was profitable, only four pits—only one with a long lifespan (Bold)—were in profit. Golborne and Clock Face were expected to become profit-making, whilst overall losses were generally offset by the profits of pits like Bold. As Fig. 1.1.2 indicates, output varied year-on-year: Bold produced around 250,000 tons fewer in 1971-72 than 1970-71 before almost regaining its 1970 level in 1972-73. Geological and technical problems, like gas, water inflow, or required improvements above and below ground could impact profitability. So, too, could industrial unrest, widespread in mining in the 1950s and again from the 1970s, albeit not noticeably in St. Helens whose colliers were described as a ‘good, average, type of man’ with generally ‘reasonable’ union relations.

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29 Tomlinson, ‘De-industrialisation not decline…’, 87.
33 ‘Individual collieries’.
Mining had always been cyclical: exhausted or unprofitable pits closed and new ones began nearby. 65 collieries were abandoned in St. Helens between 1841 and 1955, including two following nationalisation in 1947: Old Boston (Haydock) and Crop Deep.
Four (Bold, Sutton Manor, Cronton, Golborne) had projected lifespans of over forty years, and Clock Face over twenty, accounting for around two-thirds of St. Helens’ colliers. Two (Landgate, Park) were ‘finished’, employing just over 300 men between them. Two with short lifespans (Lyme, Lea Green) would provide men for the forthcoming Parkside pit. The remaining three (Wood, Ravenhead, Summersales) had lifespans under ten years but were noted as ‘continu[ing] to do well’, ‘will not go worse’, and ‘good little pit’, respectively. Many colliers from these pits transferred to Parkside or other collieries, as per mining’s cyclical nature. Clock Face ultimately closed in 1966, well short of its projected lifespan, underlining the industry’s uncertainty. Its remaining 700 men transferred to Sutton Manor and Bold, whilst Ravenhead’s remaining 420 men were successfully transferred to neighbouring pits in 1968.

The number of miners nationwide fell by almost half in the 1960s from its late 1950s peak. The National Coal Board was concentrating production in modern, mechanised, and generally larger mines like Parkside, dubbed the ‘push button pit’ when it began production in 1964. It was the South Lancashire coalfield’s last new pit, though, reflecting mining’s diminishing capacity for self-renewal. Men from exhausted or unprofitable mines who wished to continue mining now relied on pre-existing pits, whose workforces were declining broadly in line with national trends. From 1960 to 1980, Bold shed over 400 miners, Cronton over 600, and Sutton Manor nearly 800. Collectively, these losses surpassed the number of new jobs created by Parkside’s opening.

35 List of Abandoned Collieries in the St. Helens Area (c.1971), St. Helens Local History and Archives (SHLHA), A36.2.
36 ‘Individual collieries’. It is unclear why collieries such as Summersales (at Pemberton, near Wigan), Landgate (Ashton-in-Makerfield) or Golborne (Golborne) are included on this St. Helens list. The ‘Northern Mining Research Society’, for one, considers these to be part of the Wigan coalfield. See: <https://www.nmrs.org.uk/mines-map/coal-mining-in-the-british-isles/lancashire-coalfield/>, accessed: 19.08.2021.
37 NCB Western Area Colliery Profiles, ‘Clock Face’, (Jan 1981) ; NCB Western Area Colliery Profiles, ‘Ravenhead Colliery’, SHLHA, A36.2.
### Fig.1.1.2: Colliery output and manpower, 1970s.\(^{40}\) Output in tonnes as of 1978-79.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Bold</th>
<th>Cronton</th>
<th>Parkside</th>
<th>Sutton Manor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Output (tons)</td>
<td>Manpower</td>
<td>Output (tons)</td>
<td>Manpower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>1906 / 1175</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969-70</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>650 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-71</td>
<td>738 157</td>
<td>1579</td>
<td>355 913</td>
<td>653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971-72</td>
<td>487 366</td>
<td>1568</td>
<td>257 209</td>
<td>670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972-73</td>
<td>719 521</td>
<td>1516</td>
<td>235 234</td>
<td>625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973-74</td>
<td>562 860</td>
<td>1450</td>
<td>157 990</td>
<td>601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974-75</td>
<td>708 815</td>
<td>1423</td>
<td>229 994</td>
<td>616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975-76</td>
<td>633 847</td>
<td>1463</td>
<td>249 562</td>
<td>607</td>
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<tr>
<td>1976-77</td>
<td>692 464</td>
<td>1470</td>
<td>240 038</td>
<td>584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977-78</td>
<td>598 081</td>
<td>1472</td>
<td>270 014</td>
<td>591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978-79</td>
<td>735 963</td>
<td>1493</td>
<td>256 721</td>
<td>583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979-80</td>
<td>709 133</td>
<td>1496</td>
<td>185 494</td>
<td>583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-81</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>298 500</td>
<td>572</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Alternative employment was required to compensate for mining losses so governments tried to entice light and assembly-based industries to mining areas. Under Harold Wilson’s 1965 National Plan, for instance, private firms establishing themselves in coal mining areas often benefited from generous grants and loans.\(^{41}\) Colliers might have to adapt to new industries but there would theoretically be similar employment available. In St. Helens, the diversity of large industrial employers also helped make up the shortfall. Pilkington’s workforce, for instance, grew by about 800 across the 1960s, some of the 1970 strikers moving there from mining.\(^{42}\) In later decades, with deindustrialisation accelerating across all industries, government policy moved towards retraining and business creation from within the communities, rather than providing similar or like-for-like employment, as Chapter 2 explores further.\(^{43}\)

#### 1.1.2: Comparison with the national picture and internal disparities

The signs of early decline visible in mining tally with St. Helens’ position relative to the North-West and England. Between 1971 and 1981, St. Helens’ unemployment sky-
rocketed from 4.7% to over 11%.\textsuperscript{44} Fig.1.1.3 shows St. Helens remained above national and North-West averages for unemployment and below national averages for economically active population.\textsuperscript{45}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>87842</td>
<td>61.3</td>
<td>83070</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>76718</td>
<td>59.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Helens</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-West</td>
<td>3223651</td>
<td>61.1</td>
<td>3174420</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>2970106</td>
<td>61.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>21778035</td>
<td>61.1</td>
<td>23113842</td>
<td>61.4</td>
<td>22839125</td>
<td>64.3</td>
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</table>

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St. Helens</td>
<td>9757</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>9654</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>5316</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-West</td>
<td>345266</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>336477</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>175549</td>
<td>5.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>1850197</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>2108141</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>1188855</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig.1.1.3: Economically active population and unemployment, 1981-2001.\textsuperscript{46}

St. Helens has long been disadvantaged in terms of jobs, consistently above national and regional averages for lower socio-economic categories and under-represented in higher ones. These lower categories (‘skilled manual’, ‘partly skilled’, and ‘unskilled’) shrink over time: in St. Helens, the proportion of skilled manual and unskilled manual jobs had already fallen over 4% and 3% respectively between 1971 and 1981.\textsuperscript{47} Nevertheless, they remained larger in St. Helens than nationally and regionally. In 1991, St. Helens had more foremen/supervisors, skilled manual, semi-skilled manual, and unskilled manual workers than national and regional averages.\textsuperscript{48} Greater reliance on these categories associated with industrial employment increased the impact of closures on the town’s workforce and wider community.

However, despite its sizeable industrial sector and apparent isolation from surrounding conurbations, St. Helens was not one homogeneous community. The above general figures hide disparities shown in Figs.1.1.4-1.1.7 between different wards and communities of workers, perhaps reinforcing Forman’s identification with the ‘smaller unit’.\textsuperscript{49} In 1981, nine wards had lower unemployment than the town’s average (11.1%) and four were significantly below the national average (8.5%): Billinge (6.8%), Eccleston

\textsuperscript{44} Census 1971, Small Area Statistics (Ward Library): 100% Population (St. Helens C.B.).
\textsuperscript{45} These are problems which persist today (8.9% unemployment in 2016, compared to 5.6% nationally) and present sizeable barriers to the town’s regeneration. See: St. Helens Local Plan 2018-2033: Preferred Options, (December 2016), p.6.
\textsuperscript{47} Census 1971, Small Area Statistics (Ward Library): 100% Population (St. Helens C.B.).
\textsuperscript{48} 1991 census – special workplace statistics.
\textsuperscript{49} Forman, Industrial Towns, p.11.
(6%), Rainford (5.9%), Rainhill (5.7%). Those with the highest levels were grouped around the town’s industries: Parr and Hardshaw (19.6%), Broad Oak (17.6%), West Sutton (17%), Marshalls Cross (16.3%), Newton West (14.6%). These inequalities were underlined by the jobs and educational qualifications held by ward residents. Wards with lower unemployment had significantly more adults with degrees or vocational qualifications, and more employers/managers, professionals, and non-manual workers, which tended to pay better, be less dangerous, and carry more prestige than the manual industrial jobs wards with higher unemployment were more reliant on. However, as the case studies and subsequent chapters show, these different areas-communities are linked, not least in terms of the impact of industrial decline on the town beyond the immediate industrial workforce.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward</th>
<th>% unemployed</th>
<th>Employers/Managers</th>
<th>Professional</th>
<th>Other non-manual</th>
<th>Self-employed</th>
<th>Skilled manual, foremen</th>
<th>Service and semi-skilled</th>
<th>Unskilled</th>
<th>% +18 with degree/vocational qualification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rainhill</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rainford</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eccleston</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billinge</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haydock</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackbrook</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windle</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sutton &amp; Bold</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thatto Heath</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newton East</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moss Bank</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>9.4</td>
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<td>13.1</td>
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<td>1.0</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>12.6</td>
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<td>Grange Park</td>
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<td>19.1</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>9.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newton West</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>30.7</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marshalls Cross</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Sutton</td>
<td>17.0</td>
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<td>17.0</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>33.2</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad Oak</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parr &amp; Hardshaw</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fig.1.1.7:** 1981 Ward-level statistics for socio-economic category, arranged by unemployment rate.\(^5\)

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1.1.3: Accelerating decline

The 1960s signs of decline became a decimation of the town’s largest employers in the 1980s and 1990s:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company/Employees</th>
<th>1978</th>
<th>1988</th>
<th>1992</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pilkington Glass</td>
<td>12500</td>
<td>4448</td>
<td>5400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruston Diesels (Vulcan Foundry)</td>
<td>2150</td>
<td>651</td>
<td>566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Coal (Parkside)</td>
<td>1718</td>
<td>1080</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triplex Safety Glass (Pilkington’s)</td>
<td>1700</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Glass Bottlemakers (UGB)</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>1205</td>
<td>1163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Coal (Bold)</td>
<td>1493</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rockware Glass</td>
<td>1450</td>
<td>Relocated</td>
<td>1982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British SIDAC (Cellulose wrappings)</td>
<td>1450</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>1982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Coal (Sutton Manor)</td>
<td>868</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>Closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beechams</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sutton &amp; Sons (Haulage)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>509</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fig.1.1.8:** Evolution of major employers.53

Several major employers disappeared completely. Greenall-Whitley closed their brewery in the 1970s, whilst SIDAC and Rockware were gone by 1982. The collieries closed in quick succession: Cronton (1983), Bold (1985), Golborne (1986), Sutton Manor (1991), and Parkside (1992). These cost thousands of mining jobs – 811 (Bold), 400 (Sutton Manor), 730 (Parkside) – and risked jobs in associated industries: the closures of Bold and Sutton Manor reportedly threatened a further 630 jobs between them.54 The knock-on effect of closure(s) in one industry on jobs in other industries is referred to by McNulty as a ‘linkage’ multiplier, a key example the effects of closures rippling out across a community.55

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The glass sector, so dominant in the 1960s, fared little better. Pilkington’s St. Helens workforce dipped definitively below 10,000 in 1983, halving again by the 1990s.\(^{56}\) UGB, operating at a loss from 1980, saw redundancies at both its plants: 400 (1982) and 750 (1986) at Ravenhead, 150 (1985) at Peasley Cross, 119 (1991) and 120 (1995) at Ravenhead, and the definitive closure of Peasley Cross in 1997, costing 400 jobs.\(^{57}\) In 1994, the iconic town centre Beecham’s factory closed, a victim of streamlining; 500 employees lost their jobs.\(^{58}\) Closures in neighbouring towns only worsened matters, again a ‘linkage’ multiplier as employment opportunities decreased across industrial regions. The BICC (cable manufacturers) in Prescot, which had employed 750 people in 1978, closed in 1991 costing over 200 jobs, whilst the 1992 closure of Bickershaw colliery in Leigh cost 620 jobs.\(^{59}\)

Many of these jobs were male, although employers like Beecham’s or the glass industry had long employed large numbers of women. UGB’s fifty-strong all-female enamelling team were featured in the local press in the late 1960s. In 1978, over 25% of Pilkington’s female employees had over twenty years’ service, with a further 30% between ten and twenty.\(^{60}\) The growing reliance on female employment in industrial areas due to de-industrialisation is well-documented.\(^{61}\) This was noticeable in St. Helens by the 1970s, when female economic activity rose by around 2% despite the town’s overall level declining.\(^{62}\) This was likely attributable partly to government attempts to diversify employment in mining areas, as the presence of textile companies like Northgate (800 jobs), Rael Brook (310) and Humphry Lloyd (120) suggests.\(^{63}\) During the 1980s, women’s representation in the town’s economically active population increased by around 4%. Where male unemployment rose across the decade, female unemployment fell, suggesting women becoming economically active were finding employment.\(^{64}\) These jobs, though, were not the same or like-for-like with the lost industrial jobs. Many fell within so-called ‘pink collar’ roles perceived as “feminine”, less secure, and less

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59 Gerard Henderson, ‘620 jobs to go as pit is closed’, *Liverpool Echo*, 31.01.1992, p.15.
61 Phillips, ‘…coal community…’, 44.
64 1991 census – small area statistics.
fulfilling, in the lower socio-economic categories over-represented in St. Helens. Moreover, the percentage of St. Helens’ women who were economically active was similar to and rising in line with regional and national averages. For their employment to compensate for male job losses, the percentage would have had to be far above those averages.

The impact of de-industrialisation was also visible amongst school leavers. A 1980 investigation revealed one-in-six were unemployed and a further one-in-six stuck on Youth Opportunity Programmes. Apprenticeships were decreasing, too: engineering apprenticeships dropped from 255 in 1974 to 120 in 1980, and construction apprenticeships from 90 to 40. Traditionally, many school leavers – particularly less academic ones – had taken on ‘lowly paid ‘mate’s’ jobs’ aged sixteen, being gradually socialised into ‘work and adulthood’ by the age of twenty-one. The worsening economic climate of the 1970s and early 1980s, along with the raising of the school-leaving age from fifteen to sixteen and the dropping of adult pay-rates from twenty-one to eighteen, wiped out many ‘growing up’ jobs. YOPs were introduced in 1978 by Labour and were superseded in 1983 by the Conservative’s Youth Training Schemes. As with Employment Training (launched 1988), St. Helens’ residents were over-represented on such programmes: 2.6% and 2.32% of men and women respectively, compared with 1.32% and 1.1% nationally. The impact of de-industrialisation on school leavers is returned to in-depth in Chapter 5.

The growing reliance on low status jobs, increasing women’s share of the labour market in place of rather than alongside men, persistent unemployment, and diminishing opportunities for emerging generations are indicative of the wider ramifications of the loss of secure (industrial) employment identified by scholars like Linkon and McNulty.

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In 1999, St. Helens South MP Gerald Bermingham bemoaned the town’s ‘training industry’, i.e. the trend of local people moving away for work:

> our college has some twenty thousand students. The tragedy is that it trains them and they develop […] [but] the young cannot work in their home town. Every year, thousands of people are trained […] and then move away.\(^{70}\)

Population drain to places with better employment prospects is a common trend across towns like St. Helens – and is a key factor behind current political interest in towns and the wider ‘levelling up’ debate discussed in the thesis **Introduction**.\(^{71}\) Following the town’s closures, there was little sign of new large employers – certainly not industrial ones – replacing the lost jobs. St. Helens broadly conforms to Tomlinson’s de-industrialisation-as-meta-narrative trajectory, with job losses ongoing from the 1960s and accelerating from the 1980s. Different areas of the town were affected to different degrees but the erosion of major pillars of St. Helens’ development resonated beyond job losses across the wider town, as per McNulty’s ‘multiplier effects’ and Linkon’s de-industrial ‘half-life’. In towns like St. Helens the industries ‘dominated not only the physical but the mental landscape’.\(^{72}\) In this vein, a council employee warned after Sutton Manor’s closure that losing such vital sources of employment left whole communities ‘in danger of being wiped out’.\(^{73}\) Listing closures and job losses may seem to endorse the declinist narrative this thesis argues against but, as this chapter’s case studies and subsequent chapters show, the numbers alone are not the full story. Being ‘wiped out’ was not a fate St. Helens’ communities were going to accept without a fight.

### 1.2: The Pilkington’s Strike, 1970

Of all St. Helens’ industrial employers, the largest and most influential was Pilkington’s. Founded in 1826, in most local families someone worked (or even still works) there. Pilkington’s retain a much-reduced presence locally as employers and their architecture still dominates the skyline, notably the imposing former Head Office, a striking blue skyscraper visible across town (**Fig.1.2.1**).\(^{74}\) Their paternalist dominance is recognised,

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\(^{71}\) See, for example: Centre for Towns, ‘The ageing of our towns’, (2018).


\(^{74}\) The Pilkington’s website does not give exact details of how its UK-based employees are divided between the different plants, but a total UK workforce of around 3,000 are shared between Lathom,
often negatively, in existing literature: St. Helens lying ‘under the shadow’ of Pilkington’s ‘benevolent despotism’, even beyond the 1970 strike. Tony Lane and Kenneth Roberts, the strike’s most in-depth commentators, downplay Pilkington’s company and family role as ‘public benefactors’ but recognise their labour market dominance meant effective control of the town: ‘nothing can be done to offend the firm too much, for who knows (?), they may pack up their machines and take them somewhere else’. Whilst this thesis overall affords greater credit to the impact of companies and families like Pilkington’s on St. Helens, the ‘exaggerated deference’ and ‘dull resentment’ such dominance engendered, the ‘defining and […] delimiting’ of the workforce’s ‘social outlook’ through a ‘fiction of community’ (seen in this thesis more as a framework for community), are important considerations when studying the 1970 strike.

Fig.1.2.1A: the domination of St. Helens’ skyline by Pilkington’s even today: the blue skyscraper which became their new Head Office on Prescot Road in the mid-twentieth century (far right), the old Head Office on Grove Street which it replaced (with the clock, right), and the remainder of Pilkington’s Ravenhead area works (left).

75 Joyce, Work, Society, and Politics, pp.13, 231.
76 Lane and Roberts, Pilkingtons, pp.30-31.
77 Ibid., p.31 ; Joyce, Work, Society, and Politics, pp.xx-xxi.
The strike was the first major industrial unrest in St. Helens since the 1926 General Strike and the first at Pilkington’s since 1870. In 1970, though world-leaders in glassmaking, Pilkington’s remained a private, family-owned company. It retained its Head Office and six plants in St. Helens. The family still lived in Windle Hall, Dr. William Pilkington’s house when he came to St. Helens in the nineteenth century. Chairman Lord Harry Pilkington was often spotted cycling around the town and his wife’s charitable activities were well known. The company owned a recreation club, well-established local sports teams like Pilkington Recs (rugby league), and had recently renovated the town centre theatre. Lord Harry was variously President of St. Helens’ YMCA, the St. Helens Amateur Operatic Society, Grange Park Golf Club, and St. Helens RLFC. The company

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78 It was Dr. William’s sons, William and Richard, who founded Pilkington’s in 1826. See: Brian Leyland, *St. Helens: The Great and the Good (And a Few Not So Good!)*, (Stellar Books, Bowden, 2018), pp.248-255.
79 ‘The Pilkington Group’ [pamphlet], April 1970, SHLHA, LAN/12/14. These social/leisure provisions are returned to in Chapter 3.
80 Leyland, *St. Helens*, p.255. On the business front, the company’s major discovery of the twentieth century – float glass – may not have come about were it not for Sir Richard Pilkington’s interest in genealogy. Whilst researching the family tree in the 1940s, Richard came across Colonel Lionel Pilkington, a Reading businessman. Upon making contact, he learned that Lionel’s son was studying at Cambridge and would soon require employment. Pilkington’s Board were suitably impressed with Lionel and his son, Alistair, was offered a job. Thanks to his surname, Alistair was considered eligible as a potential future company director, it being decided that his branch of the family must have moved away more than fifteen generations ago, the furthest Richard had been able to trace. Alistair
was generous to its retirees: one said her father wished her to choose between Pilkington’s
and the BICC, but himself preferred Pilkington’s for their superior pensions.81 This
family- and St. Helens-centred approach accounted for the favour – deference –
Pilkington’s appeared to enjoy from their employees and the wider town population.

Fig. 1.2.2: map of Pilkington plants in St. Helens.82

had a ‘glittering’ industrial career, including discovering the float process, which enabled the
development of modern-day commodities such as double-glazing and cemented Pilkington’s place as
the world’s leading glassmaker.

81 PhD/001, Interview conducted by the author, August 2018.
82 Based on line-drawing in T.C. Barker, The Glassmakers. Pilkington: the Rise of an International
The strike challenged this deference and paternalism. It began over wages before developing into a wider dispute over negotiating structures, under the leadership of a Rank and File Strike Committee (RFSC). Like much industrial action at the time, it became as much a fight with the workforce’s union (General and Municipal Workers Union, GMWU) who refused to officialise the strike as with Pilkington’s management. The strike lasted seven weeks and cost Pilkington’s £5 million. Other Pilkington’s plants nationwide struck in solidarity and support came from other industries and organisations outside St. Helens. A follow-up strike in the summer and attempts to create a new union came to little but Pilkington’s did review their pay and negotiation structures.

This case study does not narrate the strike; its chronology is summarised in the below timeline and elsewhere. The case study instead reflects on the (work-based) community in St. Helens. The Pilkington’s strike reflected rank-and-file unrest visible throughout the 1960s and fits with notions of declining working-class deference. St. Helens, however, was a latecomer to this trend. The case study reveals limits to declining deference and the ongoing strength of paternalism in St. Helens, for instance the ambivalence towards and opposition to the strike amongst some Pilkington’s workers. Deference and paternalism do not just disappear overnight in a town previously known for docility. The case study nonetheless argues that in a town so dominated by locally-rooted, paternalistic employers and industries as St. Helens, it is significant that a willingness emerged to contest the established order, demand agency, and seek to further/protect what were presented as the community’s interests (local) against those of management and unions (outside). Moreover, it shows the community was neither as male-dominated nor as isolated as existing literature implies: women participated in the strike, new workers arriving from other industries and towns were important in sparking it, and support transcended geographical and industrial boundaries. The defence of local interests, role of women, and links across boundaries visible at Pilkington’s in 1970 would

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84 For example: Botcherby, ‘Strike at Pilkingtons…’; Lane and Roberts, Pilkingtons.
86 Lawrence, ‘…British path to modernity’, p.147; Joyce, Work, Society, and Politics, pp.13, 231.
87 Mah, Industrial Ruination, p.76.
88 Joyce, Work, Society, and Politics, pp.xxii-xxiii, suggests the ‘working-class radical tradition’ that was ‘sown deeply’, if not ‘broadcast widely’, was found mainly in men from ‘outside the factory workforces’, i.e. outside the immediate scope of paternalistic control.
be significant in subsequent decades as the community faced up to industrial decline, as in the second case study (Parkside).

Fig.1.2.3: timeline of Pilkington's strike (1970).
1.2.1: ‘The trend of strikes’: rank-and-file militancy in the 1960s

Conceptions of declining deference akin to Sutcliffe-Braithwaite’s were articulated from the 1970s. John Goldthorpe reflected that a ‘revolution of rising expectations’, encouraged by post-war socio-economic improvements, meant ‘less advantaged groups’ (presumably workers/working-class) were more likely to “punch their weight” – to press their claims closer to the limits of the power they actually possess’. One consequence was the ‘decay of the status order’ which previously secured the ‘symbolic and moral’ social standing of families like the Pilkington’s, in addition to their economically-obtained class superiority. Referring to rank-and-file militancy, Goldthorpe saw a working-class no longer inhibited by the status order, willing to challenge the social hierarchy on more than just economic grounds of employment or wages. Less bound by hierarchy and tradition, people demanded more agency, choice, and participation in the running of society. A decaying status order suggests a weakening of paternalism. Jon Lawrence, however, argues the persistence of paternalistic ‘thought and practice’ at the top of the ‘status order’ into the twentieth century cannot be overlooked, and this

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91 Ibid., pp.197, 200.
persistence was very much on display at Pilkington’s. Lawrence nonetheless agrees with Goldthorpe and Sutcliffe-Braithwaite’s time-frame, seeing this paternalism under threat from the 1960s.

This declining deference is typically presented as a consequence of post-war cultural, economic, and social improvements. Rising affluence (consumer goods, wages) for many workers and the security offered by full employment and the Welfare State encouraged expectations of autonomy and choice. Shifts in broadcast media, fashion, popular and youth culture, and social mores changed attitudes towards elites, identity, and tradition. Increasing value was placed on ‘ordinariness’, partly spurred by the valorisation of the masses in presentations of World War Two as the ‘People’s War’. The term ‘people’ was synonymous with ‘working-class’: to be working-class was to be ordinary, their living and working conditions the ‘yardstick’ for socio-economic progress. With these changes came a marked rise in rank-and-file worker activism across British industry, particularly in the 1960s. The Pilkington’s strike, like many before it, was motivated by workers seeking what they felt entitled to in a society supposed to offer ‘benefits that would improve all their lives’.

Rank-and-fileism fits into the second of three phases of twentieth century industrial activism outlined by Chris Howell. The second phase began in the 1950s, so Pilkington’s (and St. Helens more widely) was a latecomer to this trend, underlining paternalism’s sway in the town. The first phase, characterised by industry-wide collective bargaining and designed to reduce market competition and industrial unrest, ensured employers managed and organised workplaces on their terms. The second phase saw bargaining de-centralised to individual firms and new mechanisms for negotiations over workplace conditions, organisation, and individual rights alongside wage disputes. ‘Productivity bargaining’ took hold: workers’ rising expectations broadened the scope of their demands beyond wages, whilst the centrality of productivity in an increasingly Fordist economy meant employers preferred wage increases to productivity-crippling strikes. The Pilkington’s strike beginning over wages again suggests the workforce’s backwardness in

93 Lawrence, ‘…British path to modernity’, p.147.
94 Ibid., pp.156-163.
95 Ibid., p.157.
96 Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, Decline of Deference, p.9.
98 Howell, Trade Unions, pp.15-16, 87-88.
100 Howell, Trade Unions, p.95.
terms of activism, although as the strike developed the RFSC did target Pilkington’s over-centralised negotiating machinery, in line with militancy elsewhere.

Declining deference applied not just to traditional social elites, like paternalistic employers, but all forms of social hierarchy. Accordingly, rank-and-filism entailed a distrust of trade unions (seen increasingly as puppets of government and/or management) and a detachment from formal left-wing politics. Made strong by post-war full employment and economic growth, workers felt able to advocate for changes themselves, rather than rely on politicians and unions. Increasing individualism is identified by Sutcliffe-Braithwaite as a feature of declining deference. This tallies with earlier concepts like the ‘privatised’ worker, driven by consumerism, family, and the home. Rank-and-filism tended to prioritise furthering or protecting immediate, local interests, i.e. the issues affecting one’s own workplace and community, rather than wider political goals. Collectivism, as the rank-and-file, within a union, or in supporting the Labour party, was a means to an end, rather than a duty or vocation. This was not selfishness or greed necessarily, although there was a degree of self-interest, but a reflection of the unwillingness to be constrained by social hierarchies or orders. By the mid-1960s, 90-95% of strikes were rank-and-file-led, whilst dramatic rises in the number of strikes overall in the late 1950s and late 1960s are recognised by many commentators.

1.2.2: Deference and paternalism in St. Helens

The Pilkington’s strike fits the trend of growing rank-and-file activism. As stated, St. Helens came late to this trend: the strike was the town’s first major industrial unrest since 1926 and Pilkington’s first since 1870. This lateness reflects Pilkington’s enduring paternalistic model, to which the strike was the first real challenge.

Pilkington’s management ran the company as per Howell’s first phase of industrial relations, i.e. on their own terms. Pilkington’s official historian, T.C. Barker, describes their attitude to worker unrest as ‘ruthless’. An 1870 sheet glass blowers’ strike, from

101 Ibid., pp.10-12 ; Coates, Crisis of Labour, p.12.
102 Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, ‘The decline of deference and the Left’, 132.
103 Coates, Crisis of Labour, pp.30-31 ; Edwards, ‘…collective industrial action’, p.233.
April to November, saw workers return ‘on their masters’ terms’, as did incidents in 1878 and 1890. Early unionisation attempts were short-lived: a Sheet Glassmakers’ Association from 1870-1879 and unsuccessful attempts by the American Knights of Labor, the United Plate Glass Society, and the Sheet Glass Flatteners’ Society. The eventual unionisation of plate and sheet glass workers in 1919 under the National Amalgamated Union of Labour (later the GMWU) was itself on management’s terms: ‘the Firm is in regular contact with this Union and quite approves of such employees becoming members of it’. Pilkington’s employees, miners in the company’s collieries aside, did not strike in 1926, their union prepared to coerce the railway’s union into guaranteeing coal supplies to the factories. This tight grip, alongside the company’s more benevolent worker provisions (employment, education, housing, leisure/recreation, pensions, etc.) and contributions to wider town development (returned to in later chapters), underpinned the paternalistic model and generated deference amongst the St. Helens community – but also the ‘dull resentment’ growing amongst the workers by 1970.

The management-centred model was particularly visible in the 1970 strike’s two main issues: wages and internal negotiating structures. Pilkington’s workers believed their pay rate unfair both compared to other industries and internally within the firm. According to Lane and Roberts, only the highly militant car and printing industries paid average weekly wages above Pilkington’s £26 10S in 1969. Internally, however, workers were split between a direct (piece work) system and a multi-factor bonus system. Less reliant on machine-controlled processes, piece workers had more control over output and could earn up to quarter more than multi-factor workers. Strike leaders believed resentment over this had steadily worsened amidst growing affluence and worker expectations.

The negotiating machinery, meanwhile, was highly centralised. Historically, labour relations had been handled by a single board member from the Pilkington family. Since the company’s reorganisation into separate divisions for specific products, the Group Industrial Relations department was responsible. Disputes at specific plants or works went initially to the work’s manager. The manager was bound by existing agreements decided by Pilkington’s Joint Industrial Council (JIC, a negotiating body of management, unionised workers, and union officials). The JIC’s main goal was

106 Ibid., pp.175, 177, 180.
107 Ibid., pp.173, 175, 178-181.
108 Ibid., p.396.
109 Ibid., p.395.
110 Lane and Roberts, *Pilkingtons*, pp.46-49.
111 Tony Lane interview with Gerry Caughey, SHLHA, LAN/11/4/7.
uniformity between all Pilkington’s British plants so even though workers could ask their JIC representative to open negotiations, local disputes (like the wage miscalculation behind the 1970 strike) were difficult to resolve.\footnote{Lane and Roberts, \textit{Pilkingtons}, pp.46-49.} This epitomises Howell’s first phase, keeping bargaining at industry-level (externalised) rather than plant-level (internalised).\footnote{Howell, \textit{Trade Unions}, pp.87-88.} The centralisation and inefficiency created distance between ordinary workers and management. The GMWU only having one branch for all Pilkington’s St. Helens plants compounded these issues.

A further reflection of Pilkington’s paternalistic control was the St. Helens workforce’s docile reputation.\footnote{Lane and Roberts, \textit{Pilkingtons}, p.12.} One of the workers interviewed by Lane and Roberts about the strike was surprised it took off because he believed ‘St. Helens people [are] a lot of sheep who would lie down to lots of things’.\footnote{Tony Lane interview with Harold Hunt, SHLHA, LAN/11/4/15.} The RFSC talked of the workforce’s awakening ‘at last from half a century of drugged sleep’.\footnote{Rank and File Strike Committee, ‘Bulletin No. 1’, c.04.05.1970-13.05.1970, SHLHA, LAN/7/1.} A letter from management and town aldermen published in the press early in the strike underlined their expectation of deferential obedience to those responsible for the town’s growth and prosperity:

> we all remember the unhappy times in the 1930s. We have seen a town that was struggling against adversity grow and prosper with a great deal of goodwill, never more clearly felt than at the Centenary Gala two years ago. We have been shocked by the troubles of this week and alarmed by the probable consequences. The reputation and future of our town is at risk. May we appeal to everyone to help restore peace and goodwill\footnote{Letter published by Harry Pilkington, W. Burrow, J.E. Highes, M.A. Shard, c.April 1970, Modern Records Centre (MRC), University of Warwick, MSS.292B/253/31. The cutting is attached to an undated anonymous handwritten letter expressing opposition to the strike.}

The extent of deference is underlined by the fact that, despite the wages and negotiating issues, the majority of Lane and Roberts’ interviewees were surprised by the strike and felt employee-management relations were positive.\footnote{Lane and Roberts, \textit{Pilkingtons}, p.87.} There was, however, a growing sense that this deference was eroding. Strike-leader Gerry Caughey believed ‘it only needed a spark’ and would have happened sooner or later.\footnote{Interview with Gerry Caughey.} Another employee sensed workers losing patience towards management and negotiating structures, their respect ‘slowly but surely […] deteriorating’.\footnote{Tony Lane interview with Denis Hallicy, SHLHA, LAN/11/4/12.} The status difference between management and workers, ‘two distinct classes’, was criticised.\footnote{Tony Lane interview with George Bibby, SHLHA, LAN/11/4/1.}
One noted a discrepancy in management/shop steward and management/worker relations – the former ‘quiet matey, first name terms’ and the latter ‘patronising’ – hinting at unhappiness with the union as well as management, a feature of declining deference and rank-and-filism. Another dismissed the shop stewards as ‘the little Hitlers […] a little tight circle of men’. Deference in its ‘dull resentment’ guise, meanwhile, emerged in letters expressing satisfaction that long-simmering gripes had boiled over into action. Deference had previously outweighed this resentment, but not in 1970:

I am a pensioner of 84 years and spent 52 years of it with Pilkington’s and may I say that this strike has come 40 years too late:- In my working days, it was on the cards several times, but we did not seem to get united as at present […].

In private, contrary to their press letter, management were similarly aware of this declining deference:

Certainly our industrial relations side, in terms of odd disputes and walk-outs and this sort of thing, had apparently got worse. We had more troubles of that sort in the last two years than we ever had: people told us “you’re sitting on a powder keg”, but what do you do with a message like that, what does it mean?

Management knew the issues with their internal negotiating machinery: ‘we had seen that we were at the point of having to take a step forward in our management labour relations […]’. They therefore likely knew of wages discrepancies. They will also have seen rising rank-and-filism in other industries. Whilst a single ‘odd dispute’ may do a company little damage – contemporary commentators talked of activism’s ‘threshold effect’ of ‘sufficient duration or coverage’ to have impact – the more remain unresolved, the more explosive the ‘powder keg’ becomes. Despite awareness of labour relations issues, Pilkington’s management still believed they possessed a ‘tremendous fund of goodwill’ locally, generated by years of paternalism towards employees and the wider town.

As with rank-and-filism more widely, the Pilkington strike centred on local concerns (the company’s negotiating machinery) and immediate interests (wages). Lane

122 Tony Lane interview with Bill Cowley, SHLHA, LAN/11/4/8 ; Goldthorpe, ‘The current inflation’, pp.197-201 ; Sutcliff-Braithwaite, Decline of Deference, pp.8-11 ; Lawrence, ‘…British path to modernity’, pp.149-150, 163 ; Howell, Trade Unions, pp.10-12 ; Coates, Crisis of Labour, p.12.
123 Interview with David Pilkington.
125 Interview with David Pilkington, 17.08.1970, MRC, MSS.317/11.
126 Ibid.
128 Interview with David Pilkington.
and Roberts’ interviews suggest little interest in formal trade unions or left-wing politics, beyond voting in elections.\(^{129}\) The inefficient negotiating machinery, wages discrepancies, and unhappiness with the GMWU, however, were long-standing issues. Given St. Helens’ reputation for docility and previous failures to turn resentment into action, these issues alone would not have caused such a large dispute. Other factors were important in sparking the strike.

One was the awareness amongst Pilkington’s workers, as among management, of the increasing incidence of strikes elsewhere in response to growing worker expectations – and of their successes. At Pilkington’s, the RFSC were inspired in contesting management by the sizeable pay rise achieved by British Leyland workers and in contesting the union by the actions of workers at the Ford plant in nearby Halewood: ‘they [Pilkington’s] should try telling them [GMWU] that […] it was the NUGMW that got the boot – not the men’.\(^{130}\) This awareness of rank-and-file successes elsewhere was accelerated by the decreasing isolation of St. Helens’ workforce, an isolation which until then had influenced the continued deference and lack of worker activism. The decreasing isolation was due partly to the trend of manufacturing industries (including glass) taking workers away from declining industries such as mining or railways: by the 1960s, around 14,000 workers – half in manufacturing – travelled into St. Helens.\(^{131}\) These were mainly from a small radius (Pilkington’s estimated it at twelve miles) but had less ingrained loyalty to Pilkington’s and sharper experiences of worker activism.\(^{132}\) This had ramifications for the company’s paternalistic model, something strike-leader Caughey recognised: ‘labour turnover was a big element […] people coming in from different industries and different localities […] could see that a new way of doing business was required […] because the old J.I.C was no good’.\(^{133}\) Amongst Lane and Roberts’ interviewees, several were recent arrivals or returnees to Pilkington’s, including from generally militant industries like mining. Some had had twenty or thirty years’ experience underground and had been active National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) members.\(^{134}\)

Despite these new arrivals, Pilkington’s remained dominated by long-serving employees:

\(^{129}\) Tony Lane interview transcripts, SHLHA, LAN/11/4.
\(^{131}\) Marwick, British Society, pp.86, 92 ; Lane and Roberts, Pilkingtons, pp.29-30.
\(^{133}\) Interview with Gerry Caughey.
\(^{134}\) Tony Lane interview transcripts. Most of the twenty-two transcripts come with a handwritten interviewee profile.
in the late 1970s, 70% overall (80% amongst male employees) had over ten years’ service. Many strikers in 1970 had been at the company for over ten years and several, including Caughey, had been or were still shop stewards. The wider climate of rank-and-file filism, plus the impetus of new arrivals with more radical attitudes towards worker activism, gave the workforce the shunt needed to turn ‘dull resentment’ into action.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0-5 years</th>
<th>5-10 years</th>
<th>10-20 years</th>
<th>+20 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fig.1.2.5:** Service length of Pilkington employees, 1978, expressed as a percentage.

Despite the strike, a declining deference or rejection of paternalism was not universal amongst Pilkington’s workers. Some outright opposed the strike, whilst a neutral group – dubbed the ‘silent 4000’ – just wanted to carry on as normal. This latter group reflect Selina Todd’s idea of detachment, seeing their job ‘simply as a job, rather than something in which they [invest] emotion or pride’. 4,000 was about the same number as attended the RFSC meetings where strikers voted repeatedly to stay out (see timeline). Opposition was demonstrated through multiple ballots and the return to work of 700 workers three weeks before the strike officially ended (see timeline). On 1 May, five of seven GMWU meetings held inside the factory gates voted a return to work, whilst the so-called Parsons’ Poll (organised by the local clergy) on 16 May saw a 4% majority in favour of a return to work. Opponents criticised the unelected nature of the RFSC, their refusal to abide by the results of ballots like the Parsons’ Poll, and their use of ‘terrorisation, threats and violence’, for instance in response to the partial return to work. Both the ‘silent 4000’ and the strike opponents may have been unwilling to gamble what still seemed secure and stable employment on the uncertain gains promised by the RFSC, reflecting people’s inherent loss aversion. Unlike later campaigns like Parkside, jobs and, by inference, the wider community were not at risk. The strike was chasing gains rather than averting losses so workers could afford indifference or opposition.

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1.2.3: ‘A rugby league town, a man’s town’?

Although deference did not decline universally, in a town so long dominated by the paternalistic model of employers like Pilkington’s, it is significant that a substantial section of the workforce was willing to advocate its own interests and demand greater agency and participation in its organisation.\(^{141}\) Support was sufficient to give the strike, and the RFSC, legitimacy in representing the interests of the community (Pilkington’s workers and St. Helens more widely). Unofficial groups, like the RFSC, lack the natural ‘power of enforcement’ of authority or official groups like management (Pilkington’s) or unions (GMWU).\(^{142}\) Unofficial groups rely on persuading people – the community – to support and legitimise them: ‘whatever powers they exercise […] are dependent on their level of voluntary and wider public support, and continually proving themselves to be worthy of that support’.\(^{143}\)

The RFSC proved its support most clearly at mass meetings where workers voted overwhelmingly to remain on strike, defying the Parsons’ Poll and an earlier GMWU ballot (see timeline). RFSC support was strong enough to contest these ballots’ results (the Parsons’ Poll only narrowly favoured a return to work and the GMWU results were never released) and alleged irregularities, the former skewed by clashing with a rugby league Championship final featuring St. Helens which many workers had attended instead and the latter by including non-union members in the vote.\(^{144}\) The duration of the strike (seven weeks), facilitated by ongoing RFSC support, meant it attained ‘threshold effect’ in terms of cost (£5 million) and impact on Pilkington’s (relationship with other industries, e.g. car manufacturers who began looking to continental alternatives for supplies of safety glass). The strike’s impact made the RFSC seem ‘worthy’ of the support.\(^{145}\) Their support also allowed the RFSC to exert a more forceful power of enforcement. They pressurised those opposing or neutral towards the strike, peaceably through picketing outside factory gates but also violently, like when rioting broke out upon the partial return to work in early May or when a shop steward was hauled from the stage at a mass meeting for suggesting a return to work.\(^{146}\) The RFSC’s potential force was acknowledged by official authorities: they obtained meetings with the town mayor

\(^{142}\) Beetham, *Power*, p.270.
\(^{143}\) Ibid., pp.274-275.
\(^{144}\) ‘Secret strike vote row’, *Sunday Mirror*, 17.05.1970, p.7., SHLHA, LAN/2/2 ; Lane and Roberts, *Pilkingtons*, p.70.
\(^{145}\) ‘Pilkington’s strike cost group £5m’… ; Turner, ‘Is Britain really strike prone?’, p.36.
\(^{146}\) Anon., ‘Police rescue shop steward’, *Guardian*, 04.05.1970, SHLHA, LAN/7/1.
and local MPs, demanded the intervention of Minister for Employment Barbara Castle, and for the 18 May return to work a large police presence was on standby. Three arrests were made following scuffles as returning workers left the factory in the afternoon, led by the same shop steward assaulted at the mass meeting.\textsuperscript{147} Of course, Pilkington’s management, the GMWU, and the strike opponents also had powers of enforcement to varying degrees, which ultimately contributed to the strike’s ending. The GMWU were able to refuse to officialise the strike, hold meetings inside the factory gates in early May, and pay out hardship money; management threatened employee’s wives about sacking the strikers, threatened to deny bonuses to all workers, and declared GMWU membership a prerequisite of (re-)employment; and the strike opponents voted in sufficient number to return to work.\textsuperscript{148}

\textbf{Fig.1.2.6:} one power of enforcement meets another as police lead a striker away at Grove Street.\textsuperscript{149}

\textsuperscript{147} Harry Dean, ‘Arrests in glass works scuffles’, \textit{Liverpool Daily Post}, 18.05.1970, SHLHA, LAN/7/1.
The constitution of the community supporting the strike is also significant, and underlines the sense of legitimacy through the evidence of ‘wider public support’. St. Helens is often depicted as very male-dominated, as per Lane and Roberts’ quote: ‘St. Helens is a rugby league town, a man’s town […] the women do as they are told. They play bingo while the men go drinking’. Its isolation, meanwhile, persists even in accounts written long after the Pilkington’s strike. The support for the strike throws both assumptions into question.

Support came from other Pilkington’s plants, other industries, and people unconnected with industry both within and outwith St. Helens. Like the workers from outside St. Helens who helped spark the strike, this support transcending geographical and industrial boundaries shows St. Helens’ apparent isolation could no longer buffer Pilkington’s paternalistic model from wider social changes like declining deference. Within two days of the initial pay dispute, over 8,000 workers in St. Helens were on strike, rising to 11,000 once Pilkington’s plants around Britain walked out in solidarity. This solidarity was mutual: the RFSC in St. Helens said there would be no return to work until twenty-eight workers from the Pontypool plant were reinstated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plant</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>On strike</th>
<th>Return to work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sheet Works</td>
<td>Grove St., St. Helens</td>
<td>3 April</td>
<td>22 May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Float Glass</td>
<td>Cowley Hill, St. Helens</td>
<td>4 April</td>
<td>22 May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pressed Glass</td>
<td>Ravenhead, St. Helens</td>
<td>5 April</td>
<td>22 May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fibreglass</td>
<td>Ravenhead, St. Helens</td>
<td>5 April</td>
<td>22 May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety Glass - Triplex</td>
<td>Eccleston, St. Helens</td>
<td>5 April</td>
<td>22 May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toughened Glass</td>
<td>City Road, St. Helens</td>
<td>5 April</td>
<td>22 May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plate Glass</td>
<td>Kirk Sandall, Doncaster</td>
<td>6 April</td>
<td>26 April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Lathom, nr. St. Helens</td>
<td>6 April</td>
<td>25 April-2 May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glass Textiles/Fibres</td>
<td>Possilpark, Glasgow</td>
<td>6 April</td>
<td>4 May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fibreglass</td>
<td>Birkenhead, nr. Liverpool</td>
<td>7 April</td>
<td>22 April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fibreglass</td>
<td>Glasgow</td>
<td>7 April</td>
<td>27 April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optical Glass - Chance-Pilkington</td>
<td>St. Asaph, N. Wales</td>
<td>8 April</td>
<td>22 April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheet Works</td>
<td>Pontypool, S. Wales</td>
<td>9 April</td>
<td>23 April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety Glass - Triplex</td>
<td>Larkhill, Glasgow</td>
<td>14 April</td>
<td>4 May</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig.1.2.7: Pilkington plants in Britain on strike 1970.\(^{153}\)

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150 Lane and Roberts, *Pilkingtons*, p.33.
151 See, for instance: Hamilton Fazey, *Pathfinder*.
152 Lane and Roberts, *Pilkingtons*, p.11.
153 Ibid, p.65; ‘Pilkington: statement for submission to the Court of Enquiry set up by Mrs. Barbara Castle, First Secretary of State’, (1970), SHLHA, LAN.
There was evidence of solidarity from the wider working-class community. The RFSC boasted support from ‘the ordinary people of St. Helens [...] the building workers, the TGWU, the AEF, and [...] growing in volume from Merseyside and beyond’. Letters of support and donations arrived from individuals, workplaces, and students both during the main springtime strike and the short-lived August follow-up triggered by Pilkington’s refusal to recognise the RFSC’s new glassworkers’ union (see timeline). Letters came from Bristol, Cambridge, Cardiff, Coventry, Glasgow, London, Middlesex, Surrey, Wolverhampton and more, and donations ranged from £1 from the pensioner cited above to £150 from Halewood Ford. When the new strike was declared in August and Pilkington’s sacked 480 men for participating, letters supporting the sacked men were sent to the Trades Union Congress (TUC) by Trades Councils including Bebington, Liverpool, Huyton, Kirkby and Prescot, Middlesbrough, Sunderland and District, Ealing, Oxford and District, and Altringham, Sale and District. Dockers in Liverpool blacked Pilkington products from 13 August. The sacked men were allowed to return if they rejoined the GMWU, leaving just 250 not re-employed by mid-September.

The role played in the strike by women suggests Lane and Roberts’ conception of St. Helens as ‘a man’s town’ is inaccurate. Lane and Roberts do not appear to have interviewed any women (based on the available transcripts) so their role has been overlooked. Contemporary press coverage, meanwhile, portrayed women either as victims of the strike or as strikers’ wives. One paper, for example, carried a photograph of female workers being harangued by a burly striker for having returned to work and proclaimed ‘Elsie gets jeers for ‘doing the right thing’” (i.e. going back to work). Some women, like Gerry Caughey’s wife Betty, did position themselves as wives, telling one newspaper ‘it’s nothing to do with me. When Gerry comes home after my meetings I never ask him questions. He tells me what he thinks I should know and I leave it at that’.

Management exploited this gendered view, too, allegedly calling on wives of strikers threatening to sack the men if they failed to return to work. They knew that if strikers’ wives were working, their wages were unlikely to compensate their husbands’ lost

154 ‘Bulletin No.1’.
155 Multiple letters of support and donations to the RFSC, April-May 1970, MRC, MSS.317/11.
156 Letters in support of sacked Pilkington strikers, MRC, MSS.292B/253/31.
158 Lane and Roberts, Pilkingtons, pp.217-219.
159 Frank Corless, ‘Elsie gets jeered for ‘doing the right thing’”, Daily Mirror, 18.05.1970, SHLHA, LAN/2/2.
161 Lane and Roberts, Pilkingtons, p.68.
earnings and that the strike’s duration was causing financial strain (unpaid bills and mortgages, food shortages, no birthday presents for children, etc.). However, Pilkington’s (as noted in 1.1.3) employed a large number of women. In some families, both husband and wife were on strike. The RFSC may have been led by men but women participated in meetings, as **Fig.1.2.8** shows.

![Fig.1.2.8: strike meeting at the Triplex plant, St. Helens.](image)

It was women, in fact, who dragged a shop steward from the stage during a meeting when he suggested a return to work. The community supporting the strike was not male-only, even if it was predominantly male-led. The active participation of women, like the wider working-class support, bolstered the RFSC’s legitimacy in advocating for the community’s (local) interests against management and the union by further broadening the support base. As the Parkside case study will show, it can also be seen as a precursor to the far greater role women would play in anti-closure disputes in subsequent decades when efforts to protect the (local) community depended on the efforts of all in it.

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164 ‘Police rescue shop steward…’.
The strike-leaders portrayed the strike as a success, lauding ‘the greatest industrial revolt in the history of the town’ which ‘shattered Pilkington’s paternalistic image’ and showed the ordinary man’s potential to ‘defeat the Windle Hall squires […]’. In terms of the wages and negotiation machinery disputes, it was successful. The JIC compiled reports on negotiating structures (July 1970) and wages (September 1970), recognising the problems of over-centralisation and poor management-worker communications: ‘in removing the many complexities and developing a dialogue between the employees and management on a local basis it should provide a sound footing from which to develop a progressive structure’. The JIC was replaced with a Central Negotiating Council and a new wages structure was implemented in June 1971. The GMWU also reorganised its St. Helens structure, replacing its single branch with separate ones for each factory. Replacing centralisation with a ‘local basis’ was much more in keeping with the plant-level (internalised) model of Howell’s second phase, bringing Pilkington’s in line with developments elsewhere.

In being the town’s first major unrest since 1926, and the first at Pilkington’s since 1870, the strike was certainly significant, showing rank-and-file activism and declining deference impacting even where paternalism was strong. However, though it challenged Pilkington’s paternalism, it shattered neither it nor the company’s local influence. The August follow-up strike, for instance, was unsuccessful and showed Pilkington’s could still be ‘ruthless’. Several hundred men were dismissed and only those willing to rejoin the GMWU were offered re-employment, i.e. a return on management’s terms. Around 70 men believed they had been blacklisted by Pilkington’s and other St. Helens employers due to the strike. The August events did not meet with the same enthusiasm across the workforce or local community. When Liverpool dockers began blacking Pilkington’s products, only 50 employees were absent from Pilkington plants and the blacking lasted

165 John Potter, ‘The Pilkington struggle’ [pamphlet], WCML, Strikes – Box 1, 36012276.
168 Howell, Trade Unions, pp.87-88.
barely a week.\textsuperscript{171} The financial, mental, and physical strain of the seven-week spring strike had taken its toll on many employees and their families.

This was not, however, a return to St. Helens’ old docility but a reflection that the strike had achieved what the majority of workers were most concerned about: changes to negotiating machinery and wages. Rank-and-file activism centred on such localised, immediate goals rather than more politicised aims, in line with ideas about the ‘privatised’ worker, the individualism of worker affluence and declining deference, and collective action as a means to an end.\textsuperscript{172} Many will have been less interested in the RFSC’s more political aims, like setting up a new trade union. Moreover, many will have recognised the value of a job at a firm like Pilkington’s so will have been reluctant to jeopardise it, as was the case for the strike-leaders and some of the August participants. In a climate where the current situation (the ‘reference point’) could be considered relatively good, there will have been an aversion to gambling seemingly secure employment and/or the gains over wages and negotiation machinery, a similar attitude to the neutral and opposition groups in the spring.\textsuperscript{173}

The case study has nonetheless shown that, despite the strength and control of paternalistic employers like Pilkington’s, people in St. Helens would no longer passively accept their lot, in line with wider trends of declining deference and rank-and-file activism. Despite the neutrality or opposition of some, the strike counted support and forged community across gender, geographical, and industrial boundaries. Just as paternalism does not disappear overnight, particularly where it has been so strong, declining deference and the willingness to demand greater agency and participation do not happen suddenly; prior to 1970, ‘dull resentment[s]’ had long simmered under the surface at Pilkington’s before boiling over into action.\textsuperscript{174} This ‘awakening’, as the RFSC put it, and the actions taken by the community would be seen again, with less neutrality or opposition, in subsequent decades amidst the fight against accelerating industrial closures.

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\textsuperscript{172} Sutchiffe-Braithwaite, ‘The decline of deference and the Left…’, 132 ; Coates, Crisis of Labour, pp.30-31.
\textsuperscript{173} Kahneman, Thinking, p.281.
\textsuperscript{174} Lawrence, ‘…British path to modernity’, p.147 ; Joyce, Work, Society, and Politics, p.13.
\end{flushleft}


1.3: The Parkside Colliery pit camp, 1992-1994

‘Tears as colliery winding towers tumble’.¹⁷⁵ On Sunday 9 October 1994, almost five centuries of coal mining in St. Helens ended with a bang and a whimper following a hurried countdown from ten.¹⁷⁶ Two blasts of demolition charges gave way to eerie silence as the dust settled on the pile of rubble. Briefly, the towers had risen up, before sinking down on themselves. As their bases gave way, the upper parts arced towards the ground, one fissuring up the middle. These were not the wrought-iron sentinels which had dominated so many northern horizons but two sheer, concrete obelisks. Right-angled corners and straight lines, Sixties futurism and the white heat of technology. When it began production in 1964, Parkside Colliery was the future, the ‘push button pit’ of cutting-edge technology. Its monumental winding towers were to watch over 100 years’ worth of miners and an annual output of over 1,000,000 tons.¹⁷⁷ This future proved short-lived, reduced after thirty years to a twisted mass of concrete and metal. ‘Some of the women were openly weeping’, mourned the Liverpool Echo beneath a photo of the towers juxtaposed at impossible angles as they crashed earthwards; it is unlikely these women were alone.¹⁷⁸

With Parkside’s 1992 closure, St. Helens lost one of its flagship industries. Prefacing a 1990 commemoration of the town’s mining history, then council leader Marie Rimmer proclaimed ‘one of the strongest historical and social links which bind the people of St. Helens together must be our mining heritage’.¹⁷⁹ As noted in 1.1, the 1980s and 1990s saw a worrying trend of industrial closures and unemployment in St. Helens, replicated across the wider region. Parkside was not only the last mine in St. Helens but the last on the whole South Lancashire coalfield. With job losses mounting, the TUC branded 1992 the *annus horribilis* for workers in the North-West.¹⁸⁰

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¹⁷⁶ Barker and Harris, *Merseyside Town*, p.7. Barker and Harris believe the first mining in what would later become St. Helens took place at Sutton Heath around 1540. The first mines in neighbouring Prescot were entered into shortly before, in 1521, whilst nearby Ashton-in-Makerfield saw mining as early as 1330, a development stimulated by the lack of wood for fuel. Video footage of the demolition of Parkside’s towers, meanwhile, can be found here: Newton-le-Willows History, ‘Parkside colliery demolition’, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u-i7eZe-Odk>, accessed: 19.08.2021.
¹⁷⁸ *Liverpool Echo*, 10.10.1994, p.5.
This case study examines the fight to save St. Helens’ (and South Lancashire’s) last coal mine between its announced closure in 1992 and demolition in 1994. It is not a detailed narrative of the pit camp, found elsewhere and in the below timeline. It presents an anti-closure campaign which saw the mobilisation of and support from a wider community beyond the threatened workers. In fighting Parkside’s closure, the campaigners sought not only to protect the threatened jobs but to protect that wider community from the socio-economic effects of closure, which would extend far beyond job losses. This example of a (working-class) community’s refusal to resign itself to its fate helps correct popular narratives which imply collectivity and solidarity amongst such communities as good as evaporated during the Thatcher years; subsequent chapters in this thesis further advance this view.

More specifically, Parkside shows many characteristics ‘awakened’ during the Pilkington’s strike on a larger scale: the defence of ‘local’ interests against ‘outside’ ones, a demand for greater agency and participation in the community’s future, a refusal to defer to the will of elites (in this case, the Conservative government and British Coal management). These characteristics had already been demonstrated forcefully in St. Helens during the 1984-1985 Miners’ Strike. The town’s Bold and Sutton Manor collieries ‘formed the heart of the strike in the Lancashire coalfield’. Lancashire’s miners had voted almost two-to-one against the strike before agreeing to join in late March 1984. Agecroft colliery remained at full production for most of the strike, whilst others such as Bickershaw, Golborne, Parkside, and Parsonage consistently saw large numbers reporting for work. Bold, by contrast, ‘was the only pit to record a majority for strike action [in 1984]. Its activists were prominent in picketing and propaganda actions.

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181 Botcherby, ‘Queens of the coal age…’; Beckwith, ‘Lancashire Women Against Pit Closures…’.
182 Mah, Industrial Ruination, pp.73, 78; Linkon, Half-Life, passim; McNulty, ‘Local dimensions of closure’, pp.57-39.
183 See, for instance: Edgerton, Rise and Fall, p.454.
184 Mah, Industrial Ruination, pp.163-167; Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, Decline of Defiance, pp.9-11.
185 ‘The battle for Bold’, handwritten article draft, n.d., People’s History Museum (Manchester), Hilary Wainwright Collection, WAIN/1/5.
186 ‘Lancs miners set to strike’, Liverpool Echo, 22.03.1984, p.5. Collieries such as Agecroft (Manchester) and Parsonage (Leigh) would even, once the strike was over, vote in favour of joining the breakaway anti-strike Union of Democratic Miners. See ‘The battle for Bold’ and ‘Miners back rebel union’, Liverpool Echo, 13.01.1986, p.4.
throughout […] ‘Bold N.U.M’ became more than a geographical description, it symbolised a thorough resistance to the [Coal] Board and the government’. St. Helens’ docility was well and truly in the past.

The community involved again transcended gender, geographical, and industrial boundaries. The pit camp was led by the women of Lancashire Women Against Pit Closures (LWAPC) who claimed to represent, like the RFSC in 1970, the legitimate voice of the community. Although some existing analyses of Parkside question the women’s relationship to the closure due to their not being miners themselves, their active involvement and leading role is significant because of how the closure was going to affect the whole community, not just the miners. LWAPC’s role reflects enforced changes to gender roles in communities threatened with closure. These communities – and their industries and trade unions – are often depicted as male-dominated, and the wider Women Against Pit Closures (WAPC) movement had some difficulties operating in that environment. LWAPC’s success in leading the Parkside campaign, attracting a wide range of support, and the way the press, public, and unions conceived of them shows both that the male-dominated label was increasingly outdated and again underlines that closure implicates the whole community. Of course, not everyone in St. Helens (or the North-West, the mining industry, the wider industrial communities, etc.) actively supported the Parkside campaign but the visible neutrality or opposition seen at Pilkington’s was not replicated. The anti-closure campaign was not gambling on uncertain gains but trying to prevent a ‘sure loss’ for the community. There will have been less risk aversion in people’s attitudes towards supporting the campaign because to not support it was to accept job losses and further knock-on effects. Ultimately, the pit camp did not save the jobs but it did underline the strength of community in St. Helens (and beyond), despite accelerating de-industrialisation.

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188 ‘The battle for Bold’.
190 Kahneman, Thinking, pp.280-281.
Fig. 1.3.1: Timeline of Parkside pit camp.

07.11: 'Coal Not Dole' march in St. Helens, 3,000 marchers

09.04: Ann Scargill, Staine Evans, Doris Barnes, and Susan Potts commence 4-day underground occupation of colliery, ending with mass rally at the pit

04.06: rally marking Parkside's last day under British Coal ownership. Miners forced to sign voluntary redundancy

17.06: People's March Against Unemployment and Pit Closures begins. Ends on 20 June with rally at Parkside

19.08.91: Parkside closure announced for Christmas, later brought forward to October. 730 jobs at risk

18.01.93: Lancashire Women Against Pit Closures (LWAPC) establish pit camp at Parkside

28.04: LWAPC and Parkside miners join workers' parade in Kirkby

28.05: Sylvia Pye, Christine Summer, Sheila Gregory, and Lucy Furness commence 5-day occupation of 260-ft winding tower

09.06: two miners and three LWAPC activists begin 11-day occupation of Liner train cabun on colliery site

04.10: over 50 protesters chain themselves to Parkside gates

05.05.94: pit camp protesters issued with court summons

18.06: bailiffs converge on pit camp

18.07: twenty activists block colliery entrance to stop contractors filing in mine shafts

18.08: LWAPC vote to end pit camp

13.05: LWAPC and Parkside miners join party celebrating successful 18 month campaign by cleaners at factory in Seacombe, near Liverpool

24.06: seventy activists stage sit-down protest to stop lorries entering colliery site

06.08: demonstration in support of pit camp

09.10: colliery demolished, end of mining in St. Helens and Lanesashire
1.3.1: National context

By the 1990s, in contrast to 1970, labour was weak. Repeated economic crises, de-industrialisation (aided and abetted, in the workers’ eyes at least, by Margaret Thatcher), and the continuous curbing of trade union powers (notably banning secondary picketing and making secret ballots a legal requirement, also Thatcher’s doing) had put employers in a position of strength, just as post-war prosperity had made the workers strong in previous decades.\(^{191}\) Major reverses, like the 1984-1985 Miners’ Strike, were ‘traumatic’ for traditional industries and their unions.\(^{192}\) One ex-Sutton Manor collier, treasurer (like his father) of his National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shot-firers branch, believed people became less keen post-1985 to become involved in union activities, ‘seen as well, like, a bit pointless, in the sense that… you know, so what? They, they didn’t listen to you, like…’.\(^{193}\) In addition, technological advances meant increased output (productivity was still management’s panacea) could be achieved with smaller workforces.\(^{194}\) Declining manufacturing and mining industries were traditionally heavily unionised, whereas growing services and technology sectors were not – and many which were used ‘strike-free’ deals.\(^{195}\) Contemporary commentators believed, in a world of market not class conflict, ‘there are now fewer reasons than ever before why an employer starting up should want to include trade unions in the operation’ and that unions needed to replace conflict with co-operation to survive.\(^{196}\)

Despite this negative climate, communities in industrial areas fought against closures, showing they would not just collapse as their industries declined.\(^{197}\) Nor was the Miners’ Strike their last hurrah, as the campaign at Parkside (and other threatened pits) in the 1990s demonstrates. The anti-closure campaigns reflected changes, for instance to gender roles, in these threatened communities. The greater reliance on female employment was discussed in 1.1. Another change, more pertinent to Parkside given LWAPC’s leading role, was women’s increasing participation in industrial activism, for


\(^{193}\) PhD/002, Interview conducted by the author, August 2018.


\(^{196}\) Ibid., pp.172-173.

\(^{197}\) Mah, *Industrial Ruination*, p.73.
instance the emergence of WAPC during the Miners’ Strike.\textsuperscript{198} This was not without precedent, women’s activism increasing since the 1960s across a variety of industrial (assembly line workers, cleaning ladies, telephonists, etc.) and community activism, like fights over council rents.\textsuperscript{199} Female participation at Pilkington’s fits this trend. Women-led support groups had been seen in mining, meanwhile, during the 1972 and 1974 strikes in Kent and Nottinghamshire.\textsuperscript{200} These earlier examples, except high-profile incidents like the Dagenham Ford machinists or the 1976-1978 Grunwick dispute, are often forgotten due to their small scale, lack of union support, and lack of ramifications beyond their immediate setting.\textsuperscript{201}

There is some debate over the true impact of WAPC’s activism on their communities beyond 1984-1985. Mining was male-dominated and female participation in mining communities’ public arena – from everyday trips to the social club to specific events like inter-colliery beauty pageants (in which Parkside had much success\textsuperscript{202}) – is often conceived as controlled or organised by men.\textsuperscript{203} Even so, in 1984-1985, women quickly took an active role and believed firmly in the importance of their actions. 1984-1985 ‘clearly increased the personal and collective confidence’ of the women in support groups.\textsuperscript{204} In 1985, it was argued the strike would have been defeated already ‘if it were not for the dynamic, forceful organisation of women in the pit villages’ and that ‘men have acknowledged that we, as women, are vital […] we’re an active part of that struggle, side by side with our men in the battle’s frontline’.\textsuperscript{205} These views are replicated in many accounts, particularly ones written immediately following the strike, with an emphasis on the strong sense of community created by the activism.\textsuperscript{206} This community-building was

\textsuperscript{198} Sutcliffe-Braithwaite and Thomlinson, ‘National Women Against Pit Closures’, 78-100.
\textsuperscript{200} Sutcliffe-Braithwaite and Thomlinson, ‘National Women Against Pit Closures’, 80.
\textsuperscript{202} Simm, Parkside, pp.74-76. Alongside pictures of Parkside’s ‘Coal Queens’, often miners’ daughters, Simm notes that during a ‘purple patch’ from 1978-1984, Parkside girls twice won National Coal Queen finals, alongside separate second- and third-placed finishes.
\textsuperscript{203} Phillips, ‘…coal community…’, 45.
\textsuperscript{204} Ibid., 45-46.
aided by WAPC’s inclusivity, welcoming all women who supported the strike, reflected in their choice of name: ‘women’ rather than ‘miners’ wives’.

As many groups disbanded after the strike, due to financial, mental, and physical strain on them as individuals and collectively, these accounts are sometimes considered exaggerated. WAPC’s 1990s revival, often overlooked, suggests however that 1984-1985 did have a lasting impact on the role women in mining areas felt they could occupy, even if the movement died down in between.

1.3.2: Pit camp origins

Commenting again in the 1990 commemoration of St. Helens’ mining, Rimmer reassured readers that the town’s remaining pits (Sutton Manor and Parkside) were ‘rich and efficient and will continue to provide employment for our people and energy for our country’. Despite the increasingly negative industrial climate in St. Helens and nationwide, Rimmer’s words did not seem misplaced: Sutton Manor had set production records in 1987 and 1988 despite manpower reductions, and in 1991 Parkside’s colliers were each gifted an ‘inscribed pewter tankard’ in recognition of their own output records and multi-million profits. Parkside, furthermore, was still relatively new and modern. Nevertheless, Sutton Manor closed in 1991 and Parkside in 1992.

Local feeling was that Parkside remained viable, a feeling seemingly justified by archival material detailing manpower and output forecasts into the mid-1990s. There was suspicion that cheaply imported foreign coal (762,000 tonnes in 1990, versus 65,000 in 1987), threatening British Coal’s contracts to supply privately operated power stations, was behind decisions to close pits like Parkside. Initial opposition to the closure in


207 Sutcliffe-Braithwaite and Thomlinson, ‘National Women Against Pit Closures’, 81.
208 Ibid., 90; Monica Shaw, Mave Mundy, ‘Complexities of class and gender relations: recollections of women active in the 1984-5 miners’ strike’, Capital and Class, 29:3 (2005), 166.
209 Sutcliffe-Braithwaite and Thomlinson, ‘National Women Against Pit Closures’, 93, accord it one paragraph in their article.
210 Rimmer, in: Mining Memories, p.vii.
212 Various forecasts and 5 year plans, extending as far forwards as 1997, Lancashire Archives, NC/ACC8443/Box 33, ACC8276/Box 35, ACC8276/Box 110.
October 1992 was led by the NUM and the miners themselves (see timeline). Lancashire NUM’s President addressed a protest meeting against imported coal, a ‘Coal Not Dole’ march in St. Helens town centre drew thousands of marchers and the applause and cheers of onlookers, and Parkside miners supported an anti-redundancy protest at Lyons Maid’s ice cream factory in Kirkby. However, when the government announced that striking against closure would cost the miners their redundancy money, LWAPC took centre stage, setting up their pit camp in January 1993.

The pit camp was simple, consisting of caravans and a portakabin. It had cold running water, toilets, daily milk and post deliveries, space to prepare food, a telephone, and TV and radio reception. The portakabin was used as an office, for meetings, to receive visitors, and as an archive. Though rudimentary, the camp provided a base in which the women lived and conducted their protest. At least two were present twenty-four-hours-a-day, seven days a week, for seventeen months. LWAPC pledged to stay camped until the pit re-opened, only stopping in August 1994 when the mineshafts were being filled with stone, ending any hopes of restarting mining operations. The activists undertook dangerous and daring acts of resistance against British Coal management (see timeline), attracting much media and political attention and generating wider support. For instance, following the four day underground sit-in involving NUM leader Arthur Scargill’s wife, Anne, the women emerged to a mass rally led by Scargill himself. They supported other worker activism, including a workers’ parade in Kirkby and the compensation campaign by female cleaners at a factory in Seacombe near Liverpool (see timeline). The strength of support for LWAPC’s campaign was underlined by their taking centre stage in the North West People’s March Against Unemployment and Pit Closures in June 1993.

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217 Sylvia Pye National Appeal/Fighting Fund, ‘An injury to one is an injury to all’, WCML, LWAPC Box 3: Parkside/LWAPC.


1.3.3: Support for LWAPC

Through the pit camp, LWAPC positioned themselves as the legitimate voice of the community. The community was not just the immediate area around Parkside but the broader Lancashire region from where the miners hailed and the wider mining/industrial sectors (thirty-one pits in all were earmarked for closure in the early 1990s). LWAPC’s legitimacy was reflected in the origins of the women involved (miners’ wives or family, local residents), the attitude of the press and the unions towards them, and the breadth of their support. Previous accounts of the strike suggest the women were only indirectly linked to the campaign as they ‘had no unidirectional, primary stake in this struggle as women, nor were they positioned in the campaign as miners’. Closure, however, would affect the whole community so the women were directly implicated, even if it was not their mining jobs at risk. McNulty talks of closure’s ‘multiplier effects’ on communities: ‘linkage’ multipliers as one industry’s closure knocks-on to others (seen in 1.1.) and

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221PH/16/483/2 - Parkside Women's Pit Camp, St. Helens Reporter, SHLHA.
‘income’ multipliers as job losses and lost wages reduce local spending power, damaging the local economy and the viability of local businesses and services. Limited employment opportunities locally reduces the prospects of future generations, raising the possibility of having to move away for work, a further hit to the community, which ‘is then condemned to a slow and lingering death’. 223

WAPC as an organisation never doubted their legitimacy or direct links to the miners and communities they were protecting. Their first call-to-arms in 1984 indicates as much:

Ladies, are you prepared to give constructive backing to your men over the proposed pit closures? […] To fight not only for your husband but your sons’ and grandsons’ future in the coal industry; for the industry? […] It is the basis of our community. Without the coal industry, our area would become just another hopeless wasteland of unemployment and despair […] We all know of young school leavers without jobs. Is this what we want for our next generation? […] Unity is strength. Fight for our future.224

A sense of belonging and ownership is clear: ‘your’ men not ‘the’ men; ‘our’ next generation not ‘the’ next generation; ‘your’ husband, sons, grandsons; ‘our’ area; ‘our’ community. Parkside LWAPC never doubted their legitimacy either: ‘we still say that this pit and the other pits are our pits, it’s our coal, it’s our future, and we will carry on fighting’ [my emphasis] and ‘the role of women in society is paramount to the survival of this generation and future generations’ .225 Their community-protecting role was similarly evident, as in this press release marking the pit camp’s one year anniversary:

the campaign is one of endurance […] remaining steady and purposeful throughout the government’s attacks. There is a unique sense of collectiveness and equality at Parkside Pit Camp, with a resolve to persist as a symbol of resistance against the insanity and immorality of the destruction of jobs and communities.226

The origins of the LWAPC campaigners supports their legitimacy as the voice of the community. Firstly, although only six of the forty women who staffed the pit camp were related to current miners, only two had no mining connections at all.227 Secondly, all of them cast themselves as working-class and many worked in ‘working-class occupations’, reflecting the growth in female employment in industrial areas during the

225 The March to Parkside, pp.6, 37.
226 LWAPC Press Release, ‘Never underestimate the power of the women’, 03.01.1994, WCML, LWAPC Box 3: LWAPC/Parkside.
1980s and 1990s (seen in 1.1.) but also the generally low status (wages, skill level, security) of that employment. The resistance to closures at this time was reinforced by awareness of insufficient alternative employment and the inadequate provisions for creating new employment. In mining areas, for instance, British Coal Enterprise (discussed further in Chapter 2) focused on retraining – often unappealing, especially to older miners – and business creation, something hardly encouraged by prevailing local economic conditions. Thirdly, the women all lived in Lancashire. Parkside was simultaneously a St. Helens pit and a Lancashire pit. Its workforce hailed from a wide area due to its size and its recent opening, meaning it absorbed colliers from pits across Lancashire as they closed. Though pre-existing rivalries between colliers, towns, and particularly rugby league teams had caused friction in the mine’s early days, the miners soon became ‘Parkside men’. The colliery was geographically located on the edge of St. Helens and the community of colliers transcended this geographical area, as did the community of women engaged in fighting its closure.

LWAPC’s legitimacy was also evident in the breadth of support for the campaign. This support was an important motivation to keep the pit camp going. For instance, LWAPC talked of the ‘inspiration’ they took from the miners’ persistence in turning up at the pit each day, a reflection of the campaign involving the whole community, even those limited in what action they could take. The camp stopped British Coal management ignoring the women and, running along the A49 road beside the colliery, increased the campaign’s public visibility. A sign inviting passing motorists to “hoot!” for the miners’ attracted ‘beeps of support from truckers, bus drivers, ordinary motorists – and men in suits driving expensive company cars’.

LWAPC’s broad support was best illustrated in the North West People’s March. Similar to the largely unsuccessful Right to Work March (Manchester-London, 1976) and the more successful People’s March for Jobs (Liverpool-London, 1981), the aim was ‘to

228 Ibid.
229 Phillips, ‘…coal community…’, 43-44.
232 ‘Never underestimate the power of the women’. The miners also participated in various demonstrations and rallies away from the colliery site, such as the Kirkby workers’ parade, Seacombe factory party, and demonstrations in London (March 1993) and Liverpool (April 1993). Unusually, two participated in the Liner train occupation on the site (see timeline).
233 Jackie Newton, ‘The women’s night shift at the colliery’, Liverpool Echo, 10.06.1993, p.6.
attract publicity and to mobilise anti-government feeling’. Mobile activism reaches a wider public than a static pit camp, even one on a main road. Four ‘legs’ of protesters set off from Burnley, Lancaster, Liverpool, and Manchester before culminating at Parkside with a rally against the Conservative government. Although the number of marchers was relatively low, they reflected a wide range of support, including miners’ support groups, WAPC groups, the TUC and trades councils, pensioners’ groups, local councillors, teachers, and ordinary people who ‘want a job for me and a job for my children’. This breadth demonstrated the depth of resentment towards the loss of industrial employment and its effects on local communities, and the refusal of these communities to simply defer to the decisions of government. The marchers’ definition of community went beyond the threatened mine workers to all the working class but also ‘whole swathes of the middle-classes’, who they saw as equally under threat from political and social changes. For the marchers, community encompassed defending jobs but also protecting public services like education and healthcare so important to the communities under threat. In this wider protest against unemployment and pit closures, LWAPC were involved with the march and the final rally, photos of which suggest a good attendance.

Speeches made during the march underlined LWAPC’s support and legitimacy. One march organiser, Chris Cooper, emphasised the wider importance of LWAPC’s campaign:

The continued occupation of Parkside [is] not an empty gesture in the face of defeat […] it’s a clear statement which reaches beyond the particulars of Parkside or any other mining community. It’s a clear statement which reaches out to every worker, unemployed or employed. It exposes the criminality of this Government and the culpability of the Labour Movement. It provides a focus for all those who want to fight, who are not sceptical about the power they hold.

Addressing the Bold Miner’s Institute in St. Helens, Cooper further enthused, ‘it’s not over because that shaft’s not filled, it’s not over because those women still exist at the end of the drive, and it’s not over because those women are still occupying the pit’.

235 The March to Parkside, p.21.
236 Ibid., pp.2, 6, 13.
237 Ibid., p.47.
238 Ibid., p.4.
239 Ibid., p.28.
having the march culminate at Parkside, it placed LWAPC centre stage in the fight to save communities threatened by closure.

The relationship between LWAPC and the NUM, and the portrayal of the campaign by the NUM and the press more widely, further reinforced LWAPC’s legitimacy and support. In traditionally male-dominated environments like mining, trade unions, and the press, gaining recognition as women was not guaranteed. Accounts of the 1984-1985 strike often mention the struggle women’s support groups faced over union recognition or money, despite the close links of WAPC’s founders with the NUM. These difficulties varied from place-to-place, depending in part on local NUM branches’ attitudes towards WAPC.\(^{240}\) The NUM overall warmed to WAPC as the strike progressed, particularly once the positive media coverage women’s groups received became apparent.\(^{241}\) At Parkside, LWAPC formed a successful relationship with the NUM. A ‘telephone tree’ of camp contacts shows links to campaigns at other threatened collieries (Grimethorpe, Houghton Main, etc.), regional and national Miners’ Support Groups, the NUM, and the press.\(^{242}\) NUM support was manifested visibly through the involvement of figures like Anne Scargill in the underground sit-in (she had also been involved in 1984-1985) and NUM rallies to mark the sit-in or the winding tower occupation (see timeline).\(^{243}\) Leading NUM men like Arthur Scargill or Billy Pye spoke positively of LWAPC: ‘they’ve led us; the women are doing something tangible’ and ‘[WAPC is] crucial to our very survival as a union […] striven to show us the way for the last decade, and […] continues to do so today’. The NUM newspaper, The Miner, often printed photos of the women ‘in action’.\(^{244}\)

This positive portrayal by the NUM was replicated in press coverage. The public’s image of the campaign centred very much on women. Coverage in local papers spoke of ‘pit women’, ‘pit lasses’, and ‘miners’ wives’, often showing them ‘in action’. The Liverpool Echo, for instance, ran a feature on camp organiser Sylvia Pye almost two months before the camp started, featuring a photograph of her holding a ‘coal not dole’ poster.\(^{245}\) An article marking the camp’s fiftieth day showed the women in traditional ‘pit brow lass’ garb in homage to the women who used to sort coal on the surface. An article about the women chaining themselves to the colliery gates featured a photograph of the

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\(^{240}\) Sutcliffe-Braithwaite and Thomlinson, ‘National Women Against Pit Closures’, 80-83.

\(^{241}\) Ibid., 86.

\(^{242}\) LWAPC, ‘Telephone tree’, WCML, LWAPC Box 3: LWAPC/Parkside.


\(^{244}\) Beckwith, ‘Lancashire Women Against Pit Closures’, 1049-1050.

women in situ (Fig.1.3.3).\textsuperscript{246} Even an article where the text focused on prominent male mining or NUM figures was dominated by a photo of four women holding aloft their WAPC banner, emblazoned ‘we are women, we are strong’, by the colliery entrance.\textsuperscript{247} Whilst the coverage was undoubtedly gendered (as in 1984-1985), to a reader flicking through the newspaper, the women will have stood out as the heart of the campaign.

![Fig.1.3.3: Parkside women chained together block access to the colliery gates.\textsuperscript{248}](image)

The media coverage, union recognition, centrality to major anti-closure events like the People’s March, and the general support for the pit camp all reinforced LWAPC’s legitimacy as the voice of the community. That LWAPC successfully occupied the centre of a previously male-dominated public sphere reflects the changing gender roles discussed earlier and underlines the impact closure would have on the whole community. As with Pilkington’s, the Parkside pit camp showed the solidarity and togetherness of community in defending local interests (keeping the colliery and protecting the community’s wider future) against outside ones (closing the colliery). The opposition and detachment seen at Pilkington’s was absent, reflecting the greater implication of the

\textsuperscript{246} Ann Todd, ‘Pit lasses mark 50\textsuperscript{th} vigil’, \textit{Liverpool Echo}, 09.03.1993, p.8.
\textsuperscript{247} Ray Kelly, ‘Parkside defiant to the very end’, \textit{Liverpool Echo}, 04.06.1993, p.2.
\textsuperscript{248} PH/16/483/5 - Parkside Women Protesters, the notice on the approach road to Parkside Colliery takes on a new meaning, 4th October 1993, \textit{St. Helens Reporter}, SHLHA.
community when faced with the higher stakes of a ‘sure loss’ (closure) as opposed to uncertain gains. The pit camp’s longevity supports the idea that faced with the ‘common working-class disaster’ of de-industrialisation, notions of community amongst those affected grew stronger.249

Ultimately, the pit camp did not succeed in saving the pit but it did provide the impetus for sustaining community. In August 1994, colliery management began filling the mineshafts with stone, thereby ending all hope of restarting mining operations. In October 1994, the colliery was demolished. As feared, life was difficult for many miners who lost their jobs: eighteen months after closure, 45% remained unemployed whilst those in work earned on average £72 less per week.250 The solidarity forged by the pit camp campaign, however, remained. A ‘Parkside Supporters’ group continued to hold monthly meetings at a pub in nearby Earlestown.251 An anti-regeneration group, Save Newton and Winwick, picked up where LWAPC left off once proposals for the now empty colliery site began to emerge, this time with the goal of protecting the community from unhealthy and unwanted redevelopment.252 The community’s desire for agency/participation and continuity amidst change, and thus the community itself, persisted despite the impact of closure and de-industrialisation.

1.4: Conclusion

Part 1.1 of this chapter demonstrated that St. Helens conforms to the de-industrialisation meta-narrative proposed by Tomlinson. Since initially proposing that meta-narrative, Tomlinson has suggested it should apply initially, in chronological terms, to cities before being applied to towns later. However, it is clear that St. Helens’ industrial sector was gradually losing its lustre even in the 1960s. The example of mining, for instance, showed the industry’s decreasing capacity for self-renewal as pit closures outstripped pit openings, and manpower reduced at rates similar to those outlined by Phillips. This trend accelerated, as per Tomlinson’s meta-narrative, across all the town’s industries from the late 1970s and early 1980s: glass, coal, brewing, pharmaceutics, and more. It is not unreasonable to suppose that had decline been limited to just one industry, lost jobs could have been absorbed by the others, as was the case with some lost mining jobs in the 1960s.

249 Phillips, ‘…coal community’, 41.
The loss of industrial jobs in neighbouring towns compounded this, further limiting the opportunities to absorb the losses. These did not just affect male industrial workers but female workers and school-leavers, too. Just as the industrial workforce was diverse, 1.1 showed that St. Helens itself was not one homogeneous industrial or working-class community: different areas had highly varied experiences of unemployment and education, and relied on different categories of jobs. This heterogeneity is important for looking at community in subsequent chapters. More than just a body count, 1.1 intimated how the ramifications of closure and decline – McNulty’s ‘multipliers’ and Linkon’s de-industrial ‘half-life’ – extend beyond job losses and introduced the communities at the heart of this thesis.

Part 1.2, through the 1970 Pilkington’s strike, demonstrated the ongoing strength of paternalism in St. Helens. However, it showed the beginnings of a challenge to this paternalist model and the emergence of a more assertive (work-based) community in a town previously noted for its docility. The strike and the community which emerged correlated broadly with Sutcliffe-Braithwaite’s ideas of declining deference, although limits to this decline in the shape of neutrality towards and opposition to the strike reflect the persistent influence of paternalism in a town heavily shaped by its nineteenth century industries and industrial families. This theme re-emerges in subsequent chapters. Part 1.3 built on 1.2 and analysed the persistence of this (work-based) community in the face of de-industrialisation through the Parkside colliery pit camp. If anything, contrary to popular narratives which pair industrial and community decline, this community was stronger than in 1970. This reflected partly a greater human willingness to gamble when faced with a ‘sure loss’ (guaranteed job losses if the pit closes) than when angling for uncertain gains (potential wage or negotiating improvements) in a scenario when the ‘reference point’ (seemingly secure jobs with an established locally-rooted employer) is good. It also reflects again McNulty’s ‘multipliers’ and Linkon’s ‘half-life’, i.e. the recognition that the collapse of the industrial base would have a far wider impact than just the immediate job losses. As with Sutcliffe-Braithwaite’s declining deference, it reflected a desire for greater agency and participation on the part of the community, something Mah frames as seeking continuity amidst change and protecting local interests against outside ones. In both case studies, the community implicated was not just male, not limited to the particular industry in question, and not limited to St. Helens either, showing that conceptions of St. Helens as male-dominated and isolated are flawed.

Overall, Chapter 1 has raised a lot of themes central to this thesis which will be returned to subsequently. In particular, the extension of the communities involved in the
Pilkington’s and Parkside case studies across gender, geographical, and industrial boundaries underlines de-industrialisation’s impact beyond job losses as something which can affect whole areas and even people not directly linked to industry. The desire for agency and participation, continuity amidst change, or to protect local interests against outside ones visible in the actions of work-based communities will be seen again in relation to (post-industrial) regeneration, where a wide cross-section of local areas and groups are involved in campaigning. These groups are not necessarily the same people directly affected by closure or involved in anti-closure campaigns but similarities are evident in their formation and tactics. Likewise, St. Helens’ heterogeneity will be reflected in relation to communities beyond the workplace, showing the diversity of community in terms of its form, where it emerges, and who it involves, as well as the multiplicity of communities individual people can belong to. Again, these may not necessarily be made up of the same people involved in the work-based communities discussed in this chapter but the influence of the town’s industrial/working-class past remains. Ultimately, it is these ways in which community has evolved or persisted despite de-industrialisation and the forms of community visible in St. Helens today that this thesis now turns to.
Chapter 2: Work and work-based community

2.0: Introduction

In 1971, Tony Lane and Kenneth Roberts described St. Helens as a ‘company town’ due to the dominance of Pilkington’s over the town’s workforce.\(^1\) The ‘key’ feature of company towns ‘is the combination of a single dominant industry with extensive company control over the daily life of the town’.\(^2\) St. Helens was actually home to several major industrial employers – although Pilkington’s was by far the largest. The town’s factories and state-owned collieries can be described as “company town-style” employers, as their role locally stretched far beyond providing jobs. From the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries up until their closures or relocations, these companies – and, for those with local origins like Pilkington’s, Beechams, or Greenall-Whitley, the industrialists behind them – were crucial to St. Helens’ social, cultural, political, and infrastructural development.\(^3\) It can justifiably be argued that industrial employment – work – was the lynchpin of community in St. Helens into the twentieth century.

Across the latter twentieth century, however, work and community underwent changes.\(^4\) The successful 1970 Pilkington’s strike questioned the viability of the paternalism of the town’s major employers, which simultaneously sought to limit the power of employees and provide them with ‘something beyond wages’.\(^5\) The anti-closure campaign at Parkside, meanwhile, came amidst a brutal series of industrial closures and redundancies which were irrevocably altering the town’s labour market. Given the link between work and community in St. Helens, changes to one raise questions about changes

to the other. Though work continues to occupy ‘a central part of our lives’, some scholars contend it no longer generates community as in the past.\(^6\)

This chapter examines the evolution of the link between work and community in St. Helens across the twentieth century. Work-based community is analysed from the perspectives of both employees and employers (or other agencies responsible for providing employment). This chapter argues that several factors contributed to work losing its status as the lynchpin of community in St. Helens, including: changes in the make-up of the town’s workforce, individuals’ changing attitudes towards and conceptions of work, and the loss of the major industrial employers connected to the community due to de-industrialisation.

The chapter is divided into two parts: 2.1 focuses on workers and work-based community, and 2.2 on employers and work-based community. Part 2.1 explores St. Helens’ work-based community in terms of the jobs typically available, the attitude of workers towards work, their relationship to the idea of a work-based community, and how these have changed over time. It shows that the town’s large industrial employers – paternalistic and/or state-run – contributed to this sense of work-based community and that their decline impacted how workers relate to work and community. However, it also contends that work remains a source of shared experiences, albeit ones based around feelings of loss, confusion, and frustration. Work may no longer be the foundation of community but it still provides some of the building blocks.

Part 2.2 analyses work-based community as conceived by those providing employment as de-industrialisation kicked in. Many of the town’s hitherto major employers downsized or disappeared, taking jobs with them. In their place emerged various initiatives – the Community of St. Helens Trust, Business in the Community, British Coal Enterprise, etc. – aimed at smoothing the transition to a post-industrial economy and linked to Margaret Thatcher’s ‘enterprise culture’. These had their origins in St. Helens, specifically at Pilkington’s, and are noticeably absent from much of the literature. During the 1980s, Thatcher’s Conservative government vaunted the success of these initiatives in creating employment, encouraging enterprise and small business, boosting regeneration, and – particularly – their roots in the needs of local communities. However, where previously local employers fostered the construction of work-based communities, these initiatives turned ‘community’ into a political tool for moving people towards more neo-liberal or Thatcherite entrepreneurial popular capitalism based on self-

employment and small business creation, a sort of ‘government through community’. The success of these initiatives and their use of the notion of community is questioned. It is argued that they were equipped neither to compensate for industrial decline nor to maintain the sense of work-based community present previously in towns like St. Helens.

Overall, this chapter argues that whilst work was the foundation of community in St. Helens in the past, this is no longer the case due to de-industrialisation’s impact on the relationship between workers and work and the changing nature of the work-based ‘community’ fostered by those providing employment. De-industrialisation has not necessarily caused a disintegration of community – as Chapter 1 demonstrated, community in industrial, working-class towns is more adaptable and durable than commonly believed – but has, moving forward, left open the question of the other ways in which community can be generated, galvanised, and supported in the post-industrial world.

2.1: From John Wayne to J.R. Ewing: a tale of two ranches?

D’you remember, a bit of a daft example, but it shows the point. I used to think like employers were… came in two packages. There was like John Wayne’s ranch and, d’you remember J.R. Ewing in the, err, Dallas, he was the bad guy [PB: er, no, I don’t--] ah ok, if you ever look it up, it sounds silly but some employers… John Wayne was like the great TV hero so if you worked on his ranch and you broke your leg, he’d look after you. He’d say you work for me, you’ve broke your leg, when you’re better, you can carry on I’ll look after you. You work on J.R. Ewing’s ranch, and he was a bad guy and you broke your leg, you’re out the door. And it seemed to me [the] private sector is like that, sort of ruthless, or exploitative and whereas the public sector… sometimes a bit too soft to be honest, they didn’t always get the balance right but it was kind of you’re one of us and you do your best and we’ll do our best for you…

Ken hails from a mining family, following in the footsteps of his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather. His father’s three brothers were all miners and his grandmother was a pit brow lass. He started mining upon leaving school and worked at Sutton Manor colliery, along with his brother, until its closure in 1991. Ken sees himself as ‘the tail end of that golden generation who just left school in time so there was still jobs and opportunities’. This feeling of ‘just in time’ matches scholarly analyses of the period.

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8 Interview PhD/002, September 2018.
9 A ‘pit brow lass’ was the name given to women who worked on the surface at the coal mine, often employed to sort the coal by removing stones/debris etc..
10 Interview PhD/002.
when Ken started working in the mid-1970s: Selina Todd sees Margaret Thatcher’s election in 1979 as a turning point for social welfare and full employment in Britain, and Ray Pahl talks of rising social inequalities as capitalism became disaggregated in the 1980s.\footnote{Todd, The People, pp.8, 318, 321 ; Pahl, On Work, pp.603-604.} Ken’s preference for the stability and security of state-run employment influenced his decision to retrain as an NHS mental health nurse following Sutton Manor’s closure.\footnote{PhD/002. See also: Ken Bailey, ‘My apprenticeship – some memories Part 1’, <https://www.suttonbeauty.org.uk/suttonhistory/sutton_memories21/>; accessed: 22.07.2019.} As with many who grew up in the era of post-war full employment, the post-industrial labour market feels quite alien to him.\footnote{Pahl, Divisions of Labour, pp.1-2 ; Claire Wallace, For Richer, For Poorer: Growing Up In and Out of Work, (Tavistock Publications, London, 1987), pp.1-2 ; McIvor, Working Lives, p.247.}

Though rarely glamorous, the industrial work which dominated St. Helens into the late twentieth century was plentiful and supposedly for life. Community and camaraderie are words often associated with such employment, both by scholars and former workers.\footnote{This is the case in both very recent and much older studies of industrial communities. Recent examples include: Tom Hansell, After Coal: Stories of Survival in Appalachia and Wales, (West Virginia University Press, Morgantown, 2018) and Alice Mah, Industrial Ruination, Community, and Place: Landscapes and Legacies of Urban Decline, (University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2012). An older, classic, example is: Norman Dennis, Fernando Henriques, Clifford Slaughter, Coal is Our Life: An Analysis of a Yorkshire Mining Community (2nd ed.), (Tavistock Publications, London, 1969).} These words are far less commonly associated with the post-industrial work landscape.\footnote{Richard Sennet, The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism, (W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 1998), p.138. Sennet notes, ‘one of the unintended consequences of modern capitalism is that it has strengthened the value of place, aroused a longing for community. All the emotional conditions we have explored in the workplace animate that desire: the uncertainties of flexibility; the absence of deeply rooted trust and commitment; the superficiality of teamwork; most of all, the specter of failing to make something of oneself in the world…’.} De-industrialisation has caused significant changes to work and employment, in turn challenging St. Helens’ sense of identity and community. Community is no longer rooted in the shared experiences of industrial employment or the collective belonging to a local institution like Pilkington’s. Yet, shared experiences based on work – or the lack of it and the changes it has undergone – persist. Community’s building blocks remain, albeit in need of a new structure.

Part 2.1 explores these evolutions from the point-of-view of individual workers. It draws heavily off two sets of oral history interviews: one conducted by St. Helens library staff with retired workers in the 1980s, spanning male and female work experiences from the 1920s up until shortly before the interviews themselves, and one conducted by myself spanning work experiences from the 1970s to the present-day.\footnote{It is a shame this thesis comes just too soon to factor in the interviews from an oral history project started in St. Helens in late 2020, a legacy of its heritage efforts for the 2018 150th anniversary. See: Anon., ‘Time to preserve our memories…’, St. Helens Star, 29.10.2020, p.17.}
Taking testimonies from outside the thesis’ main time period underlines the continuity in the sense of work-based community which existed around St. Helens’ industrial employment and reinforces again the influence of the town’s paternalistic industrial employers. Though subjective, these testimonies are not just ‘nostalgia’ but stories shaped by and reflecting their narrators’ awareness of the times they lived through.\textsuperscript{17} Used alongside raw data (e.g. censuses) and secondary literature, the interviews convey people’s personal relationships to work and work-based community, giving greater insight into how this was experienced and why it was important.\textsuperscript{18} Ultimately, community being made up of individuals and work being intrinsic to the lives of these individuals, it is necessary to listen to their voices in order to understand the links between the two.

Re-using interviews, like the 1980s ones used here, is a source of debate amongst oral historians. The original interviewer and the historian today might not ask the same questions of the material. An interviewee might give different answers depending who is asking, when/how they are being asked, and what their answers are being used for (for instance, a local history project versus a university thesis).\textsuperscript{19} ‘In the most successful oral history, there is no distancing but a continuing sense of partnership and shared endeavour’ between the interviewer and interviewee so scholars who reuse interviews must ensure the interviews are contextualised and historicised with the spirit of the original interviewer’s intentions in mind.\textsuperscript{20} The 1980s interviews drawn upon here are accounts of St. Helens residents’ lives and work experiences, collected to preserve old ways of life. No transcriptions were available so quotes reflect my own rendering of the recordings. In transcribing both the 1980s interviews and my own, I have tried to ensure that the reader can ‘hear’ the interviewees’ voices through their ‘rhythm’ and ‘dialect’ – although no


\footnotesize{18} Alessandro Portelli, ‘The peculiarities of oral history’, \textit{History Workshop}, 12 (1981), 96-107. To quote Portelli’s seminal article (99-100): ‘the first thing that makes oral history different, therefore, is that it tells us less about events as such than about their meaning […] [interviews] tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, what they now think they did […] the organisation of the narrative […] reveals a great deal of the speakers’ relationship to their own history’.


transcription can reproduce these entirely faithfully.\textsuperscript{21} The 1980s interviews are used to compare and contrast with my own interviews (and other relevant data), which largely covered similar themes and topics and were collected, like the 1980s ones, via semi-structured, free-flowing life story interviews.

2.1.1: Typical employment possibilities in St. Helens

Valentine, a former collier who began working in the 1920s, describes how people’s work choices were largely pre-determined by St. Helens’ dominant industries (coal and glass) and by a certain classism:

\begin{quote}
you had your well-to-dos as wore shoes and you ‘ad our… err… type of human being that wore clogs. You know that was the distinction. Those that left school wi’ shoes on went fer a job in a shop or errand lad or somethin’ for a shop and we ‘ad only two things in mind, that was the glass-- the bottlehouse or the pit…\textsuperscript{22}
\end{quote}

Valentine’s description recalls \textit{Love on the Dole}, set around the time he began working, when manual work in a factory (or in a ‘bottlehouse’ or ‘pit’) – not commercial or clerical work – was where ‘Men’ worked:

\begin{quote}
[Harry] felt ashamed of himself, slunk along by the walls trying to make himself inconspicuous. All these men and boys wore overalls; \textit{they} weren’t clerks, \textit{they} were Men, engaged in men’s work. Sullen obstinacy mingled with rebellious desperation stirred in his heart. ‘They ain’t gettin me clerking,’ he muttered.\textsuperscript{23}
\end{quote}

Here, clothes are a marker of identity, of the community to which one belongs. Harry’s clerk’s uniform of ‘Eton collar, stud bow and those abominable knickerbockers’ is contrasted with the manly overalls, just as Valentine contrasted those with shoes (shop workers) and those with clogs (industrial workers).\textsuperscript{24} In separating himself from the shoe-wearing ‘well-to-dos’, Valentine indicates a similar attitude towards types of work and what these reveal about a person as Harry.

Edith, meanwhile, experienced two fairly typical careers open to girls in the 1920s and 1930s, working in a chip shop before going into service at a house in Manchester:

- How long did you work in service?

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{22} Interview OH/19, March 1985, St. Helens Local History and Archives (SHLHA).
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
Such employment was common across the 1980s interviewees. The other male interviewees worked in glassmaking or coal mining. Amongst the other female interviewees, one also worked in a chip shop whilst another spent time in shops and in service. In contrast to the other interviewees, this latter woman undertook paid employment her whole life as she was unmarried. The idea that women with husbands did not work was repeated by several interviewees.26

Jumping forwards to my own interviewees, whose working lives began in the 1970s and 1980s, apprenticeships and industrial employment remained predominant for men. In 1971, over 56% of employed persons in St. Helens worked in mining or manufacturing; this figure was still nearly 45% for men in 1981.27 Consistency in the sorts of work available maintained a sense of work-based community as different generations succeeded one another. Whilst Ken chose mining, Gary took a full-time job at Fishwick’s butchers followed by an engineering apprenticeship at Capper-Neil and a stint in the merchant navy before starting his main job as a local press photographer.28

Autobiographical contributions to the ‘Sutton Beauty’ local history website similarly reinforce the prevalence of industrial work amongst school leavers in St. Helens.29 For successive generations, industry was presented as a secure form of employment: ‘at the time I entered the mining industry, coal was ‘king’, with a future of at least 100 years. At least that’s what we were told!’30 A National Coal Board (NCB) recruitment video from around the time Ken began mining carried the tagline ‘people will always need coal’.31

As late as 1984, NCB publicity talked up Britain’s ‘proved coal reserves to provide energy

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25 OH/16, March 1985, SHLHA.
26 OH/29, April 1985 ; OH/30, April 1985, SHLHA.
27 1971 Census, Small Area Statistics: 10% Sample (St. Helens C.B). A further 5% worked in construction and 5% in utilities/transport. ; 1981 census – special workplace statistics. This figure covers those listed as ‘materials process (not metal/electrical)’, ‘processing (metal/electrical)’, ‘painting, repetitive assembly’, ‘construction, mining’. As is clear, the scope of the categories changes over time so exact comparison is tricky, although the percentages still offer a reasonable indication.
28 PhD/007, February 2019.
for another three hundred years’.\textsuperscript{32} This belief in industry’s security reinforced the sense of work-based community.

For women, office work was common in the 1970s, as former Pilkington’s research chemist and primary school teacher Jackie explains:

most people went and worked in the office, young girls like meself went and worked, I expected to end up working in an office and I went for the interview to be an office worker or secretary and you went to, I think it was Grove Street – or was it, er, Watson Street – where there was a training centre I think and you went and you were tested […] they [Pilkingtons] had massive typing pools at the time as well, which you used to be able to see, if you went from St. Helens to Prescot on the bus, you could see them all sat typing…\textsuperscript{33}

Su, an engineer, also recalls female school friends undertaking various secretarial and service sector roles. In 1981, 27.6\% of women in St. Helens were classed as ‘clerical/related’, just under 10\% in ‘selling’, and 25.2\% in ‘catering, cleaning/personal services’. Just under 11\% worked on ‘materials processing’, ‘processing’, or ‘painting, repetitive assembling’, many no doubt in the factories of Beechams, Pilkington’s, and United Glass.\textsuperscript{34} Unlike the women interviewed in the 1980s, Su’s generation increasingly remained in employment beyond marriage and childbirth:

Quite a few teachers, primary school teachers in the main, couple of nurses… one girl who I’m still very friendly with did a psychology degree and we didn’t even know what psychology was at the time […] there was the other group, the group that when we got to do our O-Levels at the time, there was kind of two diverse groups then, one that went on to do A-levels with me and the other group who all left, they didn’t get the O-Levels that would have enabled them to carry on with A-Levles and they went to work in the bank, the nurses all left then… yeah quite traditional jobs really, working in offices, not so much retail […] all of the girls who left school at sixteen, straight away they had jobs […]

I think my generation was probably that kind of first generation that didn’t give up work and, erm, I do have friends who gave up work for ten years or more to look after their children when they were small but not many. Quite a lot of us went part-time, I guess that was the way to manage it […] it was fantastic to go part-time… but again there was no problem, you went to your employer and you said “can I work part-time?” and they said “yeah”… it seemed a much easier world.\textsuperscript{35}

In 1981, almost 46\% of women in St. Helens were economically active, 66\% working full-time. Just under 49\% of married women were economically active, split equally

\textsuperscript{33} PhD/001, August 2018.
\textsuperscript{34} 1981 census – special workplace statistics.
\textsuperscript{35} PhD/006, January 2019.
between full- and part-time. In 1991, just over 47% of women were economically active, 51% working full-time and just over 34% part-time.\textsuperscript{36} Though the experience and range of female employment was wider than for the 1980s interviewees, feminine or ‘pink collar’ jobs still predominated, helping maintain a sense of work-based community similar to the men’s perception of industry as eternal.\textsuperscript{37}

Neither Jackie nor Su had ‘typical’ jobs, something they both recognise. This reflects the increasing access to education across the twentieth century. Similar to the distinction highlighted by Valentine between job opportunities for different people, Su’s recollections reveal a division based on educational attainment. Whereas the 1980s interviewees left school at the earliest age and went straight into work (only one mentions further studies at the ‘dole school’ and, later, ‘night school’\textsuperscript{38}), by the late twentieth century workers increasingly undertook qualifications alongside their job.\textsuperscript{39} Ken followed the Mining Craft Apprenticeship scheme, ‘a very high standard of training’ with those who completed it ‘regarded as a skilled worker in [their] trade’.\textsuperscript{40} He undertook Technicians Education Council certificates and the Higher National Certificate, and was appointed Deputy at the colliery.\textsuperscript{41} Jackie took the Ordinary National Certificate and the Higher National Certificate at the town’s technical college alongside her research work at Pilkington’s. Many of her colleagues attended the college with her: ‘… I did chemistry there and-- but most of the people I went to college with were from Pilkington’s, they did special courses for people at Pilkington’s and they [Pilkington’s] paid for you to go to college’.\textsuperscript{42} These qualifications improved their standing on the job and stood them in good stead for finding new employment upon leaving industry.

\textsuperscript{36} 1981 census – small area statistics ; 1991 census – small area statistics.
\textsuperscript{37} The term ‘pink collar’ was coined by Louise Kapp Howe in Pink Collar Workers: Inside the World of Women’s Work, (Putnam, New York, 1977), pp.19-20: ‘…after you get through reading about all the historical changes, after you stop tracing all the twists and turns women’s work has taken over the years, after you finish paying the necessary homage to all the exceptions and variations and tokens and models, this is what you always find: the vast majority of American women getting up in the morning, getting dressed, maybe grabbing a bite, and then going off to work at jobs (either within or without the home) where women form the bulk of the labour force; where pay is usually nil or low (in comparison to what men of the same or lower educational levels are making); where unionisation is usually nil or weak; and where equal-pay-for-equal-work laws are of little or no meaning since if women are competing with anyone for these jobs they are competing with other women’.
\textsuperscript{38} OH/15, March 1985, SHLHA.
\textsuperscript{42} PhD/001, August 2018.
Despite the growth in post-compulsory education across the twentieth century, St. Helens was – and remains – afflicted by below average educational attainment.\(^4^3\) In 1993, a Coalfield Communities Campaign report noted that just 58\% of sixteen year olds in St. Helens stayed in education, compared to 68\% nationally, and just 9\% of the town’s population possessed post-18 qualifications.\(^4^4\) The 2019 version of St. Helens ‘Local Plan’ notes that 12.4\% of residents have no qualifications, compared to 7.6\% nationally.\(^4^5\) Partly this is a legacy of industry, the jobs it provided meaning there was no need or expectation to remain in education, but it is also partly due to local authorities in industrial areas lacking the funding to provide adequate educational resources to break the low attainment ‘spiral’.\(^4^6\) The ‘significance of home’ in explaining discrepancies of attainment between different areas and social classes was much-evoked in the mid-twentieth century, and a similar logic could well apply to later periods: if there is no tradition of post-compulsory education amongst family, friends, colleagues, or neighbours, there will be less natural inclination to pursue it.\(^4^7\) A low-skilled workforce tends to attract low-skilled (and low-paid) employment, perpetuating the sorts of social divisions highlighted by Valentine and Su.\(^4^8\)

### 2.1.2: Changing attitudes towards work

Across both sets of interviews was a keen sense that work was simply something you *had* to do, alongside disappointment that this sense of obligation was diminishing. That the declining sense of obligation was bemoaned is suggestive of people’s strong attachment to, and sense of pride in, work and work-based community. This contrasts Arthur McIvor’s assertion that the lower one’s place in the occupational hierarchy, the more alienating one’s work is likely to feel – unless, of course, the attachment and pride was a *barrage against* such alienation.\(^4^9\) Across his working life, Valentine became disheartened at the increasing untrustworthiness of those beneath him which he saw as indicative of laziness and contrary to the spirit of what it meant to work:

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43 Mandler, *Crisis of the Meritocracy*, *passim*.
44 Coalfield Communities Campaign, ‘Britain’s coalfields: a social audit’, (1997), pp.36-37, National Coal Mining Museum (NCMM), Wakefield.
46 ‘Britain’s coalfields: a social audit’, pp.18-19.
47 Mandler, *Crisis of the Meritocracy*, p.70.
this was a different generation, put it tha’ way… haulage hands wi’ kind o’ a dumb insolence… in my younger days […] [if] the Fireman [at the colliery] says to me, “eh Val, I wan’ you t’go such a place”, I’d go…

From my interviews, Gary, having undertaken various industrial jobs before becoming a local press photographer, reacted to his recent redundancy by picking up work as an exams invigilator, wedding car driver, and producing a weekly historical supplement for his old employers. That people today will not take whatever work is available in order to get by frustrates him:

what amazes me is that there’s a million unemployed in this country, why is that? There shouldn’t be a million unemployed, there must be two million migrant workers come over and got jobs, so why can’t our one million… there should be zero unemployment in Britain… but British won’t pick cauliflowers will they like the migrant workers will. It’s entirely their choice that they’re unemployed. If I had no option, I’d go and pick cauliflowers…

Alongside obligation and pride, the interviews reveal the value attached to working. To work was to be respectable. To produce something with one’s own hands which had an obvious and immediate application was to have purpose. Across both sets of interviews was a sense of this being lost. Speaking in the 1980s, former glass worker Joseph regretted that work was no longer about making things but about watching things being made by machines:

I seen ‘em there, they were just sat there watchin’ the glass go… there was no pushin’, no drawin’, no splitter-girls, no flatteners or nothin’ […] it’s not glass-making [now], it’s watchin’ glass being made… d’you know I got the shock o’ me life…

Earlier in the interview, Joseph had explained meticulously how all these now obsolete roles came together to form the finished product. The people performing these roles formed the work community: a team dependent on one another to successfully complete their tasks, a source of potential friends and allies against the oppression of factory rules and management, a human touch amongst the machines and production lines.

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50 OH/19, March 1985, SHLHA.  
51 PhD/007, February 2019.  
52 This has been a common finding in studies of industrial communities. See for instance: Dennis, Henriques, and Slaughter, *Coal Is Our Life*, pp.73-74.  
53 OH/2, February 1985, SHLHA.  
From my interviews, local councillor Allan remembers the working-class pride he encountered as a child:

I didn’t live on a council estate, I went to school on a council estate and a lot of my friends were living on a council estate. Those people, those mothers and fathers, those kids who I mated around with were proud. They had something for themselves, whether they didn’t have two ha’pennies to rub together, they were proud and they had dignity.\(^55\)

Allan speaks proudly about how his father, a long-standing shopkeeper, was recognised around the town by his customers. For Allan’s father, work was part of his identity: working in the same Redmond’s shop from 1948 to 1972, he was known as ‘Mr. Redmond’. Allan similarly takes pride in being recognised by local people in his ward through his role as a councillor but hints that this is not always the case amongst his colleagues, many of whom do not live in the ward they represent. He wonders if the sense of pride – in work, in one’s identity – has ‘gone out of people’s lives?’, a question which tallies with suggestions that as society has evolved across the post-war period, people increasingly identify with and are less defined by their work.\(^56\)

### 2.1.3: Work and work community

The industrial employment discussed in the interviews fostered community. The pride and obligation attached to work and the presence of dominant forms of employment were important building blocks for this. Lane and Roberts called St. Helens a ‘company town’ due to Pilkington’s dominance over the local labour force, the various provisions they made for workers’ health, education, and recreation, and the family’s influence over the town more generally.\(^57\) As T.C. Barker and J.R. Harris argue convincingly, Pilkington’s and other industrial employers established in the nineteenth century contributed greatly to St. Helens’ development.\(^58\) These “company town-style” paternalistic employers persisted into the twentieth century, encouraging a work community from the top-down. The presence of industries attracting more workers to the area contributed to the town’s and its inhabitants’ identity:

the separate groups formerly distinct elements of the local population tended to merge into one. The colliers mixed more with those who worked in other industries […] the

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55 PhD/004-005, September 2018.  
57 Lane and Roberts, Pilkingtons, p.29.  
58 Barker and Harris, Merseyside Town, passim.
glassmakers became an integral part of the town as their occupation became less nomadic. Gradually, the different sections of the community came to ignore, if not to forget, their own individual backgrounds and developed a new outlook dictated by conditions then prevailing in the town […] as new generations grew up, this broader outlook became gradually accepted.59

The sense of community should not be unduly romanticised. Charles Forman’s oral history of early twentieth century St. Helens, for instance, offers a mixed view of life under the town’s industrial patrons. One colliery deputy described his manager as ‘a proper despot’.60 Another miner commented that ‘you didn’t know the mine owners. The mine owners were down south; they weren’t here’. Pilkington’s, by contrast, were known to people locally due to their local-rootedness.61 Beecham’s were described positively as ‘a family atmosphere and a family firm. Everybody knew me. I knew all the girls’ families and talked to them all’. Grumbles about reluctance to increase wages were countered by the assurance that Beecham’s always found work for an employee rather than let them go, ‘even if it was just scrubbing the floor’. A similar familial atmosphere existed at Pilkington’s, perhaps even more so because ‘while the Pilkginton’s were philanthropic, the Beechams were show people’.62 There appears a division between the positive view taken of locally-rooted employers/owners (Pilkington’s or Beechams) and those who lived away (mine owners). With de-industrialisation in the late twentieth century, geographical dislocation between employers and workers would be highlighted as a barrier to private enterprise taking an interest in de-industrialising communities. Contrastingly, as 2.2 shows, Pilkington’s proximity and presence within the local community influenced their close concern over St. Helens’ de-industrialisation.

The industrialists’ efforts created a framework within which a bottom-up community based on their employees’ shared living and working experiences could emerge. Whether the workers used this framework as the industrialists intended or to their own ends – or both – is difficult to discern. The top-down and bottom-up communities were by no means mutually exclusive. To quote Lane and Roberts:

if a new ruling class was in the making in the shape of industrialists with their own characteristic sets of ideas, attitudes, and institutions, a working class was also in the making with its own ideas and institutions. The character of present-day St. Helens is very much a product of these people.63

59 Ibid., p.412.
60 Forman, *Industrial Town*, p.45.
61 Ibid., p.47.
62 Ibid., p.82.
The intertwining of these top-down and bottom-up communities is seen in the dual allegiance of locals to their particular area of the town as with St. Helens as a whole. Alice Mah refers to this as place attachment, an ‘affective bond between people and landscape’ based on social and economic processes. As the above Barker and Harris quote suggests, work was key to this. For a long time, as outlined in the thesis Introduction, many people working in particular mines or factories lived together in employer-provided housing close to the workplace. This was still the case for my interviewee Ken in the mid-twentieth century:

the family house was in Parr, which was like an estate, a miner’s estate, which were National Coal Board houses, so when I was born [late 1950s] people who ‘ad these houses worked in the collieries, mostly Bold Colliery which was nearby […] there was a kind of community aspect to it…the majority o’ people who lived there worked in mines and the Miners’ Club was just round the corner as well you know, it was called Bold Miners’ Institute, so there was a kind of commonality…

The togetherness was particularly marked when industries or trades ran through generations of a family, as was the case with miners across both sets of interviews (and also amongst some of Lane and Roberts’ interviewees from the 1970 Pilkington’s strike). 1980s interviewee Jimmy, like Ken, came from solid mining stock:

I knew what to expect because it ‘ad been drilled into us from being young y’see cos we’re a minin’ family. Grandfather was a miner, me Uncle John, Uncle William and now I’ve got sons o’ my own who’re in the minin’ industry so it’s, err, it’s a transfer of allegiance…

Ken himself evokes the phenomenon of ‘dads-and-lads’ lists, which influenced who could get a job, particularly as the mines declined:

as things tightened through the 80s… there were vacancies came up and there was what was called the dads and lads list and that was like a waiting list of… fellers who worked there, their sons were on this waiting list for’t be interviewed when the job came up. And I don’t recall hardly anyone for a period – I’d be open to correction – who got a job who wasn’t on that list […]

64 Forman, Industrial Town, pp.11, 13.
66 PhD/002, September 2018.
67 OH/15, March 1985, SHLHA.
68 PhD/002, September 2018.
Ken recalls there being ‘at least thirty’ pairs of dads-and-lads. With Sutton Manor employing between 400 and 500 men in the mid-1980s, dads-and-lads could have made up around 15% of the workforce.\textsuperscript{69}

The strength of belief in a sense of work-based community was visible across both sets of interviews. It was apparent both regarding the workplace and beyond, as these quotes from Ken, Su, John, and Jackie suggest:

> if you didn’t work in it, you didn’t know about it, but when you worked in it, you knew, I think I used a phrase once… people could speak “pit”, I mean the jargon and the understanding and what was going on… – Ken\textsuperscript{70}

> I absolutely loved it in manufacturing… the camaraderie between the people, I mean working in Liverpool’s just a hoot because Liverpool people are so funny, they are funny from morning til night and I just remember it as being a complete and utter laugh – Su\textsuperscript{71}

> y’could go in any ‘ouse round there an’ get a jam butty in them days, neighbours were real neighbours […] cos we were all in the same boat y’see… all poor kind of… I’d like to see it [community spirit] come back, but not with the poverty… – John\textsuperscript{72}

> they [Pilkington’s] used to have [an] annual summer fete type thing for retired people and being a young girl at the time I used to go along to help make the tea… so that was very community minded – Jackie\textsuperscript{73}

The extension of the sense of community beyond work, as in John and Jackie’s quotes, was both a product and a cause of community at work. John’s in particular recalls Barker and Harris’ point about industrial growth cementing community as people ‘in the same boat’ stuck together.\textsuperscript{74} Ken and Su’s quotes, meanwhile, highlight the sense of identity which ran through these work-based communities. Though Su is speaking of her experiences of working in Liverpool – hinting at changes in the structure of work-based community as commuting increased in the late twentieth century – rather than St. Helens, she highlights the togetherness and like-mindedness of her colleagues; an inability to share their mindset would likely be a barrier to fitting in at work. Language – speaking ‘pit’, in Ken’s case – meanwhile is often considered a key building block of community.\textsuperscript{75}

\textsuperscript{69} Anon., ‘Future of pit is in jeopardy’,\textit{ St. Helens Reporter}, 16.05.1986, SHLHA, A36.2.

\textsuperscript{70} PhD/002, September 2018. This ‘job-as-identification’ is also evoked in: Royce Turner, \textit{Coal Was Our Life}, pp.65-66.

\textsuperscript{71} PhD/006, January 2019.

\textsuperscript{72} OH/16, March 1985, SHLHA.

\textsuperscript{73} PhD/001, August 2018.

\textsuperscript{74} Barker and Harris, \textit{Merseyside Town}, p.412.

\textsuperscript{75} This theme has been explored by a wide range of scholars, e.g. Helen Smith, \textit{Masculinity, Class and Same-Sex Desire in Industrial England, 1895-1957}, (Palgrave Macmillan, Houndsmills, 2015),
As Su’s colleagues bonded through humour, Ken’s did so through language, simultaneously differentiating themselves from non-miners. Writing about the 1950s, Richard Hoggart noted, ‘if we listen to working-class people at work and at home we are likely to be struck first […] by the degree to which working-people still draw, in speech and in the assumptions to which speech is a guide, on oral and local tradition’. This was evident in Ken’s case through the oral and local tradition of the pit. At Parkside colliery, for instance, a ‘cosmopolitan’ workforce was drawn from multiple pits (23 according to one interviewee, 11 according to other sources) and various Lancashire towns. This was unnerving for colliers used to a familiar and stable St. Helens work community, with the men’s different ‘pit’ dialects being one initial barrier to camaraderie. That the colliers gradually bound together as ‘Parkside men’ suggests a common idiom and sense of community did evolve. Along with ‘pit’, swearing to register ‘anger, rage, surprise, pain and joy’ bonded the men from ‘the area management down to the lowest paid worker’: ‘if all the expletives were deleted from some pit-men’s language, there would be very little left’.

2.1.4: De-industrialisation and work-based community

Across the interviewees is an affinity for work-based community of the kind more associated with paternalistic and/or state-run employers than the private sector. In mining, for instance, one 1980s interviewee described nationalisation as ‘the best thing that’s ever came out […] did away with lots o’ things which were inhuman really’. This contrasts starkly with descriptions of pre-nationalisation conditions in privately-owned collieries collected by Forman: ‘compensation [for injury] was very, very poor. You couldn’t sue for neglect – it was very difficult to prove there was negligence on the owners’ part’. From my interviews, Ken contrasted the ‘secure’ state industries which ‘had lots of good

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79 OH/16, March 1985, SHLHA.
80 Forman, *Industrial Town*, p.49.
qualities’ with the ‘hit and miss’ nature of private sector employment.\textsuperscript{81} This fondly evoked work-based community was altered drastically by the town’s de-industrialisation (Chapter 1).

Without the guarantee of industrial employment, the framework which previously facilitated community amongst the town’s workers and residents has been weakened. No longer working in the same places as family members, friends, and neighbours, the communities Ken recalled above from his childhood have been eroded and displaced. This displacement was underway even during the last years of industry as people moved from the old estates near to the mines and factories to newer estates being developed further out; Ken himself moved to a new estate in Sutton Leach once married.\textsuperscript{82} Community appeared to be declining alongside the industries and there is a hint of 1980s individualism in Ken’s explanation:

\begin{quote}

everyone in my generation were obsessed with mortgages and interest rates… when they went up, when they went down […] and people moved houses… you know it was as if, for some people it felt as though it was compulsory, oh we have to move house now… \textsuperscript{83}
\end{quote}

Ken definitely felt there was a less obvious communality as time went by:

\begin{quote}

I’m not saying it’s a mega-turnover but you can see some parts, especially where this buy-to-let stuff came in, you know people like just even on the estate where I was brought up, there’s a number of houses which have been converted to flats or buy-to-let and people like kind o’ come and go so when you’ve got that turnover, it doesn’t help, like, engender some kind of… community thing.\textsuperscript{84}
\end{quote}

Similar sentiments have been expressed about post-industrial coal communities in Yorkshire: ‘it was an unquantifiable spirit that held these places together. A spirit which had developed over generations, based on collectivism, kinship, advancement by cooperation rather than individuality’. The ‘spirit’, when industry was present, ‘infused the community’ but de-industrialisation saw the ‘collective community confidence… transmogrified into a series of survival strategies played out by individuals, many of them marginalised’.\textsuperscript{85}

\begin{footnotes}
81 PhD/002, September 2018.
83 PhD/002, September 2018. See also: Lawrence, Me, Me, Me, p.233.
84 PhD/002, September 2018.
85 Turner, Coal Was Our Life, pp.4-5.
\end{footnotes}
Nevertheless, as seen in Chapter 1 with the Miners’ Strike or the Parkside pit camp, a sense of work-based community persisted despite de-industrialisation. The interviews also evoke evidence of community being constructed and surviving in ways independent of the workplace. For instance, Jackie alludes to the support of communities of church groups or fellow parents that she has benefited from. These ‘micro-communities’, based on shared interests or life cycle stage, show the potential for community to develop wherever shared needs, interests, experiences, conditions etc., are present, without the framework offered by industrial employment. They are explored fully in Chapter 3.

Even without the major industrial employers, work remains a source of shared experiences – albeit of a more negative kind than previously. A common and widely shared struggle is that of finding employment again following closure and the attendant effects of long-term unemployment. In areas of heavy de-industrialisation, ‘work is becoming the privilege of just a narrow age group, from about 25 to 50.’ Younger people increasingly spend longer in education, government training schemes, or unemployment. Older people are forced into ‘life ‘on the sick’” or early retirement. One calculation of ‘real’ unemployment (i.e. factoring in those absent from official figures because they retired early, claim sickness benefit, or are on training schemes) found the true level in St. Helens in 1991 to be 23.5% rather than the official 13.9%. A 1994 study of former miners found 45% of Parkside’s colliers were unemployed eighteen months after closure, of which 90% had been unemployed continuously. 80% who had found work earned less than they had in the pit. Nationally, 46% of miners affected by the 1990s closures remained unemployed, of whom 80% had not worked at all. Of the five pits surveyed, Parkside’s miners had boasted the second highest average weekly earnings (£249), which had dropped to £179 post-closure. The closures had resulted in a loss of £300 million in spending power across coalfield areas.

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86 PhD/001, August 2018.
87 Lawrence, Me, Me, Me, p.234.
91 Nigel Guy, Dole Not Coal: The Labour Market Experience of Redundant Miners Since October 1992, (Coalfield Communities Campaign, August 1994), pp.5-6, 31. The other collieries surveyed were: Grimethorpe (Yorkshire), Silverhill (Nottinghamshire), Vane Tempest (Northumberland), and Taff Merthyr (South Wales).
Across my interviews, a sense of loss, confusion, and frustration pervades the interviewee’s analyses of the post-industrial jobs landscape in St. Helens:

I can’t understand how we’ve got relatively high employment but I can’t always see where these people are going. Where do they work? I realise that it’s not just St. Helens industries, people travel more now, to other towns and cities doing jobs but somehow employment’s continued but I can’t always figure it out. – Ken

I want to see them [local council] bring the kind of industries that my son works in in Wigan, data industries, computer industries, I want to see those brought here… I was reading on a Twitter feed the other day that one chap had wanted to open an IT business here and the council had told him, “oh, er, we’re not really that kind of town, why don’t you try Wigan or Warrington” and you just think “whoa, we should be that kind of town!” We won’t move forward and we certainly won’t attract you know better off individuals to come and work and invest and live in the town unless we get it right, get the town right first. – Su

Ken spent his life in state-run employment, so is understandably disorientated by its decline. Su describes herself as ‘aspirational’ for St. Helens but despairs at the local council’s attitude towards enticing new employers. Whilst Gary’s frustration at modern attitudes to work is directed at potential employees, that people must resort to taking what they can get is revealing about the labour market in St. Helens today: low levels of educational qualifications, unemployment above the national average, below average weekly and hourly earnings, and above average reliance on ‘elementary’, ‘process plant and machine’, ‘sales and customers service’, ‘administrative and secretarial’, and ‘skilled trade’ employment.

Gary’s experiences of jumping between jobs recall those of some of the 1980s interviewees. Several recalled the ‘bad times’ of the 1930s, a memory which underpinned the post-war obsession with full employment and which was used as a comparison in the late-twentieth century when de-industrialisation started to affect the working lives of people like my interviewees. One 1980s interviewee recalled that ‘in those days [1930s] you were in an’ out o’ work like a yo-yo, might be six month, might be less’. Another commented that ‘me mother didn’t want me to go [mining] because she’d seen so much o’ the bad times when me father used to work three days a week…’. Although by the
late twentieth century, the root problem was similar (a lack of employment), the conditions were not. 1980s commentators contrasted the almost perverse community of the unemployed in the 1930s – ‘found in the streets, hanging around day after day on street corners, queuing for soup or for the dole’ – with the individualised, lonely existence of modern unemployment: ‘they’re at home watching television in the middle of the afternoon. You can’t picket dole offices today and find captive queues…’

A fear of ‘bad times’, of the absence of consistent (industrial) employment, perhaps fuels the loss and frustration felt by people such as Ken, Su, and Gary. St. Helens’ answers to John Wayne – Pilkington’s, Beecham’s, United Glass, Greenall-Whitley, the coal mines – have gone and, with them, the sense of certainty about work. Many employers who have taken their place lack the size, the local roots, or are not state-run so can seem very J.R. Ewing by comparison. To people who grew up in the era of full employment – the golden generation, of which the 1980s interviewees were the avant-garde and my interviewees the tail end – such a work landscape is alien and not conducive to the sorts of community recalled across the interviews. Nevertheless, as the resistance to closure and shared feelings over post-industrial (lack of) work suggest, building blocks for creating community do persist. These, along with the micro-communities constructed outside of the work context explored in subsequent chapters, are important for constructing and preserving community into the future.

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100 Lawrence, Me, Me, Me, pp.234-235 ; Mah, Industrial Ruination, pp.90-95.
2.2: Work community and the enterprise culture

De-industrialisation did not just impact the workers’ conceptions of work and community. Shortly after the 1970 strike, the family-owned Pilkington’s company went public. The strike, particularly in forcing the company to modernise their wages and negotiations structures, had hinted that their paternalistic model was increasingly outdated. Management were conscious of major changes in the nature and requirements of manufacturing, due to globalisation and information technology, which would inevitably mean major workforce reductions. The company was keen to ensure these changes did not cripple St. Helens’ workers and local economy so sought a solution. The result was the Community of St. Helens Trust (CSHT), an attempt to cushion the loss of industrial employment in keeping with their paternalistic nature and the forerunner to Thatcherite ‘enterprise culture’ initiatives like Business in the Community (BITC).

Part 2.2 deals with these enterprise initiatives and what they reveal about changes to work-based community amidst de-industrialisation. It is not a comprehensive history, which remains to be written despite a proliferation of ‘enterprise culture’-themed publications in the 1980s and early 1990s. As a phenomenon, ‘enterprise culture’ is hard to define: ‘whenever one attempts to give the notion of the ‘enterprise culture’ any solidity, it melts’. Critics claim it fosters selfishness and individualism, creating a ‘violent hierarchy’ of individual over community.

The Conservative government, however, presented it as a liberation of the individual and a launch pad for ‘community responsibility and voluntary work’: enterprise ‘is the sum of the talents of individuals who dare to use their initiative to supply their fellow men with the goods and services they want’, whilst the prosperity generated allows those who accumulate wealth a ‘closer involvement with the community, and a greater willingness to second employees and put money into voluntary projects’ to aid job creation and economic regeneration.

101 Barker, Glassmakers, pp.420-423.
General works on late-twentieth century Britain accord enterprise agencies little coverage. The literature which does deal with specific agencies contests their much vaunted success, a view this section concurs with. The role and presentation of these agencies under Thatcher’s government fits Nikolas Rose’s notion of ‘government through community’, as opposed to government for community, i.e. the use of ‘community’ to further political goals. The late-twentieth century saw the erosion of the socially-focused Welfare State and the emergence of ideas of self-help and individual or community responsibility. This ‘mutation’, as Rose repeatedly calls it, saw governing ‘in the name of’ ‘the Social’ (protection, justice, rights, solidarity) give way to ideas of ‘overlapping networks of personal concern and responsibility’, one of which was community. In becoming ‘technical’ and somewhat all pervasive – Rose lists ‘community care’, ‘community homes’, ‘community workers’, and ‘community safety’, alongside more negative ideas like ‘risk communities’, as examples – the ‘community’ label became ‘a valorised alternative, antidote, or even cure’ to societal problems and, particularly, problems blamed on previous ‘social’ forms of government. Government through community, based on ‘neighbourhood participation, local empowerment, and engagement of residents’ was presented in opposition to ‘centralising, patronising, and

106 David Edgerton, in *Rise and Fall*, focuses on comparing “big name” entrepreneurs from the 1980s (e.g. Alan Sugar, Richard Branson) with more impressive examples from previous decades (pp.488- 491). McIvor, in *Working Lives*, succinctly ascribes the growth in ‘non-standard’ forms of employment (self-employment, homeworking, temporary work, informal work, etc.) to the developments of the 1980s and 1990s but makes no mention of particular agencies or initiatives (pp.41-42). Todd, in *The People*, does not specifically refer to the enterprise culture or enterprise agencies, although she does comment contemptuously on the so-called ‘caring’ society brought about by slashed public spending and notes that ‘far from giving people independence, Thatcher’s reforms robbed them [the “people”] of the little collective power they had had’. Though made in relation to Thatcher’s social policies, this same quote could accurately sum-up the impact of Thatcher’s economic and trade union reforms, too (pp.326-328).


108 Rose, ‘Death of the Social’, 327-356. It should be noted that Rose’s analysis approaches the subject from a Foucauldian perspective, in particular his use of concepts like ‘governmentality’. For the purpose of this study, the term’s utility is more in its differentiating of the attitudes to (work) community of the economic regeneration policies of the 1980s and of the attitudes of the workers themselves (explored in part 2.1) and the locally-rooted (paternalistic) employers from whose local initiatives elements of Thatcher’s enterprise culture and economic regeneration policy emerged.

109 Ibid., 327-331.
110 Ibid., 331-332.
disabling social government’. As this part shows, however, for all the focus on community and self-responsibility, government through community was individualistic and market-based (hence the focus on entrepreneurship) and actually relied heavily on intervention directly by the state or indirectly by ‘quasi-private regulatory organisations’. Enterprise agencies and bodies juxtaposed neo-liberal economics with state intervention and small business creation with the encouragement of work-based community. Ray Hudson and David Sadler see enterprise initiatives as a ‘classic’ example of Conservative self-help policy, workers’ reliance on nationalised industry being replaced by a reliance on state grants and loans. David Edgerton describes the enterprise initiatives as ‘not so much the release of entrepreneurial power but rather the creation of a brutally activist state’, more interventionist than ever before.

Though the enterprise culture and the activities of the various agencies were consistently couched in the language of community benefit, they hardly represented regeneration for the community and failed to involve members of the community as a community. Although the locally-rooted CSHT sought mutual benefit for workers and firms locally, enterprise initiatives overall failed to compensate for de-industrialisation and community became a propaganda and marketing tool, pedalled by a panoply of different bodies and central government. This section argues these shortcomings were inevitable. Business creation in towns like St. Helens was handicapped by depressed local economies and the lack of spending power across the local population. Other barriers included a lack of skills or entrepreneurial culture and the aversion to financial risk in industrial communities. In terms of community, small business creation and entrepreneurship are the antithesis of what former industrial workers in areas characterised by a ‘culture of employment’ expect from the labour market; the interviews explored in 2.1 certainly do not indicate otherwise.

This section analyses the origins and objectives of the CSHT and how this developed under the umbrella of BITC into a wider programme of enterprise agencies

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111 Ibid., 335.
112 Ibid., 350.
113 Hudson and Sadler, ‘National policies and local economic initiatives…’, 109; Hudson and Sadler, ‘New jobs for old…’, 322.
114 Edgerton, Rise and Fall, pp.455-456.
118 Rees and Thomas, ‘Coalminers to entrepreneurs’, pp.63, 66, 77; Greene et al., Three Decades, pp.94, 104-105, 240.
119 Rees and Thomas, ‘Coalminers to entrepreneurs’, p.73.
and initiatives within Thatcher’s enterprise culture. It questions how an initially community-focused initiative became a policy encouraging individualistic neoliberalism, with the notion of community a propaganda tool of enterprise agencies and central government. Enterprise agencies were more likely to create a work landscape of individuals than enable individuals to form or maintain a work-based community. It then examines the coal industry’s own enterprise scheme, British Coal Enterprise (BCE), to demonstrate the discrepancy between the portrayal of these agencies’ success by the agencies and central government and their actual impact on de-industrialising communities. This section contends that the various agencies succeeded neither in equipping the local population for the transition away from industrial employment nor in creating the conditions for the preservation of the sense of work-based community found amongst the old paternalistic and state-run employers.

2.2.1: The Community of St. Helens Trust (CSHT): local community and paternalism

The CSHT has received some attention from scholars. Hugh Morison uses it as an example of the private sector boosting regeneration, praising the CSHT as ‘undoubtedly […] an effective catalyst for business development in the area’ which ‘changed the attitude of the whole community’, helping 186 ‘new starts’ and 117 expansions from 1979 to 1983. Ian Hamilton Fazey dedicated a whole book to the CSHT, commissioned by Pilkington’s but which Fazey claims he wrote independently. Unsurprisingly, this work is very celebratory, telling how St. Helens ‘made an unusual experiment work, not to provide all the answers, but to give people a grip on their own bootstraps so they could begin to pull themselves up by them’. This individualistic image of pulling oneself up by one’s bootstraps, often associated with Margaret Thatcher, is immediately juxtaposed with the CSHT’s ‘prime asset’ being St. Helens’ ‘close-knit community, not always pulling together but capable of laggered [sic.] tribalism if need be’. Fazey’s book has

120 British Coal Enterprise was originally called NCB (Enterprises). This section containing more than its fair share of acronyms, BCE will be used throughout. See footnotes 101, 105, and 106 for examples of relevant literature.
121 Morison, Local Economies, p.70.
123 Ibid., p.1. Regarding pulling oneself up by one’s bootstraps, in a 1979 speech to the Conservative Central Council, Margaret Thatcher commented that recent French economic success was an example of how ‘a country can pull itself up by its own bootstraps’, ‘Speech to the Conservative Central Council’, 24.03.1979, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/103980>, accessed: 20.05.2021. In 1983, she was accused by Labour’s Neil Kinnock of ‘lecturing people without shoes on to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps’ in reference to her speech at the New Delhi Commonwealth
been criticised as ‘thin on critical analysis or objective evidence’, for instance regarding the businesses and jobs created, their number (‘between 6000 and 8500’), and how many would have been created without the CSHT.124 Similar complaints are made in literature on other enterprise agencies but Fazey’s is a quasi-official history of the CSHT. If the author who had ‘free access to people and records’, plus the assistance of someone present since the CSHT’s inception, does not offer concrete answers, questions over the true effectiveness of enterprise agencies become more urgent.125

The belief that St. Helens’ industrial model needed changing did not occur suddenly. Pilkington’s management were aware that modernisation and technological change would necessitate large workforce reductions from at least the early 1970s; Sir Alistair Pilkington claimed to have known this since the advent of float glass in the 1950s. The town’s largest employer, they were concerned about the local impact of labour force reductions:

right back in the early seventies, we started talking to the town council, saying that we did not like being such a high proportion of St. Helens and that we ought to be working together to dilute the Pilkington presence […] it was a curious thing to come to the realisation that companies like ours in established industries were going to be creators of unemployment in order to remain competitive and survive.126

Events locally (the Thorn Group stopping television production at nearby Skelmersdale) and abroad (the 1973 oil crisis and its aftermath) confirmed these fears. Thorn sourced its glass tubes from Pilkington’s and its pulling-out cost 2,000 Pilkington’s jobs, which translated into a stubborn increase in local unemployment.127 The town’s other employers could not absorb such numbers and out-commuting to other towns and cities had yet to

125 Hamilton Fazey, Pathfinder.
127 Hamilton Fazey, Pathfinder, p.3.
fully develop. The continuing downward trend of employee numbers during the 1970s and early 1980s is outlined in Fig.2.2.1.

<table>
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<th>Year</th>
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<th>Bold</th>
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<th>Sutton Manor</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>1984</td>
<td>7657</td>
<td>1030</td>
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<td>756</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Fig.2.2.1: Evolution of employment at Pilkington’s (St. Helens) and major St. Helens collieries.128

Being equally worried about creating unemployment and surviving made Pilkington’s unusual. Unemployment in Merseyside had long been above national averages and many companies thought that ‘the best way to serve the community was […] by not going to the wall’.129 Still offering some employment was better than going bust; the fate of those unemployed was not the prerogative of hard-pressed businesses. The self-contained nature of St. Helens’ workforce and Pilkington’s local roots explains this wider community concern:

> responsibility does not end at the factory gate, especially in a place like St. Helens. We can’t have a situation where my secretary’s brother is out of work with no one helping him; that’s going to affect her. We live within the community and the community has got to be comfortable otherwise we are in trouble.130

This concern was underlined by efforts to protect the St. Helens-based workers by shedding other plants first, such as Chance (Birmingham), Queensborough (Sheppey) and two in South Wales.131

There was self-interest alongside this paternalistic community concern. Pilkington’s head office remained in St. Helens so the company would suffer if the area declined: visitors might form a negative impression, young people might leave (as

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129 Ibid., p.4.
130 Peter Sheperdson, senior manager at Pilkingtons, cited in: Ibid., p.5.
131 Ibid., p.6.
Chapter 1 noted, this has since become an issue), local labour force morale might dip – and the company certainly wished to avoid a repeat of 1970. Moreover, supporting alternative employment locally could offer new sources of materials, possibilities for outsourcing, a recruiting ground for potential managers, or ways of utilising spare resources. This combination of community concern and potential business benefits led Morison to term Pilkington’s actions ‘enlightened self-interest’. 132

The CSHT emerged against this turbulent backdrop in 1978. Its functions were listed as ‘information, advice, finance and premises’, alongside training for both young people (in tandem with INDEX) and redundant executives via a Management Extension Programme. A mid-1980s report claimed the CSHT had helped establish 220 new businesses and expand over 100, helped 70 businesses outside St. Helens, and been a consultant around 200 times. 133 INDEX (Industrial Experience Projects Limited), meanwhile, offered work experience and teaching to less academically able school leavers who, as Chapter 1 noted, were finding employment and apprenticeships harder to come by. Fazey describes it as ‘the other great community project to have been developed in St. Helens to fight back against the ravages of unemployment and recession’. 134 In increasing school leavers’ employability, INDEX aimed to produce workers adapted to the needs of the small businesses being encouraged by the CSHT. By 1983, 200 young people had found work through INDEX’s placements and training. 135 About 80% of the businesses employing INDEX graduates were CSHT clients. INDEX’s success was cemented when the Conservative government’s Youth Training Scheme, laid out in the ‘New Training Initiative’ White Paper, borrowed heavily from their model. 136

The commitment to community support (and the awareness that this would benefit both the community and the firm) of Pilkington’s management translated into the CSHT’s attitude and ethos. Outgoing Director, W.E.G. Humphrey, claimed in 1982 that when the CSHT emerged:

the rules of the economic game were written for the large and established, by the large and established. The small and new were ignored, almost penalised for being small and

133 Local Economic Development Information Service, ‘Community of St. Helens Trust’, (December/January 1984), SHLHA.
134 Hamilton Fazey, Pathfinder, p112.
135 Ibid., p.117.
new […] an assumption that activity must be generated from the top down, most often inside a hierarchical structure… 137

The CSHT’s bottom-up, public-private, community-focused approach instead offered ‘one-stop shopping’ for entrepreneurs to simultaneously encourage employment and ensure that private sponsors benefited. Humphrey wanted local firms to ‘identify much more closely with local community benefit not out of a sense of charity, but out of a sense of hard-headed self-interest’. 138 There was already a hint of Thatcherism: Humphrey hoped big firms would spot the potential benefits of encouraging entrepreneurship in terms of investment and growth but also appealed to the notionally inherent social obligation towards fellow man felt by those who had accrued wealth. 139 The CSHT aimed to ‘marshal the resources of the Community’ as a whole and place the ‘emphasis on community activity rather than [the] central activity’ Humphrey so bemoaned. 140

The CSHT’s success is perhaps best expressed not in numbers but attitudes. Whereas upon its inception, a press conference was cancelled because private sponsors feared being overtly associated with it, its model soon attracted interest and respect. Locally, ‘any similar venture today is almost automatically conceived of as a Community venture rather than a sectoral venture’. 141 This was echoed by central government, a 1979 report noting the CSHT ‘seems to have achieved a good deal’ and that ‘Trusts might also improve the representational strength of leading local firms within their community […] offer a means of emphasising the mutual interests of local employers, local authorities, and the local community’. 142 By 1979, six similar Trusts existed in London, Birmingham, and West Somerset, with a further fourteen in the pipeline. 143 In March 1980, James Prior, Secretary of State for Employment, dubbed the scheme’s beneficiaries the ‘million-pound winners’ and affirmed that ‘the creation of new jobs depends largely on the success of small businesses’. 144

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139 Lord Young of Graffham, ‘Enterprise regained’, p.33.
140 Ibid.
141 Ibid.
142 Draft Misc 15 Paper, ‘Local Enterprise Trusts (Memorandum by the Department of the Environment)’, TNA, LAB9/599.
143 Ibid.
144 Department of Employment Press Notice, ‘Large firms are helping small firms to help the economy, says James Prior’, (11.03.80), TNA, LAB9/599.
the CSHT provided a model for dispersing political power away from both central
government and inefficient (Labour) local authorities by ‘pushing [power] out to the
people’. He later described the CSHT as ‘caring capitalism’ driven by ‘intelligent self-
interest’, expressing admiration for companies who ‘act on the principle that social
commitment should be coupled with economic attainments’. He felt government ‘must
do what [it] could to encourage the spread of that promising movement’. This prompted
the creation in 1981 of BITC, with the aim of establishing an enterprise agency in every
town over 200,000 inhabitants. Like the CSHT, BITC combined central and local
government, private enterprise, voluntary organisations, and Trade Unions; private
businesses and local/central government split the funding, skills, and equipment sixty-
fifty. A ‘network’ of enterprise agencies, it was felt, ‘could play a vital part in local
regeneration’.

In June, Heseltine called for the development of similar trusts in ‘30 to 40
communities’. The difficulty in retaining the CSHT’s bottom-up, community-centred
model as the scheme expanded quickly became apparent. A July report stated the ‘DoE
have taken the lead in discussions about setting up local enterprise trusts as part of their
efforts to encourage private sector interest in the problems of local communities’. This
statement conflicted with another report just days later which said, ‘DoE prefers LETs
[Local Enterprise Trusts] to grow spontaneously’. The 1979 report had similarly
suggested that whilst ministerial and local authority interest was helpful, local firms
should lead and funding for Trusts should be private rather than public. However, it had
also hinted at the ‘creation of a formal network that would make the resources of larger
firms more readily available to local small firms’. Heseltine’s championing of the
CSHT model through the support of his department and BITC at once enabled an
‘explosive’ growth in Trusts around the country and transformed the idea into an arm of
government economic and social policy.

146 Ibid., p.164. Heseltine cites Pilkington’s as a prime example of such a company, alongside Cadburys, Rowntrees, and Marks & Spencers.
147 Ibid., p.165.
148 Ibid., p.166.
149 MISC 14(80)19, ‘Local Enterprise Trusts’, (04.08.80), TNA, LAB9/599.
151 MISC 14(80)19, TNA, LAB9/599.
152 Draft Misc 15 Paper, TNA, LAB9/599.
2.2.2: Business in the Community (BITC): losing touch with local communities

BITC proved popular, although its success is less certain. Upon inception, it boasted 30 private sector member companies, rising to 130 by mid-1985.\(^{154}\) Officially, 201 enterprise agencies were creating 50,000 jobs per year and saving a further 25,000 from disappearing.\(^{155}\) The 1984-1985 Annual Review suggested enterprise agencies created 16.5% of all new jobs the previous year.\(^{156}\) These headline-grabbing numbers, though, are not the whole story. Calculating how many jobs were genuinely ‘new’ or ‘saved’ – and how many would not have been created or saved without the efforts of BITC or enterprise agencies – is difficult.\(^{157}\) This issue is referred to as ‘deadweight’; a more pernicious problem still is ‘displacement’, when jobs created in one area come at the expense of jobs elsewhere.\(^{158}\) It was not guaranteed that businesses were being created or jobs occupied by enterprise agencies’ target groups of former industrial workers or unemployed school leavers.\(^{159}\) A 1985 survey showed that, although each agency was averaging 100 new start-ups, the average number of resulting jobs was only 194, suggesting new businesses employed on average fewer than two people. Per agency, per year, fewer than 300 jobs were being created or saved.\(^{160}\) These figures do not suggest that small business and self-employment were plugging the gap left by industrial decline.\(^{161}\) Whilst nearly 90% of respondents agreed that enterprise agencies had helped them set-up, only 20% suggested that without the agency they would have either not started or failed, and under half said the agencies played a ‘crucial’ role.\(^{162}\)

BITC struggled to retain the CSHT’s community focus. Though seemingly counter-intuitive given the presence of the word ‘Community’ in BITC’s name, new businesses employing so few people could not create or maintain work-based community. There is a juxtaposition between BITC acting as an ‘umbrella’ agency, providing guidance for a movement the government repeatedly insisted was private sector-led and

\(^{154}\) Heseltine, \emph{Where There’s A Will}, p.165 ; Stephen O’Brien, ‘Report No. 2: Developments since January 1985’, (11.06.85), TNA, LAB9/599.
\(^{155}\) ‘Report No.2…’, TNA, LAB9/599.
\(^{157}\) Martin, ‘New jobs in the inner city…’, 628-629.
\(^{159}\) Hudson and Sadler, ‘National policies and local economic initiatives…’, 108.
\(^{160}\) Business in the Community/The Centre for Employment Initiatives, ‘Local enterprise agencies surveyed: summary of the results of a questionnaire survey of local enterprise agencies carried out in February/March 1985’, TNA LAB9/599.
\(^{161}\) Greene \etal., \emph{Three Decades}, p.245. The authors note, for example, that on Teeside small business/job creation would need to increase thirty-fold to compensate for all the industrial jobs lost.
\(^{162}\) ‘Local enterprise agencies surveyed…’, TNA, LAB9/599.
community/locally-focused, and it being a vehicle through which government could control and impose its ideals upon enterprise agencies.  

BITC’s Chairman, Pilkington’s very own Sir Alistair Pilkington, felt BITC had rekindled declining community spirit. Business involvement in local community affairs was presented as a natural continuation of 1970s community self-help and voluntary movements, part of a growing realisation that government must not be solely responsible for social problems. Enterprise agencies were encouraged to account for local conditions rather than follow a centralised blueprint: ‘each area will have its own different problems and opportunities and the resources and interests of participating companies will vary’. The importance of local communities being able to identify with their local enterprise agency was underlined: ‘there appears to be a recognition amongst local people that the agency is in existence specifically to assist with their problems and is by definition familiar with the local situation’. ‘Community based impetus’ was described as a ‘main point’ in a report about enterprise agency creation; if the agency were presented as too overtly a tool of government, potential users might be put off. When BITC was merged with the CBI Special Programmes Unit, it was described as a ‘non political partnership’ whose ‘initial priority’ was wealth and job creation. This was in keeping with neoliberal trickle-down economics: greater wealth creation stimulating greater wealth distribution whilst ‘successful entrepreneurs create work for others, either directly by employment or indirectly […] as business consumers’. To quote Thatcher, ‘it’s our duty to look after ourselves and then to look after our neighbour […] as economic wealth [grows], individuals and voluntary groups should assume more responsibility for their neighbour’s misfortunes’. By this logic, BITC’s priorities were very much community spirited.

Beyond job and wealth creation within communities, BITC was associated with various community-oriented initiatives. These show BITC in its guiding role, encouraging private enterprise community engagement. A 1985 report encouraged

164 Hamilton Faze, *Pathfinder*, p.89.
165 Inner Cities Division, Department of the Environment, ‘Why set up an enterprise agency?’, (Background note for the Local Enterprise Conference, May 1981), TNA, LAB9/599.
166 Ibid.
167 Ibid.
168 Ibid.
169 Business in the Community Press Release, ‘‘Business’ merger benefits the community’, (22.05.84), TNA, LAB9/599.
171 Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, p.626.
employers to use the Community Programme to create jobs.\textsuperscript{172} This provided temporary work for those aged 18-24 unemployed for six months and those over 25 unemployed for over a year.\textsuperscript{173} Projects were funded for twelve months but not necessarily beyond. It was hoped private companies would provide secondees, materials, management, and sponsorship. In parallel, BITC led ‘corporate community involvement workshops’, where representatives from companies engaged in community development swapped ideas on corporate social policies.\textsuperscript{174} There was a focus on projects with ‘community benefit’ and a recognition that participating individuals benefited from obtaining a recent work reference.\textsuperscript{175}

In 1987, BITC launched the Neighbourhood Economic Development Partnership ‘to bring together business and community leaders, along with public representatives, to create and implement viable long-term \textit{action plans} for the revitalisation of each neighbourhood’. Its three ‘key elements’ were: ‘community involvement’, ‘business involvement’, and ‘neighbourhood focus’. Business involvement was billed as ‘most effective where it takes place in a genuine partnership with local residents and local authorities’, whilst tight geographic focus on particular neighbourhoods fosters ‘community participation and action […] local people feel able to get involved in projects which have immediate relevance and visible benefits’.\textsuperscript{176} It was billed as ‘community enterprise’, a bottom-up notion of enterprise recalling the CSHT’s community focus.\textsuperscript{177}

Despite this insistence on community, central government retained an important degree of influence over BITC. As Morison argues, ‘it would be a mistake to regard the activities of [BITC] as capable of substituting for central government initiative’.\textsuperscript{178} The same goes for local authority initiative which, according to Alistair Pilkington, had often driven the success of BITC and enterprise agencies in helping their local community.\textsuperscript{179} He believed this more top-down notion of enterprise was necessary to expand the enterprise agency movement to towns which, unlike St. Helens, did not boast a locally-rooted, socially-concerned international company: ‘the vast majority of operations are waiting for signals that come out of Headquarters in London’.\textsuperscript{180}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{172} ‘Report No.2…’, TNA, LAB9/599.
\item \textsuperscript{173} Ray Hudson, ‘The North in the 1980s: new times in the ‘Great North’ or just more of the same?’, \textit{Area}, 23:1 (1991), 52.
\item \textsuperscript{174} ‘Report No.2…’, TNA, LAB9/599.
\item \textsuperscript{175} ‘Private sector involvement in the Community Programme (CP) [2 versions]’, TNA, LAB9/599.
\item \textsuperscript{176} ‘Neighbourhood Economic Development [pamphlet]’, TNA, D11/303.
\item \textsuperscript{177} A similar notion, ‘social enterprise’, is discussed in Hansell, \textit{After Coal}, pp.100-119.
\item \textsuperscript{178} Morison, \textit{Local Economies}, p.73.
\item \textsuperscript{179} Hamilton Fazey, \textit{Pathfinder}, p.89.
\item \textsuperscript{180} Cited in: Ibid., p.85.
\end{itemize}
Although keen to downplay their involvement in BITC and enterprise agencies, central government appeared to be using them to convert people to their vision of community.\textsuperscript{181} In 1982, cash given to agencies was made tax-deductible.\textsuperscript{182} The Enterprise Allowance Scheme, meanwhile, gave unemployed people £40 per week guaranteed income if they started their own business, demonstrating the government’s reliance on state intervention to drive forward the enterprise culture. Across the 1980s, £8.3bn was spent on youth training, £7.8bn on job creation schemes, and £1.18bn on Enterprise Allowance.\textsuperscript{183} Local Enterprise Agency Grants, introduced in 1986, cost over £2.3m in their first year, nearly equal the £2.9m of private sector support for enterprise agencies. Grants were necessary due to the varying success of different enterprise agencies, particularly those in government Assisted Areas, highlighting the difficulty of encouraging enterprise in depressed local economies. Grants were conditional on agencies demonstrating their efficiency and professionalism: they had to submit a business plan and were subject to performance measures. The government did not see this as centralising state interference, a 1987 report stating these were not ‘telling [agencies] precisely what to do’ but simply ‘making good management practice’ the norm. It was similarly suggested that, long-term, the best form of government support for enterprise agencies would be the provision of advisors from the Small Firms Service, i.e. a guiding or umbrella role.\textsuperscript{184}

Nevertheless, the grants demonstrate how government saw community as a tool rather than a window into the needs of local areas. Community was being used as ‘part of a promotional advertising campaign to help bring about some of the changes’ government claimed had already occurred.\textsuperscript{185} Enterprise initiatives were presented as ‘local empowerment and engagement of residents in decisions over their lives’ in contrast to the ‘centralising, patronising and disabling social government’ of the past – but remained a method of control enabling government to build ‘responsible’ communities who engaged with their values of self-reliance over state-reliance.\textsuperscript{186} The grants were creating ‘a network of viable, self-supporting’ agencies, an idea already mentioned in 1979 when the CSHT first attracted attention. Agencies which were not self-supporting, it was argued,

\textsuperscript{181} Rose, ‘Death of the Social’, 348.
\textsuperscript{182} Heseltine, \textit{Where There’s A Will}, p.167. Heseltine clearly felt this allowance could go further: ‘it would be a small but generous gesture to allow companies to double the actual cash spent as an allowance against tax’.
\textsuperscript{183} Greene \textit{et al.}, \textit{Three Decades}, pp.62-63 ; ‘Secretary of State’s meeting with the Chairman of Whitbread: 4\textsuperscript{th} July 1984’, TNA, LAB9/599.
\textsuperscript{184} ‘Local Enterprise Agency Grant Scheme’, (09.07.87), TNA, LAB9/599.
\textsuperscript{185} Hudson, ‘The North in the 1980s…’, 48.
\textsuperscript{186} Rose, ‘Death of the Social’, 332-3, 335.
should merge with other agencies: ‘the aim of the scheme is not to maintain inadequately funded agencies’.

This, of course, meant inadequately privately funded agencies and is reminiscent of Thatcher’s disdain for economic ‘lame ducks’.

These are examples of top-down interference in the running of enterprise agencies and represent control and power being taken away from the communities these agencies were meant to serve. They contradict the afore-mentioned notion of helping communities to identify their own needs. Merged agencies covering a wider geographical area, for instance, would be less aware of local conditions than an agency dedicated to a specific town. Whilst ‘hard’ government supports (grants, loans – as opposed to ‘soft’ supports like training or mentoring) for enterprise agencies were billed as infrastructural support, they also functioned as a means of creating an ‘enterprise industry’ in of itself, which Thatcher’s championing of the enterprise culture certainly supports. The need for hard supports indicates that small business creation and self-employment were not the right solutions for many areas. Case studies of former industrial areas show that business creation and self-employment grew slower than in more prosperous regions and highlight a reticence towards them amongst former industrial workers. Even Alistair Pilkington felt that no more than 200 enterprise agencies could run viably as only so many private companies had the wherewithal to support one. Broadly speaking, the more agencies, the more requirement for government support alongside the private sector.

2.2.3: British Coal Enterprise (BCE): an insufficient alternative to industry

Alongside place-based agencies like the CSHT and national bodies like BITC, there were industry-specific agencies like BCE. Their success is hard to calculate: even St. Helens’ pioneering CSHT, for all its apparent attitudinal impact, relied on the highest level of Local Enterprise Agency Grants. Figs.2.2.2-2.2.3, detailing unemployment and self-employment levels in St. Helens and England, suggest underwhelming results: though

187 ‘Local Enterprise Agency Grant Scheme’, TNA, LAB9/599.
188 See, for example: Margaret Thatcher, ‘The Historic Choice’, speech to the Conservative Central Council, (20.03.1976), <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/102990>, accessed: 16.08.2019. In this speech, Thatcher says: ‘the old arguments about the sacrosanct nature of Government spending, of subsidies for this and that, of propping up lame ducks and dead ducks, of paying the massive bill for still more nationalisation, all those tired clichés that have been trotted out so often they can trot themselves […]’.
189 Morison, Local Economies, pp.116, 127.
190 Greene et al., Three Decades, p.12.
192 Hamilton Fazey, Pathfinder, p.89.
193 ‘Local Enterprise Agency Grant Scheme’, TNA, LAB9/599.
self-employment increased from 1981 to 1991, full-time employment – particularly male – declined significantly and unemployment actually rose. These trends being similar in St. Helens and England indicates that St. Helens was no anomaly: job creation was not keeping pace with industrial job losses. As Greene notes, despite increasing self-employment and small businesses in more prosperous and/or rural regions, similar trends in declining areas are less evident.\textsuperscript{194} The final pages of this section use BCE to shed some light on the impact of enterprise agencies in de-industrialising areas.

\textsuperscript{194} Greene \textit{et al.}, \textit{Three Decades}, pp.5, 11, 234, 240.
BCE launched in 1984. It was not the first industry-specific agency: two other declining industries, British Steel and British Rail, had adopted similar initiatives already. British Coal’s Chairman spoke of its mission to ‘create new jobs not just for mineworkers – but also their families and the communities in which they live’, a sentiment of community protection redolent of the anti-pit closure campaigns of the 1980s and 1990s. BCE’s Chief Executive expanded: ‘the critical demand was arising among the younger generation […] who grew up in coal mining communities believing that their future employment prospects lay either directly or indirectly in the local colliery’, a

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196 Ibid.
197 British Steel (Industries) Limited was established in 1975 to stimulate job creation in steel closure areas. Initially this was done by attracting ‘sizeable mobile projects’ into steel areas but in the 1980s BSI’s focus changed to job creation ‘on the ground’ and the development of workshops – similar to BCE. By 1983, BSI claimed to have created 20,000 jobs, with a further 8,000 per annum subsequently. British Rail’s BREL scheme aimed ‘to cushion the effects of large scale redundancies on both the staff and the communities concerned’ through the funding of employment creating initiatives and the marketing of vacated workshops. See: ‘British Rail Engineering Limited: Alternative Employment Initiatives’, (23.05.1985), TNA EG26/258; Letter from David Hunt to Mrs Ann Cwlyd MP, (16.07.1985), TNA, EG26/258.
generation whose job opportunities were reduced and reshaped by closures. Older miners were expected to show little enthusiasm for self-employment or retraining.\textsuperscript{199}

BCE’s model was similar to existing enterprise agencies. It provided loans, premises, and training to individuals, potential new companies, and existing companies seeking expansion. Like BITC, it supported existing enterprise agencies and helped develop new ones. It worked with BITC, enterprise agencies, local authorities and central government, the Manpower Services Commission, the National Coal Board, the private sector and financial institutions, and its British Steel equivalent.\textsuperscript{200} Further collaboration came from the Rural Development Commission, which provided small business assistance in Rural Development Areas, and the Department of Employment’s Training and Enterprise Council, which collaborated with enterprise bodies to make training, education, and enterprise more effective.\textsuperscript{201} In its first five years, BCE received £60m government funding, increasing gradually from an initial £5m based on ‘the company’s success’. In early 1988, it was estimated that this government funding had helped BCE attract almost £300m more in investments in coalfield areas.\textsuperscript{202}

Although BCE showed its enterprise culture colours more overtly than the CSHT or BITC, community support remained central to how it presented itself. BCE was supposed to help not just redundant miners find new employment but everyone living in coalfield areas negatively affected by closures.\textsuperscript{203} One MP claimed that in creating BCE, ‘the government has clearly shown that it is building for the future in coalfield communities’.\textsuperscript{204} Thatcher herself praised BCE’s community support, reiterating the aim of creating employment for all residents in coalfield areas based on specific local needs.\textsuperscript{205} Thatcherism was not incompatible with community so long as community was self-supporting rather than state-supported. This did not entirely preclude state intervention: ‘the [Coal] Board, with the backing of the government, wish to ensure that these men receive every help and encouragement’, hence central government increasing BCE’s funding in line with its success.\textsuperscript{206} One of BCE’s flagship initiatives, the Jobs and Career

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\item \textsuperscript{199} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{200} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{201} Note on Training and Enterprise Councils (c.1992), TNA, EG26/15 Coal 2C Interests in UK regional aids.
\item \textsuperscript{202} ‘Five Years On’, R.A. Spray, ‘Contribution of British Coal Enterprise Ltd.’, (20.01.1988), TNA, EG26/73 Coal 1B Interest in British Coal Enterprise.
\item \textsuperscript{203} ‘Five Years On’.
\item \textsuperscript{204} ‘NCB Enterprise builds for the future – David Hunt’, (19.03.1986), TNA EG26/260 Job Creation and Retraining in Colliery Areas.
\item \textsuperscript{205} Letter from Margaret Thatcher to Roy Mason MP, (10.06.1985), TNA, EG26/258 Job Creation and Retraining in Colliery Areas.
\item \textsuperscript{206} Ibid.
\end{thebibliography}
Change Scheme, was hailed as ‘part of the total retraining, job creation and community support package’ for the coal industry. Like enterprise agencies, the Jobs scheme was tailored to local conditions. In 1988, a system of ‘job shops’ was implemented using specialist counsellors to help ex-miners find new jobs locally without retraining, an example of BCE reacting to the redundant workers’ desires, if not the reality of the local economic situation in coal mining areas.

BCE’s highlighting of community, however, cannot hide that like the other enterprise bodies it pushed hardest for self-employment and small business creation. Thatcher herself emphasised self-employment as a solution. BCE’s partnership with the Skillcentre Training Agency, meanwhile, offered individually tailored ‘professional advice and counselling’ for new jobs or business creation in order ‘to stand a reasonable chance of obtaining alternative work locally’. BCE’s guides for those seeking work underlined this tendency. Though some, like the ‘Guide to retraining’, ‘Job Seeker’s Handbook’, and ‘Interview success: the visual factor’, discussed a diverse range of post-closure pathways, many focused on self-employment, such as the ‘Self employment handbook’. Another handbook covered ‘rewards and risks’, ‘forms a business may take’, ‘sources of advice’, ‘financial assistance’, ‘market research’, ‘will the business work?’, ‘pricing’, ‘credit control’, ‘marketing’, and ‘business plans’. A separate pamphlet was entitled ‘Guide to considering self-employment’ and a brochure called ‘Guide to considering the franchise option’ described the ‘well respected way for people to develop their own business under a common corporate banner’, benefiting ‘greatly from the experience, advice and support of the parent company’.

Guides on employment contracts, commission-based selling, and sub-contractors were also produced, again suggestive of a focus on self-employment and small business creation. The language in the BCE counsellors’ manual struck a similar tone:

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207 Letter from Peter Gregson to John McLeod, (09.10.1986), TNA, EG26/261 Job Creation and Retraining in Colliery Areas.
209 Letter from Margaret Thatcher to Roy Mason, TNA, EG26/258.
210 Press Office (2055), ‘£10m training scheme for ex-miners: creating jobs in areas of greatest need’, (02.05.1985), TNA, EG26/258.
212 Ibid.
counselling is assisting people to take more control of their lives and destinies […] what is important is for the individual to be in control and responsible for his or her own actions and choices […] this means the individual recognising that redundancy is not the end of the world, that they have abilities, skills, and achievements which they can use […] take steps to set and achieve their goals.  

Encouraging entrepreneurship and self-employment in ex-miners was certainly one way BCE counsellors could heed this advice, unemployment being reconceived as a lack of individual talent or skill such that those who would not retrain or attempt self-employment were as if excluded from any new work community.  

BCE presented itself as successful. A government brief states that after one year, BCE had supported 264 projects, created 3,720 job opportunities, helped start 50 enterprise agencies, and approved £5.5m of loans. The Skillcentre partnership, however, had attracted only 161 applicants, underlining the lack of interest in retraining and self-employment. By 1993, the government claimed 85% of former British Coal employees ‘actively seeking jobs have been resettled or retrained for identified jobs’. This is a further example of the Thatcherite overtones of these initiatives. ‘Actively seeking work’ was a major point of contention in debates over the 1989 Social Security Act, which required the unemployed to provide proof they were searching for jobs (application letters, phone records, etc.) and to accept jobs to which they were suited if and when they came up. Benefits were ‘intended for people unemployed through no fault of their own’, not those who refused employment. What the 85% figure does not indicate is how many former British Coal employees were actually considered to be actively seeking work. Studies cited in 2.1 noted the high incidence of former industrial workers (especially miners) disappearing from unemployment statistics either through early retirement or disability benefit, and the resultant discrepancy between ‘official’ and ‘real’ levels of unemployment in towns like St. Helens. By 1993, BCE had approved 3,736 projects, created 41,277 potential jobs, and 11,947 workshop jobs, whilst its Jobs scheme had placed 12,643 on retraining schemes and resettled 18,357 directly into

215 ‘Factors affecting the creation of jobs: brief on NCB (Enterprise) Ltd’, (05.03.1985), TNA, EG26/259 Job Creation and Retraining in Colliery Areas.  
216 Briefing note ‘British Coal Enterprise (BCE)’, TNA, EG26/267 Job Creation and Retraining in Colliery Areas.  
219 Beatty and Fothergill, ‘Registered and hidden unemployment…’; Beatty, Fothergill, and Lawless, ‘Geographical variations…’.
employment. Yet, studies from the mid-1990s (again cited in 2.1) showed a high proportion of former miners still unemployed (or, if they were employed, earning far less) long after their mine had closed. 85% of former miners seeking work may well have been ‘resettled or retrained’ but this figure was a long way off including all redundant miners.

BCE and government press releases were similarly self-congratulatory. One press release described BCE as a ‘tremendous success – probably unparalleled anywhere else in the world’, another noting that ‘very few of the schemes we have backed have proved to be failures’. BCE was creating ‘lasting jobs’ in coalfield areas at an increasing rate. In summer 1986, the aim was to ‘double the present rate of creating alternate jobs’ to 10,000 per year. The scale of operations is planned to be at a level capable of replacing with alternative opportunities, all jobs lost in coal mining during the industry’s restructuring; in autumn 1986, a press release trumpeted BCE’s 10,000th new job. In 1988, it was said that ‘if other job creation schemes as efficient as this one could be devised then the UK’s unemployment problems could be solved rapidly and at a low cost’. BCE variously claimed that they generated ‘more than £5 for every £1’ spent or six times as much investment from other sources. Government support was strong, promising BCE with more funding as necessary: ‘the good progress must be allowed to continue. Nothing must be allowed to impede this’.

BCE were careful to praise the beneficiaries of their funding, too: ‘it says a great deal for the entrepreneurial spirit of people in mining areas’ and ‘mineworkers are very adaptable, self-reliant and versatile and usually have less than average difficulty in finding alternative employment’. This ‘entrepreneurial spirit’ was reflected in the range of ‘one-man businesses’ created: butchers, motor engineers, haulage drivers, furniture

220 Employment Bill.
223 Department of Energy, ‘£40m for British Coal’s job creation company – Peter Walker’, (08.07.1986), TNA, EG26/261.
224 British Coal, ‘On target to create 10,000 new jobs a year: increased funding for British Coal Enterprise’, (08.07.1986), TNA, EG/261.
225 British Coal, ‘Enterprise scheme to create 6,500 coalfield jobs: expanding activities this year’, (05.06.1986), TNA, EG26/260 Job Creation and Retraining in Colliery Areas; ‘The 10,000th job…’.
226 British Coal, ‘25 percent growth objective achieved: enterprise job scheme ‘on target’”, (09.05.1988), TNA, EG26/265 Job Creation and Retraining in Colliery Areas.
227 ‘New jobs near 12,500…’, TNA, EG26/262; ‘Enterprise schemes to create 6,500…’, TNA, EG/260.
228 Briefing note ‘NCB (Enterprise) funding: points to make’, n.d., TNA, EG26/261.
229 ‘The 10,000th job…’, TNA, EG/261; ‘Enterprise schemes to create 6,500…’ TNA, EG/260.
repairers, software developers, etc.. BCE was hopeful that ‘from among them may spring some of the large enterprises of the future’. Nevertheless, the shortcomings of BCE’s approach remained apparent. That many new businesses ‘would remain small’ and ‘a major effort is now needed to convince more and more people of the merits of being self-employed’ was recognised. Two-thirds of new businesses remained in the declining manufacturing sector. This raises questions about the appropriateness of self-employment for former colliers, the likelihood that enough small businesses would be created to replace the thousands of jobs lost, the long-term viability of the new businesses created, and – as alluded to across this section – their ability to create or maintain a sense of work-based community. If enterprise agencies really were so successful, would towns like St. Helens still suffer the knock-on effects of de-industrialisation?

Indeed, BCE’s record looks less convincing when its nationwide figures are compared with job losses in de-industrialising areas. In 1989, St. Helens North MP, John Evans, railed that under Thatcher there had been one-third less industrial investment in the North-West than in the South-East and bemoaned the loss of 40% of the region’s manufacturing jobs, a third above the national average. Despite the various enterprise initiatives, new businesses had grown by just 7% – half the national average – and the number of retail and agricultural units had fallen by over 6% and 10% respectively.

Looking back at Fig.2.2.1, between 1970 and 1984, job losses at Pilkington’s and St. Helens’ major collieries totalled over 8,200. Bold colliery’s closure in 1985 added a further 811 (with a knock-on effect on 500 further jobs) and United Glass saw various rounds of lay-offs between 1980 (when it began trading at a loss) and 1985, taking the total to over 10,000. Based on Fig.1.1.7, between 1978 and 1988, the town’s major employers shed between 15,000 and 20,000 jobs. Though this may include some double-counting as some workers will have been laid off more than once during this period, it remains illustrative of the decline. BCE by 1988 had created 3,627 jobs and 6,685 job opportunities in its Western region (Lancashire, North Wales, and Staffordshire) whilst

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230 ‘On target to create 10,000 new jobs…’, TNA, EG/261.
231 ‘Enterprise schemes to create 6,500…’, TNA, EG/260.
232 Ibid.
233 ‘On target to create 10,000 new jobs…’, TNA, EG/261.
the 1984 CSHT report claimed it had created 220 new businesses and expanded 100.\footnote{236 British Coal Enterprise figures October 1988, TNA, EG26/265 ; ‘Community of St. Helens Trust’, SHLHA.} Given estimates that many new businesses employed fewer than two people, it is unlikely that the CSHT and BCE will have got anywhere close to making up the jobs shortfall in St. Helens. In July 1986, unemployment in the St. Helens and Wigan Travel to Work Area was 18.8% (22.6% for men), and was still between 11-12% throughout 1989, well above national averages.\footnote{237 Figures from Newton and Goldborne News (various editions 1986-1989). Both this paper and the St. Helens Reporter published unemployment figures on a monthly or so basis during this period, SHLHA, 306STH.} These rough calculations show the enormity of the task facing enterprise agencies. It can legitimately be asked how agencies like the CSHT or BCE were supposed to cope with losses on such a scale across so many industries whilst being used by central government to push a neo-liberal, individualistic conception of community.

The CSHT emerged from Pilkington’s paternalistic desire to support its local community. Once it and enterprise initiatives more generally were picked up by central government, they became a tool for the transmission of an individualistic, entrepreneurial, popular capitalist society, the notion of community a rhetorical device to curry favour in de-industrialising areas where a sense of work-based community had been important historically. This is not saying that bodies like the CSHT, left to their own devices, could have combatted alone de-industrialisation on the scale seen in St. Helens. However, more attention would have been paid to local needs which may have, if nothing else, helped preserve a sense of work-based community. It is notable, given the generally critical tone towards the economic regeneration initiatives explored in this chapter, that the Coalfield Communities Campaign praised the CSHT in its 1995 study ‘Regenerating the coalfields: good practice in local economic development’. The study suggests that the CSHT had, by 1994, helped 7,300 clients and created 2,000 new businesses and 15,000 jobs.\footnote{238 Nigel Guy, ‘Regenerating the coalfields: good practice in local economic development’, (Coalfield Communities Campaign, 1995), 4-7.} There is no indication as to the location of these jobs (in St. Helens or not), who they were going to (redundant industrial workers or not), or the sorts or size of businesses being set up (which would influence their ability to create or maintain work community). However, the Coalfield Communities Campaign’s endorsement reinforces this chapter’s suggestion that the original locally-rooted model was more effective than the larger national schemes which followed.
As the CSHT morphed into nationwide policy through bodies like BITC and BCE, it became less about smoothing the transition away from industrial employment and more about attempting to crudely impose an entrepreneurial spirit on communities who were neither equipped for, nor desirous of, it. For all the language of community such bodies employed, they focused on an individualised conception of employment based around self-employment and small business creation, eroding the concept of work-based community previously visible in towns like St. Helens. Given the inherent difficulties in establishing successful new businesses on any scale in economically depressed areas, these bodies were also inadequate for dealing with the scale of job losses, further undermining any sense of work-based community as stable industrial employment disappeared with little to replace it.

2.3: Conclusion

With its two contrasting source bases — the worker oral histories in 2.1 and the documentary evidence around enterprise agencies in 2.2 — this chapter has explored work community both from the perspectives of the people who make up work communities (the workers) and the people whose provision of employment creates (or not, as may be the case) the frameworks around which these communities coalesce (companies, management, government). As mentioned in the Introduction, these twin perspectives are crucial when studying a place so shaped by both as St. Helens.

In 2.1, several generations of workers presented a shared, stable idea of what work was, what it meant to work, and the presence of a community generated around this (largely industrial) work. Already amongst the 1980s interviewees, however, there was some sense of change afoot. This was felt even more keenly by my interviewees who had entered this industrial work landscape as decline set in, requiring them to adapt. In a town like St. Helens where for so long the major employers were either state-run or locally-rooted paternalistic firms, the contemporary prevalence of non-paternal private enterprise is alien to its inhabitants as individuals and, crucially, not conducive to the sense of work-based community described in the interviews.

Part 2.2 examined the enterprise culture and agencies designed to help the transition away from industry and cushion the blow of job losses in places like St. Helens. The original enterprise agency, the CSHT, was conceived as a community-focused initiative to help St. Helens in the face of reduced manpower requirements at companies like Pilkington’s. Like the workers interviewed in 2.1, Pilkington’s had sensed early
impending changes in the nature of work and they hoped their efforts would soften the blow of these changes on the local community. Later, when central government adopted the enterprise agency model to push a neo-liberal, Thatcherite model of work based around individuals and entrepreneurship, community was turned into a political tool. Community became a tool of governance rather than a product of individuals coming together.

Of course, the paternalistic and state-run employment of St. Helens’ industrial past was itself a form of community governance. In providing employment and creating an infrastructure, employers created a framework around which community could develop. However, being based around larger firms (glass factories, coal mines, etc.) and persisting across several generations, shared experiences developed amongst the workers living and working in shared environments, whilst new generations grew up expecting to move into this same work landscape. This was reflected in the consistency in conceptions of work across the interviews in 2.1. As Lane and Roberts and Barker and Harris all argue, workers were brought together by this framework. Employers and workers were both able to shape the town’s identity and community.

This framework of community based on particular types of employment and notions of work was weakened with the loss of state-run and paternalistic firms through de-industrialisation. The enterprise agencies charged with helping former industrial workers move on embodied a different conception of community to the employers which had preceded them – different even to the intentions of the CSHT. The onus on entrepreneurship, self-employment, and small business creation was very different to the large-scale operations of the past, much more likely to generate a work landscape of individuals than preserve a sense of work-based community. Moreover, the enterprise model proved incapable of generating sufficient new jobs or businesses to replace the jobs lost to de-industrialisation, particularly in towns where the losses were on such a scale as St. Helens.

The hitherto commonplace shared environments and experiences were lost. Any collective experience based on work was now more likely to be based on loss, confusion, or frustration felt by workers struggling to adapt to the new work landscape. The consistent, stable work of the past became harder to come by; low-waged, low-skilled employment and long-term unemployment became more common. The loss of familiar, large-scale industrial employers changed conceptions of work and work-based community from the point-of-view of the workers. The change from paternalism for community to government through community – from collective to individual – during
the 1980s reflected a changed conception of work and work-based community from the point-of-view of those providing employment. Although the shared feelings about the post-industrial work landscape in 2.1 suggest the building blocks for community remain, work is no longer the foundation. If community persists, work is no longer its lynchpin.
Chapter 3 - Community beyond the workplace

3.0: Introduction

In September 2019, the Daily Mirror dubbed St. Helens England’s ‘suicide capital’.\(^1\) The town’s mental and physical health (depression, drugs, obesity, suicide) and economic struggles (deprivation, (un-)employment, in-work poverty, low wages, population loss, under-investment) reflected a ‘sense of decline’ and ‘general aura of “hopelessness”’.\(^2\) These are classic symptoms of de-industrialisation’s ‘half-life’, its ongoing impact beyond industrial closures.\(^3\)

The Mirror visited Teardrops, a charity helping the homeless. Through its hub, Teardrops creates a sense of ‘inclusion’ for those in need, a community for those often on society’s margins, regularly helping 50-60 people per night.\(^4\) The demand for Teardrops, and other charitable organisations like Chrystals for Change (women suffering anxiety, depression, or domestic abuse) and the Saints Community Development Foundation (run by the town’s professional rugby team), underlines the challenges St. Helens is facing.\(^5\)

There is, though, more to post-closure St. Helens than these economic, health, and social struggles. Teardrops’ manager, Nick Dyer, is upbeat: ‘St. Helens is built on community, and I’ve always felt that. I think that’s why we’ve got places like Momo’s [a community cafe]… why people want to come here […]’. The community evolves over time but ‘the sense of community, people coming out and helping, is still there […] I think it’s still a close town […] people help more when they’ve got less […] a lot of people are on that poverty line, a lot of families […] but if you need help, it’ll be there for you’.\(^6\)

This persistence of community is this chapter’s focus. In industrial towns, community developed around the workplace, neighbourhood, and working-class pursuits. These communities are often evoked fondly (Chapter 2) but were products of circumstance and necessity.\(^7\) The fond evocations give the impression these communities


\(^{2}\) Ibid.


\(^{4}\) Interview PhD/008, November 2019.

\(^{5}\) ‘Inside England's ‘suicide capital’…’.

\(^{6}\) PhD/008.

have been lost, for example due to de-industrialisation. Commentators bemoaned the loss of working-class, industrial culture and communities from the mid-twentieth century. Today, trends of closing pubs, post offices, bank branches, municipal parks, playing fields, etc., are given as proof of community decline, whilst new housing developments are criticised for lacking community amenities. Recent scholarship, however, reinforces the importance of community across the post-war era. Stefan Ramsden argues post-war associational life saw ‘a sizeable minority of working-class people ready to breathe life into a variety of clubs and societies’, seeking ‘to serve the wider community through their involvement in civil society’. Mark Clapson, meanwhile, believes the ‘fashionable’ critique of ‘the working classes declin[ing] after 1980 into either selfish suburban homeowners or a tattooed lumpen proletariat [on] sink estates […] wallowing in a dependency culture’ is unrepresentative of many places where associational culture and local groups persist. Community has evolved rather than been lost, with greater choice around community belonging key to this. Jon Lawrence talks of ‘micro-communities’, to which belonging is temporary and linked to life-course stages, whilst Liz Spencer and Ray Pahl evoke ‘personal communities’ based on choice, friendship, and greater inter-connectedness rather than geography or circumstance.

This community evolution is key to this chapter. St. Helens was long dominated by work, neighbourhood, and working-class communities, rich sources of associational life and micro-communities. The chapter examines to what extent these communities persist today and, where they have been lost, what has emerged instead. Community was not exclusively tied to industry and work so the chapter explores wide-ranging sources of

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8 See, for example: David Edgerton, The Rise and Fall of the British Nation: A Twentieth Century History, (Allen Lane, London, 2018) who suggests (p.454) that ‘the power of organised workers was broken by high unemployment and the collapse of unionised industries […] from the late 1980s, the working class disappeared from the public sphere’.


10 Chris Burn, ‘Shutting the banks was the death knell of the village’, I, 05.02.2018, p.29 ; James Trapper, ‘A walk in the park? Not this summer as festivals hog our green spaces’, Observer, 08.07.2018, p.11 ; Jamie Doward, ‘Forget Madrid… where will next generation of stars learn to play?’, Observer, 02.06.2019, p.3 ; Tom Wall, ‘Serious design flaws in many housing estates, report claims’, Observer, 19.01.2020, p.27. This criticism of new estates lacking community amenities is not new. See, for example: George Orwell, The Road to Wigan Pier, (Penguin, London, 2001), pp.63-67 ; Michael Young, Peter Wilmott, Family and Kinship in East London, (Penguin, London, 2007).


community. Throughout, the influence and legacy of the community-building efforts of the town’s nineteenth-century industrialists is evident.

The chapter begins with industrial and work-based community. Particular emphasis is placed on Pilkington’s long-standing social club, pubs and social clubs’ links to local identity, and the town’s close relationship with professional and amateur rugby league. The chapter then examines non-industrial micro-communities, including residents’/tenants’ associations, community centres, and Women’s Institutes. The third section examines “state-sponsored” community, generated via municipal leisure and recreation provision. Community’s role in this provision increases over time, notably with the 1980s Community Leisure Department, linking to Chapter 2’s ‘government through community’. Finally, the chapter examines community-building through industrial heritage, using examples of commemorations and monuments, alongside recent policy analyses of St. Helens’ heritage sector. From these overlapping sections emerges a still dense and robust framework for community, less centred around industry than previously.

Measuring (sense of) community and engagement with it is challenging. Potential for community exists, as in Chapters 2 and 4, but this existence cannot be guaranteed. The influence of working-class and industrial culture remains, notably rugby league and industrial heritage, albeit diminished compared to previous eras. Ultimately, the chapter argues that losing industrial employment, previously central to community in St. Helens, has not led to community decline. Across the chapter, associational community emerges from hugely diverse sources.

3.1: Industrial and working-class communities

Chapter 2 linked industrial work and community, both the framework constructed by prominent industrialists and the community amongst workers. This community reached beyond the workplace, with workmates often neighbours (sometimes on employer-built estates) and/or socialising together (often in workplace social clubs). As former miner Ken explained, ‘the majority o’ people who lived there worked in mines and the Miners’ Club was just round the corner as well you know, it was called Bold Miners’ Institute, so there was a kind of commonality’.\textsuperscript{14} Tim Strangleman argues employers’ leisure and recreation provision created industrial citizens, ‘a community of workers’ playing sports and/or engaging in various ‘nonwork activities […] an active engagement and vision of

\textsuperscript{14} PhD/002, September 2018.
a particular type of creative citizenry, one inextricably linked to the workplace’.  Extending into neighbourhoods and social settings, the work community included people external to the workplace: spouses and children, retirees and pensioners, outside friends and acquaintances.

The origins of industrial/working-class community’s social side, like the workplace communities themselves, run deep. Pubs and taverns have been present in St. Helens since the King’s Head on Church Street in 1630. There were around 20 in 1760, 35 by 1800, and 150 ‘beerhouses’ by 1871, growing rapidly alongside industrial and urban development. This growth was intimately linked with local industry through Greenall-Whitley brewers, a key part of St. Helens’ industrial/working-class community identity.

Workplace leisure and recreation provisions developed alongside paternalistic efforts by St. Helens’ nineteenth century industrialists towards housing, infrastructure, and political standing. The most extensive facilities, at Pilkington’s, opened in 1847. Cricket was the preferred outdoor sport until rugby emerged in the 1880s. Matches, particularly against rivals Wigan, ‘drew large crowds’. Non-sport provisions included part-time education, a lecture series, canteen facilities, and medical care. Joseph Beecham, meanwhile, founded St. Helens Cycling Club in 1876, 15 years before Pilkington’s founded their own. Annual races drew crowds sufficient to block traffic. Chemist A.J. Kurtz built the town’s first public baths and David Gamble, another chemist, financed the town centre Gamble Institute for adult education.

Scrolling to the 1960s and 1970s, social clubs, pubs, and workplace recreation facilities were booming. The Club and Institute Union peaked at over 4,000 clubs. Clubs were ‘the social hub of the whole community’ – despite persistent archaic attitudes towards non-white and female members. They were supposedly more family-friendly.

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20 Ibid., pp.381-382, 463-464.
22 Tremlett, *Clubmen*, pp.296-297.
than pubs, hosting birthday parties, wedding receptions, Christmas do’s, and wakes alongside week-to-week offerings of entertainment (‘turns’ – some more family-friendly than others!), bingo, and after-work pints.\textsuperscript{24} Sports and games were popular, especially working-class ones like darts, dominoes, snooker, angling, and bowls.\textsuperscript{25} St. Helens’ archives contains photographs of many work-related social clubs, giving a flavour of their activities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>United Glass Bottlemakers</th>
<th>Vulcan Foundry (Newton-le-Willows)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Social club and sports club at Bobbies Lane, Eccleston. Bar, events celebrating employees’ forty years of service, children’s Christmas parties, visit by Prime Minister Harold Wilson\textsuperscript{26}</td>
<td>Bar, bowls tournaments, foundry football team, works outings, horticultural show, rifle club, theatre show, running races, rugby practice, Gala Day with various sports (tug of war, high jump, walking race, girls’ long jump) and entertainments (trapeze artist, Foundry Band)\textsuperscript{27}</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parkside Colliery</th>
<th>Bold Miners’ Institute (Bold Colliery)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘a successful First Aid Team, a competitive Safety Quiz Team, a Golf Society, a Rugby Team, a Chess Club, and Shooting Club, a Fishing Club, and a famous Choir’, also annual Coal Queen beauty contests\textsuperscript{28}</td>
<td>‘a ballroom, concert room, lounge, several bars and substantial sport and recreational areas […] to be enjoyed by the whole family’\textsuperscript{29} Christmas party with children’s performances and visit from Santa, social event ‘complete with French accordionist’, miners playing dominoes, men and women playing bingo, jackpot prizes, annual Beauty Queen contest, trophy awards for colliery sports teams, retired miners’ outing to Blackpool, Gala Day, Centenary celebrations\textsuperscript{30}</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig.3.1.1: industrial social clubs and a selection of their events/activities, c.1950s-1970s

Pilkington’s facilities, meanwhile, had been redeveloped in the 1950s by renowned landscape designer Geoffrey Jellicoe.\textsuperscript{31} Pilkington’s provisions promoted industrial citizenry by providing ‘opportunities and facilities for social and recreational activities’ and encouraging ‘education among the members’.\textsuperscript{32} The club’s provisions (‘sections’) were wide-ranging and the facilities high quality: ‘it is becoming common to

\textsuperscript{24} Anderson, \textit{Dirty Stop Outs}, p.20.
\textsuperscript{25} Tremlett, \textit{Clubmen}, p.256 ; Cherrington, \textit{Beer and Bingo}, p.130.
\textsuperscript{26} Various photographs, SHLHA, UG/1/406, UG/1/410, UG/1/1244, UG/1/1245, UG/1/1247, UG/1/1337, UG/1/411.
\textsuperscript{27} Various photographs, SHLHA, VU/18/6, VU/18/7, VU/18/15.
\textsuperscript{29} Programme for Bold Colliery Centenary Open Day, (1976), SHLHA, SAW/23/7/15.
\textsuperscript{30} Various photographs, SHLHA, SAW/23/7/20.
\textsuperscript{32} ‘The Pilkington Recreation Club Rules’, (c.1964), SHLHA, SHC/6/1/1.
hear visitors say spontaneously, “this must be the finest Industrial Recreation set-up in the country”.

They certainly matched those of industrial employers like Guinness, also developed by Jellicoe, questioning Strangleman’s assertion of Guinness’ provisions as ‘distinct’. Fig.3.1.2 illustrates Pilkington’s range of sections:

| 1962: holidays | 1976: dog obedience, operatic & dramatic (replaced dramatic) |
| 1982: chess | |
| 1983: ju-jitsu |

Fig.3.1.2: Sections of Pilkington Recreation Club (dates denote the Annual Report in which the section is first listed)35

Section membership was not systematically recorded. Angling and swimming regularly had hundreds whilst rugby (league and union), football, hockey, cricket, and bowls consistently fielded multiple teams in leagues and competitions. Others, like archery, bridge, and badminton, often struggled for members. Popularity fluctuated: the dance section sold hundreds or thousands of tickets to early 1960s dances before demand lessened, whilst the lecture section consistently feared more modern forms of leisure eroding their talks’ audiences. Like at Guinness, the successes of sections and their members (when representing Pilkington’s and when competing regionally, nationally, or even internationally) were promoted in the company’s Pilkington News, alongside fixture lists to encourage spectators. Individual sections produced newsletters to foster community amongst members with results, match reports, features about team members and social events, tactical and training hints, and more.38

34 Strangleman, Guinness, pp.66-67, 168.
36 Ibid.
37 Various editions of Pilkington News, SHLHA, SHC/12/35.
38 ‘Hockey News’ – newsletter published by Pilkington Recreation Club, St. Helens, SHLHA, SHC/7/1/6.
This social side of industrial/working-class community extended beyond industrial workers. Pilkington’s had four membership categories: ‘Employee’, ‘Honorary’, ‘Family’, and ‘Outside’. Employee members were from Pilkington’s, subsidiaries, and certain approved companies. Honorary members were mainly retirees, with Employee member rights and no subscriptions. Family members were spouses of Employee or Honorary members and their unmarried children aged over 15. Outside members, maximum 50 per year, were recommended to and approved by the Executive Committee and were re-admitted annually.39

The Club (and Pilkington’s themselves) often emphasised the wider benefit to St. Helens. Jellicoe’s redevelopment was ‘seen and used not only by very large numbers of our own members but by very large numbers of persons who have no connection with the Firm at all’, prompting the apparently spontaneous expressions of wonder quoted above.40 The 1960s Theatre Royal redevelopment, replacing the company’s Ravenhead theatre, was presented as benefiting the wider town, in keeping with industrial paternalism: ‘we feel sure that the Recreation Club (and indeed the Town) will have a theatre to be proud of [...]’.41 In 1966, Pilkington’s emphasised the Club’s wider duty to the local community, advising ‘greater freedom’ to admit Outside members ‘at economic subscription’ rates and making ‘grounds and facilities’ available to the local authority and local sports clubs for events like ‘Inter Town Festivals’ or ‘School Sports’.42

Concerning pubs, Greenall-Whitley was the region’s major brewer. When the ‘smile please, you’re in Greenall-Whitley land’ advertising campaign launched in the 1970s, Greenall-Whitley covered Lancashire, Cheshire, North Wales, and the North Midlands.43 A 1970’s pub guide indicates Greenall-Whitley’s dominance in St. Helens, owning around 40 pubs and 2 hotels.44 The company’s imposing town centre brewery and sponsorship of sports and recreation activities linked to pubs and working-class culture reinforced its place in local working-class identity. Events sponsored ranged from the annual Waterloo Bowling Competition in Blackpool and the Greenall-Whitley Chase at

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41 Ibid.
Haydock Park (horseracing) to local pub leagues. The 1970s rebranding of its bitter as ‘Local Bitter’ further underlined its local roots.

There were limits to industrial/working-class community, as some Pilkington’s sections’ small membership and fluctuating popularity suggests. As with other communities in the thesis, not everyone working for a particular company or living in a particular area was actively involved. Many employees saw work ‘simply as a job’ (Chapter 1) so workplace recreation relied on a minority of more active members. In Pilkington’s hockey section, this was a recurrent issue, as two notes from the 1970s and 1990s bemoan:

[...] nobody except a faithful few have the clubs [sic.] organisation at heart; nobody is willing to participate [...] the solution is in your hands. PARTICIPATE OR THE CLUB GOES UNDER! [...] Can’t you get it into your heads that being a member of a club is more than just having a game of hockey [...] when I accepted the role of Chairperson it reflected the general apathy of most of the membership [...] that nobody else was prepared to accept the role or show commitment to the club [...] fewer people attended training [and] too many players who do nothing but turn up at the pitch, play, and then disappear back into oblivion [...] in the 17 years I have played for the club, I have rarely turned up at a pitch to play having not been involved in some sort of organisation beforehand [...] Nevertheless, workplace facilities remained well-used and industrial citizenry and community persisted into the 1980s. At Pilkington’s, ‘arts & hobbies’ sections had between 20 and 60 members in 1982. Those grouped as ‘other sports’ were generally larger: badminton had 89, ladies keep fit 81, swimming 102, and sailing 125, although bridge, chess, and table tennis had fewer than 20. Cricket (5), football (4), hockey (5-7), rugby league (3), and rugby union (4) fielded multiple teams each year. In 1983, there were 20 bowls teams across five works and inter-works tournaments remained popular:

46 ‘A scrapbook…’, CALS, DGB 5928/286.
49 Handwritten note (c.1994), SHLHA, SHC/14/19.
50 ‘Registration of membership’, (March 1982), SHLHA, SHC/14/15.
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Snooker</td>
<td>38 teams</td>
<td>40 teams</td>
<td>37 teams</td>
<td>33 teams</td>
<td>32 teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>449 members</td>
<td>502 members</td>
<td>432 members</td>
<td>396 members</td>
<td>384 members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football</td>
<td>23 teams</td>
<td>13 teams</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>500 members</td>
<td>500 members</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cricket</td>
<td>21 teams</td>
<td>22 teams</td>
<td>16 teams</td>
<td>16 teams</td>
<td>18 teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>403 members</td>
<td>481 members</td>
<td>378 members</td>
<td>480 members</td>
<td>396 members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darts &amp;</td>
<td>18 teams</td>
<td>10 teams</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominoes</td>
<td>230 members</td>
<td>187 members</td>
<td>/</td>
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Fig.3.1.3: teams and players for various inter-works tournaments (/ = no figures given)

Industrial citizenry and community persisted at Beecham’s, too. A 1984 *Beecham News* article praised the St. Helens manufacturing ‘girls’ for fundraising through raffles and a dance. Employees’ charitable, social, and sporting endeavours featured regularly, suggesting community within the workforce and a commitment to communities beyond the workplace. A 1987 article celebrating the St. Helens site’s centenary evoked the strong work community and the company’s high regard locally.

However, from the 1980s, de-industrialisation increasingly limited these industrial/working-class communities. Many social clubs were linked to specific industries so declined post-closure. Economic changes calling paternalistic industrial management into question similarly affected paternalistic social provisions. Pilkington’s job losses reduced the pool of potential internal members, with more employees retiring than new employees being recruited. Some sections relied on Outside membership so numerical limits on this were relaxed, provided each section continued to have more Employee than Outside members. Members could now bring ‘guests’ to the club up to four times a year.

Workplace clubs depended on firms like Pilkington’s: ‘plans will depend on the amount of money the Firm can afford and is willing to commit […]’. This was the case even before the early 1980s recession and de-industrialisation, reflecting paternalism’s

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51 ‘Annual Reports of the Executive Committee…’, SHLHA, SHC/1/3/3
limits. The Theatre Royal renovation was suspended in 1961 due to an ‘economy drive’ and completed later. A 1966 note stated ‘the Company believes that having provided the permanent facilities for Recreation, the financial cost of Club activities should be the general responsibility of the Members’, with funding from subscriptions, match fees, social events, etc. In 1980, the Club indicated a desire to ‘place less reliance on the Company’s financial support’.

With Pilkington’s local presence decreasing, the paternalistic model was unviable: ‘we have all enjoyed many years of excellent facilities at low cost because of heavy subsidies from the company. We are going to have to get used to the idea of paying a realistic rate for those facilities’. In 1991, operating at a loss, Pilkington Recreation Club wound up and became Ruskin Leisure. Ruskin Leisure offered the same sports and social facilities, and hoped to still play ‘a major role in local community life’.

Though the name Pilkington Recreation Club only lived on in sports teams like Pilkington Recs (rugby league), forming Ruskin Leisure – rather than selling the land and facilities – meant the employees and wider community retained an important local resource. The local community arguably gained as the imbalance between employee and non-employee membership ended (though employee activities like inter-departmental tournaments continued).

At other companies with similarly impressive provisions, the paternalistic industrial citizenry simply fizzled out through rationalisation, redundancies, and closure. Where Pilkington’s weakening of the Club’s industrial foundations increased its openness to the wider community, Beechams saw a different transition away from industrial citizenry. Following its merger with SmithKline, industrial citizenry became corporate identity. In 1990, ‘a planned effort to develop [a SmithKline Beecham] culture’ based on ‘performance, customer, innovation, people and integrity’ was launched. The ‘Simply Better Way’ was ‘dedicated to continuous improvement’, involving employee training schemes and competitive ‘Simply the Best’ awards. Industrial citizenry was itself improvement, training, and competition-oriented but also fostered company

59 ‘The Pilkington Group Recreation…’, SHLHA, SHC/6/1/2.
61 ‘Self-sufficiency is key objective’, *Pilkington News*, (Oct. 1989), SHLHA, SHC/12/35.
belonging and loyalty, and equipped employees as ‘good citizens’ in wider society. Talk of Beecham’s ‘unaltered’ characteristics and its concern for employee well-being must have felt hollow once the St. Helens site closed in 1994.

Greenall-Whitley’s attachment to St. Helens also weakened in this period. Brewers’ local roots, identities, and customer bases were challenged during the late twentieth century. From the late 1960s, a tendency towards lighter beers and continental-style lagers emerged, partially due to foreign holidays, necessitating new products to meet demand. Customers still drank local but their tastes were increasingly less so. Brewers needed new facilities, leading Greenall-Whitley to close their St. Helens plant in the mid-70s in favour of Warrington’s modernised Wilderspool brewery. Ongoing local council housing clearance schemes meant many ‘tied houses’ were demolished and the ‘free trade’ (non-tied outlets like social clubs or free houses) became increasingly important in reducing competition from rival breweries.

The 1989 Beer Orders were the biggest change. These stemmed from an investigation into market dominance by the ‘Big Six’ brewers through the ‘beer tie’, whereby brewery-owned establishments had to buy the brewers’ products. The Orders capped at 2,000 the number of establishments one brewery could own and made a ‘guest beer provision’ allowing landlords one non-brewery draught and bottled beer. The measures aimed to increase competition and reduce beer prices, which had risen 15% in pubs during the 1980s. This would theoretically benefit local and regional brewers – even larger ones like Greenall-Whitley – by limiting Big Six dominance. However, in an industry over-capacity and needing rationalisation, the Orders simply hastened an ‘inevitable restructuring’ towards foreign beers, domestic consumption (74% of beer was consumed in pubs in 1994, versus 91% in 1976), and family-friendly establishments.

The over-capacity and uncompetitiveness makes it clear why Margaret Thatcher’s government wanted to intervene. In reality, though, the Orders failed to dilute market concentration, accelerated the decline of regional brewers like Greenall-Whitley, and

67 Strangleman, Guinness, pp.50-51.
68 ‘St. Helens, a hundred years young…’, GSKBA, 4/HO/4 Legal//4/CM/7 Public Relations – Box 1.
69 Slater, Brewer’s Tale, pp.217-219.
70 ‘A scrapbook…’, CALS, DGB 5928/286.
74 Spicer et al., Modern UK Brewing, p.xviii.
weakened local industrial/working-class community identity. A new ‘Big Six’ controlled 84% of the market by the early 2000s. The number of breweries fell from 142 in 1980 to below 80 by 1998. Beer prices increased 10% in real terms in 1990-91 and rose above inflation in the mid-1990s. Brewers like Greenall-Whitley sold off breweries to focus on pub ownership, creating ‘pubcos’. By 1996, Greenall’s was Britain’s largest independent pub retailer, controlling 2,300 pubs and restaurants, and owning off-licences and hotels, before selling their pubs and off-licences to concentrate on hotels. By 2003, the six largest pubcos owned 40% of establishments, less than the original Big Six but still substantial. The resulting chain pubs and loss of local colour has been widely lamented. However, the growth of independent and micro-breweries, alongside consumer campaigns like the Campaign for Real Ale, has hinted at a return to a diverse, localised beer and pub landscape. The same processes which saw Greenall-Whitley dominate smaller local rivals before being dominated by larger national players still occur, though, as larger brewers buy out the more successful independent ones.

De-industrialisation and measures like the Beer Orders badly weakened industrial/working-class community’s social side. Many St. Helens social clubs have recently been demolished or redeveloped as housing. Elements do persist, though, like

75 ‘Development of the UK market for beer, 1989-2004’.
77 ‘Price of a pint’; ‘From the boozer to brand palace?’
78 ‘Development of the UK market for beer, 1989-2004’.
80 ‘Development of the UK market for beer, 1989-2004’.
83 In 2017, St. Helens Council approved plans for building over 100 houses on the still active Sidac club’s playing fields. In 2018, the demolition of the former Broad Oak club in Parr to build 24 homes was approved, whilst plans to transform the Eccleston Lane Ends club into apartments were floated. In 2019, plans to build 8 houses on the former Portico and Grange Park Cabaret and Social Club were approved. In 2020, a proposed apartment block at the former Thatto Heath Royal British Legion club was approved whilst plans were made to build 20 homes on the former Moss Bank Sports and Social Club site. See: Simon Mulligan, ‘Field and housing plans approved’, *St. Helens Star*, 14.12.2017, p.27 ; Kenny Lomas, ‘Revised social club plans approved’, *St. Helens Star*, 31.05.2018, p.7 ; Anon., ‘Plans for ex-social club site passed’, *St. Helens Star*, 09.08.2018, p.11 ; Anon., ‘Plans to convert recreation club’, *St. Helens Star*, 16.08.2018, p.8 ; Anon., ‘Houses for ex-social club site’, *St. Helens Star*, 28.03.2019, p.11 ; Kenny Lomas, ‘Apartment block for ‘grot spot’ site’, *St. Helens Star*, 21.01.2020, p.34 ; Anon., ‘Plans for homes at ex-social club site’, *St. Helens Star*, 02.04.2020, p.18.
the ongoing provision of leisure facilities at Ruskin Drive. A study of Sunderland’s Vaux brewery notes regional brewers remained ‘an iconic symbol’ locally, even following expansion or closure.\textsuperscript{84} The same applies to other aspects of industrial/working-class community. Pilkington Recs fly the Pilkington’s flag in amateur rugby league, as do Clock Face Miners for coal mining, whilst the Parkside name lives on through the Golborne Parkside rugby club and the Parkside Male Voice Choir.\textsuperscript{85} Greenall-Whitley is immortalised in a favourite song of the town’s rugby league fans:

\begin{quote}
You light up my senses,
like a gallon of Greenall’s,
like a kebab from Geno’s,
like a good sniff of glue.
Like a night out at Martine’s,
like a split fish and curry,
oh St. Helens rugby,
none thrill me again […]
\end{quote}

Rounded off by a ‘na-na-na-na-na naaah naaah’ and a resounding ‘ooohh’, ‘You light up my senses’ evokes local traditions from Greenall’s ale to notorious kebab shops and nightclubs.\textsuperscript{86} Maintaining traditions was always important to industrial/working-class community’s social side. Bold Colliery, for example, boasted one of the region’s ‘last surviving colliery bands’ when they acquired the defunct Clock Face colliery band’s instruments. Representing the colliery at events and offering free tuition to children, they hoped to transmit the tradition forwards and even beyond the initial community.\textsuperscript{87} The elements which survive today are links to these traditions and the communities to which they belonged.

One surviving, thriving element is rugby league. To quote one resident, ‘it’s a good job that we’ve got a damn good rugby team, otherwise we’d have nothing to be hopeful about.’\textsuperscript{88} Since Super League summer rugby began in 1996, St. Helens have been one of England’s dominant – and most consistent – professional sides (\textbf{Fig.3.1.5}). The club is a large local employer, with 280 full-time and around 300 part-time staff. Between on-field success, employment, and initiatives like the Saints Community Development

\textsuperscript{84} Pike, ‘…Vaux brewery…’, 201, 208.
\textsuperscript{88} ‘Inside England’s ‘suicide capital’ […]’.
Foundation (focused on mental health and participation in recreation), the club is ‘really ingrained in the mood of the entire town’ and local people ‘look up’ to it.89

Professional and amateur rugby league, concentrated along the M62, is intimately linked to industrial and working-class communities (Fig.3.1.4). Sport’s significance for local identity and community is well-documented. Football matches, for example, are ‘one of the most visible ways dissolving working class communities [can] temporarily restore a sense of the past’.90 Football is often described as the working-man’s game, playing a ‘unique’ role in ‘the social history of de-industrialisation’.91 If there is a working people’s game, though, it is rugby league with its rootedness in (former) industrial towns and communities, historic and ongoing reliance on locally-sourced players, long-standing presence of women and families in crowds despite its masculine image, and important community role.

Rugby league rarely features in academic literature. Robert Colls dismisses rugby’s significance to the nation’s wider sporting landscape.92 Sports historian, Tony Collins, contrastingly describes ‘rugby league and soccer grounds [as] often the third part of the local trinity of home, work and leisure’. Rugby league particularly has retained ‘a deep residual support […] in its traditional constituencies’.93 In more journalistic narratives, sport (cricket, football, rugby league) reflects the North’s refusal to submit to socio-economic decline.94 Rugby league clubs are today ‘more rather than less important in preserving the identity of their towns and cities’, the stadia, club shops, and replica kits immediate markers of place.95 These local identities and rivalries underpin a wider solidarity across the rugby league playing world.96

91 Ibid., p.231.
Fig.3.1.4: map of rugby league teams across top 4 levels (Super League, Championship, League 1, National Conference) of the English pyramid (2021 season). Beyond the Lancashire/Yorkshire/Cumbria 'heartlands', there are also: Catalan Dragons (SL, France), Toulouse Olympique (Ch, France), London Broncos (Ch), Newcastle Thunder (Ch), London Skolars (L1), Coventry Bears (L1), North Wales Crusaders (L1), West Wales Raiders (L1), and Gateshead Storm (NC).
Like most teams in Fig.3.1.4, St. Helens RFC is steeped in industry and local community. Founded by a Pilkington’s chemist, five years before Pilkington’s formed their own team (St. Helens Recreation), in 1890 they moved to Knowsley Road, leased from Pilkington’s, who later opened their Triplex works next door. A railway linking to another Pilkington’s site ran alongside Knowsley Road, hence the Main Stand’s unusual cut-away shape.97 In 1925, a Greenall-Whitley loan facilitated Knowsley Road’s purchase.98 St. Helens’ new stadium, opened in 2012, stands on United Glass Bottlemakers’ former Peasley Cross site.99

Rugby league has always been highly localised. Surrounded by housing and Triplex, Knowsley Road was locally-rooted like the pubs and social clubs. Crowds – often arriving on foot – contained players’ friends, neighbours, colleagues, and relatives. Until recently, most players worked alongside their playing career, despite rugby league being professional. Former St. Helens player and BBC commentator, Ray French, recalls players arriving ‘straight from work in their oil-stained overalls’ and others doing their shift afterwards.100 Many had working-class occupations like engineers, labourers, miners, bricklayers, electricians, painters, or warehousemen.101 It was said that shouting down the nearest pit shaft sufficed if a team needed players.102 Players lived, worked, and socialised alongside fans.103 They likely grew up with the fans too, with most players coming from Lancashire, Yorkshire, and Cumbria amateur rugby league. Turning professional has always been a viable ambition for local youngsters.104 St. Helens’ home-grown tradition is strong. In a 1950 team photograph, 11 of 13 players were sourced from local school or amateur teams.105 In the 1990s, they were amongst the first to implement Modern Apprenticeships, developing players and providing them with qualifications.106

In 2021, of 30 first-team players, 17 are academy products.107

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98 Ibid., p.87.
101 Collins, Rugby League, p.141.
103 Collins, Rugby League, p.52.
104 French, Union and League, p.52 ; French, Union and League, pp.63-64, 143.
105 Denis Whittle, ‘When Saints teams were full of St. Helens men’, St. Helens Reporter, 14.10.1988, SHLHA, A29.35 (P).
107 Of the remaining 13, 6 were sourced from lower-league clubs, 5 from Australian clubs, and 2 from fellow top-flight clubs.
Their local-rootedness means clubs like St. Helens are important to local identity: ‘steeped in tradition and […] situated in the communities on whose support they depend’.\footnote{Geraint John \textit{et al.}, \textit{Stadia: The Populous Design and Development Guide}, (Routledge, New York, 2013), p.69.} French describes childhood memories of Boxing Day derbies against Wigan: ‘a sea of flat caps, hardly out of their Christmas wrappers, trilbies, and buttoned overcoats could not hide the smiling and contented faces of the miners and glass-workers on their way to the peak of everyone’s Christmas – the match!’\footnote{French, \textit{Union and League}, pp.1-2.} Against Colls’ dismissal of streets as ‘too narrow for passing and too hard for tackling’, French describes playground rugby matches using a maths book tied with a shoelace and street rugby ‘on cobblesstones and roads […] shirt-sleeves buttoned down and handkerchiefs tied round our knees and elbows to avoid cutting them’.\footnote{Colls, \textit{Sporting Life}, p.237 ; French, \textit{Union and League}, p.12.} To French and other children, rugby was part of daily life, the playground and street games the stage where they re-enacted their heroes’ feats.

Things had not changed by the 1980s and 1990s, as Gary (\textit{Chapter 2}) describes:

> when [the Wigan derby] was on, the whole town was still. At three o’clock you could walk through the town centre and there’d be like tumble weed... like an eerie silence because the match was on […] Knowsley Road used to be packed, they’d be turning them away.\footnote{Interview PhD/007, February 2019.}

On-field success generated civic and local pride.\footnote{Ibid.} This was clearly seen in St. Helens during the 1984-85 Miners’ Strike, as Ken recalls:

> it’s an escape […] you can put yer emotions into a team which is symbolic […] it’s your town, your heritage so it becomes more than a, more than a team […] they, St. Helens, signed Mal Meninga who was [a] top Australian […] he played for us that year and, er, he was like a rejuvenation, he was [a] fantastic player […] the town was going through difficult times […] but seein’ him, I mean, […] you, you put your ‘opes into, into this… this guy who’s just so talented and it, and it was an escape like I say, I can only really describe it as an escape.\footnote{Interview PhD/002, September 2018.}

Ken depicts the pride and hope local teams – and individual players – bring, particularly in difficult periods. Meninga, a club legend despite just 31 appearances, helped Saints to two trophies and prompted increased attendances. Rugby-wise, at least, 1984-85 saw ‘the town walk with a collective spring in its step’.\footnote{Mike Critchley, ‘How Mighty Mal earned his Sainthood’, \textit{St. Helens Star}, 25.03.2010, p.51.}
Despite de-industrialisation and moving from the club’s historical home, St. Helens remains deeply-rooted in the local community in terms of players, fans, and the club’s wider social role. In rugby league generally, these community ties have been questioned since Super League’s advent. That debate is beyond this thesis’ scope but opinions depend largely on whether one’s club is successfully anchored in Super League or has stagnated in the lower divisions. Regarding St. Helens, Super League has strengthened their position locally and allowed them, and a few other clubs, to dominate:

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\(^*\)withdrew mid-season

**Fig.3.1.5:** Super League era rugby league honours (1996-2021).

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117 In 1996 and 1997, the competition was decided by a round-robin league format (which St. Helens won in 1996). In 1998, a play-off structure was implemented – the team top of the league after the regular matches is awarded the League Leaders’ shield, before the play-offs take place, culminating in the Grand Final.

A key window onto rugby league’s community role is the amateur game.\textsuperscript{119} The local amateur sides from St. Helens’ 1950 team photo included Pilkington Recs, United Glass, and Clock Face Colliery.\textsuperscript{120} Other local industrial companies including Sidac, Fosters, and the National Coal Board fielded sides, as did various pubs and clubs.\textsuperscript{121} St. Helens’ amateur game struggled at times, with only six teams playing by the mid-1950s.\textsuperscript{122} A merger with nearby Wigan and Leigh created a competitive league and, in the mid-1960s, a South West Lancashire Amateur League incorporating Warrington and Widnes was formed.\textsuperscript{123} The amateur game’s key development was the 1973 creation of the British Amateur Rugby League Association (BARLA). In St. Helens, despite de-industrialisation and losing many pubs and social clubs, a vibrant amateur scene persists. Nine clubs, including Pilkington Recs and Clock Face, compete across BARLA’s National Conference and North-West Men’s amateur leagues. Most of St. Helens’ academy products played junior rugby at local amateur sides, as did their players sourced from other English clubs.\textsuperscript{124}

On the professional side, St. Helens’ community-rootedness is shown by the club’s fanbase. 2019 was the fourth consecutive season of declining Super League average attendances (around 8,400 per match), but St. Helens has seen stable figures of 11,000-12,000 since 2010, recording year-on-year increases since 2016.\textsuperscript{125} The crowds’ composition is also significant. Despite its masculine connotations, rugby league crowds have long had a strong female contingent.\textsuperscript{126} A 1995 study suggested most fans came from C1 (supervisory, clerical, administrative) or C2 (skilled manual) socio-economic groups and estimated women made up one-third of spectators.\textsuperscript{127} Children were always present,  


\textsuperscript{120} ‘When Saints teams were full of St. Helens men’, SHLHA, A29.35 (P).


\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., p.121.

\textsuperscript{124} Former amateur clubs of the 2021 squad include: Blackbrook, Newton Storm, Thatto Heath Crusaders, Rochdale Mayfield, Widnes Moorfield, Halton Hornets, Oulton Raiders, Barrow Island, Wigan St. Judes, and Orrell St. James.


\textsuperscript{126} Collins, Rugby League, p.1 ; ‘The Game That Got Away’ ; Collins, Rugby League, pp.154-155.

too: ‘lads of all shapes and sizes left dad to join the queue for the boy’s pen, a caged area which was reminiscent of Colditz, reserved exclusively for the kids at ninepence’. With Super League, the sport has been consciously and successfully marketed as affordable and family-friendly to encourage female and young fans. Recent years have seen increased focus on women’s and disability rugby league, culminating in 2021’s joint men’s, women’s and wheelchair World Cup in England (now postponed to 2022 due to Covid-19).

Even St. Helens residents uninterested in rugby know of the club. Iconic moments like ‘Wide to West’ are local folklore. Ken believes ‘the club promotes an emphasis [on] heritage and the town’s ‘istory and all that […] it is… a focal, still a focal point for, as regards engenderin’ a community spirit, town, town pride’. Many locals, fans or not, benefit from the club’s wider social role, for instance its Community Development Foundation. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the government gave rugby league a £16m emergency loan, calling clubs ‘the beating heart of their towns and cities’. From January 2021, St. Helens’ stadium became Merseyside’s only mass Covid-19 vaccination centre, vaccinating 100,000 people by early May.

This section has shown St. Helens’ industrial and working-class communities extended beyond just industrial workers. De-industrialisation has weakened these communities, rugby league aside. Whether regarding workplace recreation facilities, social clubs and pubs, or locally-rooted sports teams, St. Helens’ experiences fit wider national trends. Paternalistic industrial citizenship has given way to corporate identity strategies (Beechams) or the facilities and the company behind them have separated (Pilkington’s). Often, workplace social and recreation facilities declined alongside their industries, and many similar facilities have since disappeared. Where once there was a distinct local flavour – quite literally for beer – this too has changed. However, the survival of names linked to the industrial past (Parkside’s choir, amateur rugby teams, Greenall’s beer)

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128 French, Union and League, p.1.
131 PhD/002.
133 Kelsey Maxwell, ‘Merseyside regional mass vaccination centre hits 100,000 landmark’, St. Helens Star, 05.05.2021.
suggests ongoing attachment to these communities. The solid support for the town’s professional rugby team, despite its move to a new stadium and declining attendance at other clubs, partly reflects on-field successes but also underlines the ongoing importance of the town’s most iconic working-class institution. The industries and workplaces which fostered these communities may be mostly gone but their legacy persists.

3.2: Micro-communities

Not all community or associational life was so linked to St. Helens’ industries. There were—and are—many locally-rooted community groups. Lawrence calls these ‘micro-communities’: based on shared interests or life-cycle stage, facilitating ‘social connection and social solidarities’ and belonging.\textsuperscript{134} They are the community groups, residents’/tenants’ associations, and amateur sports clubs found in Clapson’s and Ramsden’s studies of individual estates or small towns.\textsuperscript{135} Whilst their existence does not guarantee engagement or community belonging, they do evidence a framework for community.

This section finds these micro-communities across St. Helens. Tracing them is difficult, reliant often on incomplete ‘historical ephemera’ for evidence.\textsuperscript{136} Two observations are explored. Firstly, that whilst communities built around parish churches have long existed (unsurprisingly, given the church’s historical social role\textsuperscript{137}), and whilst community centres appear across the thesis’ time period (Chapter 4’s regeneration plans mention founding community centres across St. Helens), only from the 1980s do residents’/tenants’ associations emerge. The 1980s saw a policy focus on community (Chapter 2), with initiatives like Neighbourhood Watch and local authorities and housing associations actively supporting residents’/tenants’ associations.\textsuperscript{138} Much-vaunted public-private regeneration schemes emerged alongside community-facing initiatives like

\textsuperscript{134} Lawrence, \textit{Me, Me, Me}, p.234.
Operation Groundwork (Chapter 4).\textsuperscript{139} Such policies, alongside accelerating de-industrialisation, heightened public interest in engaging with and improving their local area, in preserving a sense of continuity amidst change, reflected here through grass-roots associational culture.\textsuperscript{140} Secondly, whilst many micro-communities are impermanent, many locally-rooted associations and groups persist in St. Helens today, underlining Nick Dyer’s belief in the town’s community spirit and contrasting popular narratives about de-industrialisation and community decline.\textsuperscript{141} Overall, this section showcases the existence of micro-communities across the thesis’ time period. It demonstrates their activities and functions and, where possible, levels of engagement. It shows how different micro-communities overlap, revealing community’s multi-faceted nature, and the challenge of neatly defining or measuring it.

3.2.1: Overlapping sources of micro-communities

Searching terms like ‘residents association’, ‘community group’, ‘community centre’, ‘parish magazine’, ‘parish council’, ‘social club’, ‘recreation club’, ‘miners institute’, and ‘labour club’ in the St. Helens archives justified this section’s first observation. Groups linked to parish churches are traceable, via church magazines, across the twentieth century (and earlier) and records of community centres appear throughout the 1970s-1990s. Only one record for a residents'/tenants’ association pre-dates 1980.\textsuperscript{142}

Though histories of Britain’s twentieth century often highlight declining worship, church magazines and parish directories show religion’s community role persisting.\textsuperscript{143} Parish Council magazines similarly spotlight associational life and micro-communities. Residents'/tenants’ associations feature in these magazines and often produce newsletters


\textsuperscript{141} PhD/008.


and pamphlets. Community centres, some local authority-run and some grass-roots, also host locally-rooted micro-communities, detailed in newsletters, pamphlets, and local authority materials. These records are incomplete. Reading them in-depth uncovers groups not independently listed in the archives but this still does not account for them all. Today, archival ‘ephemera’ is supported by online evidence. This helps assess the persistence of similar micro-communities, as most have social media or websites, and reveals further pre-Internet material, helping fill some of the archival gaps.

Parish churches offered many activities and groups, either directly religious or using church facilities like the church hall:

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<td>Girls’ club</td>
<td>Badminton (for Church members)</td>
<td>Pathfinders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl Guides/Brownies</td>
<td>Mothers’ Union</td>
<td>Sunday school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth group</td>
<td>Parish choir</td>
<td>Young Wives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventurers</td>
<td>Guitar group</td>
<td>Badminton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers’ Union</td>
<td>Climbers/Explorer/Pathfinders (for children)</td>
<td>Guides/Brownies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Girl Guides/Brownies</td>
<td>Youth Fellowship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cubs/Scouts</td>
<td>Women’s Fellowship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Youth Club</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men’s Fellowship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men’s Bible study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women’s Bible study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wives’ coffee group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Church Army Mission/band</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig.3.2.1: examples of micro-communities at various churches in St. Helens

Alongside these groups were regular one-off events. St. Peters’ had brass band and choir concerts, coffee evenings, bring-and-buy sales, sewing circles, lectures, keep fit classes, family fun days, and Christmas and Spring fairs. Their Mothers’ Union arranged theatre outings, day trips, jumble sales, raffles, themed meetings, garden parties, and the Easter dinner. Christ Church’s Young Wives group offered quizzes, discussions,


¹⁴⁷ ‘Christ Church Calling’ [Eccleston], (1989), SHLHA, A96ECCP.

and talks. Churches engaged with wider community issues beyond their congregations. In 1977, Parish Church sent postal orders to 70 aged or ill parishioners from donations by churchgoers. St. Peter’s participated in the Rainhill steam locomotive trial’s 150th anniversary, its exhibition and activities welcoming 1,000 schoolchildren and 1,500 visitors. Christ Church’s magazine mentions churches fighting unemployment, one hosting a Job Club for the long-term unemployed whilst another organised a lunch club, playgroup, mothers and toddlers group, and participation in a government Employment Training programme where unemployed locals maintained elderly residents’ homes and gardens.

Community centres and residents’/tenants’ associations offered more wide-ranging activities because they catered to a wider audience than churches. Typically associated with housing or development issues (Chapter 4), many drove local community and associational life. Chester Lane Community Centre, for example, was so named to reflect it being for ‘all local people in the surrounding area’; its previous name, ‘Four Acre’, felt too tied to one estate. The Four Acre Tenants’ and Residents’ Association, meanwhile, was for estate residents ‘irrespective of sex, nationality, race, political or religious belief’. This catering for all was reflected in the range of activities:

149 ‘Christ Church Calling’, SHLHA, A96ECCP.
150 ‘St. Helens Parish Magazine’, (January 1977), SHLHA, CSH/42.
152 ‘Christ Church Calling’, SHLHA, A96ECCP.
153 Bradley, Tenants’ Movement, p.6.
The activities covered sports, hobbies, childcare, and education, targeting children, adolescents, mothers, and pensioners. Individual groups organised diverse activities for members. Chester Lane Over 60’s club offered bingo, day trips, annual holidays, and a Christmas dinner. Clinkham Wood’s ‘soft ball’ sports covered rugby, football, cricket, volleyball, tennis, badminton, netball, rounders, and circuit training. As with churches, one-off events, open to the wider community, ran alongside regular activities. Chester Lane held Fun Days, 4th July celebrations, Children in Need, Christmas parties, morris dancing displays, and an exhibition marking 200 years of Ordnance Survey maps. Clinkham Wood held May Day celebrations, a Halloween night, a Rescue Services Day, and a pensioners’ Christmas party.

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156 Community Leisure Department, St. Helens Council, ‘Chester Lane Centre’, (c.1991), SHLHA, ST29/2/10/8, Records related to activities available at the Chester Lane Centre c1991-1995.
161 Newsletter (c.2001), SHLHA, A26 2(P).
163 Newsletter (c.2001), SHLHA, A26 2(P).

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**Fig.3.2.2:** micro-communities at community centres and residents’/tenants’ associations in St. Helens
These micro-communities’ significance was underlined in a special ‘Ladies edition’ of the ‘Local Faces’ newsletter, focused on Chester Lane’s groups and activities for women:

even if one can only manage to leave the house for one evening per week and there is something available, which for you is a real pleasure, then that evening to yourself will make all the difference to the rest of your week.\textsuperscript{164}

This ‘one evening to call your own’ reflects the social connectedness, solidarity, and belonging offered by micro-communities. An evening as ‘your own’, doing your own “thing”, expressing your own identity and personality in a group setting generates community and friendship.\textsuperscript{165} The popularity amongst women of slimming clubs has recently been attributed to their role as ‘spaces of female homosociality’ (a parallel to male-dominated pubs), a point equally applicable to other female associational spaces.\textsuperscript{166} The ‘Ladies edition’ focused on escaping housework and/or childcare, with sessions on returning to work, ‘confidence building’, and ‘assertiveness’, alongside gendered craft activities like beauty care, embroidery, or flower arranging.\textsuperscript{167} This idea of ownership and belonging applies across the activities and groups targeted at other audiences.

Measuring engagement with these groups and activities is challenging. It is not systematically mentioned in newsletters or pamphlets. Both community centres and residents'/tenants’ associations relied day-to-day on volunteers, so their existence necessitated engagement. Chester Lane saw local involvement during development via public consultations and after opening through its User Group Forum, the ‘Local Faces’ community newsletter, and its volunteer-staffed coffee bar.\textsuperscript{168} The local council and tenants'/residents’ association collaborated on its outdoor play area, Sutton High School pupils built its Braille garden, and various murals resulted from a Community Arts initiative involving local youngsters. In its first year, it went from hosting 15 to over 40 groups, ranging in size from 3-4 to nearly 100 members. Many expanded (the Youth Club from 15 to 60 members) and some groups’ popularity spawned new ones, like the After School club from the Saturday morning children’s club, or the Over 50’s club from the Over 60’s club. Easter and Summer playschemes attracted up to 100 local children and

\textsuperscript{164} ‘Local Faces’, 38A (June 1991), SHLHA, ST29/2/10/6.
\textsuperscript{165} ‘Local Faces’, 40 (November 1991), SHLHA, ST29/2/10/6 ; Lawrence, Me, Me, Me, p.234.
\textsuperscript{167} ‘Local Faces’, 38A (June 1991), SHLHA, ST29/2/10/6.
\textsuperscript{168} ‘…The First Year’, SHLHA, ST29/2/10/5/25.
one-off events attracted large numbers. Such evidence demonstrates strong engagement and community-building.

However, as in 3.1, discrepancies emerged between engagement in terms of participating and in terms of running the events and facilities. Four Acre’s tenants’/residents’ association bemoaned low turnout at meetings just two years after forming. Later, though ‘still alive and kicking’, it ‘urgently’ needed more members to survive. This contrasted early enthusiasm and high hopes surrounding them and neighbouring Sutton Manor groups. After two meetings, the Four Acre group wrote ‘we hope we are gaining support and consideration, and becoming an effective voice in the community that we serve’. Other groups talked of their recognition by St. Helens Council, improvements to housing and derelict sites, liaising with industries to reduce localised pollution, social events like galas, and facilities like children’s play areas.

This mirrors Guy Ortolano’s findings in Milton Keynes: early enthusiasm (encouraged in Milton Keynes by ‘arrivals workers’ settling new residents, in Sutton Manor by a local authority keen to appease social housing tenants), galvanisation around a ‘crisis’ (in Milton Keynes urgent housing repairs, in Sutton Manor the 1988 Housing Act and fears over privately-run housing associations), and a flourishing associational life followed by declining energy and momentum. In both cases, this loss of energy apparently stemmed from difficulties in maintaining or replacing the original enthusiastic membership once members could no longer commit time.

Despite relying on volunteers, community centres and residents’/tenants’ associations were not entirely grass-roots. They interacted with and were supported or even set-up by the local authority. The Peter Street community centre illustrates nicely the evolving combination of “top-down” authority and grass-roots involvement. Initially founded and privately-run by the Pilkington family as a Girls’ Institute (for ‘poor girls’, offering a cookery room, gymnasium, assembly hall, tea room, classrooms, lectures, drama, and holidays and outings), it was local authority-run from the 1970s following purchase by St. Helens Council, before being placed under the auspices of St. Helens Council.

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169 Ibid.
Together, a Local Strategic Partnership combining the council, private interests, and local voluntary sectors.\textsuperscript{175}

Chester Lane, and its surrounding network of residents’/tenants’ associations, were similarly linked to the local authority. A joint venture between the council’s Community Leisure and Personal Services departments, its novel ‘community building’ concept amalgamated already existing services – library, community centre, council Personal Services – into one centre, combining local community and council initiative.\textsuperscript{176} Its ‘diverse high quality services’ were ‘very favourably received by the local community’.\textsuperscript{177} Residents’/tenants’ associations had working links with estate management, received local council seed money, and sat on the St. Helens Federation of Tenants’ Associations.\textsuperscript{178} The different sources of micro-communities in Fig.3.2.2 – churches, community centres, residents’/tenants’ associations, schools – overlapped and their grass-roots initiatives often overlapped with top-down efforts by the local council.

\textbf{3.2.2: Changing micro-communities over time?}

The above examples show a complex web of micro-communities in St. Helens. They are, however, snap-shots: the micro-communities’ longevity is hard to discern. Lawrence’s definition suggests impermanent individual belonging to micro-communities, whilst Ortolano’s account of Milton Keynes implies micro-communities themselves are impermanent. This sub-section examines micro-communities’ longevity and change over time.

Scrapbooks of local life created by Rainford’s Women’s Institute (WI), a significant micro-community, offer good insight on this front:

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{177} ‘…The First Year’, SHLHA, ST29/2/10/5/25.
\textsuperscript{178} ‘Four Acre Tenants’ and Residents’ Association…’, SHLHA, ST29/2/10/5/24.
\end{flushleft}
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Venues</th>
<th>Civic</th>
<th>Women’s</th>
<th>Children’s</th>
<th>Pensioner’s</th>
<th>Sports &amp; Hobbies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1965  | - Labour club  
- British Legion  
- Church halls (Parish, Congregational, Catholic)  
- Village hall  
- Secondary Modern | - Rainford Show Comm.  
- Rainford Gala Comm.  
- Rainford Civic Society  
- Rainford Charities  
- Friends of Rainford  
- Rainford Round Table  
- Twin Town Assoc.  
- Allotment Committee | - Women’s Institute  
- Women’s Conservatives  
- Mother/baby clinic  
- Mother’s Union  
- Young Wives  
- Evening classes | - 2 x youth clubs  
- Scouts  
- Guides  
- Boys’ Brigade  
- Girls’ Friendly Society  
- Life Boys  
- Young Farmers’ Comm. | - Luncheon club  
- Treat committee  
- North End Over 60’s  
- Central Over 60’s  
- Seniors group | - 2 x football clubs  
- Cricket club  
- Tennis club  
- Bowls (6 teams) |
| 1994  | - Labour club  
- British Legion  
- North End club  
- Ex-Serviceman’s club  
- Church/village halls  | - Rainford Show Comm.  
- Rainford Gala Comm.  
- Rainford Civic Society  
- Rainford Charities  
- Friends of Rainford  
- Rainford Round Table  
- Twin Town Assoc.  
- Allotment Committee | - Women’s Institute  
- Women’s Conservatives  
- Mother/baby clinic  
- Mother’s Union  | - Scouts  
- Guides  
- Boys’ Brigade  
- Girls’ Friendly Society  
- Life Boys  
- Young Farmers’ Comm. | - Luncheon club  
- Treat committee  
- North End Over 60’s  
- Central Over 60’s  
- Seniors group | - Football club  
- Cricket club  
- Tennis club  
- Bowls |
| 2005  | - Labour club  | - Rainford Show Comm.  | - Women’s Institute  
- Various playgroups  
- Mother’s Union  | - Scouts  
- Guides  
- Boys’ Brigade  
- Girls’ Friendly Society  
- Life Boys  
- Young Farmers’ Comm. | - Junior Red Cross  
- The Ecumaniacs  
- Junior Flower Club  | - Football club  
- Cricket club  
- Tennis club  
- Bowls |

180 ‘Rainford 1994’, SHLHA, RWI/7/2.
181 ‘Rainford 2005’, SHLHA, RWI/7/3.
So do Eccleston Parish Council Magazine directories of local leisure and sport associations and clubs (private/public/volunteer-run):
Fig. 3.2.4: micro-communities in Eccleston, based on Parish Council magazines 1991-2016 (yellow indicates years active).
Neither the WI scrapbooks nor the parish directories are complete. Eccleston Park Tennis Club disappears from the directories in 2005 but has existed continuously since 1904. Kicks Soccer School, formed in 1996 and discussed in the magazine in 1998-1999, only features in directories from 2012. The WI scrapbooks are a product of their micro-community’s members and carry their biases. In 1965, a dim view was taken of ‘new comers’ who ‘want to make our village into a town by pushing for town amenities’ because ‘if you want to live in the country you should accept country ways’. Likewise, the disappearance of the ‘cult of long hair’ amongst local teenagers was welcomed with ‘relief’ and teenage grumblings about lacking leisure activities were dismissed: ‘if that means propping up Coffee Bars they are right as that is something yet to come to our village’. Given the WI’s ‘jam and Jerusalem’ stereotype, especially post-war, a focus on respectability and traditional community life is unsurprising. It illustrates barriers to inclusion in micro-communities, which often target particular life-cycle stages and audiences. The inclusivity promoted by community centres and residents’/tenants’ associations, for instance, was only possible because of their range of activities and groups.

Rainford WI’s scrapbooks accordingly show micro-communities for different audiences and life-cycle stages, for instance mothers, children, or pensioners. Not all micro-communities are circumscribed by life-cycle stage: the WI accepts all women over 18 and Rainford’s annual reports mention many ‘long-standing’ members. Only the ‘civic’ category saw a drop-off in the micro-communities available over time. Whilst the specific micro-communities in existence changed, the venues (church halls, social clubs, village hall) remained consistent. The micro-communities and their activities became more diverse over time. Measuring engagement with these is difficult but the scrapbooks indicate many were well-established; to survive so long implies consistent engagement.

The Eccleston table similarly shows a solid network of micro-communities over time, particularly for sports and hobbies. Several exist continuously and even more

183 ‘Golden Jubilee Scrapbook…’, SHLHA, RWI/7/1.
185 Lawrence, Me, Me, Me, p.234.
changeable ones, like the many men’s football teams, exist consistently in some guise.\textsuperscript{187} Looking through more recent magazines available online, many long-standing groups and activities persist. In 2020, the Village Hall still offered Ju-Jitsu (in its thirtieth year) and Slimming World (at least its thirteenth year), alongside sensory classes for babies (its third year), yoga, post-partum fitness, and children’s theatre. Some ‘mums and toddlers’ groups which disappeared from the directories still exist, too, including Christ Church and St. Julie’s.\textsuperscript{188} Some activities, like Slimming World or yoga, seem individualistic and focused on self-improvement rather than sources of community-building but, as noted above, they go beyond their advertised function (weight loss, mindfulness) and act as shared social spaces and sources of friendship.\textsuperscript{189} Micro-community membership, particularly those targeting specific life-cycle stages, may be impermanent but the micro-communities themselves are remarkably durable.

An exception are more civic-minded micro-communities like the Friendship Society, Townswomen’s Guild, and Women’s Royal Voluntary Service. They still exist nationally – Rainhill, for instance, has a Townswomen’s Guild – but disappeared from Eccleston’s directories in the 1990s.\textsuperscript{190} Similarly, Rainford’s WI branch folded in 2006, with members incorporated into the nearby Crank branch; other St. Helens branches remain at Ruskin Drive and Rainhill.\textsuperscript{191} When Rainford’s President stepped down, no one volunteered as a replacement.\textsuperscript{192} Difficulties had emerged in finding volunteers to organise the lunch club and bowls section, both WI cornerstones: ‘apathy is a contributory factor and [the organiser] has become disheartened’, similar to the frustrations at Pilkington Hockey Club (3.1).\textsuperscript{193} Apathy explained growing disgruntlement with Group Meetings, too: ‘members tend to have “been there, done that”’.\textsuperscript{194} These problems, plus dwindling membership, suggest a micro-community losing energy: membership dipped permanently below 100 in 1989 and below 50 in 1996, leaving just 26 members by 2006.\textsuperscript{195} Eccleston’s Townswomen’s Guild similarly folded in 2012 due to reduced...
The persistence of WI’s or Townswomen’s Guilds elsewhere suggests ongoing but lessening demand for such micro-communities, hence the need for fewer branches overall.

Micro-communities’ evolution over time links not only to local enthusiasm or taste but wider trends, for instance the late 1980s impetus for residents’/tenants’ associations or the growth in slimming clubs. Similarly, the changing nature of Eccleston’s playgroups, dominated in 1991 by ‘mums and toddlers’ groups run in church halls but in 2012 by specialist nursery providers, matches trends in national provision.

The 1980s and 1990s saw increased scrutiny on Early Year’s provision. The Rumbold Report emphasised raising provision standards in terms of curriculum and facilities. It demanded ‘closer links’ between pre-schools and schools, which many groups listed in Eccleston’s early 1990s directories will have lacked. At the time, 40-60% of 3-4 year olds attended playgroups (mainly run by community groups), 24% attended local authority nurseries, 1% private day nurseries, and 10% attended no form of pre-school; the majority listed in early 1990s directories were playgroups. Rumbold advocated greater co-ordination of provision, particularly ‘a national framework within which local development could take place’, in line with the existing national curriculum for schools. This tendency towards universalising provision continued with the 1996-7 nursery voucher system ensuring pre-school education for all 4 year olds, and its replacement in 1997 with a blanket entitlement for all 4 year olds to part-time nursery places for the three terms before they reached compulsory school age.

1999 and 2000 saw the publication of ‘Early Learning Goals’ and ‘Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage’. These provisions were not to be ‘inappropriately formal’ and emphasised the importance of play and active parent involvement, an ethos common to the playgroups most children attended. Even so, ‘Curriculum Guidance…’

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196 ‘Eccleston Parish Council Magazine, 2012-2013’, p.8, SHLHA, EC/14. This is a further example of the magazine’s directories being incomplete, given the group continued until 2012 but was not listed in the directory from the mid-1990s.
197 Bradley, Tenants’ Movement, p.24; Moseley, ‘Slimming’, 70-75.
200 ‘Starting with Quality…’, pp.2-5.
201 ‘Summary of the report’s main recommendations’.
203 ‘Memorandum from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority to the Select Committee on Education and Employment’, (June 2000),
demanded a ‘well-planned and resourced curriculum’ to take children’s learning ‘forward’, ‘monitoring of each child’s progress’, and ‘carefully structured’ activities, implying increasingly formalised provision more like a pre-school than a playgroup. Given these national developments, Eccleston’s available provision tending towards more formal day nurseries and away from less formal ‘mums and toddlers’ groups or playgroups is unsurprising.

A dense network of micro-communities persists in St. Helens across the thesis’ time period. Grass-roots micro-communities, like residents’/tenants’ associations, exist alongside and intertwine with more “top-down” sources of community, like churches or the local authority. These grass-roots initiatives increased from the 1980s, alongside the town’s de-industrialisation, a trend also seen in Chapters 1 and 4. A wide network of community centres still exists in St. Helens today and their reliance on volunteers and grass-roots involvement is clear. Direct local authority involvement no longer appears common – whereas previously, several centres were developed, purchased, and even run by the local council, often with support from local residents’/tenants’ associations and volunteers:


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Facebook Likes/Visitors</th>
<th>Twitter Followers</th>
<th>Management Structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chain Lane Community Centre</td>
<td>Haresfinch</td>
<td>124 / 500</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>Voluntary management committee since 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crownway Community Centre</td>
<td>Newton-le-Willows</td>
<td>611</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>Volunteer management committee since 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deafness Resource Centre</td>
<td>Dentons Green</td>
<td>666</td>
<td>1059</td>
<td>Registered charity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derbyshire Hill Family Centre</td>
<td>Derbyshire Hill</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lester Drive Centre</td>
<td>Eccleston</td>
<td>99 / 73</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>Volunteer-run</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newton Community Centre</td>
<td>Newton-le-Willows</td>
<td>2846 / 1271</td>
<td>1745</td>
<td>Small team of paid workers + local community volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park Farm ACYP Community Centre</td>
<td>Carr Mill/Clinkham Wood/Moss Bank</td>
<td>473 / 58</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>Registered charity, small paid team + volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parr Sports and Community Centre</td>
<td>Parr</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>Registered charity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERTH Community Centre</td>
<td>Thatto Heath</td>
<td>171 / 32</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>Volunteer-run</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Street Community Centre</td>
<td>Town Centre</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>Local Strategic Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wonderland Community Centre</td>
<td>Town Centre</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig.3.2.5: community centres in St. Helens (2021)

Like in the past, these centres cater for many activities and offer facilities for external hire. Common activities are mother-and-baby groups, exercise and health groups, and arts and crafts groups:

213 Hainsworth, ‘Peter Street’.
Measuring engagement with these micro-communities has been challenging but their persistence and wide-ranging activities indicates demand and ongoing engagement. Many of these micro-communities, as per Lawrence’s definition, correspond with life-cycle stages. Evolutions in the variety of activities offered, meanwhile, show a reactiveness to wider fashions and trends. Whilst the loss of workplace associational culture (3.1) no doubt impacted St. Helens’ sense of community, the strong community-building potential of non-work micro-communities remains clear.

### 3.3: Local state and community

3.2 showed the local state helping to facilitate and generate micro-communities through community centres and residents’/tenants’ associations. This section examines this local state – local authority/council/municipal – through leisure and recreation provision which facilitated (a sense of) community and/or hosted micro-communities. This municipal
provision goes back to the nineteenth century, overlapping with local industrialists’ provisions for leisure and recreation at workplaces and beyond; early municipal authority was intimately intertwined with local industrial development. These links persisted into the mid-twentieth century, a 1960s Sports Council report pairing St. Helens’ ‘industry’ and ‘community’ recreation. Rather presciently, given workplace leisure and recreation’s subsequent decline (3.1), the report suggested

industry can no longer be expected to provide in full all the diverse and extending recreational needs of their workpeople, an operation which is becoming increasingly more expensive and with a return to the employer which is […] becoming more difficult to justify.\(^{218}\)

During the post-war era, the horizons of municipal provision expanded – as Saumarez-Smith demonstrates through the 1970s vogue for waterpark-style leisure centres – ‘away from the traditional concern with hygiene and fitness, towards more nebulous concepts of happiness, free time, and even fun and glamour’.\(^{219}\)

St. Helens never had a waterpark but it did have local authority leisure centres (the ‘indoor facilities for sport’ variety), libraries, parks, activities, and museums and galleries.\(^{220}\) This provision increasingly focused on evolving consumer/user tastes and creating community.\(^{221}\) Provisions were reshuffled in 1974 with St. Helens’ incorporation into Merseyside. Further council reorganisation in the 1980s saw the creation of the Community Leisure Department. This section examines the changing context of St. Helens’ municipal provision, the extent to which and how successfully it generated community, and whether the importance of community building evolved over time.

The 1960s Sports Council report praised St. Helens’ overall provision. It boasted Lancashire’s second highest acreage of open space (parks, gardens, playgrounds, sports grounds) per thousand population. These spaces’ popularity allowed the local authority to turn a profit. Local industrial provision (3.1) was similarly praised. Indoor provision, floodlit all-weather surfaces, golf facilities, and social amenities alongside recreation facilities, though, were lacking. The local community valued their facilities: tennis and bowls aside, all were ‘used to capacity’, and golf had a 500-long waiting list. Facilities

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218 ‘Report of the study group appointed by the Sports Council to investigate industry and community recreation at St. Helens’, (c.1960s), SHLHA, A29(P).
220 Ibid., 183. I.e. the sort suggested in the 1960 report ‘Sport and the Community: the report of the Wolfenden Committee on Sport’.
221 Ibid., 193.
catered for individuals and local clubs, including industrial ones, an example of overlapping sources of (micro-)community. The report highlighted the community aspect of provision: the ‘community at large [should] be consulted’ on future improvements and new facilities should provide ‘club rooms and social amenities’. The report expected the local authority to lead future developments, rather than local industries, private, or voluntary initiative, although co-operation between these sectors was encouraged.  

Library and arts-based provision was similarly solid and also fostered community-building. In 1967-68, library usage increased at all but one of eight branches. The Art Gallery, alongside exhibitions by national, regional, and local bodies, hosted local groups like the Camera Club, Historical Society, Society for Music and the Arts, Theatre Club, and the Workers’ Education Authority. Grants were offered to local arts societies (Art Club, Choral, English Folk and Dance, Grange Park Male Voice Choir, Glee Club, Parr Public Prize Band, and the Society for Music and the Arts) and amateur dramatics plays at the Theatre Royal were guaranteed against loss. In 1970-71, usage increased across all branches. Discussions for Four Acre’s new library building highlighted the need for ‘accommodation for small meeting[s] and space for displays’ for the branch to ‘become part of community life’. The initial plans had been rejected by then Education Minister, Margaret Thatcher, for lacking ambition, with central government wishing branch libraries to be ‘cultural centres’ for local communities. From October 1972 to March 1973, 5,250 people visited the Museum and Art Gallery, including 24 schools parties; across 1973-74, there were almost 11,400 visitors.

Returning to the origins of St. Helens’ municipal provision, the nineteenth century was the ‘heyday of the voluntary principle and of private initiative’. Many initiatives were targeted at particular industrialists’ employees but ‘individual enterprise’ also provided public services, like Kurtz’s public baths (1861). Samuel Taylor offered fifty guineas towards land for a public park in 1847 and his family gifted the town a park in

222 ‘Report of the study group…’, SHLHA, A29(P).
225 Ibid.
226 Anon., ‘Think big’ on new library, committee are told’, St. Helens Newspaper, 13.10.1970, SHLHA, ST29/1/16/26 Newscuttings related to St. Helens Public Libraries and Museum 1970-1985. It appears that they did think big, going on to include a play area for children, hosting the local over 60’s club one evening per week, and even becoming home to a variety of caged birds, following an initial donation by a local resident: Anon., ‘The novel way to run a library’, Evening Post and Chronicle, 28.10.1974, SHLHA, ST29/1/16/22 Newscuttings relating to St. Helens Public Libraries and Museums 1974-1976.
228 Barker and Harris, Merseyside Town, p.393.
229 Ibid., p.382-383.
In 1852, the Mechanics Institute advocated for a library and, in 1854, local landowners and industrialists donated money provided the library be made public. As the century progressed, local government infrastructure formalised and encompassed provisions begun privately, for example controlling library provision from 1871. The local authority leased Kurtz’s baths and in 1890 built larger ones in Boundary Road (still council-run today). All the town’s parks and recreation grounds, save Taylor Park and Gaskell Park, were local authority purchases. Private initiative persisted nonetheless, for instance the Gamble Institute (for technical education and the town’s Central Library) donated by chemist David Gamble. Gamble and Greenall provided sites for branch libraries at Sutton and Eccleston, respectively; these and the Thatto Heath branch also benefited from donations by the philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. Local industrialists and prominent residents maintained a consistent presence in local government and other bodies so private and public initiative remained closely linked.

Generally, though, municipal leisure and recreation provision has been criticised for persistent deficiencies, notably its ‘discretionary’ nature given the minimal legislative requirements surrounding it. A 1982 study criticised successive central governments for failing to develop ‘an overall and clearly articulated’ leisure policy to guide local authorities. Previous state encouragement concerned issues not associated with leisure at the time: public parks and baths a reaction to concerns over sanitation and public health; public libraries to low literacy rates; playing fields and sports halls to concerns over

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230 Ibid., p.314, 466.
231 Ibid., p.386; ‘St. Helens Public Libraries Centenary Assessment, 1850-1950’, SHLHA, ST29/1/12 St. Helens Library Collection – Reports by the Chief Librarian.
232 ‘…Public Libraries Centenary Assessment…’, SHLHA, ST29/1/12.
234 Barker and Harris, Merseyside Town, pp.466-467; Incomplete pamphlet on parks of St. Helens, Eccleston Library Local History Section. The parks in question are: Thatto Heath (1884), Victoria Park (1886), Queen’s Park (1899), Parr Recreation Grounds (1900), Sutton Park (1903), Hardshaw Park (1909). As the twentieth century progressed, the local authority purchased further parks at Grange Park (1934), Sutton Manor (1936), Sherdley Park (1949), Blackbrook (1952), and Haresfinch (1960).
235 The Gamble is still home to the local archives today. Barker and Harris, Merseyside Town, pp.463-464.
236 ‘…Public Libraries Centenary Assessment…’, SHLHA, ST29/1/12.
237 As Barker and Harris, Merseyside Town, p.467, put it: ‘as with the town, so with its leading inhabitants; they too, deserved recognition: a seat on the Council, a place on the Bench, or the Mayoral Chain were their perquisites’.
national fitness levels and international sporting reputation. Local provision is said to have been neglected, a nineteenth century ‘outburst of civic pride’ aside, and was either ‘strictly utilitarian’ or a ‘brief legac[y] of Victorian paternalism’. By the 1990s, in terms of ‘direct’ legislation, libraries came under the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act (museums and galleries were discretionary) and some sports provision fell under the National Curriculum. Provision was otherwise based off broader social and political objectives, leading to discrepancies in provision between different areas.

St. Helens’ provision certainly reflected nineteenth century civic pride and paternalism – although neither were merely brief ‘outbursts’. The ongoing importance of industrially-sponsored leisure and recreation reflected paternalism’s persistence locally and the industries’ desire to serve the wider community (3.1). At the time of the Sports Council report, municipal provision followed the Welfare Model of ‘leisure for all’. Leisure was an inherent right of citizenship, independent of local authority politics or wider economic conditions. In this centralised model, residents and communities were ‘passive recipients’ of municipal provision. St. Helens’ provision was not as sclerotic as the wider picture, as plans for the new branch library, golf course, pools (Boundary Road baths were modernised between 1960-1963242), and community centres in each neighbourhood suggest. Such plans do not imply a ‘strictly utilitarian’ outlook and the community-building potential of leisure provision was repeatedly acknowledged. The Four Acre branch library, for one, was intended as the model for all new library buildings, many of which subsequently became host-sites for micro-communities (3.2). As with urban regeneration (Chapter 4), the ongoing influence of the industries and industrialists behind nineteenth century developments caused the local authority to be more proactive in improving its provisions than it may otherwise have been.

The 1960s Sports Council report into St. Helens coincided with increased central government interest in leisure (similar to Chapter 4’s increased interest in urban planning/regeneration).243 The 1972 Baines Report recommended rationalising local government, integrating the ‘disparate and fragmentary’ leisure provision spread across multiple departments.244 A growth of ‘leisure services departments’ followed, covering adult education, art galleries, community centres, golf courses, libraries, museums, parks,
playgrounds, sports centres, swimming pools, theatres, and youth facilities. As many as 260 such departments existed by 1978. The 1975 White Paper on Sport and Recreation underlined leisure’s importance to communities’ everyday needs and general welfare. Leisure was increasingly seen, beyond health and fitness, as important to individual and community ‘quality of life’, linked to rising free time and affluence.

The new concept of ‘community sports centres’ exemplified the increasing community focus and shift from ‘sports and recreation’ to ‘sports and leisure’. From 27 indoor sports centres in England and Wales in 1969, there were 600 by 1979, the vast majority developed by local councils. Despite the draw of Saumarez-Smith’s ‘leisure age’ centres, the ‘core essence’ of sports centres remained sports halls, swimming pools, catering or vending facilities, and – increasingly – squash courts, indoor bowls, activity rooms for yoga, dance, and martial arts, and sauna/solariums. By the 1990s, 100% of centres had a sports hall, 72% a fitness room, 62% squash courts, 59% a bar, 43% a ‘traditional’ pool, 38% a cafeteria, and 13% an indoor bowls hall. These more traditional developments did not offer the leisure-age centres’ indoor sunshine or nightclubs but were nevertheless increasingly branded ‘leisure centres’. Some traditional centres adopted leisure-age facilities like water flumes, splash pools, or wave machines but this was far from universal. Ultimately, traditional leisure centres are more reflective of general changes in leisure provision.

In St. Helens, local government rationalisation accompanied the 1974 incorporation into Merseyside. The new Leisure and Recreation Committee matched the leisure services departments elsewhere, albeit separating outdoors/sports provision and Arts provision. Provision previously split across multiple local authorities (including Lancashire, Ashton-in-Makerfield, and Newton-le-Willows) centred on St. Helens and developed in line with wider national trends, building on the town’s pre-1974 progress. Though the town lacked a ‘sports centre’ combining ‘wet’ and ‘dry’ activities, plans were

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245 Ibid., p.17.
251 Saumarez-Smith, ‘Leisure centres’, 181; ‘The era of rapid progress’.
underway for a ‘Joint Provision’ centre and a ‘central Leisure Complex’, the former in keeping with rationalising provision, the latter the attitudinal change towards leisure and community. Boundary Road’s 1960s modernisation had been a traditional development focused on health and fitness (two swimming pools, modernised ‘slipper baths’ for bathing, and a sauna), but the new Parr Swimming Pool opened in 1975 reflected broader definitions of ‘leisure’ and provision’s community role: a modern ‘deck level’ pool with two shallow ends, spectator accommodation for 220 people, refreshments and vending, swimming clubs, meeting rooms and laundry services for local clubs, weekly swimming lessons to around 500 people, and a schools swimming programme. The Parr pool still featured slipper baths, but it was recognised that there was only ‘slight’ demand for these Victorian innovations.

Regarding parks, St. Helens boasted 15 ranging in size from 2 to 300 acres, offering diverse sports and leisure amenities beyond their basic provision of open green space, with bowling greens, children’s playgrounds, football pitches, and tennis courts found in most. Community could be facilitated or generated day-to-day through simply providing a pleasant place for people to meet up and spend time; various parks were noted as ‘very popular with local people’ and ‘typical of a village park’. Some were host-sites for local clubs and associations (3.2). For example, ten parks had a senior citizen’s meeting room and one had a 400 member-strong Pensioner’s Association. Their clubhouse had facilities for billiards, cards, and functions, and a ‘thriving’ bowling club. The parks’ sports pitches catered for both private and club use. Community was also generated through one-off events, like Sunday afternoon band concerts, fetes and fairs, or amateur sports. The pinnacle was the annual St. Helens Show, held in the town’s largest park, Sherdley Park. Already able to draw regional and nationwide visitors alongside local people with its wide-ranging provisions (golf, mini-golf, driving range, horse/pony/donkey riding, Pets Corner, ornamental gardens and lake), Sherdley’s annual Show attracted huge numbers to the town: 150,000 in 1976 and 550,000 in 1993. First held for the town’s 1968 centenary and running until 2006, the Show

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253 ‘Leisure Facilities’, SHLHA, A78.2(P).
254 Ibid.
255 Ibid.
256 Ibid. The booklet lists: 56 playgrounds, 54 tennis courts, 43 football pitches, 26 bowling greens, 6 putting greens, 5 cricket squares, 5 rugby pitches, 2 aviaries, an 18-hole golf course, a mini-golf course, a driving range, a boating lake, a ‘Pets Corner’, and a pony riding establishment.
257 Ibid.
258 Ibid.
259 Ibid.
featured performances from local groups like the St. Helens Military Band and Parr Public Prize Band, morris dancing troupes, athletics and sports clubs, and youth centres.261 ‘Mother and baby’ and ‘Miss St. Helens’ pageants featured regularly, alongside fireworks displays, hot air balloon rides, staged entertainment, and air and field displays.262 As with heritage events (3.4), the Show brought large numbers of residents (and outside visitors) together for a shared experience and gave many local groups (micro-communities) an unparalleled audience.

For libraries, meanwhile, the amalgamation of services from different local authorities doubled the number of branches.263 As noted, recognition of libraries’ community-building potential predated 1974’s reorganisation. Newly-built branches at Eccleston (1972) and Four Acre (1974) had meeting rooms and spaces, as did Billinge (1963) and Rainhill (1968). These could also hold small exhibitions. Rainhill and Moss Bank (1957) were both built adjoining ‘clinics’, perhaps recognising that grouping local amenities would increase their use.264 Location has always factored into local authority leisure provision because facilities must be accessible. Boundary Road was chosen for the new baths in 1890 because it was within ten minute’s walk for around 20,000 people, whilst suggesting Parr Recreation Ground for the proposed Leisure Complex in the 1970s was similarly due to the site’s accessibility from across the Borough.265

Alongside facilitating use by local groups, library provision promoted inclusivity.266 New builds had disabled access and ‘pram parks’, with older buildings adapted where possible.267 A ‘housebound’ service, begun in conjunction with voluntary organisations (a pattern seen in 3.2), served around 250 households by 1980 with three-weekly deliveries of books and audio cassettes; old people’s homes and hospitals were

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261 ‘St. Helens Centenary Show (25-27 July, Sherdley Park)’, SHLHA, ST/10/37/4-11 St. Helens Centenary Celebrations.
262 ‘The St. Helens/Sherdley Show…’.
265 ‘Ankle deep in pea soup…’, SHLHA, A29.5(P) ; ‘Leisure Facilities’, SHLHA, A78.2(P). At the time of writing, Parr is again the focus of plans for a new swimming and fitness site to include an elite sports training base for the town’s rugby team. ‘Vision for ‘elite’ sporting venue’, St. Helens Star, 20.05.2021, p.7.
266 ‘Introducing the Libraries, Museums…’SHLHA, ST29/1/17.
267 Ibid. ; ‘…Services Provided…’, SHLHA, ST29/1/13.
similarly supplied. Areas without a branch library were served by the mobile library service. For young people, a programme of story hours, competitions, and talks was encouraged, and there were ‘displays, exhibitions and talks’ for adults too. Future expansion was envisaged, subject to demand and funding. Alongside pushing libraries beyond their basic book-lending function, there was a distinct effort to engage as much of the local population as possible.

There were, however, limits to municipal provision’s community-building potential. There are also limits to judging its effectiveness. The evidence demonstrates only the provision’s framework and its potential for community-building. Actual public engagement with and opinion of these provisions is rarely mentioned. Leisure and Recreation Committee ‘Activity Statements’ hint at these limits. Although confirming leisure and recreation’s increasingly broad conception, the 1981 statements point to various shortfalls. Playgrounds, particularly in older housing areas, were insufficient and poorly maintained; a need for ‘maximum’ voluntary participation was recognised. Parks, too, were suffering from declining maintenance due to budget reductions. Swimming pools, sports halls, and outdoor pitches remained insufficient despite the 1970s developments. Whilst provision for ‘social activities and entertainment’ was growing, notably through community centres (3.2), the town still lacked an ‘entertainments hall with full bar and catering facilities’; existing catering facilities, for instance in parks, were unprofitable day-to-day and inadequate for one-off events. The Libraries, Museums and Arts Department had not fulfilled all the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act’s requirements, again bemoaning ‘cut-backs’ – although it now boasted 86,603 registered readers (compared to 48,000 in 1974) and 19,964 museum visitors (compared to just over 11,000). The increased library and museum figures, plus the recognition of provision shortfalls, indicate local appetite for leisure facilities and activities and, thus, their community-building potential – but such shortfalls represent a brake on this potential. Municipal provision can only facilitate community-building to the extent that provision is sufficient.

Nonetheless, progress continued broadly in keeping with wider national trends. By 1983, shortfalls in playgrounds, parks, outdoor pitches, and social amenities persisted.
Notable progress had, however, been made regarding leisure/sports centres. The Sherdley Leisure Park Complex (combining the park, Sutton High Sports Centre, an athletics track, and outdoor pitches) had opened in 1981, the Boundary Road baths became Queens Park Recreation Centre in 1983 (with pools, sports hall, sauna/solarium, squash, and weight training/fitness facilities), and Haydock Leisure Centre was due to open in 1984. The Sherdley site boasted a licenced clubhouse and the ‘Sherdley Tavern’, although the new Queens Park centre still lacked bar or lounge provision. A more pressing concern was rising local unemployment, leading to a 1982 trial making many municipal facilities free-to-use on weekday mornings. The community benefit of the libraries and museum were still recognised. The mobile library had 83 stopping points and the housebound service catered to 290 residents (with a waiting list of 40). Across 16 full-time and 3 part-time libraries were 136,000 registered readers, the museum had welcomed 21,671 visitors, and 12 Arts grants had been made. The town’s libraries were praised for their inclusive services, like job centre noticeboards and free phones (Four Acre) or toy lending for learning disabled children (New Street). This matched the Leisure and Recreation Committee’s combining of provisions in ‘joint community facilities’, like Newton-le-Willows’ ‘community library’ which linked the public library service with the adjacent further education college’s library. A library service for the deaf and hard of hearing began in 1984, and a travelling exhibition on deafness was an example of branch libraries being used as local exhibition space.

Further progress came in 1985 when, amidst council reorganisation, the Community Leisure Department (CLD) was formed. The reorganisation aimed to create closer links between the local council and community. The 1974 structure had proved too ‘rigid’, ‘traditional’, and ‘Victorian’ with sub-committees proliferating alarmingly, creating inefficiencies. The Leisure and Recreation Committee alone had 20, including

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275 ‘Activity Statement Leisure and Recreation Department’, SHLHA, ST/10/21/2; Anon., ‘Town leads the country’ plus advert for ‘free use of facilities’, St. Helens Reporter, 06.07.1982, SHLHA, ST24/2.


one specifically for skateboarding. Alongside budget issues, these inefficiencies may explain the persistent provision shortfalls. The council wanted to be ‘more responsive to the needs of the public’ and ‘involve the community in the provision of services’. Council employees needed to learn about ‘community involvement’ and ‘making services more accessible’ to make the council more ‘relevant’ to residents.279

An emerging trend in governance at this time was ‘government through community’ (Chapter 2). Put crudely, this used ‘community’ as a political tool, to suggest community agency and involvement, whilst in reality reinforcing a neo-liberal political agenda: governing through community rather than for community. A ‘market-oriented’ model was overtaking the welfare model of leisure provision, matching wider trends in local government.280 The market-oriented model, at odds in name at least with the CLD, saw local authorities as facilitators of leisure and residents as consumers, with provision run along private sector lines including outsourcing, ‘business case[s]’ for provision, and a performance-related culture.281 Nonetheless, local initiatives and policies sufficiently attuned to local community needs (like Chapter 2’s Community of St. Helens Trust) could genuinely engage local people – which, presumably, was the CLD’s aim.282

The CLD rested on seven beliefs reflecting the council’s wish for accessibility, community involvement, and relevance: ‘action gives service’, ‘customers matter’, ‘employees matter’, ‘councillors matter’, ‘management must be visible’, ‘attention to detail’, and ‘community use of facilities’. ‘Customers’, redolent of the 1980s market-based provision models, means leisure facility users, i.e. local residents. The CLD, though, envisaged these customers in very un-market terms: ‘it is our job to ensure that they are happy with the service [...] and that they will always want to come back’. Quality provision was required to entice better-off residents who could otherwise find leisure opportunities elsewhere but, more importantly, to cater to the less well-off, disadvantaged, and disabled, for whom private leisure facilities were inaccessible. Pushing for inclusive provision matched existing initiatives like the mobile library or the free use of facilities on weekdays.283

279 St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council Community Leisure Department, ‘Briefing for the members of the department’, (22.03.1985), SHLHA, ST/24/3 SH(M)BC – Community Leisure – Briefing for members of the department (1985).
280 King, ‘Local authority sport’, p.16 ; Bacon, ‘Role of the state’, pp.32-33 ; ‘Briefing for the members...’ SHLHA, ST/24/3 SH(M)BC.
281 King, ‘Local authority sport’, p.16.
283 ‘Briefing for the members…’, SHLHA, ST/24/3 SH(M)BC.
Between unemployment, the gradual decline of employer-provided leisure, and increasingly privatised leisure time, more people sought ‘life’s satisfactions’ outside of work so the CLD believed quality municipal provision was of growing importance. Many demographic groups (women, young children and their parents, school leavers, the unemployed/low earners, pensioners, the disabled) made relatively little use of municipal facilities so the CLD aimed to encourage their participation. Leisure provision was not just for ‘sporting competition’ or the ‘pursuit of excellence’: it had to become ‘more creative and fulfilling’ and relevant to current tastes and needs. Libraries, for instance, needed to stock CDs, VHS, and computer games and software, alongside books, periodicals, and records. The influence of prominent local families remained visible even at this stage, with the Pilkington’s donating £5,000 towards computer software for libraries. With building new facilities unlikely, further opening up existing ones to individuals and community groups was also important. The joint use of school facilities was one example (as at Sutton High), and libraries, community centres, and youth clubs were used similarly (3.2). Libraries especially would be gateways to local communities. Divided into three area groupings, decision-making was devolved to these areas to make them ‘closer to the community’ they served. This community-focused provision mapped closely to the ‘ensuring state’ model where the local authority provides and facilitates leisure, and residents and communities have input into decision-making. Where outsourcing occurs, the local state guarantees accountability and quality. The CLD’s community-focused approach reflects the general resistance of northern local authorities to the marketisation of local government from the early 1980s, unsurprising given Labour’s strength on Merseyside at the time (Liverpool had briefly been dominated by the Militant tendency, whilst St. Helens was considered ‘militant’ with a small ‘m’).

285 ‘Briefing for the members…’, SHLHA, ST/24/3 SH(M)BC. And even with the more traditional offerings, relevance and reaction to demand was important. The mid-1980s saw the expansion of the library’s record collection from almost entirely European classical music to include a range of folk and country music: Anon., ‘Hitting high note with ‘country’ folk’, Prescot, Hayton and Knowsley Reporter, 24.02.1984, SHLHA, ST/29/1/16/26. A subsequent introduction of rock and pop music proved quickly popular: Anon., ‘Top of library pops’, St. Helens Reporter, 21.09.1984, SHLHA, ST/29/1/16/26.
287 Ibid.
289 Bacon, ‘Role of the state’, p.32. By contrast, Bacon suggests, more prosperous (often suburban or rural) areas of southern England tended to embrace this shift towards marketised provision. St. Helens as ‘small m’ militant was evoked in Interview PhD/004 (September 2018). For a detailed account of the Militant tendency, see: Michael Crick, Militant, (Biteback, London, 2016). See also: Beatrix Campbell, ‘The Mersey purges’, Marxism Today, (October 1987).
The ensuring state model has been criticised for the gap between ‘aspiration and reality’, particularly regarding the relationship between provision and community involvement. Little information on engagement with the CLD’s provisions exists but they were wide-ranging. The CLD ran youth clubs at seven community centres and one school, with a further five clubs receiving grants.290 A wide range of ‘community leisure courses’ were available at the further education college, libraries, community centres, schools, civic halls, and leisure centres. Activities covered arts, crafts, music, and sports (as in 3.2). A ‘community education’ programme covering languages, typing, computing, English, and maths was available ‘at all levels in most centres’. The prefix ‘community’ was applied widely: community leisure centres, community primary schools, community high schools, and community libraries. Provisions were covered by the ‘free user scheme’ for the unemployed, those receiving benefits, and pensioners; under-18s could access them for free or half-price. A ‘free user’ card was provided to qualifying residents, which also covered their ‘immediate dependents’.291 The CLD co-ordinated a Community Arts programme working with local groups, local schools and libraries, providing training and facilities, and running at least three ‘community workshops’ per week in community centres around the Borough.292

There is clear evidence of St. Helens’ municipal leisure provision evolving. Less-so than leisure age waterparks, there was a move towards fun and glamour alongside health and fitness. Particularly clear was the move towards greater community involvement and community-building, especially with the Community Leisure Department (another community-focused initiative emerging as de-industrialisation worsened) in the 1980s, although leisure’s community-building role had been recognised long before this. The influence of the town’s nineteenth century paternalistic industrialists and their closely linked industrial and civic provisions over attitudes to provision into the late twentieth century was clear. Even today there is strong attachment to the legacy of their efforts.

290 Including centres seen in the previous section: Peter Street Community Centre, New Street Community Centre, Chain Lane Community Centre, Derbyshire Hill Youth & Community Centre, Grange Valley Community Centre, Carr Mill Community Centre, Windlehurst Community Centre, and Grange Park Community High School. Grant-aided clubs were: YWCA Nunn Street, Newton-le-Willows Boys Club, Bichley Youth Club, Gateway St. Helens, Gateway Newton-le-Willows. ‘Young People Speak Out: Information’, (c.1990), SHLHA, A26.3 St. Helens (Metropolitan) Borough Council – Community Leisure Dept.


Current provision is wide-ranging, although tensions persist. The council maintains four leisure centres (two recently refurbished), but outdoor sports pitch provision has declined due to funding cuts.\textsuperscript{293} Long-standing arts venue The Citadel closed in 2019, again due to funding issues – although it was reacquired privately in 2020 to be retained as an arts and entertainment venue.\textsuperscript{294} In 2017, it was rumoured the town’s public parks were being sold off to help the council save over £20m before 2020 (having already lost, apparently, £74 million funding since 2010).\textsuperscript{295} In 2018, the council considered axing the Park Rangers, reducing key maintenance like litter picking, grass cutting, weed killing, and outdoor furniture upkeep, and even transferring some management of facilities (notably sports pitches) to the voluntary sector.\textsuperscript{296} The fate of these municipal provisions was clearly important to the local community, making the front page of local newspapers.\textsuperscript{297} Following local opposition, the decision to axe the Rangers was postponed until 2020 at least.\textsuperscript{298} Debates over moving the town’s Central Library due to the spiralling costs of maintaining and repairing the Gamble Institute met with ‘a largely negative reaction’, not least because of attachment to a building seen as important to local heritage.\textsuperscript{299} That the town’s Central Library had been closed with no immediate prospect of re-opening was another source of local ire, again underlining the importance of these provisions to the local community.\textsuperscript{300}

There are positives, though. A new town centre library opened in September 2020, housed in the town’s World of Glass museum, with long-term hopes to preserve the Gamble Institute as a ‘community arts, cultural, and educational space’, in line with municipal provision’s community-building potential.\textsuperscript{301} The town libraries’ arts programme, Cultural Hubs, was crowned National Lottery Best Arts Project in 2016:

\begin{quote}
what St Helens has done is to re-imagine the trusted space of the library as a chance to discover something just as special – great art and culture. They have put this discovery of
\end{quote}

\begin{itemize}
\item 295 Anon., ‘Borough’s parks could be sold off’, \textit{St. Helens Star}, 05.10.2017, p.2.
\item 301 Kelsey Maxwell, ‘Library to launch in the World of Glass this month’, \textit{St. Helens Star}, 03.09.2020, p.5.
\end{itemize}
new experiences at the heart of what the library is about, bringing people and places to life. That’s what regeneration is […]\(^{302}\)

In 2018, St. Helens was Liverpool City region’s ‘Borough of Culture’ and awarded £200,000 for its 150\(^{th}\) anniversary celebrations (3.4).\(^{303}\) The St. Helens Show was discontinued in 2006 but large one-off events continue, for instance the annual town centre Summer Streets festival.\(^{304}\) In 2019, St. Helens’ first ever Pride parade was shortlisted for Liverpool City Region Pride Awards Community Event of the Year.\(^{305}\) In 2020, a Victorian street festival was proposed as a fundraiser for the Gamble building and, to quote its organiser, ‘bring the library home again’, underlining the strength local opinion about the future of this long-standing civic institution.\(^{306}\) Such events, particularly linked to local civic and industrial heritage, remain popular ways of bringing the local community together, as 3.4 now shows.

3.4: Industrial heritage and community

Recent debates about St. Helens’ Central Library moving out of the Gamble Institute, especially arguments opposing it, reveal present-day attachment to local heritage and the ongoing influence of the contributions of influential local families. Opposition centred around ‘bringing the library home again’.\(^{307}\) The Gamble as the library’s ‘home’ stems from its architectural status (a ‘jewel in the crown of St. Helens’, said one local) and its historic purpose educating the local community.\(^{308}\) From 2018-2020, at least 16 local press articles featured the Gamble and the library relocation, including front-page spots about repairing the Gamble costing over £2 million and reassuring readers there were ‘no plans to sell’ it.\(^{309}\) The Labour-run council ‘pledge[d]’ before May 2019’s local elections


\(^{303}\) Kelsey Maxwell, ‘Town to be the region’s beating heart of culture’, St. Helens Star, 22.03.2018, p.3.


\(^{306}\) Anon., ‘Victorian street festival planned’, St. Helens Star, 05.03.2020, p.9.

\(^{307}\) Ibid.


\(^{309}\) Kenny Lomas, ‘Gamble repairs will cost millions’, St. Helens Star, 07.03.2019, pp.1, 3 ; ‘No plans to sell Gamble Building’. This coverage continued into 2021, including plans to base a ‘health innovation hub’ in the building, the announcement of £3.6m funding for its regeneration, and the announcement of regeneration works to begin in June 2021. Kenny Lomas, ‘Health hub could be key part of Gamble building’s future’, St. Helens Star, 18.02.2021, p.21 ; Anon., ‘£3.6m for Gamble
to bring it back into ‘public use as soon as is practicable’ and began a public consultation on its future. The Gamble is an important marker of local identity and a community asset, particularly to older residents. Its central location, adjacent to the Town Hall and bus station, reinforces its prestige and community role, being considered of easier access than the World of Glass museum where the library is now housed. Accessibility is crucial to leisure and recreation’s community-building potential (3.3), and is similarly important to local heritage assets which share many features with leisure and recreation provisions. The Gamble’s public consultation recognised this link between community, amenity, and heritage, looking to identify community assets, resources and skills, and ‘ideas and solutions’ to safeguard the building’s future. This attachment to local heritage and its community-building potential is this final section’s focus.

St. Helens Council recognise heritage’s importance. Local planning documents emphasise ‘the conservation and enhancement of the Borough’s heritage assets and their settings’, reflecting the heritage industry’s growing importance since the late twentieth century. In 2019, the council commissioned a study to inform the town’s ‘heritage strategy’. The study assessed the Borough’s heritage assets and their community-building potential, reflecting the council’s desire to create a nationally and internationally significant heritage sector by 2030. Many former industrial centres, particularly larger cities but increasingly small- and medium-sized towns, have recently turned towards tourism and the heritage visitor economy. This transition purports to make ‘communities […] feel that their heritage and identity is respected and celebrated’, and boosts the local economy and (post-industrial) regeneration. Alongside community-building, heritage can revitalise damaged local economies, particularly in de-

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312 ‘Library plan debated’.

313 Bella Dicks, Heritage, Place and Community, (University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 2000), p.68.


318 Lingard et al., ‘Heritage opportunities’, p.5.
industrialised areas. In such cases, heritage’s role mirrors the 1980s ‘leisure-led regeneration’ (3.3) in terms of the growth of sites and increasing range of activities offered to visitors increasingly seen as consumers needing fun and excitement alongside education.\(^{319}\) Heritage has even been dubbed the ‘quintessential’ enterprise culture output, no doubt a bittersweet analysis for those whose lost industrial jobs opened the heritage floodgates.\(^{320}\)

The 2019 heritage strategy study praised St. Helens’ range of ‘heritage collections’ and ‘heritage places’ but criticised their use and promotion. Prominent industrial elements include the World of Glass museum, the Dream statue, the Sankey Canal, the North West Museum of Road Transport, and the Rainhill Trials exhibition.\(^{321}\) The council’s approach to heritage, though, was criticised as uncoordinated, attributed to recent funding cuts preventing recruitment in key heritage roles. The council stepped away from the St. Helens Heritage Network which co-ordinated local volunteers and the Network has ‘effectively ceased operating’.\(^{322}\) Several issues limiting use of the town’s heritage were identified: the World of Glass’ £8 entry fee, the Gamble Institute’s ongoing closure, and insufficient visitor facilities and access difficulties at sites around the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, Billinge Hill, Carr Mill Dam, and the Dream statue.\(^{323}\)

The study identified “holes” in St. Helens’ heritage story, too, notably regarding canal, mining, and railway histories. This is problematic if the Borough’s heritage collections and places are to reflect its ‘collective memory’.\(^{324}\) The ‘Borough’s nature as a place with distinct identities and multiple centres’ (a characteristic of the town reflected in Charles Forman’s work and touched upon in earlier chapters here) was lacking, too.\(^{325}\) Alongside the obvious themes of coal, glass, railways, and rugby league, the study advocated promoting farming, other industries and sports, and theatre.\(^{326}\) Such additions would better capture the difference between St. Helens town and St. Helens borough.\(^{327}\)

The 1974 local government reorganisation altered St. Helens’ makeup but the town-

\(^{319}\) Dicks, Heritage, p.9. Similar, then, to Saumaurez-Smith’s ‘nebulous’ concepts associated with leisure provision, explored in 3.3.
\(^{320}\) Ibid., p.9.
\(^{321}\) Lingard et al., ‘Heritage opportunities’, p.8.
\(^{322}\) Ibid., p.6.
\(^{323}\) Ibid., pp.9-10.
\(^{324}\) Ibid., p.8-9.
\(^{325}\) Ibid., p.13. As Forman puts it in Industrial Town: Self Portrait of St. Helens in the 1920s, (Granada, London, 1979), ‘fifty years ago [in the 1920s], the town was like an overgrown teenager, its main roads, like gangly arms, only just connecting up with the outlying centres of Sutton, Parr, Thatto Heath, Eccleston and Windle […] Even today, people identify with the smaller unit: ‘He comes from Sutton’ or ‘They were a Parr family’” (p.11). Despite touching on this issue at various points, this thesis itself is not without its own “holes”.
\(^{326}\) Lingard et al., ‘Heritage opportunities’, p.18.
\(^{327}\) Ibid., p.9.
versus-borough divide pre-dates this. Following Ravenhead Colliery’s 1968 closure, at that point the borough’s ‘last remaining pit’, there were calls for a mining ‘plaque, tablet or plate […] in a public place’ to reflect the town’s ‘debt’ to ‘the miner’. Today, factoring in the 1970s expansions, the 1990s closures at Sutton Manor and Parkside represent the end of mining in the town. The 2019 study found only 10% of residents feel their identity is celebrated ‘very well’ and almost one-third say it is not represented ‘at all’. The differences between St. Helens town and its outlying areas undoubtedly contribute to this. The shortcomings in the use and promotion of the town’s heritage, and the holes in its heritage story, serve to limit its community-building potential.

A separate site study (focused on Clock Face Country Park (former mine), Sutton Manor Community Woodland (former mine, home to the Dream statue), the World of Glass museum, and the Gamble Institute) found that although St. Helens’ industrial heritage sites are ‘used for their landscapes more than their heritage’, there is local attachment to and desire to be involved in heritage. Site users, mainly older residents, do not use the sites chiefly for heritage but do ‘use the space often’ and will ‘continue to do so’, underlining their community-building potential. Of over 300 respondents to questionnaires (in-person) and surveys (online), almost 70% were aged over 46 and almost 50% over 56. From the questionnaires, ‘dog walking’ (40) and ‘walking’ (11) were popular reasons for visiting the sites, along with 19 specifically visiting the ‘exhibition/museum’. The sites’ repeated use was evident in over 80% having visited before and 88% saying they would visit again. Around two-thirds said the sites’ history did not prompt their visit but there was anecdotal and residual knowledge, particularly about glass and Pilkington’s or amongst people whose friends or family worked in industries. 88% of in-person responses said the site(s) were ‘significant’ or ‘very significant’ regarding industrial heritage and ‘meaning’ to the community.

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328 Anon., ‘Memorial to miners move’, St. Helens Reporter, 09.11.1968, SHLHA, ST29/1/16/25
Photocopies of newscuttings relating to St. Helens Public Libraries and Museums 1930-76. The plaque was created and currently resides in the Town Hall. It reads: ‘the closing of the Ravenhead Pit on 18th October 1968 was the end of five centuries of hewing coal in this County Borough. Honour the miners whose toil produced the coal on which the industries of Saint Helens were founded, and which added so much to the wealth of the nation’. See: Stephen Wainwright, ‘The debt we owe to our miners’, St. Helens Star, 18.10.2018, p.31.
331 Ibid., p.42.
332 Ibid., pp.28-29.
333 Ibid., p.30.
334 Ibid., pp.31-32.
335 Ibid., pp.31-32, Appendices.
336 Ibid., p.34.
thirds of online respondents said industrial heritage was ‘significant’ or ‘very significant’ to St. Helens’ community.337 There was a clear desire to safeguard the sites’ accessibility for the benefit of future generations; losing these sites would represent a betrayal of the community.338

Appetite for community involvement in heritage management was highlighted, too, with ‘local people’ being the most popular answer regarding who should control the town’s heritage sites.339 The management deficiencies identified in the heritage strategy study were reflected in survey responses: the town needs ‘a strong led council that involve local people’, better promoting the town’s famous industry.340 Respondents criticised the council as ‘short sighted’ and ‘stuck for plans’, with the site study detecting a ‘lack of trust and involvement’ on the part of residents.341 These misgivings about current management underline the attachment to and importance of heritage, and its potential for community-building.

The calls for a mining memorial and the Centenary celebrations in 1968 show heritage has been significant in St. Helens across this thesis’ time period. Raphael Samuel concurs with this longer-term perspective when discussing heritage as ‘living history’, a 1960s term originating in ‘period streets’ (1930s), canal and railway restoration (1940s-1950s), and historical walks (1950s).342 This heritage stems not from the enterprise culture but the post-war ‘renaissance’ of local history. This renaissance also promoted local history through pictorial histories of old photographs and, later, ‘living memory’ oral histories.343 St. Helens has been the subject of both. Chapter 2 used oral histories from the 1980s.344 In 2020, the National Lottery-funded ‘St. Helens Oral History Project’ began, aiming to collect over 100 oral and video interviews to ‘reflect and represent’ the town’s different communities, a step towards filling the holes identified in the heritage strategy study.345

337 Ibid., p.36.
338 Ibid., p.36.
339 Ibid., p.37.
340 Ibid., p.36.
341 Ibid., p.39.
By offering for public consumption materials otherwise confined to under-utilised local archives (in St. Helens, the ongoing Gamble Institute saga and a lack ‘promotion or awareness’ limits their use; nationally, persistent local government cuts threaten them) and directly involving local people in collecting and telling local history, these initiatives showcase heritage’s community-building potential. Samuels notes the importance of local librarians in bringing these materials ‘through exhibition and publication, into the public sphere’; 3.3 showed St. Helens libraries’ proactive reputation for arts and culture, including heritage initiatives like the oral history projects. Successful heritage is ‘a pluralistic mode of communication and persuasion involving consensual negotiation between the different interest groups […]’, i.e. involving local communities. The 2020 oral history project involves local residents through the interviews and ‘outreach activities’ in local schools to develop pupils’ oral history skills and, presumably, their awareness of local heritage. Even where heritage is contested (as in the heritage strategy study) or collections and sites are not used for their primary heritage purpose (as in the site study) heritage’s community-building potential is visible.

Two important heritage moments bookend this thesis: the 1968 Centenary and the 2018 150th anniversary celebrations of the town’s Incorporation. Both link civic and industrial culture. Important to each were “one-off” events like exhibitions and shows, festivals and galas, and parades and processions, which facilitate community-building through contributions to and attendance at them. The 1968 celebrations focused on the town’s civic heritage and pride. A programme barely mentions the town’s industrial traditions, save a line drawing entitled ‘impressions of industrial St. Helens’ and acknowledging the industrial achievements of the town’s nine ‘freemen’. Instead, it foregrounds the Charter of Incorporation, the development of local council and governance, the town’s civic insignia, and various ‘municipal works’ – including the


347 Samuel, Theatres of Memory, p.19.


349 ‘Time to preserve our memories…’.
modernistic Central Area Development underway at the time (Chapter 4).

Several events pushed the civic theme, too, like the ‘civic procession’ from the Town Hall to the Parish Church. In terms of industry, Greenall-Whitley hosted a celebratory centenary dinner in their own Fleece Hotel, whilst Pilkington’s dramatics and music sections gave several performances, the company’s archivist gave a lecture on ‘St. Helens and the Pilkington Connection’, and the company donated the £100 first prize to the centenary talent competition.

More prominent was (working-class) culture and community and the scope for participation by micro-communities and individual residents. Alongside the Pilkington’s sections, other local groups performed including the Newtown Players, the St. Helens Choral Society, the Amateur Gilbert and Sullivan Society, the St. Helens Girls Choir, the Unitarian Players, and the St. Helens Amateur Operatic Society. There were centenary-themed sports tournaments and events at various local clubs and venues, including tennis, swimming, bowls, seven-a-side rugby league, and cricket. The talent competition ran alongside a Centenary Queen pageant, akin to those so common in industry. Community participation came through performing or competing in these events, or simply attending. There was a ten week Centenary Exhibition at the Central Library and the St. Helens Centenary Show (3.3). Part of the show was a carnival procession from the Town Hall to Sherdley Park, with thick crowds lining the streets along the way. The show’s success was reflected in its retention as an annual event drawing tens of thousands of attendees.

The 2018 celebrations had many similarities. 2018 was a doubly significant year, being also the 70th anniversary of St. Helens’ twinning with German city Stuttgart, the first such post-war partnership in Europe. The civic side of the celebrations were again visible. ‘St. Helens Day’ was billed as a ‘civic parade, led by the Mayor, to celebrate the

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351 ‘Civic service by St. Helens Parish Church’, SHLHA, ST/10/37/4-11 St. Helens Centenary Celebrations.
353 ‘Programme of events’, SHLHA, ST/10/37/4-11.
354 ‘Supplementary programme of events’, SHLHA, ST/10/37/4-11.
355 ‘St. Helens Centenary Queen Contest 1968: Girls!!! Does your face fit this figure?’, SHLHA, ST/10/37/4-11.
356 ‘Programme of events’, SHLHA, ST/10/37/4-11.
people of the borough’. Combining a procession with music, street entertainment, and vintage vehicles, the event had shades of the Centenary parade and was praised by the local press as something ‘we can all be proud of’. The Stuttgart anniversary, meanwhile, saw a large civic delegation including the city’s mayor, councillors, representatives from a business school, the city’s university, two high schools, and a local football team welcomed to St. Helens.

Industry, or rather its legacy, was prominent in the anniversary’s billing. The council’s quarterly magazine emphasised the town’s many industrial ‘firsts’ (industrial canal, passenger railway, mass-produced painkiller) in outlining the celebrations’ purpose. The exhibition ‘Where things are different’ saw photographer Stephen King work with former Pilkington’s, Beechams, and mine workers, using their experiences to produce photographs to decorate the banks of the Sankey Canal. Ken Loach’s ‘The Rank and File’, about the 1970 Pilkington’s strike, was screened. A local brewery produced a commemorative ale called ‘1868’ based off an 1860s Greenall-Whitley recipe. The beer’s label depicted a coal mine, reflecting the town’s mining past. The town’s brewing heritage was also celebrated for the Stuttgart anniversary, with the commemorative ‘Siebzig’ (‘Seventy’) beer produced in collaboration with a Stuttgart brewery. A driving force behind many of the celebratory events was the arts collective Heart of Glass, named after the town’s glassmaking.

Of greater prominence, though, than either the civic or industrial themes was the community involvement: ‘as the emphasis of the programme will be people and place driven, local communities are being encouraged to get involved’. Many events were free to ensure accessibility, and local groups, associations, and volunteers were heavily involved. The events combined the public, private, and voluntary sectors.

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360 ‘Stuttgart visits twin town’.
361 Anon., ‘What are we celebrating?’, St. Helens First, (Spring 2018), p.8.
364 Kelsey Maxwell, ‘Have a pint from the history books’, St. Helens Star, 01.02.2018, p.28. The same brewery offers other heritage-themed beers, such as ‘Lucem’ (a nod to the town’s motto ‘Ex terra luceum’) and ‘Providence’, a nod to the nineteenth century hospital of the same name.
368 Ibid. ; ‘St. Helens 150 events’.
369 Anon., ‘A year-long cultural celebration’, St. Helens First, (Spring 2018), p.7 ; Bartie et al., ‘Performing the past’, p.34.
Helens Day parade, for instance, involved 16 community groups.370 ‘We are still here’, which saw the town hall lit by 200,000 lumens of light, involved collaboration with local disability groups, whilst an associated stop-frame animation film produced by local school children and community groups was aired during the event.371

Throughout the programme, different events shone lights on different local communities, like the Westfield Street Music Festival featuring over 50 local and regional acts, the St. Helens Armed Forces Day celebrations in Victoria Park, or the ‘prayer for St. Helens’ collaboration between 16 local churches. The prayer, partially compiled from ‘dreams and hopes’ for the town contributed by local residents, reflected many symptoms of de-industrialisation’s ‘half-life’: the desire for ‘increasing prosperity and improved employment’, the need to ‘improve the physical and mental health of our residents’, to provide ‘effective help and support’ for those in need, to ensure ‘high quality education and […] fruitful leisure opportunities’, and to foster cohesion through an ‘inclusive community’ with a ‘sense of pride’ in a town that is ‘a place of welcome […] where all sections of our community live and work well together’.372

The programme’s success confirmed its community-building impact. ‘Hundreds’ attended the town prayer reading and the St. Helens Day parade.373 ‘We are still here’ attracted around 500 spectators despite the wintry conditions.374 The most innovative community-building element was the online Community Archive launched during the celebrations, building on their heritage focus.375 Run by the town’s local archives, it is accessible for anyone to view and, crucially, the content is largely based on items (photographs, videos, audio) uploaded by the public.376 The project also involved schools outreach and digitising archive photographs and oral history collections.377 It recalls the ‘People’s Show’ movement, started in Walsall in 1991 when local collectors were invited to use museum space to curate their own exhibition or archive.378 The archive currently

373 Ibid. ; ‘A parade we can all be proud of’.  
375 In addition to those discussed, there was an event called ‘Helen’ about the role of women in history and a special Heritage Weekend. See: ‘2018 promises to be a very special year for all of us…’.  
377 Ibid.  
378 By 1994, there were 5,000 People’ Show collections on display across the country. See: Samuel, Theatres of Memory, pp.26-27 ; Local Government Association, ‘Transforming local archive services:
contains over 3,700 items from the late-nineteenth century to the present, covering the whole town and topics from industrial development and sports and leisure right up to the Covid-19 pandemic.\textsuperscript{379} Directly involving local people in the curation and generation of heritage collections helps break down barriers between the archives and the public. As noted, St. Helens’ are under-promoted and under-used so projects like the Community Archive facilitate contributions to, and raise awareness of, their holdings.

Elements of the 1968 and 2018 celebrations are visible in other heritage events, too, particularly industrial ones. For mining, the 1979 Golborne Colliery disaster, when ten miners died in an underground explosion, is commemorated five-yearly with a procession led by Golborne Brass Band.\textsuperscript{380} In 1990, St. Helens celebrated 450 years of coal mining with various events aimed at and involving different local communities. Some events combined the civic and the industrial, like the Parish Church commemoration service, the unveiling of a blue plaque for the town’s mining heritage, and the Theatre Royal musical finale. Other events celebrated mining and working-class culture, like the Miners’ Gala, entertainment nights at local Labour clubs, and a schools production celebrating mining heritage.\textsuperscript{381} In 2018, the Wood Pit disaster’s 140\textsuperscript{th} anniversary was remembered with a ‘choral homage’ led by Haydock Male Voice Choir, originally formed by miners in 1923. A local school choir, a talk on mining in Haydock, and an exhibition of related local archive and World of Glass artefacts also featured.\textsuperscript{382} Such events bring the local community together through participation or attendance. For the mining disasters, it is a chance to pay respects to the victims and their families. Many different groups are involved, broadening awareness of local heritage. They help preserve the town’s working-class culture, like its brass bands and male voice choirs, many of which have industrial roots (3.1), and partially fill the gaps in St. Helens’ heritage identified in the heritage strategy study.\textsuperscript{383}

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Beyond one-off celebrations, St. Helens boasts various industrial monuments and statues, alongside more civic-minded ones like war memorials and a Grade II*-listed Queen Victoria statue, as shown in Figs.3.4.1-3.4.3.384

Fig.3.4.1a: Grade II-listed statue ‘The Miner’ (or ‘The Anderton Mining Monument’), pictured from afar.

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384 ‘Statue of Queen Victoria’, <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1075878>, accessed: 03.03.2021. ‘Grade II*’ is a categorisation between ‘Grade II special interest’ and ‘Grade I exceptional interest’.
Fig.3.4.1b: Grade II-listed statue ‘The Miner’ (or ‘The Anderton Mining Monument’), set on a roundabout on the ring-road close to the former Ravenhead colliery where the Anderton Shearer, which revolutionised mining, was first used in the 1950s.385

Fig. 3.4.2: mining monument 'The Landings', also sited on a ring-road roundabout and unveiled following the 1990 commemorations of mining in St. Helens. The statue and the roundabout share the same name, a ‘landing’ being the mining term for a junction of underground pit roads. The statue depicts a mining family, the adult male using a coal pick, the young boy breaking coal, and the female as a ‘pit brow lass’, highlighting ‘the inclusion of the whole community in the mining industry and so the total devastation when it ended’.  

Fig. 3.4.3a: 'The Workers Memorial' statue.
‘The Workers Memorial’, unveiled in 2019 in tribute to industrial workers who lost their lives due to industry-related accidents or illness and situated between the town centre and the rugby stadium on land which in the nineteenth century was known as Lyons Yard, an important industrial transport hub. The site is not especially ‘obvious’, sandwiched between busy roads, the canal, retail parks, and industrial estates, and is susceptible to vandalism.387 This close up in particular shows the donated work tools which were used to create the statue.

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The community-building potential of these is not always clear, particularly given their locations make them difficult to visit close up. They are nonetheless symbolic and visual reminders of the town’s industrial legacy, along with prominent industrial buildings linked to Beechams, Greenall-Whitley, and Pilkington’s (Figs.3.4.4-3.4.6). The community element of the Workers Memorial, meanwhile, is reflected in its funding by charitable donations and its construction from donated workman’s tools, many from St. Helens residents. The sheer number of industry-related monuments underlines the town’s industrial identity and heritage and, like the periodic commemorations, fills some holes in St. Helens’ heritage story, particularly around mining.

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Fig.3.4.4a: the former Beecham’s factory in the town centre.

388 ‘Remembering workers who lost their lives’.
Fig. 3.4.4b: the former Beecham’s factory in the town centre.
**Fig.3.4.5:** the decorative frontage of the former town centre Greenall-Whitley brewery. The frontage currently decorates two empty large retail units formerly home to Marks & Spencers and Woolworths. What was the brewery has since become The Hardshaw Centre shopping arcade.
Fig. 3.4.6a: the Pilkington’s Head Office on Prescot Road, a skyscraper visible across the town (as shown in Chapter 1).
Fig.3.4.6b: the Pilkington’s Head Office on Prescot Road.
The community-building issues with monuments are best illustrated with the Dream statue (Fig.3.4.7). Part of Channel 4’s ‘Big Art Project’, Dream involved the community from its inception, with 3,000 people attending 24 public exhibitions.390 A focus group of local ex-miners were heavily involved in Dream’s design. They wanted to avoid overt mining symbolism, believing many such monuments to be ‘dour’ and backwards-looking.391 Moreover, the town already had obvious mining monuments, like the original Sutton Manor colliery gates (Fig.3.4.8) and the above statues.392 Dream’s initial design, shaped like a miner’s lamp, was accordingly rejected. There are mining links, though: the white materials represent light (reflecting the town’s motto ‘ex terra lucem’ (‘out of the ground, light’)), the statue sits on a replica miner’s tally (tokens used to show if a miner was underground or not), and the girl’s closed eyes reflect her ‘looking inwards […] in homage to the miners and their dream of light when underground’.393

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392 Kelsey Maxwell, ‘Dream believers calling for action’, St. Helens Star, 09.05.2019, p.3.
393 ‘The story of Dream’; ‘The Dream concept’.
Fig.3.4.7a: The Dream statue, on the site of the former Sutton Manor colliery.
Fig.3.4.7b: unveiled in 2009, Dream celebrates St. Helens' mining past and future regeneration. It depicts a girl's face, eyes closed, ‘dreaming not only about her future but also that of the former colliery site and St. Helens’. The stark contrast between the statue’s white concrete/marble and the ‘darkness of the mine and coal’ beneath symbolises its future orientation. Alongside the surrounding Sutton Manor Community Woodland, Dream is ‘a beautiful, inspiring, contemplative space for generations to come’.394

Dream’s official opening attracted 2,000 spectators and was ‘warmly received’. The unveiling showcased many elements of traditional mining and working-class culture, including a Whit Walk to Sutton Manor, a May Queen, and performances by brass bands and choirs. In surveys, 85% believed Dream would create a ‘positive image’ for and attract visitors to St. Helens, and 75% believed it would become an ‘icon’ for the North West. Related projects involving different community groups, like schoolchildren, resulted in two DVDs and a short book entitled ‘Sutton Manor, its Colliery and Community’.

Despite this, Dream has never wholly fulfilled expectations, even for the miners involved in its creation. It has never been entirely popular locally. During development, rumours that council tax revenue was funding the sculpture whilst many locals were

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397 ‘Dream at 10’.
398 ‘Dream could be so much more’; ‘Dream believers calling for action’.
struggling due to de-industrialisation and the 2008 financial crisis led to criticism. Its design, lacking obvious links to mining or St. Helens, initially received negative public feedback. Both the heritage strategy and the site studies identify issues with Dream and the surrounding woodland. There is tension between the council, who manage the statue, and Forestry England, who manage the woodland (reclaimed from the colliery before the statue’s inception). Over time, the views from and of Dream have been obscured by tree growth, revealing conflict between its ‘intended status’ as a visible landmark and its forest location. In terms of visitor experience, the site has suffered vandalism to interpretation boards and lighting, the available parking is across a busy road, and there is no visitor centre. A heritage trail featuring audio interpretation seems ‘almost forgotten’. These shortcomings limit its appeal and, thus, its community-building potential. The site study reveals generational differences towards Dream, more popular with younger residents. Forestry England notes regular complaints over litter, dog fouling, (lack of) litter bins, and motorbikes – and the view-obscuring trees. Site study respondents concurred, criticising the lack of facilities and ‘tatty’ woodland. This unfulfilled potential is borne out by online user reviews averaging ratings of 3.5/5.

Whilst Dream’s journey has not been entirely smooth, it does illustrate heritage’s importance to community. Despite its criticisms and shortcomings, visitor numbers are good: 25,000 in its first year rising to 85,000 by 2018 – plus the millions of passing motorists. Its development saw active community participation and close consultation with former miners. Criticisms of its design or of the site, like the strong opinions around the Gamble Institute, demonstrate community attachment to local heritage and identity. Some of Dream’s shortcomings may be rectified in the near future, too, with the announcement in 2021 of a three-mile mining heritage trail offering walkers old photographs of the colliery, facts about mining in Sutton Manor, and information about

399 ‘Dream at 10’. 400 Lingard et al., ‘Heritage opportunities’, p.10. At the time of writing, there was disappointment locally that a decision to regenerate a former pub near Dream did not include a heritage centre dedicated to the site. Jess Phillips, ‘They’re missing a big opportunity’, St. Helens Star, 18.03.2021, p.10. 401 Lingard et al., p.18. 402 Waugh, ‘…industrial heritage markers…’ p.22. 403 Ibid., p.26. 404 Ibid., p.27. 405 The full breakdown of reviews is: Excellent 70; Very Good 113; Average 89; Poor 43; Terrible 39. ‘Dream’, <https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g227131-d1553149-Reviews-Dream-St_Helens_Merseyside_England.html#REVIEWS>, accessed: 04.03.2021. Other local leisure and heritage amenities, like the World of Glass, the North West Museum of Road Transport, Carr Mill Dam, Victoria Park, and Sherdley Park all boast ratings of over four. 406 Lingard et al., ‘Heritage opportunities’, p.10.
Dream. 407 Alongside raising awareness of the site’s history, the trail will improve Dream’s accessibility and user experience, helping fulfil its community-building capacity. Existing heritage trails were criticised in the heritage strategy study so the mining trail – plus another new trail based around rugby league – will improve St. Helens’ heritage offering on that front. 408

The focus group of miners involved in Dream’s creation and the groups behind the mining trail are further indicators of heritage’s community-building potential. Though the heritage strategy study bemoans local heritage groups’ lack of co-ordination, they represent active local communities dedicated to local heritage and regeneration. 409 The Northwest Miners Heritage Association, for instance, has 942 members on Facebook. Such groups often drive local heritage projects. The Rainhill Railway and Heritage Society is key to commemorations of St. Helens’s railway heritage, like the plaque confirming its status as the railway’s birthplace and the 190th anniversary gala celebrations. 410 Friends of Cannington Shaw are dedicated to preserving the former Cannington Shaw bottle shop, placed on the Victorian Society’s list of most endangered Victorian buildings in 2017. Alongside campaigning for the site’s preservation and raising awareness, the group documents its history and preserves related archival material gathered locally. 411 Even groups not specifically focused on heritage contribute to its preservation and celebration, reflecting the overlapping sources of community shown across the chapter. The Newton and Earlestown Community Group, for instance, campaigned to commemorate the Vulcan Works’ locomotive manufacturing, raising £25,000 for the restoration and relocation of a former Vulcan locomotive to the site. 412 These groups often focus on less well documented aspects of the town’s heritage, contributing again to filling the holes identified in the heritage strategy study.

409 Lingard et al., ‘Heritage opportunities’, p.17.
3.5: Conclusion

Overall for community, the chapter bears out Nick Dyer’s hopeful vision more than the Daily Mirror’s doom-and-gloom picture (3.0). The persistence of (sense of) community stemming from various and often overlapping sources concurs with Clapson and Ramsden’s analysis arguing for the persistence of associational community across the post-war period.

Part 3.1 found striking similarities between workplace recreation facilities at Pilkington’s and other industrial companies, revealing a widespread framework for workplace-based community and industrial citizenry. These provisions followed their industries’ fortunes: expanding with industrialisation, most comprehensive when the industries dominated the town, and weakening with de-industrialisation. These provisions reached beyond the workplace, particularly by the later twentieth century, as industrial employers, Pilkington’s especially, opened their provisions to St. Helens’ wider community. Rugby league, professional and amateur, is the most thriving element of St. Helens’ traditional workplace and working-class communities today. It is also, for the present day and the industrial North where it is dominant, a better example than football of community-building around sport.

This chapter, particularly 3.1 and 3.3, challenges the notion that paternalistic and/or civic efforts of prominent nineteenth century industrialists had declined by the mid-twentieth century. In terms of workplace-based communities and municipal leisure provision, the influence of St. Helens’ industries and major industrialists outlasts the industries themselves into the present day. Part 3.3 also showed that smaller leisure improvements in towns like St. Helens and, particularly, the growing role of community in these provisions is as worthy of consideration as the grander leisure-age projects explored by scholars like Saumarez-Smith. Just as regeneration literature overlooks smaller and/or industrial towns in favour of new towns, so too small-scale provision developments are overlooked in favour of the new and exciting. Part 3.4 showed heritage as a source of local identity, pride, and community through St. Helens’ repeated large-scale commemorative events involving diverse sections of the community. The continued influence of the civic-minded action of the town’s leading industrialists into the present day was again visible.

Throughout the chapter, a sense of community is evident. Whilst some aspects, like industrial work-based communities, have declined, others like rugby league remain
strong. Despite de-industrialisation, there is evidence of elements of traditional working-class culture persisting, as shown in 3.1 and 3.4. The non-work micro-communities explored in 3.2 show a strong degree of permanence – both the range in existence and the continued existence of certain ones over extended periods – even if membership of and engagement with them is impermanent. The attitudes of industrial employers and the local council, particularly regarding leisure and recreation, show a desire to involve the community, whilst the persistence of non-work micro-communities and the interest and engagement with local industrial heritage suggests a reciprocal desire for involvement from the communities themselves. Significant overlap in these various sources of community is visible throughout the chapter, showing community’s complexity as a concept.

Demonstrating (sense of) community does not mean everyone in St. Helens felt or feels part of the community (or of multiple (micro-)communities). It does not mean either that everyone wanted or wants to be part of the community (or of multiple (micro-)communities). This is no different to when industrial work-based communities dominated the town. What demonstrating the persistence of community and micro-communities does achieve, however, is to show community in towns like St. Helens is more than just a parallel to industrial development and de-industrialisation. There is evidence of community and community-building across the thesis’ time period, and a number of diverse communities people can belong to. Measuring engagement with these communities has been challenging but, throughout the chapter, a strong and persisting engagement with them has emerged.
Chapter 4 - Community and regeneration

4.0: Introduction

In January 2017, 400 protestors marched five miles from Rainford in north St. Helens to rally outside the Town Hall against the town’s Local Plan.1 In March, another 300 protested outside the Town Hall during a full council meeting.2 Following publication of the Local Plan ‘Preferred Options’ in late 2016, action groups and residents’ associations had sprung up across the town. Posters and placards supporting the groups adorned front windows and gardens. The desire to participate in St. Helens’ regeneration was clear. The proliferation of action groups expressing this desire suggested existing opportunities for participation and the consideration given to local opinion were insufficient.

Regeneration is a pressing issue for many towns, particularly formerly industrial ones like St. Helens. De-industrialisation’s wide-ranging socio-economic ramifications, and concepts like Des McNulty’s ‘multiplier’ effects or Sherry Lee Linkon’s ‘half-life’, have recurred throughout this thesis.3 Although ‘moving beyond the body count’ has been criticised for obscuring de-industrialised workers’ experiences and struggles, de-industrialisation is more than initial job losses.4 Memories of decline form a ‘continuing – if, more often than not, unspoken – affective context’ for residents’ lives – even those not directly involved in industry.5 Recent research reveals an exodus of younger residents from de-industrialised towns to ‘core cities’ with greater employment and leisure opportunities.6 In early 2019, local press reports suggested 43 units, or 13.4% of St.

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Helens town centre’s retail capacity, lay empty.\textsuperscript{7} Interviews with local residents underline its dilapidation and unpleasantness:

the town centre, the shops, you know the quality shops have gone and… the sort of people that you meet in the town centre isn’t very nice\textsuperscript{8}

some of the shopping areas, I remember when they opened in the 70s […] and it was like the bees-knees when they first opened, this is modern […] but obviously they’re showin’ their age now and if you go to say Warrington […] the shopping area still looks fairly brand new\textsuperscript{9}

As this chapter shows, similar attitudes exist towards the town’s wider condition and regeneration attempts. In such circumstances, successful regeneration to replace lost industrial jobs, reinvigorate local economies, and stem the loss of younger residents is vital, as St. Helens’ Local Plan recognises:

in recent decades the traditional industries have declined in importance, with a corresponding reduction in jobs and business opportunities, and the creation of a legacy of derelict and […] contaminated land. These issues lie at the heart of many challenges facing the Borough.\textsuperscript{10}

Mainstream discourse often associates de-industrialisation with community decline.\textsuperscript{11} The potential for such decline only increases as younger residents leave. However, scholars like Alice Mah identify parallels between attitudes towards de-industrialisation and (post-industrial) regeneration, the legacy of closure impacting attitudes towards regeneration. Mah depicts communities formerly linked by shared industrial working experiences now linked by attitudes towards regeneration, encapsulating Linkon’s idea of a de-industrial ‘half-life’.\textsuperscript{12} As with Chapter 1’s case studies, these communities seek to protect local interests against outside ones. Scholars

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{8} Interview PhD/001, August 2018.
  \item \textsuperscript{9} Interview PhD/002, September 2018.
  \item \textsuperscript{11} A recent example is David Edgerton’s \textit{The Rise and Fall of the British Nation: A Twentieth Century History}, (Allen Lane, London, 2018), p.454.
  \item \textsuperscript{12} Alice Mah, \textit{Industrial Ruination, Community, and Place: Landscapes and Legacies of Urban Decline}, (University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2012), pp.73-78, 153-157.
\end{itemize}
like Sarah Mass and Simon Gunn show action groups concerned with urban (re-)development existing as far back as the 1960s and 1970s.13

This chapter traces the development of public participation in urban (re-)development and regeneration from the 1960s to present, hanging around two important evolutions. Firstly, the 1960s political focus on public participation, culminating in the 1968 Town and Country Planning Act and the 1969 Skeffington Report. Secondly, the impact from the 1980s of worsening de-industrialisation, the ‘turn to community’, and the attitude towards planning of Margaret Thatcher’s government, particularly figures like Michael Heseltine. Both public participation and redevelopment/regeneration belong to a longer history of planning with visible similarities persisting throughout this chapter’s period. Policies recur across successive redevelopment schemes – improving the retail offer, attracting new employers, better housing – and aim to improve local living conditions and avoid being “left behind”. The succession of redevelopment or regeneration schemes visible in places like St. Helens, it has been argued, reflects regeneration’s inherent incompleteness: ‘landscapes of industrial ruination will become landscapes of regeneration, reuse, demolition or abandonment all over again’.14

Crucially, though, the changing socio-economic context in which different schemes are elaborated alters their framing, the 1960s’ modernising optimism contrasting with today’s post-decline rescue mission. Changing political attitudes towards planning, like the evolutions around which the chapter hinges, impact the nature of the schemes and participation in them. Differences are evident in public consultation before and after the changes of the late 1960s (“official” participation), as is a growth in grass-roots participation from residents since the 1980s, concomitant with de-industrialisation (“unofficial” participation). Critiques of public involvement in redevelopment or regeneration – particularly grass-roots action groups – often use the derogatory term ‘NIMBY’ (“not-in-my-backyard”) and suggest the opposition only represents more affluent middle-class residents, although some recent studies of de-industrialised areas do praise grass-roots ‘community regeneration’ efforts.15 This chapter shows that, while


14 Mah, Industrial Ruination, p.9.

participation in regeneration is never wholly inclusive, participants are not so limited as the NIMBY acronym implies.

Ultimately, the chapter argues that participation in regeneration generates and maintains a sense of community in places affected by de-industrialisation. The people involved in regeneration activism are not always the same people who participated in anti-industrial closure campaigns but there are similarities in aims, methods, and tactics. The chapter traces debates on public participation in planning during the 1960s before examining participation in practice by comparing St. Helens’ Central Area Development (CAD) signed-off in 1969 and the Town Centre District Plan (TCDP) a decade later. In light of government attitudes to regeneration since the 1980s and the impact of the town’s de-industrialisation, the chapter then considers the growing emergence of grass-roots participation, heeding Mass’ call for greater focus on ordinary people in the history of planning and redevelopment.16 It analyses the emergence and development of Operation Groundwork from the late 1970s, another example (like Chapter 2’s Community of St. Helens Trust) of St. Helens at the forefront of regeneration initiatives. It then examines ongoing issues around St. Helens’ current Local Plan, notably the proliferation of action groups since 2015 and their precursors formed in the aftermath of earlier de-industrialisation.

4.1: Public participation in planning

By the 1950s, post-war legislation gave planning a ‘distinct social function […] concerned with the way people lived as well as the way buildings looked’. Planning had to ‘satisfy the public that it improves the daily quality of life’, although generating favourable public opinion was complicated.17 Both American and British scholars, however, feared planning and development was conceived ‘in the image of too abstract or incomplete picture of human society […] rooted in theories of social organisation reached by intuition, but not adequately supported by observation or experience’.18 Investigations into lived experiences of planned environments supported this fear, for instance the ‘involuntary links’ forced upon people by the design of post-war housing

estates. The sociologist Ray Pahl warned of disruption caused by planning and redevelopment to existing communities and residents: ‘certain forces are at work modifying the social, economic and geographic conditions with which the original community was associated and creating a new kind of community based on a wider set of conditions’.

Recent historiography on post-war Britain picks up similar themes. Pahl’s conflict between existing and new communities amidst post-war expansion mirrors Mah’s work on post-industrial regeneration, ‘local’ versus ‘outside’ interests, and ‘place attachment’. Guy Ortolano and Otto Saumarez-Smith, meanwhile, examine planning and redevelopment’s impact on places and the people who use them. Both highlight the post-war planning optimism as belief in continued economic growth and material prosperity fuelled expansive modernist schemes catering for increased car ownership, leisure, and shopping. Ortolano contrasts ‘physical’ planning where experts built environments for people with ‘social’ planning which placed people ‘at the centre of attempts to build community’. This transition from physical to social coincided with increased focus on participation during the 1960s, reflecting the broader civic and social activism sparked by frustration at being estranged from the levers of government decision-making. Mass (‘save the market’ campaigns) and Gunn (protests against urban highways) offer examples of this in relation to planning and development, reflecting people’s wish to ‘regain control’ of ‘ordinary spaces and institutions’, to maintain their ‘day-to-day material interests’ and the ‘coherence of their particular lived environments’.

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23 Ortolano, Thatcher’s Progress, p.53 ; Saumarez-Smith, Boom Cities, pp.14-34.


Concern over public participation, like other contemporary planning trends including modernism and state intervention, was cross-party.\textsuperscript{27} In 1961, the Conservative Minister for Housing and Local Government stressed the importance of public opinion and sufficient public consultation.\textsuperscript{28} The subsequent ‘Urban Planning Bulletin No.1’ billed public support as ‘the vital factor’ and advocated early consultation and public engagement in planning.\textsuperscript{29} Under Labour, the 1967 Civic Amenities Act encouraged participation in conservation through local ‘conservation advisory committees’ and ‘joint action’ initiatives between local authorities and residents.\textsuperscript{30} The 1968 Town and Country Planning Act afforded greater public involvement than its predecessors: the citizen ‘must be given information’ about development plans ‘and an opportunity to make his views known to his local planning authority’.\textsuperscript{31} The 1968 \textit{Committee on Public Participation in Planning}, from which emerged the 1969 Skeffington Report, should have been the apex of thinking on public participation though it has since been criticised as ‘mundane’ and ‘obvious’.\textsuperscript{32} The Report nevertheless remains a reference in planning histories, pinpointing key participation issues and suggesting a framework for overcoming these.

The Report defined ‘participation’ as ‘the act of sharing in the formulation of policies and proposals […] doing as well as talking […] tak[ing] an active part throughout the planning process’.\textsuperscript{33} The Report worried that local authorities informed rather than involved the public, stating full participation ‘is additional’ to having the right to object. Accounting for wider demands for participation in the democratic process, the Report said participation should ‘cover the broadest interests of people’ as ‘a point of entry to civic matters as a whole’.\textsuperscript{34}

Early participation was advocated, alongside consistently conveying information to the public in between ‘set pauses’ for major participation to sustain interest.\textsuperscript{35} The
Report emphasised visible results, even small aesthetic improvements like tree planting which might involve local voluntary organisations.\textsuperscript{36} Planning had been divided into broad Structure Plans and place-specific Local Plans, and the Report identified four similar stages for participation in both: announcement of proposals; the survey stage; ‘identification of choices’; and ‘statement of favoured proposals’. For both sorts of plans, the final stage was ‘key’, requiring various tools to stimulate participation: explanatory documents, publicity, exhibitions, public meetings, films, questionnaires and comments sheets, etc.\textsuperscript{37} It was recommended that Local Plans capitalise also on the survey stage to involve local organisations like amenity societies, Women’s Institutes, or senior year school pupils.\textsuperscript{38}

The Report recognised the challenges in guaranteeing participation. It evoked society’s division into ‘joiners’ and ‘non-joiners’, pertinent to all questions of community involvement and, for planning and regeneration, critiques of exclusivity and NIMBY-ism.\textsuperscript{39} The Report advocated Community Forums for joiners and Community Development Officers for non-joiners. Joiners likely belonged to existing community groups which the Forums would encourage to collaborate and aid to communicate with the authorities. The Forums would be local authority-instigated but subsequently left to local initiative. Development Officers would locate non-joiners and prompt their participation, provide information, transmit comments, and foster links to existing groups or create new ones.\textsuperscript{40}

Forums and Development Officers were poorly received, the former too formal and top-down, the latter ‘unnecessary nannying’.\textsuperscript{41} Many of the Report’s recommendations were largely ignored, coinciding as it did with the local government reorganisation which culminated in the Redcliffe-Maude Report and the 1972 Local Government Act.\textsuperscript{42} This created larger local government units, which some feared would benefit joiners (or, at least, the mobile middle-classes more able to join) and further distance non-joiners from the democratic process.\textsuperscript{43} It divided planning responsibility between two levels of local government, causing clashes and delays which meant plans

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid., p.35.
\item Ibid., pp.45-55.
\item Ibid., pp.58-59.
\item Ibid., pp.9, 43.
\item Ibid., pp.24-28, 30-33.
\item Ortolano, \textit{Thatcher’s Progress}, p.154.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
were often outdated by the time of their adoption, effectively nullifying the benefit of public involvement.44

4.2: Pre- and post-Skeffington: participation in the Central Area Development (CAD) and Town Centre District Plan (TCDP)

4.2.1: The plans

The thinking behind the Skeffington Report nevertheless reflected the preoccupation with participation. Its influence is visible in the differing participation between St. Helens’ CAD and TCDP.

![Fig.4.2.1A: St. Helens town centre – artists’ impression of the 1960s Central Area Development](image)

St. Helens’ CAD, signed off in 1969, was elaborated amidst the 1960s modernising optimism which had laid bare its centre’s deficiencies: ‘one of the least attractive of Lancashire’s industrial towns’.\(^{46}\) Its retail landscape was weaker than nearby towns and cities, its market ‘clearly outdated and ripe for development’.\(^{47}\) Quality shops and national multiples were lacking, the Co-operative, Woolworths, and Marks & Spencer’s aside.\(^{48}\) Turnover per head was significantly less than nearby Warrington and Wigan. Only around half of residents shopped in the centre, compared to over 70% and 80% in Warrington and Wigan respectively.\(^{49}\) Its transport infrastructure was insufficient for growing car usage, too much heavy industry clogged the retail district, and many retail

\(^{46}\) Note ‘St. Helens’, (03.05.1967), TNA, HLG79/1201, St. Helens Central Area Redevelopment No.1 – Post-Inquiry Correspondence.

\(^{47}\) Goddard & Smith, ‘Supplementary report on the redevelopment of the central area’, SHLHA, ST/10/30/10.


\(^{49}\) The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited, ‘Viability report on St. Helens Central Development Area prepared for the Town Council’, (February 1967), p.19, SHLHA, ST/10/30/15. These figures are tricky, as another study based on ‘shopping catchment area’ rather than population suggested St. Helens’ smaller catchment area gave it a larger turnover than nearby towns.
and housing premises were obsolescent.\textsuperscript{50} The CAD’s Public Inquiry described St. Helens as a ‘gradually dying shopping centre’.\textsuperscript{51}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{ground_floor_plan.png}
\caption{Ground Floor Plan of St. Helens Central Area}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{50} County Borough of St. Helens, ‘Redevelopment of central area: report on survey and proposals’, (August 1963, revised June 1965), SHLHA, ST/10/30/12.

In line with prevalent modernising trends, the CAD envisioned a centre residents could be proud of, solidifying a sense of belonging and community. A ‘re-vitalised Centre’ offering ‘dramatic change’ and ‘long awaited shopping facilities and amenities’ was promised for a ‘new St. Helens’. Proposals included ‘complete pedestrianisation […] paved and landscaped. Planting, seating, a water feature and items of sculptural interest […]’, covering and canopies for the main shopping areas, and ‘warm air curtains’ at the entrances to new shopping arcades with capacity for five large stores and 72 ‘flexible units’, alongside two new market halls to replace the existing one with capacity for over 140 stalls between them. Modern materials like concrete and stainless steel, set design specifications, and aesthetic quality were emphasised: colours, ‘natural daylighting […] coffered ceilings, moulded brick panels and tiled finishes’ in the arcades, and no ‘cheap or brash materials’. A central bus station and car parking for over 4,000 vehicles would facilitate outside visitors. A ring-road would transport these visitors to the town centre.

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53 ‘St. Helens Town Centre Redevelopment: Foreword by the Leader of the Council’, (draft, 1969), SHLHA, ST/10/30/19.
54 ‘…The Market Centre’, SHLHA, ST/10/30/21.
and, crucially, remove congestion from the retail streets within it, whilst all industry save Beechams and Greenall-Whitley would be relocated.\textsuperscript{55} This modernisation would not entirely dispense with the town’s past: the two main redevelopment areas were called ‘the church yard area’ and ‘the market area’, the town’s traditional architecture of ‘moulded brickwork and tiling’ would feature in new buildings, and the pedestrianisation would match the existing street layout.\textsuperscript{56} Nor would it be at the expense of community, with provisions for ‘recreation and entertainment’ (notably youth-oriented ‘ten-pin bowling, dancing, gymnasium […]’), facilities for clubs and societies, and a museum and art gallery for ‘matters of local interest’ and the ‘encouragement of local artists’. Beyond the town centre, the borough would be developed as eight ‘neighbourhoods’ with ‘schools, churches, shops, open spaces and social facilities’, including a ‘community centre situated as centrally as possible’ in each.\textsuperscript{57}

The TCDP, a decade later, was elaborated in much less buoyant socio-economic and planning circumstances. 1960s ‘comprehensive redevelopment’ was predicated on continued economic growth and planners schooled in this optimism struggled to adequately ‘confront’ decline from the 1970s.\textsuperscript{58} Provision for major elements of comprehensive redevelopment, especially retail, was perceived as being ‘excessive in relation to population needs’ on Merseyside by the mid-1970s.\textsuperscript{59} Despite adding over 30,000 square metres of shopping floorspace since 1969, St. Helens still lost shoppers to surrounding towns and cities, particularly from its growing outskirts. The centre lacked ‘large department store[s]’, diverse evening entertainment, convenient public transport, and had lost the Greenall-Whitley brewery. The town still relied on extractive industries and manufacturing, with glass-making accounting for 39% of employment. Of 7,500 town centre employees, 2,200 worked in retail and the service sector overall remained under-developed.\textsuperscript{60}

The TCDP nonetheless built on CAD initiatives, furthering pedestrianisation, extending the ring-road, expanding community and recreation facilities, improving the centre’s environment, consolidating the central shopping area, and stimulating the service

\textsuperscript{55} ‘St. Helens Central Area Development’, (c.1965), SHLHA, ST/10/30/13.
\textsuperscript{56} ‘…The Market Centre’, SHLHA, ST/10/30/21.
\textsuperscript{57} County Borough of St. Helens, ‘Amendment of Development Plan’, (1965), SHLHA, ST/10/30/14.
\textsuperscript{60} …Report of Survey Stage 1’, (c.1977), BLDS, F84/0465 ; ‘…Written Statement and Proposals Map’, BLDS, f84/0471 ; ‘St. Helens Town Centre District Plan: Statement of Public Participation’, (January 1982), BLDS, f84/0396.
sector.\textsuperscript{61} There was far less fanfare, though, with considerations of ‘financial constraints’ and ‘feasibility’ emphasised over revitalisation or dramatic change.\textsuperscript{62} In modernising the centre, both plans hoped to make St. Helens a more appealing place to live, shop, and work. Generating a sense of (civic) pride in the centre might solidify a sense of belonging and community amongst users and make residents care more about the centre, akin to the work-based communities fostered by local industrial employment.\textsuperscript{63}

\textbf{4.2.2: Participation in the plans}

The CAD and the TCDP demonstrate the differences in both official and unofficial participation occasioned by the 1960s changes. The CAD’s development preceded the 1968 Town and Country Planning Act and the Skeffington Report so was unaffected by calls for increased participation. The TCDP, conversely, emerged post-Skeffington and the Report’s influence is clear.

For the CAD, the main participation was the 1967 Public Local Inquiry. The Inquiry noted an exhibition attracting 2,543 people and considered 100 objections to the proposed developments, plus 14 to compulsory purchase orders. Most objections were from town centre businesses, alongside a handful from town centre residents. This seemingly limited participation emphasises why expanding participation was important in the 1960s, something the objections’ main themes underline. These covered the planning process and the proposals themselves, for example the inadequate public consultation, out-of-date surveys, impact on local traders and small businesses, opposition to the ring-road, and opposition to pedestrianisation.\textsuperscript{64}

There is no evidence of unofficial participation in the form of action groups or grass-roots campaigns – even over issues such as ring-roads or demolishing the market hall, which were proving contentious elsewhere. Pre-Skeffington, the scope for generating a sense of community through participation in redevelopment seems limited. Perhaps St. Helens’ proposals were just popular. Market facilities would be improved, so traders and customers were not losing the resource; opposition to the ring-road, meanwhile, came largely from businesses who feared being cut off from the town centre,

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{61} ‘…Written Statement and Proposals Map’, BLDS, f84/0471.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{62} ‘…Foreword by the Leader of the Council’, SHLHA, ST/10/30/19 ; ‘…Written Statement and Proposals Map’, BLDS, f84/0471.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{63} Charlotte Wildman has explored the links between urban redevelopment, civic pride, and community in the inter-war period. See: \textit{Urban Redevelopment and Modernity in Liverpool and Manchester, 1918-1939}, (Bloomsbury, London, 2016), p.64.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{64} ‘Report on the public local inquiry…’, TNA, HLG79/1200.}
\end{footnotes}
i.e. those *directly* affected by the developments. Alternatively, it could reflect disinterest in the developments, something suggested by the low proportion of St. Helens’ residents who used the centre. 65

The town’s major industrial employers, however, did show keen interest. Glassmakers Pilkington’s and United Glass Bottlemakers believed ‘the drab and inadequate appearance of the town matches ill with the nature of [our] industry and is of positive detriment to the impression given to both foreigners and visitors and in the development of the industry itself’. 66 Greenall-Whitley shared this view, after initial misgivings: ‘in order to keep pace with the modern times, the St. Helens Corporation have to have Central Redevelopment. As our company is one of the oldest Companies to operate in this town, it would be most retrograde to stand in the way of progress’. 67 Such companies had long contributed to the town’s development so expected their opinions to matter. 68 As in Chapter 1, paternalism remains visible even well into the post-war era, suggesting influence was strong in smaller towns where the relative dependence on major employers was greater. It also illustrates the importance for such companies of St. Helens not being left behind other towns, a fear shared in different circumstances by regeneration activists today.

The TCDP offered a more proactive and varied approach to participation, reflecting the 1960s developments discussed above. Participation was sought in April 1977 when the plan’s formulation began and in February 1981 when the Draft Proposals were published, as summarised. 69

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65 ‘Viability report on St. Helens Central Development Area…’, SHELHA, ST/10/30/15.
66 Note about St. Helens to Mr. Cox, (28.05.1967), TNA, HLG79/1201.
67 Letter to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, (15.03.1967), TNA, HLG79/1200.
69 ‘…Statement of Public Participation’, BLDS, f84/0396.
Both stages saw limited engagement. In 1977, one local organisation returned comments and three requested meetings; in 1981, eighteen statutory undertakers but only six local organisations replied, and only three requested meetings. The 1977 questionnaire generated little enthusiasm and low return rates prompted its redistribution amongst town centre employers. 447 were returned, representing 1,340 residents or 0.7% of the town’s population. In 1981, whilst over 2,000 people saw the exhibition, only 300 comments sheets were taken and twelve returned. In 1981, 240 Policy Statements but only 60 Draft Proposals were sold. The 1977 public meetings attracted just 56 attendees in total; the 1981 meeting 53.70 The Council used most of the Skeffington Report’s methods but still could not guarantee public engagement.

The results of this participation were nevertheless reflected in the 1982 ‘Written Statements and Proposals Plan’. Overall, respondents approved of the proposals, though underlined issues previously highlighted in the CAD: the lack of a central bus station, the need for greater variety of shops (notably a department store like British Home Stores, C&A, or Littlewoods, and a bookshop), and better evening entertainment. Jobs-wise, respondents highlighted the need for a recreation facility for the young and unemployed. Service sector expansion was supported, in preference to noisy and polluting heavy

70 Ibid.
industry. Given later fights against industrial closures, this perhaps justifies critiques that the middle-classes, less invested in the town’s industrial employment, dominate such participation. Yet, respondents prioritised the centre’s practicability (shops, traffic, public transport, employment) over its physical appearance. Broadening ‘cultural facilities’ ranked bottom amongst community and entertainment issues. These considerations read more like those of the everyday users than of people out-of-step with local needs. No demographic information on respondents is provided but the employers to whom questionnaires were given to and, presumably, from where at least some responses were garnered covered white-collar, blue-collar, well-paid, and low-paid jobs.71

The TCDP also saw greater unofficial participation, notably an action group similar to those analysed by Mass and Gunn and those active today. The Duke Street Committee (DSC), with 32 members, represented businesses and traders around Duke Street who feared being cut-off from the town centre by the ring-road extension.72 They already found themselves at one extremity of the centre’s ‘elongated spine’ layout, a consequence of the CAD stretching the shopping area from Duke Street in the west to the train station in the east (Fig.4.2.2).

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71 Ibid.; ‘…Written Statement and Proposals Plan’, BLDS, f84/0471.
72 ‘Statement of Public Participation’, BLDS, f84/0396.
Action groups began emerging when urban conservation and development were becoming a catalyst for community action and participation (from civic societies, tenants’ associations, ratepayers’ associations, chambers of trade, etc.). Mass ‘save the market’ campaigns concerned specifically town centre regeneration and the replacement of traditional market halls with modern shopping centres. More than self-preservation by traders, the markets’ broader contributions to the local character and economy, their appeal to outside visitors, and their importance to local people’s sense of place were evoked. Gunn’s anti-urban highway campaigns similarly combined narrow focus (air pollution and noise) with wider local community ramifications (artificial neighbourhood divisions and exacerbation of socio-economic differences and inequalities). These campaigns were popular. In Bradford, a save the market petition gathered 30,000 signatures, whilst some of Gunn’s groups numbered hundreds of members. Such popularity and community engagement is crucial for groups facilitating unofficial participation to legitimately claim to represent local interests. Existing beyond the legislative framework for participation, ‘whatever powers they exercise […] are dependent on their level of voluntary and wider public support, and continually proving themselves to be worthy of that support’.

Having such particular goals and membership (businesses rather than the general public, in the DSC’s case) arguably justifies critiques of action groups as exclusive. Like Mass’ and Gunn’s groups, though, the DSC’s opposition was framed more widely than self-preservation. They argued their combination of ‘specialised shops’ and services (‘Estate Agents, Solicitors, Sporting Facilities and the Y.M.C.A’) offered a broader selection than the town centre multiples, rendering them ‘necessary’ to the town’s ‘shopping environment’, character, and retail offer. They portrayed the ring-road and traffic island as a ‘psychological barrier for even the most physically fit and an unsurmountable barrier to the elderly’. Though not intrinsically opposed to redevelopment or national multiples, they opposed changes made at their expense, mirroring the local-versus-outside dichotomy Mah describes regarding post-industrial regeneration. They highlighted their reinvesting of profits in the town and their contributions to local employment. They counted support from existing groups like the

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73 Mass, ‘Commercial heritage’, 466-468.
74 Ibid., 460-462.
75 Gunn, ‘Ringroad’, 231-232, 234, 238.
76 Mass, ‘Commercial heritage’, 466-470 ; Gunn, ‘Ringroad’ 234.
Civic Society and the Business and Professional Women’s Club, suggesting a broader sharing of their concerns.\textsuperscript{78}

The DSC hoped that articulating their concerns collectively, rather than individually, would strengthen their voice, an example of participation in planning and redevelopment bringing individuals together as groups or communities. Unlike Mass’ ‘save the market’ or Gunn’s anti-urban highway campaigns, though, the DSC did not capture broader public imagination. Some scholars argue community only comes together in times of ‘crisis’, which the ring-road certainly was for the DSC but less so for the wider public.\textsuperscript{79} Though by the time of the TCDP, the town’s industrial confidence had been knocked, there was little indication of the scale of de-industrialisation to come, little need for the sense of continuity amidst change which Mah sees as fuelling regeneration activism in the later post-industrial context.\textsuperscript{80}

### 4.3: The growth of grass-roots participation

The chapter now examines the 1980s to the present. Like the Skeffington Report, the Thatcher administration, and important figures such as twice Secretary of State for the Environment Michael Heseltine, marked an important evolution in terms of planning and redevelopment. In this period, political focus shifted from modernisation to regeneration, particularly in those areas hit by urban and industrial decline.

Thatcher’s government sought to reduce the scope for participation in planning and looked to an entrepreneurial, business-like model of regeneration with an increased focus on private sector contributions, notably through public-private partnerships.\textsuperscript{81} This was most evident in Heseltine’s flagship London Docklands and Merseyside Development corporations. In St. Helens, the public-private consortium Ravenhead Renaissance was formed to co-ordinate town centre fringe redevelopment, attract outside investment, and compete for government funding. Major schemes included transforming derelict industrial land into retail parks and housing estates, and developing the town’s heritage offer through a new glass museum.\textsuperscript{82}

\textsuperscript{78} ‘…Statement of Public Participation’, BLDS, f84/0396.


\textsuperscript{80} Mah, \textit{Industrial Reination}, pp.184-189.


Alongside this emerged a ‘turn to community’ aligned to the wider enterprise culture (Chapter 2), with various initiatives presented as pro-community, utilising ‘community’ to spark regeneration. In St. Helens, initiatives championed by the government, like the Community of St. Helens Trust (Chapter 2) and Operation Groundwork (environmental regeneration) emphasised voluntary and community participation. Following these mixed messages about community and participation, causing a loss of faith in plans and planning, subsequent governments took different attitudes to regeneration, which have been categorised as: competitive (John Major), neighbourhood renewal (New Labour), and localism (Coalition). Whilst policies in the 1990s and 2000s looked to reintegrate a wider range of stakeholders and return the focus towards community participation, policy in the 2010s has shifted back towards the 1980s. Although the TCDP had met with fairly disappointing public engagement, it and engagement with community-focused regeneration initiatives like Groundwork show a clear desire for participation from within local communities. This grass-roots participation has grown in recent decades, alongside de-industrialisation, a trend suggestive of the desire to protect local interests against outside ones, to exercise agency over the area’s future, to seek continuity in a period of change.

4.3.1: Operation Groundwork

Operation Groundwork – like the Community of St. Helens Trust (CSHT) – is another example of St. Helens pioneering approaches to regeneration. Environmental regeneration is inseparable from urban regeneration. Vanguard urban planners like Patrick Geddes believed urban planning must include both the town or city and the surrounding region, as it was ‘the environment which shaped urban culture’. Groundwork was not the first time St. Helens had been central to debates around environmental management. Pre-industrialisation, richer families sent their children to St. Helens for school and for its ‘attractive, rural-sounding’ addresses like Peasley Vale and

86 Ibid., p.5.
Urban growth and increasing industrial pollution changed this rapidly. Home to alkali manufacturing alongside coal and glass, St. Helens’ ‘notorious’ air pollution affected trees and crops and gave off a fetid smell for miles around. The town’s degraded environment pushed the Earl of Derby to demand a ‘committee of enquiry into noxious vapours’, resulting in the 1863 Alkali Act, an early precursor to the 1956 Clean Air Act.

Twentieth-century Lancashire, meanwhile, was a frontrunner in land reclamation. Operation Springclean, a voluntary scheme organised in 1967-1968 by the Civic Trust for the North West and the North West Economic Planning Council, involved most of the county’s 183 local authorities and aimed to counter the north-west’s ‘worldwide reputation for ugliness and grime’. St. Helens’ 1960s CAD plans likewise highlighted local successes in environmental and land management. In the 1970s, 24 acres of Rainford’s disused collieries were cleared and the site largely returned to its natural state, with picnic areas, a pond for angling, and some agricultural use. Locals voiced concerns over excess traffic so the final plans limited car-parking on site to protect the local environment, hinting at local appetite for involvement in regeneration.

Groundwork has been overlooked by scholars, even those dealing specifically with planning, regeneration, or the environment. John Sheail does not mention it, despite discussing various contemporaneous environmental measures. Town and Country Planning in the UK awards it barely half a page, though acknowledges it as a ‘particularly interesting initiative which […] is now well established’. Even Michael Heseltine, a driving force in Groundwork’s development, affords it scant attention. He does comment, though, that Groundwork has transformed ‘that awful urban fringe of post-industrial blight – litter-strewn streets, neglected fields despoiled by overuse, a general seediness – which so often characterises the frontier between town and country’, alongside wider

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88 Barker and Harris, Merseyside Town, p.178.
90 Ibid., pp.34-37.
93 ‘Amendment of Development Plan’, SHLHA, ST/10/30/14 ; Note ‘St. Helens’, TNA, HLG79/1201.
94 Philip Smith, ‘The social, economic, and spatial change which has occurred in the village of Rainford, near St. Helens, from the 19th century to the present day’, (BA Dissertation, University of Lancaster, 1985), pp.8-9, 19-22, 24-26, 31, SHLHA, MTH/9.
95 John Sheail, An Environmental History of Twentieth-Century Britain, (Palgrave Macmillan, Houndsmills, 2002).
impacts in youth crime prevention, environmental education in schools, job creation in the green economy, and encouraging companies to assess their environmental impact.\(^\text{97}\)

Groundwork predates Thatcher's Conservative governments, emerging from the Countryside Commission’s late-1970s ‘Major Urban Fringe Experiment’. The Commission was increasingly aware of ‘ineffective’ use of urban-rural fringe due to competing land uses and the missed opportunities for leisure, recreation, and reclamation.\(^\text{98}\) Initially, project officers were appointed to particular areas to work with interested parties (landowners, local authorities, conservation volunteers), copying the successful Upland Management Experiments combatting the impact of recreation on National Parks.\(^\text{99}\) For small-scale physical improvements or resolving conflicts between land users to improve access, this was considered effective and several urban fringe schemes were established.\(^\text{100}\) However, these schemes were deemed insufficient for larger issues like industrial blight, waste, or spoil – a ‘considerable concern’ in towns like St. Helens.\(^\text{101}\) Major Urban Fringe expanded these small-scale initiatives, with teams of project officers working with local authorities and representatives of land owners and users, backed by substantial government funding.\(^\text{102}\)

At the time, countryside management meant providing ‘a local service which can resolve conflicts of interests between those who live in and manage the countryside and those who visit the countryside for their recreation […]’\(^\text{103}\) and ‘clearing eyesores and dereliction’.\(^\text{104}\) Actions were linked to an area’s Local or Structural Plan, linking environmental regeneration to wider urban regeneration. The involvement of local communities (land owners/managers, voluntary organisations, local residents) was stressed. Parish councils, schools and colleges, youth groups, prisoners and community service, voluntary wardens, conservation corps, and amenity and recreation groups were suggested sources of manpower, alongside central government schemes like Youth Opportunities Programme and the Special Temporary Employment Scheme.\(^\text{105}\) Formal

\(^{101}\) Green, *Countryside Conservation*, pp.190-191.
\(^{102}\) Handley, ‘Operation Groundwork’, p.3.
\(^{103}\) Countryside Commission, ‘Local authority countryside management policies’, (1978), SHLHA, STSD/19/1.
\(^{105}\) ‘Local authority countryside management…’; ‘Grants to Local Authorities…’, SHLHA, STSD/19/1.
community involvement in countryside management can be traced to the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (1959) and the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Groups (1969), the latter launched the same year as the Upland Management Experiments.\textsuperscript{106} Advisory Panels, particularly for conservation, and community involvement in small-scale regeneration like cleaning local eyesores, had been advocated in the Skeffington Report and the 1967 Civic Amenities Act.\textsuperscript{107}

These themes – local-rootedness, community involvement, dereliction, recreation – were central to Major Urban Fringe. The twin focus of dereliction and recreation influenced the choice of St. Helens and neighbouring Knowsley as its testing ground.\textsuperscript{108} St. Helens ‘despoiled land created by mineral working, waste disposal and neglect’ would test the experiment’s capacity to implement large-scale physical reclamation.\textsuperscript{109} Despite being 60% greenbelt, St. Helens encompassed 60% of the statutory derelict land in Merseyside – some 311 hectares, with a further 477 still in use for active mineral extraction or tipping operations designated as potentially derelict.\textsuperscript{110} Knowsley’s combination of Grade 1 and 2 agricultural land and ‘heritage landscapes’ ‘eroded’ by post-war high-density council housing would test its capacity to resolve land use conflicts.\textsuperscript{111} There was clear local and civic pride when St. Helens was chosen in June 1979.\textsuperscript{112} The local press trumpeted ‘eyes of the world on unique scheme’ as St. Helens welcomed this world-first experiment, the Countryside Commission’s ‘largest ever’ management scheme. The Council Leader said it ‘will involve a great deal of effort from the council, from individual organisations and from the community as a whole’. A shadow nevertheless hung over this bright occasion, with fears that the new Conservative government’s public spending cuts might limit the project’s scale…\textsuperscript{113}

Michael Heseltine’s interest in the urban fringe predated his stint as Secretary of State for the Environment. In the early 1970s, he had been shocked by London’s derelict docks and felt similarly about early 1980s Liverpool. Cleaning up the environment was key to his Urban Development Corporations: ‘the present functional concentration on

\textsuperscript{106} Green, \textit{Countryside Conservation}, pp.189-190.
\textsuperscript{107} ‘People and Planning…’, pp.28, 35; ‘Public Participation in Urban Planning…’, pp.22-23, TNA, CAB152/130.
\textsuperscript{108} Major Urban Fringe Experiment, ‘Visit of Secretary of State for the Environment to St. Helens, 17 June 1980’, SHLHA, STSD/19/3.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{110} Note about derelict and vacant land in St. Helens, (c.1978), SHLHA, STSD/19/1.
\textsuperscript{111} ‘Visit of Secretary of State…’, SHLHA, STSD/19/3.
\textsuperscript{112} Countryside Commission Press Release, ‘St. Helens chosen for Major Urban Fringe Experiment’, (27.06.1979), SHLHA, STSD/19/1. The other candidates were Rochdale-Oldham, Mersey Valley, Greater Nottingham, Derby.
\textsuperscript{113} ‘Eyes of the world on unique scheme’, \textit{St. Helens Reporter}, 26.06.1979, p.1, SHLHA, STSD/19/1.
housing to the exclusion of work, recreation and environment is a mistake of the past’. Though he believed in government and taxpayer contributions to alleviating ‘urban decline’ and ‘social stress’, he ultimately advocated combining public and private resources, ‘bringing local authority, private and voluntary interests into partnership for joint renewal schemes’. As speculated, the change in government did change Urban Fringe Management’s approach and even its name.

In January 1980, Merseyside County Council hinted at a likely reduction in the experiment’s scale. A meeting in March confirmed only ‘ordinary’ government funds were available, not the promised ‘special funding’. Following his June visit, Heseltine confirmed his support but stipulated changes, including reducing manpower to one project officer per area (like the previous smaller-scale countryside management schemes), shortening the experiment timescale, and increasing private sector involvement by setting up a Trust. The local authorities in St. Helens, Knowsley, and Merseyside agreed, as did the Countryside Commission, and the CSHT agreed to help form the Trust. To Heseltine, Trusts were cheaper than public spending and better involved ‘industry and community’ groups. The importance of local private sector and grass-roots involvement was reflected in the name change from Major Urban Fringe to Groundwork, a ‘snappy title’ with connotations of community and themes like ‘ground level’, ‘groundswell’, ‘break new ground’, ‘getting it off the ground’, etc.

Groundwork bore similarities to the CSHT, also backed by Heseltine. It was agreed in 1981 to not use the word ‘enterprise’, despite first drafts of promotional material billing Groundwork as an enterprise trust. Like with the CSHT and its subsequent expansion, Heseltine wanted to see if this local model could be rolled out more widely, an umbrella organisation for urban fringe regeneration. As with enterprise trusts,

116 Letter from MCC County Planning Officer to St. Helen Councillor MJ Doyle, (03.01.1980), SHLHA, STSD/19/2.
117 Meeting on the Countryside Commission Urban Fringe Experiment, (13.03.1980), SHLHA, STSD/19/2.
120 ‘Urban Fringe Project St. Helens/Knowsley, Meeting at St. Helens’, (08.10.1980), SHLHA, STSD/19/2.
121 Note of a meeting on UFEX, (21.11.1980) ; Note of a meeting on UFEX (Operation Groundwork), (04.12.1980), SHLHA, STSD/19/2.
123 Letter from Michael Heseltine, SHLHA, STSD/19/2 ; ‘Making good between town and country…’, SHLHA, STSD/19/3.
Groundwork was designed to be the locally-rooted body acting in the interests and with the co-operation of its local community. Throughout Groundwork’s development, local community involvement was stressed. Archive materials about its development include a Countryside Commission training course brochure for the ‘development and organisation of volunteer programmes’, with sessions focusing on ‘volunteer recruitment and involvement’, ‘using volunteers’, and ‘training and motivation’. Groundwork’s initial Steering Committee involved ‘close communication’ with local interest groups. The private sector element of the project included voluntary bodies. A draft publicity statement proclaimed the ‘knowledge and skills of local people and industries’ were key. A draft brochure said the scheme ‘brings together the skills and resources of local people with the local councils, industry, voluntary organisations and the Countryside Commission’. A draft press release described local community involvement through ‘cash, labour or in other ways’ as ‘essential […] a vital aim’. Another document suggested that without community involvement, the scheme would likely fail. The advert for the role of Groundwork Director and the script for a publicity video emphasised the same themes, foregrounding ‘local knowledge and enthusiasm’ and entreating people to ‘join us as a volunteer, patron or sponsor. Give us a little of your time or special talents…’ As seen with other regeneration projects at this time, successful marketing was considered crucial: ‘public involvement and awareness of the Project are absolutely vital to its success’. In theory, then, Groundwork combined public and private sector resources with a heavy emphasis on the local and the creation and promotion of community through resident and volunteer involvement, similar to the CSHT. It is necessary to look at Groundwork’s evolution, both in St. Helens and as it expanded, to see how this played out in reality.

Groundwork’s quarterly newsletters and Annual Reports offer good insight. They serve a similar function of charting Groundwork’s activities and achievements but are not identical. Their target audience differs, reflected in their presentation and content. The newsletters are shorter and simpler, often in black-and-white. They provide an ongoing

124 ‘Development and organisation of volunteer programmes’, (02-06.03.1981), SHLHA, STSD/19/4.
125 Briefing note for a discussion with the Countryside Commission, (28.03.1979), SHLHA, STSD/19/1.
126 Notes of a meeting with the Countryside Commission, (18.08.1980), SHLHA, STSD/19/2.
128 ‘… Making Good Between Town and Country’, SHLHA, STSD/19/3.
130 ‘Operation Groundwork: enlargement of the Board and involvement of other interested bodies’, (27.08.1981), SHLHA, STSD/19/4.
record of recent Groundwork activities, highlight the work of volunteers through articles and pictures of their work, and underline Groundwork’s sense of community. They advertise forthcoming events and how to get involved. The newsletters are a “pat on the back” for current volunteers and a way of enticing further participation. Their role is similar to the in-house newsletters produced by employers, which promoted a particular ethos or vision of how management wanted the company to be.\textsuperscript{133} The Annual Reports also record Groundwork’s activities but more in a more marketable fashion. The target audience is “shareholders” or “investors”, i.e. public and private bodies with an existing or potential future interest in Groundwork. They are much more professional publications, partly in colour on glossy paper, and include official statistics and financial statements. The volunteers’ contributions are present still, but in less detail than in the newsletters. There is a similar use of pictures to the newsletters, showing groups of smiling volunteers or action shots of volunteers at work to illustrate Groundwork’s positive impact and community spirit.\textsuperscript{134}

It seems Groundwork certainly created a framework for community. Very quickly, several volunteer groups emerged: Groundwork Conservation Volunteers (GCV), Friends of Operation Groundwork (FROGS), and Froghoppers (for children).\textsuperscript{135} GCV feature in the inaugural 1983 newsletter and there is a clear focus on inclusivity: ‘everyone is welcome as the tasks require no experience’.\textsuperscript{136} Membership was diverse, including factory workers, white-collar professionals, pensioners, students, and the unemployed.\textsuperscript{137} The GCV spring 1983 Volunteer Programme included tasks like tree planting and hedging, woodland management, waterway clearance, landscape improvements, and even dune management; this latter task – unsurprisingly – was not in St. Helens but on the coast north of Liverpool and conducted in partnership with other volunteer wildlife groups and university students.\textsuperscript{138} The summer 1983 programme mentions ‘maintenance tours’, showing how Groundwork’s involvement in projects was ongoing, and the ‘FROG Festival’, enabling volunteers to show off their work to a wider public.\textsuperscript{139} Froghoppers allowed children to learn about the environment, engage in basic conservation work like

\textsuperscript{134} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{135} ‘Your Countryside Needs You’ (pamphlet, c.1981), SHLHA, A15(P).
\textsuperscript{136} ‘Operation Groundwork’, (Issue 1, Spring 1983), SHLHA, A15(P).
\textsuperscript{137} ‘Groundwork: The First Decade’, p.21, TNA, COU3/601.
tree planting, and undertake outdoors activities like orienteering.\textsuperscript{140} Belonging to these groups created a sense of allegiance and identity amongst volunteers. Several newsletter photographs show children in their Froghoppers or Groundwork t-shirts.\textsuperscript{141}

Statistics from the newsletters and reports indicate the activities were popular. Events were well-attended from the off, with over 50 people taking courses on land and landscape. These were both educational (with sessions run by geologists, archaeologists, and botanists) and an opportunity for local input. Attendees again hailed from diverse backgrounds, including teachers, miners, farmers, and ramblers, the diverse points-of-view creating an ‘extremely useful picture of perceptions of and attitudes to the environment’.\textsuperscript{142} Around 30 volunteers undertook pond improvements at Whiston in early 1983, an example (like the dune management) of Groundwork working with existing local groups, in this case the Whiston Village Angling Club. Alongside creating community, an umbrella organisation like Groundwork could link existing communities together. Over 30 FROGS and GCVs, meanwhile, toured seventeen Groundwork sites to sample the range of projects, including ‘major land reclamation and landscaping’, school nature gardens, small ‘environmental improvement’ schemes, and tree planting.\textsuperscript{143} In autumn 1983, over 50 volunteers (children and adults) helped clear a silted up section of St. Helens Canal.\textsuperscript{144}

This popularity continued over the years. 1984-85 figures (for the whole Groundwork area, not just St. Helens) said the GCVs contributed to around 50% of all projects, completing 58 tasks since 1982, with 636 adults giving up 1,092 volunteer days.\textsuperscript{145} By 1993, it was estimated the GCVs had completed over 800 tasks.\textsuperscript{146} In 1995, over 120 tasks were ongoing, involving over 260 organisations. 180 volunteer organisations had given up over 7,000 volunteer days between them and, in St. Helens alone, there were 17 community sites and 73 schools projects with 2,000 adults and over 9,000 schoolchildren involved.\textsuperscript{147}

These numbers clearly indicate an increase in Groundwork’s activities across the 1980s and 1990s. They are not, however, the full story of Groundwork’s role in

\textsuperscript{141} Ibid. Whist striking, one wonders if white was a sensible choice for a t-shirt for an outdoors organisation… comments from readers who have worn one are welcomed!
\textsuperscript{142} ‘Operation Groundwork’, (1:1983), SHLHA, A15(P).
\textsuperscript{144} ‘Operation Groundwork’, (3:1984), SHLHA, A15(P).
\textsuperscript{146} ‘Operation Groundwork News’, (Spring 1993), SHLHA, A15(P).
The volunteers’ work was necessary but it was also supposed to be enjoyable, combining purpose and fun to keep people coming back. Regarding the canal clearance, the newsletter remarks that ‘spurred on by numerous cups of tea and lemonade a great deal of digging was done by all’, and that once finished the volunteers were rewarded with a ‘well earned Barbecue and bonfire’. In 1995, one volunteer commented that ‘Groundwork Day is the highlight of the week for both of us […] the best moments are at mid-day when the job is half completed and we sit back and relax with chips and mugs of tea in the outdoors’.

Some events were not tied to particular reclamation activities, like the Christmas parties, the tenth anniversary celebrations for staff and volunteers, and annual Town and Country Fairs. In 1991, St. Helens’ fair attracted over 5,000 visitors and Knowsley’s over 2,500. Groundwork ran schemes like the Lord Winstanley Scholarship, providing travel and training money for young people on low incomes working as environmental volunteers, with preference for those ‘showing promise of furthering their career through the scholarship’. The Young Leaders scheme, meanwhile, gave participants ‘a chance to take a leading role in improving their surroundings’.

There are shades of paternalism in all this, unsurprising given the influence of Heseltine, a self-avowed fan of paternalistic businesses, and the CSHT (a product of Pilkington’s paternalism). A Pilkington’s factory worker was seconded to Groundwork to set up the GCVs and the financial support of ‘major patrons’ such as Pilkington’s and Greenall-Whitley is emphasised; Pilkington’s were described as ‘one of the Trust’s most enthusiastic supporters’. The GCVs, FROGS, and Froghoppers in this imagining are equivalent to industrial sports clubs and societies; the parties and barbecues are the workplace social club or summer fête. If this comparison seems a stretch, there are also similarities with modern-day regeneration groups (4.3.2) building community through quiz nights, dances, and raffles. The below quote captures a can-do spirit of togetherness which Groundwork doubtless considered the embodiment of the ethos it encouraged amongst volunteers:

152 ‘…10th Birthday Special Issue’, SHLHA, A15(P).
154 Heseltine, Where There’s A Will, p.164.
the next most likeable trip was Sutton Manor where we tried to improve a small area. We planted plants and shrubs and we also built small seating places. But when we went back to the same place the following week the area had been vandalised. But everyone started again to improve the area and to show the vandals we were not defeated. I enjoyed that a lot. If felt as if you were helping to improve your town.\textsuperscript{156}

Judging Groundwork’s impact beyond its own volunteers is difficult. According to Groundwork’s Rochdale and Oldham branch, by 1988 50\% of residents knew of Groundwork and 15\% had participated; no equivalent statistic exists for St. Helens.\textsuperscript{157} The emergence of other groups concerned with their local environment, though, is suggestive of Groundwork’s influence.

One group, the Sutton Mill Dam Action Group, actually began in 1976, before Groundwork, in protest at the dam’s filling with industrial waste. Petitions were signed, meetings held, the local council acquired the dam, and a Derelict Land Grant brought the site back into public use. In 1984, the group raised £400 for Groundwork to create educational nature packs about the dam for local schoolchildren and members of the group helped set up FROGS. The dam was transformed into a wildlife park and angling site, showing a local community successfully defending local interests and making something positive out of their local environment.\textsuperscript{158} The Sankey Canal society was formed in 1985 with Groundwork’s encouragement. The society’s ‘principal aim’ was the canal’s ‘full restoration’. Still active today, they facilitate restoration through ‘monthly work parties’, alongside talks, guided walks, and visits to other restoration projects. The work parties are presented similarly to Groundwork’s volunteer projects: ‘all volunteers are assured of a warm friendly welcome’ and one of the ten ‘rules’ is to ‘enjoy it’. They cooperate with the local authorities and other groups concerned with waterway regeneration, like the Waterways Recovery Group and the Inland Waterways Association.\textsuperscript{159} The Newton Lake Action Group was established in 1991 to campaign for the site’s restoration and, with support and advice from Groundwork, held volunteer-led clean-up events.\textsuperscript{160} Groundwork also influenced the creation of a new St. Helens

\textsuperscript{156} ‘…Annual Report 1984/85’, SHLHA, A15(P).
Ramblers Group, following the interest shown in the Ramblers Association at a Town and Country Fair and a ‘well-attended’ meeting at Groundwork’s offices.161

Other groups, meanwhile, were created by Groundwork in collaboration with the local council, like the Wildlife Advisory Group in 1982. A noteworthy achievement of this collaboration was the 1986 Policy For Nature. The 2006 version of the policy aims ‘to work with the community to encourage wildlife in St. Helens for its own sake, for the people of St. Helens and for the attractiveness of the Borough’ and mentions the importance of groups like Groundwork or the Sankey Canal society in achieving this. A 2005 survey showed the importance of the environment and wildlife to the general public: over 90% of respondents said parks, open spaces, highway verges, housing estates, and business parks should be made attractive to wildlife.162 Larger projects with which Groundwork was involved, like Bold Moss and the Mersey Forest Project, engaged with official participation in planning through consultation plans and exhibitions to gauge public reactions to proposed projects.163

The above examples suggest Groundwork successfully generated interest in environmental regeneration and fostered greater community involvement and togetherness. Groundwork’s activities underline local interest in actively contributing to local development. The word ‘community’ was certainly repeated as often as possible across the various schemes and initiatives. Residents and volunteers were routinely praised in Annual Reports.164 In 1991, a Volunteer Co-ordinator and a Community Link Officer were appointed in light of the success of the GCVs and FROGS and newsletters mention a Community Maintenance Team.165 A Groundwork Trust Community Fund, to which members of the public could donate, was also established.166 It seems community was central to Groundwork’s development in St. Helens.

Groundwork’s expansion across the North-West, implicitly acknowledging its success in St. Helens, was decided quickly. A Groundwork North West Unit oversaw bids from local authorities and established new Groundwork Trusts.167 Of 15 bids, 5 were

chosen – Macclesfield, Oldham and Rochdale, Rossendale, Salford and Trafford, and Wigan – and were established in 1983-1984. The North West was chosen because of the scale of its de-industrialisation and dereliction, and by the practicalities of sharing experiences between neighbouring local authorities. The chosen bids offered a range of testing grounds: Macclesfield, for instance, was a rural borough bordering the Peak District National Park, an ‘important area for recreation and leisure’ for Greater Manchester, whereas Wigan had ‘major problems of dereliction and industrial decline’.

A nationwide expansion was evoked, too: ‘today is not just the launch of Groundwork North West: rather it is day one for a wider Groundwork movement’. Over 40 local authorities expressed interest and the Groundwork Foundation was set-up in 1984 to oversee future expansion. The first Trusts outside the North-West were Hertfordshire, East Durham, South Leeds, and Merthyr Tydfil. By 1991, over 30 Trusts had been established.

The expansion did not change Groundwork’s core principles and aims; it avoided the pitfalls of Chapter 2’s enterprise agencies. Like in St. Helens, the new Trusts looked to local companies, residents, and volunteer groups to manage and undertake projects. A pamphlet described ‘involv[ing] local communities in the task of environmental improvement […]’. Giving local people a voice was justified because it is ‘their city and they must have the opportunity to shape it’. Writing in 1991, Heseltine reflected that ‘the emphasis on local is important. These are not programmes imposed from above but are determined locally and achieved by local people of all ages’. John Handley, director of the original St. Helens-Knowsley Trust, agreed that Groundwork could only function as a ‘local-level’ partnership rather than as a quasi-government development agency.

This community, local-level focus was reflected in Groundwork’s projects. In 1984, Oldham and Rochdale undertook a similar canal clearance to St. Helens, involving

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168 ‘Groundwork Foundation’ presentation slides, (c.1984), TNA, AT107/37, Operations Groundwork. Another document from 1983 suggests there were in fact 21 bids.


170 Press Release, ‘“Keep it local” says Patrick Jenkin’, (Department of the Environment, 11.03.1983), TNA, AT107/13.


172 Ibid., p10.


volunteers, the Rochdale Canal Society, and labourers from government schemes like the Manpower Services Commission’s Community Programme and the Youth Training Scheme.\textsuperscript{177} In 1983, ‘local conservation advisory groups’ were advocated, similar to St. Helens’ Wildlife Advisory Group.\textsuperscript{178} Publicity pamphlets issued by the new North-West Trusts repeated the people-centred, community focus on one side (‘there is a part for everyone to play in Groundwork – companies, organisations and individuals […]’) and gave details of ongoing projects on the other. Rochdale and Oldham outlined key large-scale schemes the Trust aimed to tackle and detailed where the community could get involved: restoring the canal, improving council-owned woodlands, planting schemes on larger-scale projects, and improving access to surrounding moorland. Both Rossendale and Salford and Trafford outlined proposed schemes and attached a call for local participation: ‘you or your organisation could help […] by providing physical assistance or financial contributions, and by simply telling the Trust about the problems you think Groundwork should be tackling’. Wigan, the most similar to St. Helens, did not highlight specific large-scale schemes but invited suggestions from the community: ‘Groundwork will make cash available to local groups and industry so that you can do your bit […] a chance to see how much can be done if everybody works together’.\textsuperscript{179}

A review of Groundwork’s first decade highlights various successful projects. The Middleton Riverside Park (Rochdale and Oldham) saw a local industrial company offer land it was no longer using, provided labour, funding, and subsequent management arrangements could be arranged. A Countryside Commission grant was matched by the company, Groundwork planned the regeneration, and Rochdale Council took on the management of the newly created park, which transformed a ‘derelict […] eye-sore’ into a ‘gateway’ between the town centre and pre-existing public woodlands. Alongside successful co-operation between local partners, schoolchildren helped plant the new park. The ‘Five Villages Project’ (South Leeds) began in 1989 to ‘ensure continued community involvement in all aspects of project work, from instigation through to implementation’, undertaking over 118 projects by 1992. The Seaham Community Link (East Durham) was running more than 30 projects after three years and relied on around 20 volunteers.\textsuperscript{180} By 1991, it was estimated that the Trusts had completed over 9,000 environmental projects, involving around 130,000 volunteers and 260,000 schoolchildren.\textsuperscript{181}

\textsuperscript{177} ‘Groundwork North West Newsletter’, (Issue 2, Spring 1984), TNA, AT107/13.
\textsuperscript{178} Minutes of a liaison meeting, (23.11.1983), TNA, HLG156/1399.
\textsuperscript{179} ‘Caring for the countryside on your doorstep’ (pamphlet, c.1984), TNA, AT107/13.
\textsuperscript{181} Ibid., p.4.
Despite these positive examples and the swift development of Groundwork, expanding it was not without difficulties. Some Trusts more actively involved the community than others, potentially diluting the overall community focus – though flexibility was necessary to allow for local particularities. One document wondered about the ‘relative importance’ of public participation – which ‘could be entirely ephemeral’ – and suggested the ‘only long term result’ was the ‘content of the projects actually carried out’, dismissing any potential wider community benefit.\(^{182}\) Some local authorities wanted to spend Groundwork’s money on pre-planned schemes which lacked funding, hampering the private and voluntary sector sides. In November 1983, it was noted that the new North-West Trusts were behind schedule and that ‘local authorities were not over-enthusiastic’.\(^{183}\) The Association of Metropolitan Authorities warned that Groundwork, whilst an ‘interesting and useful approach’, should not detract from ‘the role local authorities can and do play’ in dealing with environmental dereliction.\(^{184}\) It was suggested that early successes on Merseyside were influenced by ‘relatively generous allocations’ available because of the Department of the Environment’s ‘priority’ focus on it.\(^{185}\)  

A further hurdle to Groundwork’s wider viability was securing private sector funding. Some national companies were unwilling to donate to geographically limited projects.\(^{186}\) Others only wanted to contribute to projects in areas where they had employees.\(^{187}\) In the uncertain economy of the 1980s, many firms did not have spare capital for donations.\(^{188}\) Local branches of national companies did not necessarily have authority to distribute funds to local schemes.\(^{189}\) Groundwork’s political supporters nonetheless remained upbeat. They believed businesses would contribute once they understood the mutual benefits, for instance the impact that location in an ‘attractive’ environment could have.\(^{190}\) It was stressed that private sector input could also come in the form of secondments (as with Pilkington’s in St. Helens) or the provision of equipment.\(^{191}\) One solution was ‘thematic’ projects joint-sponsored by large private sector

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\(^{182}\) Paper for discussion at meeting on 21 September 1983…, TNA, HLG156/1399 .
\(^{184}\) Letter from Association of Metropolitan Authorities to Department of the Environment North West Regional Office, (03.01.1984), TNA, HLG156/1399.
\(^{185}\) Paper for discussion at meeting on 21 September 1983…, TNA, HLG156/1399.
\(^{187}\) Groundwork Extension: Note of meeting held on 2 March 1984, TNA, AT107/13.
\(^{188}\) ‘Groundwork: The First Decade’, p.18, TNA, COU3/601.
\(^{189}\) Groundwork Extension: Note of a meeting…, TNA, AT107/13 ; Heseltine, Where There’s A Will, p.155.
companies, for example Shell’s ‘Brightsite’ scheme initiated in 1988 to encourage owners of commercial and industrial premises to undertake landscape improvements.\footnote{192 Ibid., p.24.}

Groundwork ultimately successfully engaged the public and enabled participation in regeneration. Through its own groups (GCVs, FROGS, Froghoppers) and its linking of existing community groups through joint participation on projects, it provided a framework for community-building. Its success in partnering local authorities, the private sector, and the public rubbed off on other 1980s regeneration initiatives like City Challenge. Groundwork actively promoted private sector sponsored community and environmental initiatives like Brightsite, Esso’s Green-link, News International’s Greenforce Challenge, and Barclay’s Innervision.\footnote{193 ‘Operation Groundwork News’, (Spring 1993) ; ‘Operation Groundwork News’, (Autumn 1993), SHLHA, A15(P).} The late 1980s and early 1990s saw the environmental agenda become more important to politics, the private sector, and the public.\footnote{194 Simin Davoudi, Angela Hull, Patsy Healey, ‘Environmental concerns and economic imperatives in strategic plan making’, \textit{The Town Planning Review}, 67:4 (1996), 421-436.} Groundwork certainly contributed to and benefited from this. Crucially, unlike the economy-focused enterprise trusts (\textit{Chapter 2}), Groundwork did not lose its community focus when it expanded. Still active today, it has a much broader remit than the original St. Helens experiment and yet remains rooted in the local and the community.

\subsection*{4.3.2: Unofficial participation and ongoing Local Plan debates}

The grass-roots appetite for participation seen with Groundwork is also visible in regeneration activism today. St. Helens’ current Local Plan envisages ‘new development and regeneration […] to create a modern, distinctive, economically prosperous and vibrant Borough’.\footnote{195 ‘…A Balanced Plan for a Better Future’, p.1.} As noted in \textit{4.0}, it is framed against a context of industrial decline and deprivation. In 2019, St. Helens was England’s 36\textsuperscript{th} most deprived local authority, having been 51\textsuperscript{st} in 2010. Low wages and benefits dependency were higher than national and regional averages, whilst economic activity and educational qualifications were below average.\footnote{196 Ibid., pp.8-9.} ‘Regenerating and growing St. Helens’ was the first ‘Strategic Aim’ in the 2016 ‘Preferred Options’ document.\footnote{197 St. Helens Council, ‘St. Helens Local Plan 2018-2033: Preferred Options’, (December 2016), p.8.} Despite this negative framing, there are similarities in the nature of proposed policies with the CAD and the TCDP: ‘high quality new employment […] wide range of vibrant shopping, leisure and other uses […]
affordable housing’, all to make St. Helens an ‘attractive, healthy, safe, inclusive and accessible place in which to live, work, visit, and invest’.\textsuperscript{198} The Plan claims to factor in ‘extensive consultation with the local community’, although ongoing opposition suggests this has been insufficient.\textsuperscript{199}

The spark for opposition to plan was the 2016 ‘Preferred Options’ document. Aside from the proposals themselves, there was anger at the report’s publication around Christmas, a busy period when many people cannot engage with such matters (an identical point had been raised in the 1960s concerning the CAD).\textsuperscript{200} Key to this opposition was the emergence of an array of regeneration activism groups, mostly run by local volunteers and instigated through local initiative. These local roots create a deep sense of place attachment: ‘they’re not just going to get up and walk away when the going gets tough […] they’re grounded here’.\textsuperscript{201} The impact of regeneration policies on local areas and communities (particularly their character, heritage, infrastructure, and services) are the groups’ main concerns, similar to Mass’ ‘save the market’ campaigns.\textsuperscript{202} The groups respond to ‘particular needs’ or issues in their locality.\textsuperscript{203} Their concerns are not opposition to regeneration \textit{per se}, but concerns over the appropriateness of proposed policies.\textsuperscript{204}

Many of the Plan’s policies predated 2016, for instance redeveloping the former Parkside colliery. Some regeneration groups also predated 2016, illustrating Mah’s link between anti-industrial closure movements and regeneration activism. This overlap exemplifies de-industrialisation’s ‘half-life’, as its consequences ripple outwards from the closures and redundancies. Following Parkside’s anti-closure movement led by Lancashire Women Against Pit Closures (\textbf{Chapter 1}), the Save Newton and Winwick Campaign formed to oppose plans for a Morrisons distribution centre straddling the former colliery and adjacent greenbelt. Beyond the environmental impact, Save Newton questioned the number and quality of jobs a distribution centre would bring:

\begin{quote}
no one is objecting to the development of Parkside and all would welcome increased job opportunity. It appears that a development of this scale will definitely cause more
\end{quote}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{198} ‘…A Balanced Plan for a Better Future’, p.12.
\textsuperscript{199} Ibid., p.2.
\textsuperscript{200} Interview PhD/006 (January 2019) ; Interview PhD/009 (November 2019) ; Interview PhD/010 (November 2019) ; ‘Report on the Public Local Inquiry…’, TNA, HLG79/1200.
\textsuperscript{201} Hansell, \textit{After Coal}, p.102.
\textsuperscript{202} Mass, ‘Commercial heritage’, 461-462, 466.
\end{flushleft}
pollution, congestion than jobs. As said at the meeting, “how many ex-miners can drive heavy goods vehicles?”

Save Newton utilised similar tactics to Lancashire Women, like producing newspapers and leaflets and holding public meetings. They held a peaceful protest at the same colliery gates outside which Lancashire Women had campaigned so often. Lancashire Women fought to protect the colliery and local community from closure, whilst Save Newton fought to protect the same site and community from unhealthy development. In asking ‘how many ex-miners can drive heavy goods vehicles’, they were not suggesting miners would be unqualified but that a distribution centre would bring fewer jobs than the former mine. One projection suggested 800 jobs, fewer than the colliery at peak production, and activists suspected many of these jobs would go to existing Morrisons workers from other distribution centres or to third-party haulage firms.

In 2006, Parkside Action Group formed to continue the fight. They emphasised community protection, seeking ‘a more appropriate use for the footprint of the old colliery to better serve our communities and way of life and preserve the Green Belt’. Both Save Newton and Parkside had strong local roots. Both groups’ committees were formed entirely of local residents. Like the DSC, their legitimacy was underlined through support from pre-existing local organisations including a Residents and Friends Association, a Women’s Institute, local churches, schools, and wildlife groups.

The groups formed since 2016 focus their opposition on Local Plan policies like greenbelt housing development or, like Parkside, unwanted industrial development. As Fig.4.3.1 shows, the groups are well-supported:

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205 Letter to local residents, (10.02.1995), SHLHA, A36.2 (P).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Facebook Page Members</th>
<th>Twitter Followers</th>
<th>Total Tweets</th>
<th>Twitter Member Since</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residents Against Florida Farm</td>
<td>1323</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>994</td>
<td>June 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rainhill Save Our Green Belt</td>
<td>1871</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>1256</td>
<td>Nov 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eccleston and Windle Community Residents Association</td>
<td>1086</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>Dec 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rainford Action Group</td>
<td>1500*</td>
<td>1807</td>
<td>4958</td>
<td>Dec 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garswood Residents Action Group</td>
<td>466 (created 2017)</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bold and Clock Face Action Group</td>
<td>1029</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>March 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkside Action Group</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Numbers correct in January 2020. According to their website.

Fig.4.3.1: Social media support for regeneration campaign groups

Eccleston, Rainhill, and Rainford are chiefly concerned with plans for large-scale housing development on greenbelt land. Parkside, Florida, and Bold focus on industrial and employment developments, some on former industrial land and some on the greenbelt. Contrary to critiques of such groups as exclusive, they are not single-issue. Parkside actively refute the NIMBY label, claiming to be ‘made up of local people from all over the local area […] we are NOT just made up of people who live by the Parkside site’. Interview with group members reveal a keen awareness of the need for coherence between the different elements of regeneration:

the council are putting the cart before the horse. […] Where are all these people who are going to live in houses [costing] more than £250,000? Where are they going to work? Where are they going to shop? Where are they going to go out? Where are they going to eat? […] regeneration comes from the inside out, the centre should be the centre […] and that’s what they should do first. Prove first of all that you can bring the jobs here and you can bring the shopping here and the places to go and eat and entertain. Do that first and then think about building the houses […]

The fear is that expensive new housing will be purchased by new residents working well-paid jobs outside St. Helens (in Liverpool or Manchester, for instance), with little inclination to use the town’s services. Failure to attract good jobs will exacerbate this. People will work, socialise, and shop elsewhere, leaving St. Helens a doughnut town serving as a dormitory suburb for more prosperous places. The campaigners want ‘safe and sustainable development’ which ‘encourages investment’ locally and is

211 ‘Call to action: Green belt destruction imminent’.
212 Phd/006.
213 Ibid. A ‘doughnut town’ is, quite literally, a town with no centre (like a doughnut). The ring around the absent centre then becomes a large dormitory suburb for other towns and cities.
commensurate with local conditions and needs in terms of environment, infrastructure, and community. Thus, if new housing were less expensive it would be accessible to existing residents; if better jobs were available more expensive housing would be affordable to people working locally; if successful town centre regeneration were combined with better jobs, new residents might be more inclined to work, shop, and socialise in the town and existing residents who would otherwise move away for work might be tempted to stay. This fear of being left behind through inadequate regeneration parallels major local employers’ fears about inadequate modernisation in the 1960s.

The groups claim to speak for the local community. This is not always easy because the local council is not always keen on listening to them. Rainhill, for instance, were blocked on social media and other groups have complained about being ‘mocked and bullied’ by councillors online. These incidents add to the sense that the council do not care about residents and local interests. The Florida Farm group often use hashtags like ‘#majorcon’, ‘#duper’, ‘#VTO’ (‘vote them out’), and ‘#floridafarce’ when Tweeting about the regeneration plans. Their tweets regularly suggest they are not being listened to and point out the shortcomings of the council’s plans: ‘still no end user for shed #2’ and ‘...adjacent to the Amazon farce & empty unit nobody wants [...] stuff the effects on our community’. ‘Shed’ has become the derogatory term amongst campaigners and non-Labour councillors for the unpopular logistics warehouses sprouting around St. Helens. Other groups, like Parkside, regularly criticise the planning process itself. The local council are partners in several of the regeneration schemes, so the groups accuse them of ‘marking their own homework’.

The groups call expressly for a ‘stronger role for local communities in planning matters’. They want the council’s future vision to be one ‘all the communities’ in the town can support.

215 PhD/006.
for, not just in terms of helping residents have a say on regeneration but through various activities which bring local people together, which have the potential to build community. Most obviously, they encourage residents to submit objections to regenerations plans. During the 2019 Local Plan consultation period, several held clinics to assist residents with their objections.\footnote{@RainhillSOGB, tweeted 27.02.2019 ; @RVFFD, tweeted 24.02.2019, accessed: 11.01.2020.} They run information meetings, provide signs and banners for residents to display, encourage attendance of protests, rallies, and official meetings, and hold fundraising events such as coffee mornings, dances, quizzes, and raffles.\footnote{<http://www.ecra.org.uk/> ; ‘The ECRA TIMES Autumn 2018’, pamphlet, author’s copy.} Similar tactics were employed by Mass’ ‘save the market’ campaigners and by anti-industrial closure movements.\footnote{Mass, ‘Commercial heritage’, 473, 484.} The rallies described at the start of this chapter, for instance, recall the ‘Coal Not Dole’ march through St. Helens town centre (\textit{Chapter 1}).\footnote{Will Rolston, ‘Miners on march to save town’s coal jobs’, \textit{Liverpool Echo}, 07.11.1992, p.8.} By bringing the different groups together and attracting outside interest, they promote the groups’ cause and generate a sense of community amongst participants, as do the coffee mornings, dances, quizzes, and raffles. These events raise awareness and funds but also promote the groups as builders of community, unite residents behind a particular cause, and (re)-establish the habit of attending community-led events. They demonstrate the groups’ ‘level of voluntary and wider public support’, necessary for them to retain legitimacy as their community’s voice.\footnote{Beetham, \textit{Legitimation}, pp.270, 274-275.} In addition to support on social media, the rallies attracted several hundred people, the groups claim good turnout at meetings and social events, and some note the wide range of local businesses and shops who support them.\footnote{@BoldClock, tweeted: 06.03.2019, 11.03.2019 ; PhD/006 ; PhD/009 ; RSOGB Facebook posts 10.12.2019, 22.10.2019. ; PhD/010.} Their relevance is underlined by the number of objections made to the council about various aspects of regeneration: over 900 about Parkside, over 2,000 for Florida Farm, and nearly 5,700 in the 2016-2017 Local Plan consultation.\footnote{Kenny Lomas, ‘Parkside ruling due’, \textit{St. Helens Star}, 12.12.2019, p.10 ; Kelsey Maxwell, ‘Amazon unit is set to create an ‘initial 250 jobs”’, \textit{St. Helens Star}, 18.07.2019, p.2 ; Anon., ‘Local plan date’, \textit{St. Helens Star}, 26.10.2017, p.2.} Despite their local roots, support, and successes, the effectiveness and representativeness of these groups is hard to judge. As noted, such groups are often tagged as NIMBYs, only representing the ‘articulate middle-classes in attractive urban fringe areas’.\footnote{Healey, \textit{Local Plans}, p.243. As one Eccleston resident commented off-the-record, the activists protesting greenbelt developments have only lived in houses overlooking the greenbelt since their houses were themselves built on greenbelt land…} This sectionalism ties in with another critique of these groups as hyper-local. In St. Helens, however, the groups which have emerged against the Local Plan come from
across the town. Some do come from areas like Eccleston, Rainford, and Rainhill with
historically lower unemployment rates and higher rates of educational qualifications and
better-paid jobs. These also have a history of returning non-Labour councillors: Liberal
Democrats in Eccleston, Conservatives in Rainford, and Independents in Rainhill.
Eccleston and Rainford are considered attractive urban fringes and their prime focus is
greenbelt development.

However, groups like Parkside, Florida Farm, and Bold and Clock Face centre on
areas with historically less well-to-do socio-economic profiles. They historically relied
on unskilled, semi-skilled, or skilled manual jobs, had higher unemployment levels, and
have lower rates of educational qualifications. They are also less solidly Labour than in
the past, with Green councillors elected in both Bold and Haydock and a Liberal
Democrat elected in Newton-le-Willows in the 2019 local elections. The Greens, using
the tagline ‘save our green space’, came second in a further ten wards. As well as
indicating growing frustration with the Labour-run council’s handling of regeneration, the
results suggest the differentiation between those included and excluded by regeneration
groups is less rigid than critics suggest.

The true reach and support of these groups is nonetheless hard to quantify. Social
media communities are indicative but not every supporter (particularly older residents)
has access to such platforms, and not each ‘like’ or ‘follow’ is necessarily a supporter.
One localised measure is the density of anti-development placards and signs in front
gardens and windows, as Fig. 4.3.2 indicates.

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230 ‘Results announced for St. Helens local elections 2019’,
<https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/news/2019/may/03/results-announced-for-st-helens-local-elections-2019/>,
accessed: 17.02.2020. These local shifts do not currently seem to have translated into St.
Helens’ results in General Elections, with its two constituencies remaining comfortable Labour seats,
matching Labour’s ongoing dominance on Merseyside despite the much-documented ‘Red Wall’
collapse in recent years (see Conclusion for further discussion).
Fig. 4.3.2: map of pro-ECRA signs and placards in Eccleston (2018).

It is impossible, though, to assert that the drop-off in signs the further one moves from the greenbelt indicates declining support or that not displaying a sign equates to non-support. The groups know they face challenges in generating interest beyond their immediate locality.\(^{231}\) The localism is partly intentional, with joint meetings deemed unproductive because specific concerns cannot be addressed. However, they recognise failure to transcend their local area weakens their impact. The Rainford group actively contest developments relating to both St. Helens and the neighbouring village of Bickerstaffe.\(^{232}\) The Eccleston group regularly attempt to convince residents elsewhere of

\(^{231}\) PhD/006 ; PhD/009.

the knock-on effects of regeneration policies across multiple areas. Negative effects can easily transcend ward and town boundaries but convincing people to act on issues which are not an immediate threat is challenging, as seen with the DSC in the 1970s. This reinforces the idea that some form of obvious ‘crisis’ is needed to spur wider communities into action. However, even on a very local scale (like individual wards), it is often only a small section of the community which gets actively involved, reflecting the issue of joiners and non-joiners highlighted in the Skeffington Report.

One way regeneration groups can overcome the NIMBY label is through their community-building potential beyond the regeneration fight, for instance as residents’ associations. The Eccleston and Rainhill groups both frame this as a way of giving back to the people who supported the regeneration campaigns. This might resolve issues of inclusivity/exclusivity as membership will no longer be conditional on a particular political stance but on a desire to participate in community activities. It might better reach the non-joiners, for instance younger residents who support the regeneration campaign online but are less present at meetings and social events. The hope is to reinvigorate the ‘community hubs’ like social clubs or church and village halls (Chapter 3), and get residents ‘used’ to participating and volunteering. Integrating new people into community groups following the first wave of enthusiasm can be challenging, however. Ortolano, writing about Milton Keynes, noted that residents came together spontaneously to protest over housing issues (a ‘crisis’) but this galvanism petered out once the repairs were complete. The ‘veterans’ of this ‘heroic’ action moved on from their community association or even away from the neighbourhood entirely, causing the associational life they had fostered to dwindle.

This potential for community-building beyond regeneration, though, is bolstered by the existence of grass-roots community-building independent of the regeneration groups, further indicating local desire for associational life. In its most extreme form, this community participation involves would-be residents actually building their homes and communities through ‘sweat equity’, i.e. the contribution of labour towards community projects. Less extreme examples include initiatives like community litter picks. In St.

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233 PhD/006 ; PhD/009.
234 Lawrence, Me, Me, Me, p.185.
236 PhD/006 ; PhD/009 ; PhD/010.
237 PhD/006 ; PhD/009.
238 Ortolano, Thatcher’s Progress, pp.175-176, 180.
239 In 2019, for instance, a derelict church in Liverpool was converted into 16 affordable homes and each future resident contributed 500 hours of labour. In France, there is a growing trend of habitat
Helens, these have been instigated “officially” by the council and by the government’s ‘Love Your Street’ campaign but also through the initiative of residents. Examples of the latter include the Moss Fairly Crew on the town’s New Bold estate. They are effective generators of local pride and links between residents:

we have families and children joining grandparents and young couples to work together to clean up this beautiful space we all live in […] it’s brought a real sense of community spirit with it – we even did a collection in the rain and the younger generation know what it takes and look after the area too. We hope it can inspire others to clean up their own communities, it’s easier when we work together.

Other community-led initiatives were highlighted in Rainford. The area’s Conservative councillors have found actively involving local residents in rejuvenating the village has reinforced community pride. Enthusiasm for participation has snow-balled, with council-initiated projects like Rainford in Bloom or the Rainford Hub (a voluntary group local businesses) essentially running themselves thanks to local volunteers. As a recent Lancashire Life feature put it:

Rainford […] has shops, leisure facilities, and a rather imposing council building that would be the envy of many more substantial towns […] but it is officially and spiritually a village – everyone seems to know everyone else, people want to be involved, and there are annual events around which community life happily revolves.


241 ‘Fairy crew help clean up estate’.
242 Interview PhD/005 (September 2018).
the heart of the village. Rainford in Bloom, now a registered charity partly funded by local donations, was awarded the highest individual honour of gold rating in the Large Village Category of North West in Bloom 2019.244

Rainford, however, is inescapably an ‘attractive urban fringe’, less directly affected by St. Helens’ de-industrialisation. Its residents are generally better off, so perhaps more able to dedicate time to volunteering. As shown in Chapter 3, it has long boasted a dense associational life so its residents are used to community participation. In the 2019 local elections, St. Helens’ attractive urban fringes had the highest turn-outs (Rainhill 40.7%, Rainford 38.2%, Eccleston 37.3%), far higher than the least well-off areas (Parr 18%) and even other areas linked to the regeneration groups (Haydock 30.9%, Newton-le-Willows 29.9%, Windle 28.3%, Earlestown 23.8%).245 Ultimately, ‘local associative action’ relies on the ‘time, resources and willingness’ of local residents.246 Fostering similar community-led initiatives and participation in less well-off areas could therefore be difficult, though Rainford remains a good example of the potential for grass-roots community-building.

Overall, there is clear interest in participating in regeneration and this interest has grown in recent decades. Though action group members play down direct links to previous anti-industrial closure movements, there are similar objectives and tactics. The desire to ensure local needs and voice are accounted for reflects Mah’s seeking of continuity in a period of change (de-industrialisation and subsequent regeneration).247 The overlap evokes de-industrialisation’s ‘half-life’, as the consequences of decline ripple out beyond initial closures. Like ripples, these consequences might be less directly felt, less consciously drawn upon, across time but they affect how people – even those not directly involved in anti-closure campaigns – think about the town and its future. For some, the link is direct as ‘expectations and ideas from the earlier era’ shape their responses to the ‘emerging conditions’.248 For others, the link is more indirect as they attempt to arrest a sense of decline, the roots of which they do not necessarily think about but which they have grown increasingly conscious of over time.249 These links are further reinforced by the evident desire to continue grass-roots community-building beyond the regeneration campaigns.

246 Clapson, Working-Class Suburb, p.163.
249 Bright, ‘The lady’s not returning’, 144-145.
4.4: Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, the degree to which people want – and are able – to participate in planning and redevelopment/regeneration has shown an ongoing link between regeneration and community. From the 1960s political efforts to increase participation to the recent growth in grass-roots activism, finding a satisfactory “official” or legislative formula has proved challenging. The 1960s efforts tied in with the swing away from physical determinism towards more social, people-centred planning and wider political recognition of the need for greater public access to the levers of democracy. The culmination of these efforts, the Skeffington Report, has however been criticised for its modesty and short-sightedness, and even where planners utilised its recommendations (as with St. Helens’ Town Centre District Plan) public engagement was limited. The issue of joiners and non-joiners highlighted in the Report persists across the chapter. The permanently evolving socio-economic context in which legislation and plans are developed, seen in the differences between the Central Area Development and the District Plan, means plans are reacting to trends already underway so are often outdated before they are implemented. These shortcomings are one reason for the emergence and growth of grass-roots groups interested in planning and regeneration.

The official or legislative provision for participation has also had to contend with changing political contexts. The focus on participation in the 1960s changed during the 1980s, with Thatcher’s rolling back of public participation in favour of public-private development partnerships like Ravenhead Renaissance. Simultaneously, however, community-focused initiatives like Operation Groundwork were actively encouraged by politicians like Michael Heseltine, a further example of St. Helens’ pioneering role in community-oriented regeneration. In Chapter 2, similar initiatives for economic regeneration lost their community focus and became political tools for furthering the Thatcher government’s neo-liberal agenda. Groundwork, however, retained its community focus as it expanded regionally and nationally. It created its own communities through volunteer groups and work parties, connected existing groups and communities through collaboration, and inspired the creation of similar community-based environmental regeneration groups. In some ways, in its role as an umbrella organisation, it successfully embodied the Community Forum advocated in the Skeffington Report, an idea much derided upon publication and since due to the apparent incompatibility of formally conceived organisations and genuine community involvement. Like the legislative provisions for “official” participation, Groundwork developed a framework
around which community could develop. Questions remain over the true extent of engagement with it and how representative such engagement was of the community as a whole but it did show an emerging and increasing desire for grass-roots participation in regeneration.

Alongside the shortcomings of legislation for participation and the mixed messages about the role of community in government attitudes since the 1980s, the desire for grass-roots participation has increased alongside de-industrialisation. St. Helens’ regeneration action groups, from the DSC in the 1970s to Save Newton in the 1990s and the plethora which emerged in 2016, fulfil similar functions and use similar tactics to anti-industrial closure groups (Chapter 1). These groups have grown as de-industrialisation has worsened and official participation been limited, just like anti-closure groups did when decline set in and the trade unions were weakened. The ultimate goal of these groups is to protect the local interests of existing area-based communities, to retain a sense of agency over the community’s future. Through their overlapping objectives and attitudes to place, these groups, consciously or not, evidence the ‘half-life’ of de-industrialisation in St. Helens. Due to their rootedness in place, they are often criticised as NIMBYs. In St. Helens, though, they cover geographically and socio-economically diverse areas. Together, they channel opinion from a wide sector of the town. They are aware of their hyper-local nature and perceived exclusivity and seek to overcome these. Their presence and popularity suggests the degree of discontent surrounding current regeneration proposals, the desire to engage with them, and the insufficiency of official opportunities to do so.

As with Groundwork, judging the true extent of engagement with these groups or their representativeness is difficult. However, there will always be joiners and non-joiners whatever the community or initiative in question. In Chapter 1, for instance, the Pilkington’s strike saw not insignificant ambivalence and outright opposition. There are people who will ‘join’ community in times of ‘crisis’ – which regeneration plans like greenbelt housing or unwanted industrial development could represent – but otherwise exist passively within it. Inescapably, there is not just one community within any given town – or even neighbourhood – and different individuals living in close proximity do not necessarily share interests, and will therefore feel a greater or lesser sense of attachment to whatever communities they identify with, or might have no interest in community at all (Chapter 3). The local council (regarding official participation) or the active minority (grass-roots or unofficial participation) cannot force people to be joiners, no more than industrial companies could oblige workers to play sports or socialise at the
club. At most, a framework around which community might develop can encourage as much participation as possible. Even strenuous efforts towards this (as with the District Plan) cannot guarantee engagement, although the grass-roots regeneration groups and Groundwork show broad engagement is achievable.

In any case, it is neither realistic nor desirable to create just one community. Not even the much-evoked industrial or work-based communities of the past included everyone. In a world increasingly characterised by communities of choice, decreasingly constrained by geography or employment, it is highly unlikely that any singular sense of community could exist even within one neighbourhood, never mind a whole town. This does not mean efforts at community-building through regeneration are futile. Regeneration activism and organisations like Groundwork help maintain, like Chapter 3’s micro-communities, a tradition of associational life disrupted in recent years by de-industrialisation and enable different individuals and pre-existing groups to come together, both in times of ‘crisis’ and potentially beyond in community-led activities.
Chapter 5 - Looking to the future: communities of choice

5.0: Introduction

St. Helens today is very different to the St. Helens of the 1968 centenary, not least due to de-industrialisation. To quote one school leaver,

it has changed a lot I think because when my grandparent[s] or parents tell me how St Helens used to be and all the industries and shops that used to be here, it doesn’t sound anything like it is now. My grandparents used to work in large factories but they’re now closed down.¹

This thesis has, however, highlighted continuities amongst these changes: not so much brutal ruptures as complicated and contested evolutions of work and work-community, de-industrialisation and post-industrial regeneration, attempts to build and maintain community, and the persistence of cultural and community activities often associated with geographically-rooted, work-based industrial communities.

This somewhat experimental final chapter looks to the future. It builds on key themes from across the thesis and wonders how they might endure or evolve. In particular, this chapter explores the future of community in St. Helens. Previous chapters showed that despite the upheaval of de-industrialisation, community, including aspects of “traditional” work-based community, has persisted in various ways – contrary to mainstream discourse on recent community decline and social atomisation.

Previous chapters focused on residents old enough to remember St. Helens’ industrial decline and even its industrial heyday. This chapter revolves around younger residents, specifically two cohorts of Sixth Form students from 2018 and 2019. This next generation of the town’s adult population and workforce – assuming they do not move away – are too young to have direct memories of the town’s industrial past or decline. The chapter draws upon quantitative surveys and qualitative ‘Imagined Futures’ essays to explore these cohorts’ future projections but also their understanding of their present circumstances, past experiences, and their attachment to community in St. Helens. The evolution of the surveys which provide the chapter’s central source base reflects the thesis’ intellectual evolution: the 2018 surveys prioritised class and de-industrialisation and the 2019 ones dealt more with ‘community’. The chapter begins by explaining its

¹ Participant A2F, Carmel College 2019.
inspiration, key historiography, and methodology before presenting and analysing the survey and essay responses. Ultimately, it examines how concepts like community will persist and evolve as St. Helens’ population changes and its industrial past recedes.

5.1: Inspiration

The idea for this chapter’s surveys emerged whilst researching regeneration, a central and challenging process for formerly industrial towns like St. Helens. Regeneration is a challenging process on various levels: economically as a town’s ‘purpose’ changes from a manufacturing-based to a service- and consumption-based economy; spatially as redundant and outdated spaces are contested and remodelled; and emotionally for residents whose excitement about overcoming dereliction and decline is tempered by concerns over the solutions proposed. Regeneration can be ‘physical’, like Chapter 4’s urban redevelopment schemes, or ‘human’. Taken literally, human regeneration encompasses the experiences and processes undergone by inhabitants of formerly industrial areas due to de-industrialisation and post-industrial regeneration. This includes former industrial workers retraining and relearning to find new employment (Chapter 2) and people’s reactions to redevelopment schemes (Chapter 4). It also includes new (potential) members of the community, whether workers migrating into the area or, as in this chapter, the renewal of the town’s population through new generations growing up.

The chapter increases the number of local voices informing the thesis’ findings, extending the analysis into the present and the future. It introduces an adolescent perspective, allowing comparison with the perspectives of older residents encountered already. Using surveys and essays rather than oral history interviews was prompted by the success of similar studies of adolescents. Of key inspiration was Ray Pahl’s use of ‘imagined futures’ essays during his Sheppey (Kent) fieldwork, since revisited and augmented with new cohorts by Dawn Lyon and Graham Crow.

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5.2: Historiography

This chapter studies contemporary attitudes towards community, de-industrialisation, and post-industrial regeneration from the perspective of Sixth Form-aged adolescents. This expands the analysis in previous chapters which, like most of the secondary sources drawn on across the thesis, focus on older residents with first-hand memories of life before industrial decline.4

The sense of community constructed from individual residents’ industrial memories and the projection of this into the present-day is founded on what Maurice Halbwachs calls ‘autobiographical memory’: memories of events experienced directly by the person(s) in question. As new generations grow up (or as new residents migrate in), that sense of community becomes increasingly dependent on those who experienced the industrial past and decline indirectly: ‘historical’ memories shaped by other people’s recollections, commemorations and celebrations, media depictions, etc..5 Together, individual memories of a place’s industrial past form a collective memory. A socially constructed form of identity, there are potentially as many ‘collective memories as there are groups and institutions in a society’.6 Only those shared partially or entirely by sufficient individuals gain traction, creating a sense of community between those individuals which can be projected outwards onto others. The more temporally distant the industrial past and decline, as memories become historical rather than autobiographical, the weaker the collective memory – and sense of community around it – becomes. Even Sherry Lee Linkon’s de-industrial ‘half-life’, like radioactive waste itself, weakens over

Dawn Lyon, Graham Crow, ‘The challenges and opportunities of re-studying community on Sheppey: young people’s imagined futures’, *Sociological Review*, 60 (2012), 498-517 ;
Guilia Carabelli, Dawn Lyon, ‘Young people’s orientations to the future: navigating the present and imagining the future’, *Journal of Youth Studies*, 19:8 (2016), 1110-1127 ;


6 Ibid., p.22.
time.\textsuperscript{7} Alice Mah saw a consistent attitude towards community and regeneration in a population where even youngsters had autobiographical memory of the area’s industrial past (local shipyards were still clinging on during her fieldwork and had garnered extensive media coverage due to their symbolic status).\textsuperscript{8} Contrasting, with St. Helens’ main closures occurring in the 1980s and 1990s, the cohorts studied here lack autobiographical memory.

However, as previous chapters suggested, community has more than one root. Whilst conserving aspects of “typical” working-class community and culture amidst industrial decline, St. Helens has seen community emerge in new contexts and amongst people who were not directly affected by industrial closure and decline, despite being alive for it. The ‘micro-communities’ (Jon Lawrence) and ‘communities of choice’ (Liz Spencer and Ray Pahl) seen in Chapter 3, and the regeneration activism groups seen in Chapter 4, showed community takes many forms and that people can belong to several communities at once or to different communities at different points in their life.\textsuperscript{9} Spencer and Pahl’s work on personal communities and friendship emphasises that community in the twenty-first century is not disappearing but evolving: less rooted in place and geography, increasingly based on choice not constraint.\textsuperscript{10} Mike Savage similarly discusses ‘elective belonging’, the idea that place, particularly for the middle-classes, belongs to a person through the ‘conscious choice to move and settle in it’.\textsuperscript{11} This chapter, however, shows the desire to choose is very much visible amongst both the working- and middle-classes.\textsuperscript{12} De-industrialisation and post-industrial regeneration do not create a binary choice between social atomisation or the persistence of community. Community will not disappear altogether as new generations emerge but its form will continue evolving.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{8} Mah, \textit{Industrial Ruination…}, pp.72-73.
\item \textsuperscript{10} Spencer and Pahl, p.201.
\item \textsuperscript{11} Mike Savage, \textit{Identities and Social Change in Britain Since 1940: The Politics of Method}, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010), pp.24, 31-33, 47.
\item \textsuperscript{12} This was also the case in Pahl’s \textit{Divisions of Labour} work on Sheppey discussed elsewhere in this chapter. See: Lawrence, pp.167, 179.
\end{itemize}
5.3: Previous studies and methodology

Pahl’s Sheppey study – and Lyon and Crow’s follow-up – is particularly pertinent to this chapter due to the essay-writing technique used and the background of economic uncertainty and societal transition. Pahl was inspired by earlier studies, particularly Thelma Veness’ surveys and essays examining the aspirations and expectations of school leavers in the early 1960s. Pahl and Veness fit within a longer tradition of using surveys and essay writing to prompt future projections by children or adolescents, early examples including Marie Jahoda’s 1930s study of severe unemployment in small towns and Hilde Himmelweit’s 1952 study of attitudes towards social class.

Pahl’s 1978 work with Sheppey school leavers was early fieldwork for his major *Divisions of Labour* study. Pahl hoped to familiarise himself with Sheppey, his case study of how worsening economic conditions were affecting ordinary people. Pahl was frustrated by the lack of up-to-date fieldwork: he accused sociologists of relying on ‘Golden Age’ conceptions of the ‘traditional male worker’ with an industrial job and workmates simultaneously colleagues, friends, neighbours, and kin, a ‘stereotype[d]’ community whose existence Pahl doubted. Sheppey was chosen due to its isolation from mainland Britain, its local reputation as a ‘seething heap of informal work’, and the ongoing hangover (or ‘half-life’) from the closure of its Admiralty dockyard in the 1960s. Savage describes Pahl as a ‘community sociologist’, i.e. believing that social change and relations – community – must be understood in the precise context of where they take place. This contrasted studies by his contemporaries (*The Affluent Worker*, for

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Some more recent studies using these techniques include:
C. Bulbeck, ‘Schemes and dreams: young Australians imagine their future’, *Hecate*, 31:1 (2005), 73-84;
17 Ibid., pp.144-145.
instance) where specific places were ‘abstracted’ from their environment.\textsuperscript{18} Tightly tied, like the thesis overall, to St. Helens – to a specific place – this chapter’s research is very much in the vein of Pahl’s.

Pahl hoped the essays would reveal young people’s feelings about leaving school and entering an uncertain jobs market, with likely short- and even long-term unemployment.\textsuperscript{19} This contrasted earlier post-war school leavers who had benefited from full employment. Sheppey’s uncertain conditions matched those uncovered simultaneously in St. Helens by a 1980 \textit{Financial Times} investigation showing declining manufacturing jobs and apprenticeships resulting in one-third of school leavers being unemployed or reliant on government training schemes (\textbf{Chapter 1}).\textsuperscript{20} Despite amassing nearly 150 essays (90 boys, 52 girls), Pahl only produced one short article; they do not feature in \textit{Divisions of Labour}, though the UK Data Service holds the transcripts. Pahl’s incomplete analysis is one reason why Lyon and Crow revisited his study.\textsuperscript{21}

Pahl’s methodology was simple. Around ten days before the respondents left school, teachers in the local comprehensive set an essay asking students ‘to imagine that they were nearing the end of their life, and that something made them think back to the time when they left school […] write an account of their life over the next 30 or 40 years’.\textsuperscript{22} Only the gender of each respondent was provided as background, perhaps anticipating responses reflecting contemporary gender divisions. Lyon and Crow employed the same methodology with Sheppey teenagers in 2009-10, collecting just over 100 essays:

I want you to imagine that you are towards the end of your life. Look back over your life and say what happened to you. Don’t write a very exaggerated story, just tell the straightforward story of your life as it might really be […] Spread your story over your whole life from the time of leaving school.\textsuperscript{23}

Like Pahl, Lyon and Crow hoped these imagined futures essays would ‘uncover young people’s aspirations, hopes and dreams’ and provide ‘a window onto their world

\textsuperscript{18} Savage, pp.159-163. The geographical-rootedness of Pahl’s work, and of Imagined Futures essays generally, is underlined by Crow and Lyon in: ‘Turning points in work and family life…’, 24.
\textsuperscript{19} Pahl, ‘Living without a job…’, 259.
\textsuperscript{21} Crow and Lyon, ‘Turning points in work and family life…’, 13.
\textsuperscript{22} Pahl, ‘Living without a job…’, 259.
views’. Such essays require respondents to perform on paper an activity they perform continuously in their heads: projecting forwards. Having projects is necessary to have agency over one’s existence: without projects, one becomes passive, someone ‘to whom things simply happen’. The essays, alongside future dreams, goals, and projects, reveal respondents’ understanding of their present circumstances, past experiences, and place within the wider community: ‘their future-as-past accounts reveal the transmission of everyday cultures of life, work and community and a sense of one’s place in the world, geographically, socially, and symbolically’. Like the attitudes of older generations towards de-industrialisation and regeneration, the Imagined Futures are based at least partially on autobiographical memory: they are experiential. If and where ‘everyday cultures of life, work and community’ are reflected, this is historical memory, the community’s collective memory (or memories) influencing the respondents. Researchers analyse the responses chiefly for what they reveal about respondents’ perceptions of the past and present and what they indicate about the durability of attitudes towards concepts like community, de-industrialisation, regeneration, social class, etc.. Whereas questionnaires and surveys responses are often slightly artificial, the essays offer nuance and detail and, hopefully, reveal the respondents’ deeper feelings.

Veness’ study was conducted amidst contemporary fears over the future of school leavers, as a population ‘bulge’ amongst adolescents increasingly pushed them towards unskilled work rather than apprenticeships and skilled work. The aim was to build a picture of the ‘normal’ boy and girl as they prepared to leave school. Veness’ varied methodology combined written essays with questionnaires and various survey activities, providing inspiration for this chapter. Respondents undertook a personal questionnaire, an aspiration test, a short written piece about the best moment of their life, several activities about ideal employment and working conditions, and a structured face-to-face interview. Alongside these was an imagined futures essay, for which respondents were given forty minutes. The instructions were similar to Pahl’s and Lyon and Crow’s:

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26 Lyon, ‘Time and place in memory…’, p.162.
27 Ibid., pp.154-157.
30 Ibid., pp.16-18.
the writer was to imagine he was at the end of his life, and was to write his life story from the time he left school […] realistic appraisal of what was likely to happen to him, instead of giving full rein to fantasy […].\(^{31}\)

Veness’ expectations of the data were also similar: ‘one can find pointers […] to the moral values that underlie [the respondents’] choices, their wishes and their dreams […] it may be, then, that what we are finding out is the young person’s understanding of adult values’, i.e. their understanding of present circumstances and past experiences, as well as attachment to or influence by existing social/cultural structures and values, reflected through their imagining of the future.\(^{32}\)

A common point across these studies is that imagined futures essays are effective for studying change and transition. School leavers are particularly favoured subjects: the transition between childhood and adulthood represented by leaving state education is considered as significant a turning point as marriage, parenthood, or retirement. Veness described leaving school as a ‘shaking up of important social relationships’: school leavers face differences in organisation between school and work, new methods of supervision, and new responsibilities and expectations.\(^{33}\) Lyon and Crow describe adolescence as a time of ‘heightened reflection on self’, as school leavers juggle moving into a new stage of life, their own ambitions and expectations, and the expectations of adults (parents, teachers) and wider society.\(^{34}\)

These studies coincided with major evolutions in post-war Britain, too: Veness’ amidst concerns over population increases on school leavers’ prospects, Pahl’s against the end of post-war full employment and early industrial decline, and Lyon and Crow’s in an area grappling with post-industrial regeneration and the aftershock of the 2008 financial crash. Lyon and Crow believe ‘unconventional times’ cause reassessments of ‘conventional wisdom’: not only undergoing individual changes, respondents faced societal change around them – potentially shattering the adult world they expected to move into.\(^{35}\) The present chapter similarly sits amidst the aftermath of de-industrialisation and the difficulties of regeneration, ongoing problems of low aspiration, below average educational attainment, and limited job prospects in St. Helens itself, and the uncertainties of Brexit. St. Helens’ expected adult world was already fragmenting at the time of the

\(^{31}\) Ibid., p.17.
\(^{32}\) Ibid., pp.1, 25.
\(^{33}\) Ibid., pp.2-3. Veness’ description of school leaving as a ‘transition point’ echoed Himmelweit et al.’s analysis from 1952.
\(^{34}\) Lyon and Crow, ‘The challenges and opportunities…’, 503.
1980 investigation as traditional pathways to adulthood like apprenticeships and industrial employment narrowed. This fragmentation has accelerated alongside de-industrialisation so there is no similarly obvious adult world to move into in St. Helens today, which explains this chapter’s survey results below.

Of course, imagined futures essays and surveys are subjective. Veness, Pahl, and Lyon and Crow nonetheless obtained responses apparently grounded and realistic in light of their expectations of their respondents, even if Pahl found some naively romantic or optimistic.36 Both Veness and Lyon and Crow specifically asked their respondents to write realistically about their futures, no doubt hoping school leavers would have given serious thought to their futures and formed some concrete ideas about it.37 There is a distinction between asking students for an imagined future drawing on personal experiences and expectations and asking for the students’ fantasy future if means and opportunity were no barrier. Many respondents accordingly described realistic fantasies, like holidays abroad or home ownership, coherent with their lived experiences and the context of the studies.38 Crow nonetheless defends fanciful or over-ambitious responses as still reflecting something the respondent hopes will happen.39 Ultimately, recurrent ideas, themes, and tropes and anomalous, fanciful, or unusual responses (which, although distracting and eye-catching, must not be unduly dismissed) to the essays are instructive.40 The quantitative survey questions asked alongside the essays in this chapter provide background information about the respondents and how they position themselves in society, anchoring the free-form writings in the essays.

Being undertaken in a classroom, some respondents might approach the activities like a school exercise, the “right” answers outweighing more personal responses.41 Veness worried about the influence of academic pressure to write interestingly and imaginatively or outside ideas from the media, parents, and teachers.42 Lyon and Crow wondered if responses would ‘reflect family sayings or wider community wisdom as resources or repertories for sense-making’ more than the respondents’ voices.43 Such influences are

36 Veness, pp.xxiv, 44 ; Lyon and Crow, ‘The challenges and opportunities…’, 500 ; Pahl, ‘Living without a job…’, 262.
37 Although Veness acknowledged that this expectation could not be universal, pp.9, 24.
38 Veness, p.44 ; Lyon and Crow, ‘The challenges and opportunities…’, 505-506 ; Crow and Lyon, ‘Turning points in work and family life…’, 17.
41 Veness, p.7.
42 Ibid., pp.9-10, 47. Pahl, surprisingly, was dismissive of the influence of the media and popular culture in ‘Living without a job…’; ‘any suggestion that teenage magazines befuddled the girls’ minds with romantic dreams would be hard to substantiate…’ (p.261).
ultimately unproblematic. Lyon and Crow themselves acknowledge responses will include ‘everyday cultures of life, work and community’. Whilst these studies typically expect evidence of change, such influence instead indicates respondents’ attachment to existing communities, groups, values, etc., and the degree of continuity between previous generations and their own.

Finally, recent studies highlight the practical issue that essay writing may not appeal to modern adolescents. When Pahl conducted his study, autobiographical writing was considered a key pedagogical tool for developing school-children’s voice and sense of self – especially for working-class children, the category into which most of Pahl’s respondents fell. However, Lyon and Crow noticed their 2009-10 cohort’s responses were generally shorter than Pahl’s. Lyon’s second Shoppey project utilised alternative methods like arts workshops, collage-making, photography, video recording, and focus groups to better mirror how young people communicate today. Indeed, responses to this chapter’s essays vary in length, some over a page, others a few lines; two simply read ‘don’t understand’ and ‘don’t get it’, although such non-engagement was a minority amongst a data set of enlightening responses.

5.4: Data gathering process

This chapter utilised mixed quantitative and qualitative surveys and imagined futures essays, conducted with two cohorts of Sixth Form students in St. Helens. A pilot cohort of 20 students was surveyed at Rainford College in spring 2018 and a second cohort of 48 students from Rainford (23) and Carmel College (25) was surveyed in November 2019. Rainford is a small college attached to a high school whereas Carmel is a specialist 16-18 college whose students study primarily A-levels. They are above average compared to St. Helens and England in terms of results and students entering Higher Education:

45 Lyon and Crow, ‘The challenges and opportunities…’, 504.
46 Though this approach is not perfect either and still presents many challenges: Lyon and Carabelli, ‘Researching young people’s orientations to the future…’, 434-435.
### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All Students</th>
<th>Level 3 Qualifications Only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmel</td>
<td>857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rainford</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Helens</td>
<td>2239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>534328</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fig. 5.5.1:** Percentage of 2017 leavers entering further education, apprenticeships, or employment.⁴⁸

### Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All Students</th>
<th>Degrees (%)</th>
<th>Top-Third HE Institution (%)</th>
<th>Russell Group University (%)</th>
<th>Oxbridge (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carmel</td>
<td>773</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rainford</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>St. Helens</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>England</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fig. 5.5.2:** Percentage of 2016 leavers going on to university study.⁴⁹

Further cohorts from Cowley International College and St. Helens College were envisaged to improve the data set’s diversity. Both are below the St. Helens and national averages for students progressing into Higher Education (Fig.5.5.2): Cowley 45% and St. Helens College 41%. The figures entering top-third or Russell Group institutions are similarly below average. Whilst Cowley is just above the St. Helens average (Fig.5.5.1) for students staying in education (49%), it is also significantly above local and national averages for students still unemployed or not in education for at least two terms after their period of study (17%, compared to 12% for St. Helens and 13% nationally). St. Helens College, meanwhile, has only 32% of students stay in education and 18% unemployed or not in education after leaving. It is above average for apprenticeships (15%) and students entering employment directly (28%). Unlike the other three colleges, it has more people pursuing Level 2 qualifications (below A-level standard) than Level 3 (A-level standard),

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N.B.: Level 3 Qualifications in this case represent A-levels but the category covers a wider range, see: https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/list-of-qualification-levels

⁴⁹ ‘Carmel College: Student Destinations’; ‘Rainford High Technology College: Student Destinations’.

N.B.: ‘Top Third’ institutions ‘when ranked by average UCAS tariff score of entrants across their best 3 A levels’.
which explains these figures.\textsuperscript{50} It seems it is colleges like Carmel and Rainford that keep St. Helens broadly in line – even slightly above – national averages. The disparities between colleges reflect the socio-economic disparities between areas of the town (\textit{Chapter 1}) and no doubt contribute to the identification with the ‘smaller unit’ discussed previously and which emerges in several survey responses here.\textsuperscript{51} According to Savage, those from lower socio-economic backgrounds have less facility to exercise ‘elective belonging’ and those less educated are less able to engage with surveys like the ones used here.\textsuperscript{52} Including Cowley and St. Helens College would be vital by that reading to the validity of the surveys. The results obtained nonetheless cover a range of socio-economic backgrounds and there is little indication of these influencing the ability to engage with the material.

Unfortunately, it was impossible to organise further cohorts before Covid-19 derailed the ambition entirely. Previous scholars worried about the influence of outside events on respondents and Covid-19 will impact school leavers massively, whatever their future intentions. One survey found that, whilst over 86\% of undergraduate applicants for 2020-2021 still wished to attend university provided classes were in person and extracurricular and socialising activities only slightly affected by social distancing, only 72\% would go if classes were mainly online and social distancing severely limited extracurricular activities and socialising.\textsuperscript{53} Employment-wise, in major North-West towns and cities – excepting Manchester and Warrington – fewer than 30\% of jobs translated easily to home-working.\textsuperscript{54} In March 2020, new job vacancies were at 8\% of 2019 levels and between March and May there were nearly 350,000 fewer vacancies than the previous quarter. Some reports suggest Covid-19 cost 9\% of workers aged 18-24 their jobs, whilst

\textsuperscript{52} Savage, pp.24, 31-3, 47, 240.
around 1-in-3 workers under 25 were employed in sectors suffering the heaviest shutdowns.\textsuperscript{55}

Veness would even frown at the eighteen month gap between the two cohorts included here, believing short-term developments in current affairs, popular music and fashion, television programmes, and talks from teachers or careers counsellors rendered the data incomparable.\textsuperscript{56} However, prior to Covid-19, the last major outside event was the 2016 Brexit referendum so both cohorts fall between these two important moments. Due to the gap between the 2018 and 2019 cohorts, and the additions made to the surveys in 2019 (see below), the intention had been to discard the 2018 results from the final analysis but they have been included to compensate for constraints caused by Covid-19.

All participants completed the surveys in college, with myself and a teacher present. In 2018, Rainford selected participants on a voluntary basis and they completed the surveys simultaneously in the same room. In 2019, Rainford selected participants at random from across their 16-18 population and, again, all completed the surveys simultaneously. The allocated room in 2019 was small so participants had to share desks or use the adjacent study area, whereas the 2018 cohort had sat one student per desk in a larger classroom. Carmel selected participants from amongst students studying history and by place of residence. They completed the surveys in three small groups: Group A (7 students) all from St. Helens, B (6) not from St. Helens, and C (12) a mixture. The 2018 cohort received a short presentation about the thesis but this was not repeated in 2019 to avoid influencing the responses.

The survey has two parts. Part A combines multiple choice questions and short written answers to ascertain background information about the respondents, their understanding of concepts like social class, community, and de-industrialisation, and their relationship to St. Helens. It includes a series of statements to which students record their reactions on a five-point Likert scale, from ‘disagree strongly’ to ‘agree strongly’. Part A was lengthened considerably in 2019, from eight questions and sixteen Likert statements to fourteen questions and twenty-four Likert statements. The expanded version included more questions about community, reflecting the thesis’ evolution.

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{56} Veness, p.14.
\end{enumerate}
As with oral history interviews, the survey questions must not be leading. In 2019, respondents had more scope to explain their choices with short written answers. The wording of the questions was reconsidered, particularly for the Likert questionnaire where some statements were deliberately linked. For instance, ‘I think that social class is important for personal identity’ was followed up by three further statements, asking whether this importance changes over time, was less important in the past, or was more important in the past. This reduces the impression that there are “right” answers and increases the accuracy of responses, as respondents hopefully correspond their choices for the different statements. A typical five-point Likert scale was chosen, allowing respondents two degrees of disagree and agree, plus a neutral mid-point. The disagree and agree options were bipolar, i.e. exact opposites of one another.57

For Part B, students were given one of three Imagined Futures essays at random. They were encouraged to write at least one side of A4, though could write more or less if they wanted. The instructions were deliberately similar to Veness’, Pahl’s, and Lyon and Crow’s:

A) Imagine yourself at some point in the future. Describe what has happened to you between now and then and what you are doing with your life.

B) Imagine living in St. Helens in the future. Describe what has happened to the town between now and then, and what it would be like to live there.

C) Imagine the world of work at some point in the future. Describe how it has changed and evolved between now and then.

Again, it was important to not lead the respondents, hence the very simple instructions. Unlike the studies discussed above, respondents to essays B and C were not necessarily imagining a personal future. Lyon and Carabelli observed that asking respondents about ‘the’ future as opposed to ‘their’ future resulted in responses more reliant on outside knowledge than on personal experiences or ambitions.58 Such futures are ‘lifeless’ and detached, whereas asking respondents about ‘their’ future connects the

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57 There effect on responses of having a neutral option and on how many options to include is often debated. A neutral option might reduce ‘false’ responses where respondents choose an option even though they either do not have an opinion or do not know how to respond. That said, it gives people who could give a positive or negative response an easy out: respondents wishing to avoid cognitive effort can answer without engaging with the question; if they are conflicted they can avoid the negative feelings associated with this; and from a perspective of social desirability, they can avoid giving a socially unpopular answer. For the number of options, the balance is between offering respondents a sufficient range of choices and not having so many that it causes confusion.

58 Carabelli and Lyon, ‘Young people’s orientations to the future…’, 1115.
present and this potential future: ‘they are not just standing and imagining it, their imagination runs to connect and adjust what they know with what they hope for and what they are not familiar with to create dynamic links and viable paths to traverse’. Interestingly, particularly in 2019, multiple respondents answering essays B and C wrote very personal answers, perhaps because it made responding easier.

5.5: Presentation of results

The graphs below present the results for the quantitative questions in Part A. The 2018 and 2019 results are presented alongside one another. The numbering and wording of the questions replicates the larger 2019 survey.

The results speak largely for themselves. St. Helens was clearly associated with the working-class and its industrial past. Recognition of social class influencing personal identity and of a greater sense of community in the past was visible, too. By contrast, place attachment to St. Helens was weak and strong identification with social class lacking. In 2019, a significant proportion reported feeling attachment to community. This community, though, seemed to come not from place (St. Helens) but from people, particularly friends. To use Pahl’s terminology, this community was *chosen* rather than *given*.

A fuller analysis is offered below the graphs, accounting also for answers to the qualitative responses in Part A and the Imagined Futures essays from Part B.

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59 Ibid., 1115-1116; Savage, p.x.
60 Various OHP slides related to personal community, Keele University Special Collections and Archives (KUSCA), PAH [not numbered]. Savage, meanwhile, would say their belonging is ‘elective’, p.24.
Part A Quantitative Results only

1) Which age group do you belong to?

2) What is your gender?

3a) Do you live in St. Helens?
3b) Have you always lived in St. Helens?

4) Did your parents/carers grow up in St. Helens?

6a) Which of the following social classes do you think you fit into? Circle any options which are applicable.
6c) What do you plan to do once you leave college?
Although not instructed to, several selected multiple options

7a) Which of the following social classes do your parents belong to?
Circle any options which are applicable

8a) Which social classes do you associate St. Helens with?
Circle any options which are appropriate
9) Which group(s) do you associate with 'community'? Circle any options which are applicable

10a) Do you feel a sense of belonging to a community?

12a) Do you feel it is important to have a strong sense of local community?
13a) Do you feel St. Helens has a strong sense of local community?

Part B Quantitative Results

1) St. Helens was an industrial town
2) St. Helens is an industrial town

3) I am aware of St. Helens' industrial legacy and heritage

4) I am proud of St. Helens' industrial legacy and heritage
5) I feel that St. Helens' industrial legacy and heritage remains relevant today

6) I think that social class is important for personal identity

7) I think that the importance of social class for personal identity changes over time
8) I think that social class was less important for people's personal identity in the past

9) I think that social class was more important for people's personal identity in the past

10) I feel a sense of attachment to a social class
11) I feel a sense of attachment to my friends and family

11) Friends and family are more important to me than social class
Alternate version from pilot study

12) My friends and family belong to the same social class as me
13) Friends and family form part of my local community

14) I feel a sense of attachment to my local community

15) People in my local community belong in the same social class as me
16) I feel St. Helens has a sense of local community

17) This sense of community was stronger in the past

18) This sense of community will persist in the future
19) I am proud to live in St. Helens

20) I want to continue living in St. Helens when I am older

21) I know what I want to do in life when I am older
22) I feel I can achieve my life goals in St. Helens

23) I feel my employment prospects in St. Helens are better than they were for my parents

24) I would still rather live in St. Helens, even if it meant having a less good job than I could find elsewhere
5.6: Analysis of results

5.6.1: Social class

Class – particularly through working-class employment, culture, and community – recurs across this thesis, even if the analysis has not been limited to a particular class-based community. The respondents’ understanding of class is important because of the traditional association between class and work-based communities in industrial towns like St. Helens.

Given both Carmel and Rainford are above the St. Helens and national averages for results and students progressing to Higher Education, a skew towards middle-class might have been expected. This would, according to Savage, afford them greater latitude as regards notions of community, place, and choice – and facilitate their engagement with such abstract concepts.61 Across both cohorts, however, a split between working- and middle-class emerged. Only two respondents said they did not belong to a class, whilst one selected upper-class. A not insignificant minority selected ‘don’t know’.

The predominance of working- and middle-class was reproduced for parents’ social class. This predominance is understandable when the respondents’ parents’ jobs are considered: 10 in the civil service or local government, 21 in the health sector (the largest category being social care, unsurprising for a de-industrialised town62), 24 in education (mainly teachers or teaching assistants, rather than managerial), 14 in manual jobs, 15 in sales and retail, and 16 in various office jobs (including several managers or project managers). 2 worked in health and beauty and 5 in hospitality and food. Only 3 were listed as not working. Just 7 were mentioned in a directorial or ownership capacity.

These jobs generally matched the respondents’ choice of social class for themselves and their parents. The figures and categories are not exact, though. For instance, whereas most said specifically what medical role their parents occupy, two just wrote ‘NHS’, and some respondents seemed unsure of their parents’ jobs: ‘stays in a house for bad children’ (presumably a social carer or worker); ‘a food business (not exactly sure what it is)’; ‘HR person?’; ‘something in Liverpool uni’.63 Some respondents,

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61 Savage, pp.24, 31-3, 47, 240.
62 As Sherry Lee Linkon says regarding her concept of de-industrialisation’s ‘half-life’ (p.2), ‘de-industrialisation may not be as poisonous as radioactive waste, though high rates of various illnesses as well as alcoholism, drug abuse, and suicide suggest that it does manifest itself in physical disease […] it generates psychological and social forms of disease, as individuals and communities struggle with questions about their identities and their place in a global economy’.
meanwhile, listed their parents as working-class even though at least one performed what could be considered a middle-class occupation: an English lecturer; a teaching assistant and a project manager; a barista and an engineer; a primary school teacher and a high school learning support assistant. St. Helens as a place was overwhelmingly associated with the working-class. This disparity between St. Helens and between the respondents and their families likely reflects the two colleges’ above average academic reputations for the area. Most respondents hoped to attend university after college, corresponding with Figs.5.5.1-5.5.2.

The respondents attached little importance to social class. Understandings of social class – both cohorts were asked to define it and, in 2019, to justify their choice – largely focused on economic concerns of wages and job status/type. Fewer than 1-in-3 said social class was important for personal identity, although around two-thirds believed this changes over time and nearly 4-in-5 thought social class was important to personal identity in the past. Fewer than 1-in-10 felt attachment to social class, with the overwhelming majority not feeling attachment or lacking a strong opinion. The vast majority nonetheless chose a social class when prompted, tallying with the 2016 British Social Attitudes survey where around half of respondents needed prompting to allocate themselves a social class.

The limited understanding of social class was manifest in Part A’s short written answers and Part B’s essays. In 2018, 16 of 20 respondents directly associated social class with money (wages) and socio-economic status (job type), as did 33 of 48 in 2019. Many answers had shades of E.P. Thompson’s alignment of class to ‘productive relations’, shared experiences, and occupation or of Friedrich Engels’ employees selling their ‘labour-force’ to employers ‘for a certain daily sum’. One 2018 response said succinctly: ‘middle class tend to be employers. Working class tend to be employees’. Another described the working-class as ‘when someone earns just enough money to get by’, often in manual or service jobs ‘like a factory worker or a person who works in catering’. Another described class as ‘your position in society and the jobs, wages and lifestyle that

64 Participant CC, Rainford College 2018 ; Participant ??, Rainford College 2018 ; Participant EC, Rainford College 2018 ; Participant EC, Rainford College 2018.
66 E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class, (Vintage, New York, 1963), pp.9-10 ; Freidrich Engels, The Condition of the Working Class in England, (Granada, St. Albans, 1969), pp.23-24. ‘The wage-worker sells to the capitalist his labour-force for a certain daily sum […] that is the basis of the system which tends more and more to split up civilised society into […] the owners of all the means of production and subsistence […] and an immense number of wage-workers, the owners of nothing but their labour force […]’.
67 Participant LH, Rainford College 2018.
68 Participant Cyber, Rainford College 2018.
you lead, and how it fits or ranks in society’.


Social or cultural influences on class were less evident, perhaps because economic factors are easier to conceive. An economic conception of class is more absolute and rests on a consistent framework, even if access to it is unequal: pounds and pence, take-home wages, taxes, spending power, etc.. Social and cultural conceptions, though facilitated by economic capital, are more relative and subjective. Links between class and personal identity, political alignment, family background and friendship groups, geography, etc., nevertheless emerged in some answers. One defined social class as a personal choice (‘where a person identifies their status in society’), one correlated social class and voting habits, another linked social class to ‘where you live’. One saw class as a social construct (‘a term generated by society’) but still based on ‘someone’s worth or value’, again an economic rationale reminiscent of Engels’ categorisation by ownership.

The influence of family and friends over social class emerged strongly amongst the 2019 cohort, with several linking social class to ‘background’. Economic considerations, particularly work, remained predominant. One suggested ‘personal wealth’ can ‘either be ascribed or achieved’, i.e. some people are born into money but others must go out and make it. 28 of 48 respondents highlighted family background when justifying their own social class and 15 who listed themselves as working-class explicitly attributed this to their parents’ work, as did 14 who listed their parents as working-class. Several evoked the influence of family across generations, suggesting class status is a transmitted element of a family’s identity. This was even true for one respondent who selected both working-class and middle-class for himself as ‘family have a history of merchant seamanship and dock working but current family are office workers’

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69 Participant LD, Rainford College 2018.
70 Participant RD, Rainford College 2018; Participant LB, Rainford College 2018; Participant RM, Rainford College 2018; Participant MF, Rainford College 2018.
72 Participant ES, Rainford College 2018; Participant LB, Rainford College 2018; Participant CC, Rainford College 2018.
73 Participant CG, Rainford College 2018.
75 Participant B6M, Carmel College 2019.
and just middle-class for his parents as ‘they are office workers in the civil service and earn average salaries’, showing his personal conflict between the family’s traditional identity and his parents’ personal improvement. This inter-generational transmission of identity was not apparent amongst those who selected middle-class for themselves, reflecting St. Helens’ association with being working-class. Inter-generational transmission has, though, appeared in surveys of the middle-classes in middle-class areas. This reinforces the importance of place, recognised by Pahl, to such surveys. Several respondents mentioned geography, either where they grew up or where their family comes from, as determining social class, whilst material living conditions like the family’s house, going on holiday, or owning goods such as up-to-date mobile phones appeared in multiple answers.

Class cropped up in the imagined futures essays, too, despite the lack of importance many respondents attached to it. The understanding of class remained largely economic. In 2018, one hoped ‘the working class would be treated right as other class and be payed [sic.] well’ in the future. Others feared continuing class divides: ‘the more rural areas of St. Helens […] have remained occupied by more affluent middle class people […] the poorer people have moved into the town centre, where housing is cheaper […]’ and ‘working class jobs would become sort of maintenance for industrial machines, the quality of living for people in the working class will decrease as more become redundant’. The 2019 cohort revealed similar sentiments. One feared existing divides worsening: those ‘on a mediocre wage (not getting enough to barely support their family) have been left behind […] its [sic.] harder for people to get jobs, but those jobs are for people higher up and more experienced […]’. Another, imagining his own future, hoped for ‘a well paid job and a wife and children’ but was adamant that ‘I wouldn’t treat anyone different and adopt a ‘snobby’ attitude and look down on people, like most wealthy people do’.

Family and a good job as a measure of future success was a common feature. One response evoked being the ‘average Joe’ with an ‘ordinary life’, which he described as a

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77 Participant C10M, Carmel College 2019.
78 Savage, Identities and Social Change..., pp.228-230.
80 Participant LA, Rainford College 2018.
81 Participant LD, Rainford College 2018; Participant ES, Rainford College 2018.
‘happy, comfortable life with a decent job, a girlfriend/fiancée and a car’. Selina Todd believes people in post-war Britain aspired to being ‘ordinary’, ordinariness being synonymous with ‘working-class’, itself synonymous with the idea of ‘the People’. Margaret Thatcher later used ‘ordinariness’ as an umbrella term for her values as part of her rejection of social class. Both uses recognise the value it was thought the public attached to being ‘ordinary’; the respondent’s wish to be an ‘average Joe’ would not have looked out-of-place in such conceptions. Indeed, in Veness’ study, ‘ordinary’ themes like marriage, children, living standards, and work recurred. Most girls mentioned marriage, as did over two-thirds of the boys. Most envisaged two or three children. Home or car ownership were only explicitly mentioned by small minorities but discussion of living standards, holidays, and travel was common. The jobs envisaged were gendered – only just over half the girls envisaged working after childbirth – but many hoped for jobs with status (a ‘good firm’, a ‘big shop’, clean not dirty, skilled not unskilled) and attractive features such as promotion, travel, high pay, free time, or use of one’s own ideas.

In this chapter, many responses evoked similar life-course stages (university, employment, marriage, children, home-ownership) in their desired trajectory. Economic concerns again dominated, these stages forming a journey towards independence, financial security, and a comfortable life. In 2018, 4 of 7 respondents to Essay A explicitly mentioned financial security, good pay, or independence and 2 more described futures which would likely bring these anyway; in 2019, 8 of 15 discussed this. In 2018, 3 talked of marriage and/or starting a family, as did 7 in 2019. This is noticeably lower than in Veness’ and Pahl’s studies, where marriage and children were nearly universal ambitions (particularly amongst female respondents), but corresponds with Lyon and Crow’s follow-up work on Sheppey. Discussing future family life, study, or work is normal since, for most respondents, living in the parental home and attending school have been the major features of their lives so far and, for most, will continue to feature heavily during adulthood.

84 Participant C10M, Carmel College 2019.
87 Indeed, ‘ordinariness’ features in several of the mid-twentieth century sociological studies examined by Savage in Identities and Social Change…, pp.221-223. See also: Lawrence, p.89.
90 Veness, pp.26, 31, 40, 52.
Respondents to other recent surveys show a more complex understanding of class. The 2016 BSA claimed 60% of British people identified as working-class, the same as in 1983. The reasons, though, were not purely economic: 47% of managers and professionals self-identified as working-class, the highest total since 2003, alongside 64% of ‘intermediate’ and 77% percent of ‘semi-routine and routine’ workers. Family background (the lower the parents’ occupational class, the more likely the self-identification as working-class) and education (the higher the qualifications, the less likely the self-identification as working-class) were similarly far from universal rules. The BSA showed class identification to be very personal, hence those not economically working-class adopting the label: 28% of managers and 40% of ‘intermediate’ workers with degrees; 24% of managers whose fathers had been managers and 49% of managers whose fathers had held ‘intermediate’ jobs; and 36% of ‘intermediate’ workers whose fathers had been managers and 69% percent of ‘intermediate’ workers whose father had held ‘intermediate’ jobs.91

The BBC’s 2011 Great British Class Survey, meanwhile, required detailed consideration of respondents’ cultural preferences and tastes and their social networks to build a seven-step model of social class more reflective of modern society than the typical ‘working-middle-upper’ model.92 This complex, fragmented class structure, alongside people’s multi-faceted attachment to class, contributes to the belief that, despite much journalistic and political talk of classlessness, class still matters even if its form and manifestation has evolved.93 Florence Sutcliffe-Braithwaite notes a blurring of working- and middle-class labels due to changes to the labour market, consumerism, education, etc., leading people to again identify as ‘ordinary’, a term now synonymous with a vaguer ‘middle’ of society (i.e. anyone who works) rather than the traditional working-class.94 Yet, most respondents to this chapter’s surveys who mentioned the class structure retained the working-middle-upper division: ‘upper, middle and lower class – the higher you are the more [privileges] you have’; ‘middle class which is average, upper class which is rich and working class which is poor’; ‘there are 3 classes and its usually about how much money you have + what job you have’.95

91 Evans and Mellon, 1, 4, 7, 9.
94 Ibid., pp.6-7.
This chapter’s respondents are younger than the BSA’s and the studies analysed by Sutcliffe-Braithwaite. Their responses might reflect an unawareness of class which will develop as they acquire more real world experience. More likely, they reflect a generational evolution whereby young people see class as increasingly unimportant. Most writing essays about their own futures did not mention class directly, even if the repeated mentions of higher education, professional careers, financial independence or stability, and happy family lives suggested a middle-class existence. Several writing about the future of St. Helens, meanwhile, predicted the loss of local amenities traditionally associated with working-class communities. One envisaged ‘much less natural areas like parks’ and the closure of libraries and cinemas (originally conceived as ways of ameliorating the urban environment for workers), whilst two feared a pub-free future: ‘the majority of pubs would either close or [be] not remotely as busy as they used to be, due to the lack of time or desire’ and ‘more pubs and places [of] leisure will decrease in size as personal leisure time is done differently now [in the future] than it was 100 years ago’. For them, class was both unimportant and disappearing.

5.6.2: Place attachment

Along with class, another key facet of traditional work-based community is its geographical rootedness, often in tight proximity to the workplace. In St. Helens, such communities existed since early industrialists built accommodation to entice workers to their glass factories and coal mines, right up to the twentieth century when colliers like Ken (Chapter 2) grew up on a ‘miner’s estate’ near the local colliery and social club. The roots provided by this housing fostered the town’s growth and created associations between certain areas and industries which, over time, galvanised place attachment to St. Helens as a town. To quote T.C. Barker and J.R. Harris:

gradually, the different sections of the community came to ignore, if not to forget, their own individual backgrounds and developed a new outlook dictated by conditions then prevailing in the town rather than by prejudices inherited from the past. As new generations grew up, this broader outlook became generally more accepted.

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96 Participant ??, Rainford College 2018 ; Participant LD, Rainford College 2018 ; Participant EC, Rainford College 2018.
98 Barker and Harris, p.412.
Mah defines place attachment as an ‘affective bond between people and landscape’, linked to ‘social and economic processes’. ‘Place’ is not simply a space but ‘home’, given meaning by inhabitants’ personal experiences of it. The increasing place attachment across generations alongside industrialisation contrasts the recent move away from place-based community identified by scholars like Spencer and Pahl and this chapter’s results. Over 4-in-10 respondents were not proud to live in St. Helens, compared to fewer than 1-in-5 who were. Nearly three-fifths did not want to live in St. Helens when they were older and over 7-in-10 felt they cannot achieve their life ambitions in the town. Just two respondents would still live in St. Helens if a better job became available elsewhere.

These responses were partially limited because some respondents lived outside St. Helens, largely due to Carmel’s wide catchment area. Of those not resident in St. Helens, three listed Rainhill and one listed Rainford, both part of St. Helens’ Metropolitan Borough, albeit on its fringes. Rainford lies around five miles to the north whilst Rainhill, to the south-west, actually uses a Liverpool postcode (rather than a Warrington one like most of St. Helens). Even some who listed St. Helens specified which part, despite not needing to: one Billinge, one Eccleston, one Rainford, and two Windle. This suggests a stronger attachment to immediate locality than the wider town. As the Billinge resident said, ‘I only live on the outskirts of St Helens so I’m not really sure’ if it has a strong local community. The respondent who listed Rainford as not belonging to St. Helens concurred: ‘I don’t live there and don’t go often enough to know’.

Place attachment is not just a question of residency within a space but of use of that space. A town’s resident might feel little attachment if they do not work, shop, or socialise there; regeneration campaigners (Chapter 4) express such fears about future residents of new housing estates. Charles Forman found a similarly powerful attachment to particular neighbourhoods or ‘smaller units’ in the early twentieth century, a consequence perhaps of the town’s formation from pre-existing villages or around industries. Circumscribing place-based attachment and community to ‘small localities’ (or the ‘smaller unit’) rather than a whole town is a common theme in literature on community decline – though, in reality, the two are not mutually exclusive as people, as shown in previous chapters, can belong to multiple communities at once.

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100 Participant 15M, Rainford College 2019.
102 Forman, p.11.
103 Spencer and Pahl, p.11.
Place attachment – or lack of it – came across strongly in the imagined future essay A answers. Some were keen to stay local because they ‘like it here and most of my family lives’ locally.\textsuperscript{104} Many, though, as the quantitative results indicate, clearly wished to leave St. Helens. One aimed to study ‘at a University in the South of England’, to work ‘at a hospital as a surgeon’, and live ‘in a rural area and [commute] into a city’.\textsuperscript{105} Another stated bluntly that ‘I’ve moved out of St. Helens, preferably to another country, but if not at least out of St. Helens’.\textsuperscript{106} Moving away is seen as contributing to the independence so many crave: ‘I want to be as independent as possible and I do not want to live in my hometown preferably’.\textsuperscript{107} A desire to leave was visible in Pahl’s Sheppey study, too: sampling ten boys’ and ten girls’ essays at random, half the girls envisaged moving away (mainly to London) and one boy wished to emigrate.\textsuperscript{108} In Lyon and Crow’s study, 1-in-4 wished to move abroad.\textsuperscript{109} The pull of friends and family still affects those who wish to move away, though: the future surgeon would come back to visit family whilst another would not move too far away so they do not ‘have to travel far to see my family or friends’.\textsuperscript{110}

Some essay B answers discussed St. Helens in terms of personal attachment, too.\textsuperscript{111} The lack of place attachment was particularly pronounced in these cases: ‘I would hate to live in St. Helens in the future as it’s a horrible place with lots of crime/poverty. The only sense of community comes from Saints! Unless someone was born and bread [sic.] in St. Helens then I don’t get why they would live here’.\textsuperscript{112} Others wrote similarly: ‘I couldn’t imagine living in St. Helens when Im [sic.] older’ and ‘personally, I don’t think St. Helens has a bright future and I want to move away as soon as possible’.\textsuperscript{113} Even the minority envisaging a positive future for the town were largely keen to move away, suggesting place is secondary to personal ambition.\textsuperscript{114}

Some more pragmatic responses underlined this subordination of place to ambition. One respondent wrote, ‘if St. Helens offered any jobs within my desired field of work then I would decide to work locally and remain at home’ – but on the proviso that
no better offers emerged elsewhere, in which case they would leave for the greater money and opportunities. Similarly, one aimed to get an initial job and then ‘see my options of moving somewhere now and see what its [sic.] like and hopefully get a better job in a nice area’. Think-tanks like the Centre for Towns identify insufficient local opportunities as a long-term problem causing small towns to lose younger residents to larger cities. Sandwiched between Liverpool and Manchester, St. Helens is not immune to the draw of neighbouring cities, as several responses indicated. St. Helens’ forced refocusing on what its MP wryly dubbed the ‘training industry’ as de-industrialisation shut down local opportunities and forced younger people to leave was evoked in Chapter 1.

The lack of place attachment to St. Helens, reflecting the respondents’ personal ambitions as much as a dislike of the town, mirrors Lyon and Crow’s findings. As alluded to, many respondents wished to pursue Higher Education and enter professional jobs to achieve financial security. Careers envisaged included secondary school teaching, engineering, accountancy, surgery, social work, paramedical, cybersecurity, law, forensics, marketing, the police, and the army. A small minority hoped for careers in sport, art, design, or writing. Echoing their economic understanding of class, many wished to be well-paid. Like respondents from previous studies, having time for hobbies, holidays, and travel were important. Their aspirations were not class- or place-based, unsurprising given the overall lack of importance attached to either. Like many de-industrialised towns, St. Helens’ job market is below average (both nationally and regionally) for managers and directors, professional occupations, and technical operations, but above average for administrative and secretarial, skilled trades, plant and machine operatives, and elementary occupations. It is above average for people with no qualifications (11.6% versus 8.8% nationally), and below average for all qualifications up to NVQ4. Whether for jobs or opportunities for ‘expanding my horizons’, as one respondent put it, prospects are likely better in larger towns and cities.

120 Abrams.
121 Lyon and Crow, ‘The challenges and opportunities…’, 509.
This need to move is heightened by the general lack of enthusiasm for St. Helens’ future development. The 2018 cohort did not mention regeneration at all and seemed resigned to losing things current campaigners are fighting for, like the greenbelt. The predicted closure of parks has been noted, another opined that farmland will be ‘reduced to make room for population growth’, and another feared that ‘there will be too much overcrowding and our greenbelt will be demolished into businesses, houses and other’. Some saw the barriers to regeneration as being bigger than St. Helens itself: ‘it is even worse due to a general decline mainly from a lack of government funding in more northern parts of England’ and ‘it’s already bad enough now but I feel like there will be less funding for the area and it will become even more dilapidated’. Many felt St. Helens will continue declining, which puts them off staying. One predicted a population decrease and another an increasing need to move elsewhere for decent employment. Another paralleled regeneration campaigners by saying St. Helens will become a vast dormitory for people working elsewhere. Worsening social and class inequality and the expansion of big cities at the expense of smaller towns were evoked repeatedly. Several mentioned the continuing decline of traditional employers like Pilkington’s and the negative consequences of this. More envisaged the high street declining further rather than recovering.

Some were more positive, for instance envisaging the arrival of ‘more well paid jobs that you would usually find in the cities’. The advent of modern, up-to-date employment would be akin to a re-industrialisation of the town, boosting local employment and the local economy. One dreamed of a ‘modernised’ centre with ‘big massive shopping centres and retail parks all across the town with skyscrapers standing tall above everything else’ – which would have delighted the town’s 1960s planners! These positive responses, though, did not discuss how jobs or investment would actually be attracted. It is tempting to dismiss them as fantasies or, like Pahl, as ‘naive romanticism’ but in reality towns like St. Helens need such optimism and big-dreaming

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124 Participant LD, Rainford College 2018; Participant EC, Rainford College 2018.
125 Participant B3M, Carmel College 2019; Participant C7M, Carmel College 2019.
126 Participant RM, Rainford College 2018.
127 Participant LD, Rainford College 2018; Participant C11F, Carmel College 2019.
130 Participant ??, Rainford College 2018.
131 Participant BE, Rainford College 2018.
if they are to thrive in the post-industrial world. What is worrying for the town’s future is that, despite some positive visions, so few respondents wish to stay, and there was no mention of engaging with the regeneration process, whether in support or opposition, in the way older residents do.

Overall, there was a marked difference between the positive portrayal the respondents have of themselves and their futures, and the gloomier predictions for St. Helens. The sense of place attachment was generally weak and there was a certain resignation towards the town’s continued decline. Although some respondents mentioned arguments used by community-based regeneration campaigners (Chapter 4), none indicated wishing to intervene in this process, suggesting a detachment from older residents’ collective memory: having never known St. Helens as anything other than declining, they had no memory of the sense of community informed by the town’s industrial past. They struggled to envisage a future there so their sense of attachment and desire to engage was weak.

5.6.3: (Local) community

Despite lacking attachment to social class and St. Helens as a place, the respondents overall did feel attachment to some form of community – even to a ‘local community’.

3-in-4 respondents felt a sense of belonging to a community. Just under 3-in-5 felt a sense of local community is important and just under 2-in-5 felt attachment to one. St. Helens, though, was emphatically not the source of this local community: across two questions, just 4 respondents said St. Helens has a sense of local community. These questions saw high levels of neutral responses (‘unsure’ or ‘neither agree nor disagree’): nearly 3-in-10 for the importance of local community, between two-fifths and two-thirds for St. Helens’ sense of local community, and over 3-in-10 for attachment to a local community. This indicates uncertainty about community as a concept; perhaps it is not a lens through which respondents see the world. To quote some respondents: ‘it can be nice but I’m [sic.] not sure it is necessary’; ‘not everyone requires a local community to be part of in order to feel supported or give their own support’; and ‘doesn’t really bother me so I don’t really bother with it’.

The composition of the respondents’ (local) communities demonstrated their understanding of community. Respondents had to select group(s) associated with

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133 Pahl, ‘Living without a job […’], 262.
community from ‘colleagues’, ‘family’, ‘friends’, ‘neighbours’, and ‘other’. Friends was by far the most popular choice, followed by family; this was underscored by all but one stating attachment to friends and family. Friends and family have already been shown to influence the respondents’ attitudes to social class and place attachment. Neighbours closely followed family, with colleagues trailing in fourth, but both scored more highly than expected given the respondents’ attitudes towards social class and place attachment.

When asked to describe their community, the answers were diverse. Many described it as ‘friendly’, where people ‘get along’, ‘help each other’, ‘work together’, treat one another equally, and share backgrounds and beliefs. Most communities were not restricted to one group. Friends and family, unsurprisingly, often featured in tandem, whilst school or college were repeatedly evoked. Several highlighted the community-building role of sports and leisure, for instance membership of a local sports team as a player or coach. As one put it, ‘at training everyone is treated equal and everyone knows each other, there’s no bad tension in the gym or anything and the people there are just very welcoming’. One evoked the criteria of people they ‘spend a lot of time around’, which could apply to most respondents’ answers. Some defined community in terms of place alone but this generally underlined attachment to ‘smaller units’: Billinge, Rainford, and Rainhill were all mentioned specifically. Place could also be vaguer, for instance the commonality expressed by several respondents of being from the ‘North’ – as opposed, presumably, to the South, reflecting the persistence of the North-South divide evoked in the thesis Introduction. That respondents root their community in specific places or regions is interesting given the relative lack of place attachment to St. Helens expressed by many of them.

The understanding of ‘local community’ was far more homogeneous, almost uniquely based around place: a group of people in a particular geographical area. Within this area, ‘everybody knows everyone’ and ‘everyone looks out for each other’. Ideally, it had ‘events’ and ‘support/facilities for its local people’, such as ‘local recreational

140 Savage, Identities and Social Change…. p.159.
things like a pub, a local shop, a place where people can talk freely’.\(^{142}\)
Crucially, this community was small: ‘a small village with fewer people’, ‘community within a town’, ‘centred around a specific area such as a school or church or street’, the ‘same postcode’, a ‘neighbourhood’\(^{143}\). Again, there was a focus on 'smaller units’ not whole towns, which encourage people to ‘get along’, ‘trust and help each other’, and provide support.\(^{144}\) Given the respondents’ lack of engagement with St. Helens’ regeneration, it is ironic that several said local community gives people ‘a voice’ for when ‘something happens or a change is not good’, ‘to improve living conditions’, make people ‘feel safe and welcome’, and ‘help prevent crime’\(^{145}\).

This equating of place to smaller units explains how the respondents both felt attachment to a local community they conceive of in terms of place and said that St. Helens is lacking this local community. The analysis of St. Helens’ local community developed the themes discussed in relation to place attachment. ‘No one really cares about other people’, said one Rainford respondent.\(^{146}\) ‘There seems to be more hate/dislike between the people living here’, added another.\(^{147}\) Crime, homelessness, and violence were all evoked. Even one who seemed to take the exercise less than entirely seriously and simply wrote ‘too many crackheads’ ultimately made a fair point regarding substance abuse in St. Helens.\(^{148}\) Like many de-industrialised towns, deprivation and health issues are common; they are major components of de-industrialisation’s ‘half-life’.\(^{149}\)

St. Helens is the 36\(^{th}\) most deprived Local Authority in England and has above average rates of mortality from respiratory diseases and alcohol misuse.\(^{150}\) In 2019, knife crime increased 46\%, alcohol-related crimes 37\%, and drug-related crimes 37\% on 2018.\(^{151}\) Regarding homelessness, local charity Teardrops regularly looks after 50-60 people per night.\(^{152}\) The local council’s 2018 Homelessness Strategy states rates had remained unchanged in the

\(^{142}\) Participant A5F, Carmel College 2019 ; Participant A7M, Carmel College 2019 ; Participant C6F, Carmel College 2019.


\(^{144}\) Participant 1F, Rainford College 2019 ; Participant 5F, Rainford College 2019.


\(^{146}\) Participant 4F, Rainford College 2019.

\(^{147}\) Participant 2F, Rainford College 2019.

\(^{148}\) Participant 22M, Rainford College 2019.

\(^{149}\) Linkon, p.2.


five years to 2018, contrasted with increases regionally and nationally, but forecasts local increases in the future.\textsuperscript{153}

The Carmel cohort, containing a significant proportion of non-St. Helens residents, also highlighted a sense of division within the town. Even non-residents noticed a lack of community: ‘most of my friends hate St. Helens’ and ‘I don’t live in St. Helens but since studying here I have not felt a sense of community or acceptance’.\textsuperscript{154} Some felt the community does not exercise its voice: ‘most people here don’t really care about the town or the local environment’ and ‘St. Helens town centre is slowly closing shops and new ones are not opening. The community is not seen to be doing anything to prevent this’.\textsuperscript{155} **Chapter 4** explored the multifarious efforts of community-based action groups concerned with regeneration but these seem to have made little impression on younger residents. Generational divides were evoked as were differences between different parts (‘smaller units’) of the town: ‘it’s clear to see some sense of local community in some areas more than others’.\textsuperscript{156} Such divisions were highlighted in previous chapters. One respondent, though, argued the community still comes together for communal celebrations such as the Christmas lights switch-on, a similar event to the 1968 centenary or 2018 150\textsuperscript{th} anniversary celebrations, Rainford’s annual ‘Walking Days’, and more recent innovations like the town’s Pride parade (**Chapters 3** and **4**).\textsuperscript{157} These events, though, were not mentioned by other respondents as a source of community in St. Helens.

One respondent said they could not say whether St. Helens has a sense of local community because ‘I’m not old enough to know yet’.\textsuperscript{158} Veness similarly wondered if the respondents’ age would limit their ability to engage with the surveys: though leaving school is a major life transition forcing students to reflect on their futures, there are aspects of these futures (driving, employment, marriage, voting, etc.) that many will not have experienced yet.\textsuperscript{159} The experience of community for children and teenagers is probably very different to that of their parents and adults in general. For example, it is unsurprising that ‘colleague’ was the least chosen category for people who make up community given relatively few respondents will have experienced working with colleagues (fellow pupils being more like friends usually). Like with social class, there is

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{154} Participant C7M, Carmel College 2019; Participant B5F, Carmel College 2019.
  \item \textsuperscript{155} Participant A6M, Carmel College 2019; Participant C2M, Carmel College 2019.
  \item \textsuperscript{156} Participant C11F, Carmel College 2019.
  \item \textsuperscript{157} Participant A5F, Carmel College 2019.
  \item \textsuperscript{158} Participant 10F, Rainford College 2019.
  \item \textsuperscript{159} Veness, p.9.
\end{itemize}
a good chance that the respondents’ understanding of and engagement with community will develop and mature as they move into adult life, whatever pathway they choose.

Given the lack of importance many respondents attached to place and social class, it is unsurprising that the majority saw their friends and family as more significant than neighbours or colleagues. Such trends correspond with Spencer and Pahl’s research into the evolutions of perceptions and experiences of community today. In an increasingly globalised world, with comprehensive instant communications, people can maintain their ‘personal community’ outwith the restrictions of geography or work.\footnote{160 Spencer and Pahl, pp.193-198.} The primacy attributed to friends by the respondents underlines their personal communities being chosen rather than given: in Spencer and Pahl’s seven ‘types’ of personal community, those centred on friends are the only truly chosen ones.\footnote{161 Various OHP slides related to personal community, KUSCA, PAH [not numbered].}

In reality, though, personal communities cannot slot seamlessly into theoretical typologies. The boundaries between Spencer and Pahl’s ‘types’ and between ideas of chosen and given communities are always somewhat blurred. Family, for instance, is technically given rather than chosen as one’s biological relations are not chosen. However, as Pahl himself recognised in earlier writings, the ‘boundaries between friends and family have become much more fluid’, i.e. within the wider group of biological relations, people choose some they feel closer to whom they are ‘much more likely to help, support and socialise’ with because they like them ‘as friends’.\footnote{162 R.E. Pahl, ‘The ties that bind us in modern society’, \textit{Parliamentary Monitor}, 5:7 (July 1997), 31, KUSCA, PAH 671.} Family covers relatives you actually live with (e.g. parents), relatives who live close by, and also relatives who live away. As a category, then, it falls at least partially into geographically-rooted place-based community; some family members might even be neighbours. As Chapters 1 and 2 suggested, in places like St. Helens where large industrial employers dominated, family members might be colleagues, too, linking them to work-based community. With this survey’s respondents still being at school, there is a good chance that both their family and friends could form a place-based and even work-based community, if schoolmates took the role of colleagues. Within their college community, though, the “colleagues” a particular respondent sees as friends will be chosen and, as the descriptions of community show, college is far from the only source of community for many of them. Similarly, for family members, in today’s globalised, connected world, family members more distant geographically can be chosen as close members of a
personal community; in the past, the scope for such choice would have been more limited, rooting the family aspect of a personal community more firmly in place. From colleagues and neighbours, too, it is possible to choose some who are more like friends – and changing jobs or moving house is today less of a barrier to maintaining links to these chosen members of one’s personal community. Such personal communities are ‘based on genuine affection, not just proximity and need’. The primacy attributed to friends by the respondents indicates a strong preference for personal communities based on choice. In such communities, it is almost incidental if those chosen are also family, neighbours, or colleagues – i.e. members of given place-based or work-based communities – because people can belong to multiple communities at once.

That many respondents saw local community as beneficial in theory, despite having little or no attachment to St. Helens (their given place-based community), backs this up. This suggests that if they could choose the place – like those who want to leave St. Helens in the future – they might feel greater place attachment and/or engage more readily with local community. Some respondents outlined clear desires for community engagement in their futures: one aspiring police officer said, ‘[I will] live with my own money and wages and live somewhere out of St Helens and help the local community with the problems surrounding underage drinking and drugs, hopefully helping to rebuild a town with nothing to it’, whilst the future surgeon hoped ‘I’ll still enjoy my football and will have a season ticket for the local side’. That said, even if place-based local community is not entirely absent from the respondents’ futures, their prevailing attitudes towards St. Helens do not bode well for its own place-based community.

Lawrence suggests that even in an era of personal communities not tied to place or work, geographically-proximate contacts retain importance. As discussed in Chapter 3, people belong to ‘micro-communities’ corresponding to their life-cycle stage, some of which will be ‘quite closely’ place-based. More than this, people still seek ‘interactions in their immediate neighbourhood which […] affirm their personhood’. These local contacts might not be a person’s most ‘meaningful’ social connections but they convey a sense of belonging; this idea of belonging cropped up in several respondents’ definition of local community. As Pahl found on Sheppey, even people not especially close to their neighbours recognised their potential utility in an emergency. His later work with Spencer similarly found that ‘local sources of fun, support and intimacy’ persist, even if

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these do not necessarily become ‘more confiding or intimate ties’.\textsuperscript{167} Today, there is a greater element of choice over such local ties than in the past when many people relied on these local contacts as a key source of personal community.\textsuperscript{168}

Despite the importance attached to friends and communities based on choice, no respondents discussed how friendships might evolve or sustain in the future, though one hopes to have ‘met many people along the way’, both as friends and colleagues.\textsuperscript{169} In 2019, just one respondent to essay A mentioned the role of their friends in their future, and they seemed to envisage having the same friends as today because they hoped not to move far from St. Helens.\textsuperscript{170} Many, as seen above, talked of marriage and starting their own family. Between the imagining of future families, careers and, in some cases, hobbies and foreign travel, there is perhaps the assumption that enough people will be met to maintain an active and diverse personal community.

Meanwhile, many talked of how work would be technology-dominated and how this might impact less qualified and/or lower-earning people but few respondents discussed how colleagues would interact in the future, i.e. would the workplace continue to be a physical space to which people commute or would work increasingly be done remotely, relying like long-distance friendships on the growth of reliable instant communications technology? One response envisaged a massive decline in the centrality of work to people’s lives: ‘it will be common for people to only work for a few hours a week as, due to automation, the cost of products and services will be at a very low price. Many people will spend their time pursuing [\textit{sic.}] creative hobbies’ instead.\textsuperscript{171} It is hard to imagine the extensive social and leisure activities attached to coal mines and factories (\textit{Chapter 3}) which contributed so much to the sense of work-based community building up had the workers not been on-site every day. It is likely that were further essays gathered from new cohorts now, the future of work would receive consideration from respondents, given the thrusting of such questions to the forefront of public debate due to Covid-19.

Overall, people were still important in the respondent’s outlooks but this ‘personal community’ did not have to be a local one – or if it were to be local/place-based, its roots seemed unlikely to be in St. Helens. The lack of importance attached to place and social class, plus the lack of engagement with ways in which community is being maintained seen in previous chapters, underlined this. Crucially, it was a community of choice, hence

\textsuperscript{167} Spencer and Pahl, p.194.
\textsuperscript{168} Lawrence, pp.4-5.
\textsuperscript{169} Participant Cyber, Rainford College 2018.
\textsuperscript{170} Participant A5F, Carmel College 2019.
\textsuperscript{171} Participant SO, Rainford College 2018.
the centrality of friends and family, and it seemed the respondents wished to exercise this choice regarding members of their community drawn from neighbours (place-based community) or colleagues (work-based community), too. As seen with place attachment, place was very much secondary to personal ambition but, as this section has shown, this does not mean that the respondents felt detached from community or wished to be so in the future. There was a strong indication that both place-based and work-based community – traditionally examples of given community – would take on a greater importance if the place were not St. Helens, i.e. if the respondents could choose a place where they felt able to achieve their personal ambitions.

5.7: Conclusion

This chapter has combined quantitative surveys and qualitative Imagined Futures essays to gain insight into Sixth Form students’ understandings of and attitudes towards concepts like social class, place attachment, and community. These are concepts which have featured throughout the thesis so it is important to understand how younger generations relate to them. Previous chapters showed various examples of community persisting in St. Helens despite the challenges and uncertainties of de-industrialisation and post-industrial regeneration. Such trends, though, only have a long-term future if they are picked up by new generations of local residents as they enter adulthood. As with earlier scholars like Pahl, this chapter has used a place-specific study to explore changes in social attitudes and community.

Concrete conclusions from such subjective data are impossible but there are nonetheless telling indicators. Social class was not particularly important to many respondents and was principally a way of expressing economic goals. Place attachment, at least to St. Helens, was generally weak, with many feeling they cannot achieve their personal ambitions in the town. Engagement with place-based concerns like St. Helens’ regeneration were similarly limited. Traditionally, social class and place attachment were key features of place- and work-based community. Community – even local community – remained important for many but it was a community founded on friends and family more so than on place or work. Regardless of the importance respondents attached to the concept of community and the social class to which they assigned themselves, there was a clear preference for choosing one’s personal community. The community to which respondents related is far less rooted in place (or, at least, given place) than in personal ties (friends and family) and ambitions. There was, though, evidence that place
attachment would be stronger if respondents could move to a place where they wanted to live – if they could choose their place. The overriding picture was of the community of choice described by scholars such as Spencer and Pahl or Savage.

There was little engagement with the initiatives which have seen community persist in St. Helens in the face of de-industrialisation and post-industrial regeneration. The collective memory – or half-life – of the town’s industrial past and subsequent decline seemed to only have a weak influence, probably because the respondents have no autobiographical memory of it. They were aware of this past, as the quantitative results indicate, but their memories of it were historical. They had only ever known the town as a declined, depressed environment, which no doubt contributed to so few of them imagining a future in St. Helens. They had a far less keen sense of the instability and lack of control triggered by the process of de-industrialisation, epitomised by the general belief they could achieve their individual goals almost irrespective of the fate of their home town or local community.

The shadow of de-industrialisation undoubtedly still looms over St. Helens. If it did not, and the town were in a better place, the respondents might have had a more positive picture of it and of their future there. As one gets further from the origins of this shadow, it feels at once more difficult to move out of and less something one is responsible for. In the 1950s, it was written that the town’s motto, *ex terra lucem* (‘out of the ground, light’), embodied the products of the town’s main industries and the benefits these brought to local residents. That light dimmed when the coal shafts were filled in and the factories closed but attempts to preserve a sense of community in the town have kept the light burning for now at least. That today’s youth seem less aware or concerned about this past and less attached to community rooted in class, place, or work, might indicate this light will soon be extinguished for good. It might, conversely, suggest a desire to embrace the post-industrial world without the baggage of decline and make the best of it, just as previous generations made the best of the town’s industrial era and its de-industrialisation. The attitudes of today’s youth towards their own futures could be the post-industrial reflections of the town’s motto, *ex terra lucem*.

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172 J. Bell, ‘More light: a town’s effort to provide and enjoy the benefits of light’, 1st prize in the 1954 Sir Arthur Markham Memorial Prize, annual writing competition for colliery workers, SHLHA, MTH/30.
Conclusion

Community is this thesis’ central theme. Broadly, in St. Helens, community has transformed across the post-war period from being centred around the working-class and industrial work to a less tangible but still present multiplicity of micro- and personal communities. This persistence of community is key: though no longer tied together by industry, there is nothing to suggest St. Helens’ de-industrialisation has triggered community collapse.

This was not a simple transformation from monolithic industrial or work-based community into fragmented smaller communities. Regardless of Pilkington’s size, the solidarity with Women Against Pit Closures, or the draw of rugby league, St. Helens’ industrial community never included everyone. However, many – and not just workers – could identify with this community, and many did. De-industrialisation weakened work-based communities by taking employers and jobs around which they coalesced but also forged new communities determined to resist industrial closures or ensure local agency in subsequent regeneration. Micro-communities, meanwhile, are not a post-industrial invention, existing across the thesis’ time period into the twenty-first century, exemplifying community’s persistence. Amidst this change, community’s industrial and working-class bases have not disappeared entirely and elements continue to thrive.

The thesis has studied community’s transformation against the impact of de-industrialisation and (post-industrial) regeneration, using St. Helens as a case study. It has shown that both de-industrialisation and regeneration are key inter-twined meta-narratives – in Jim Tomlinson’s sense of overarching themes – for post-war British history. Chapter 1 showed St. Helens very much fits Tomlinson’s de-industrialisation meta-narrative and that, contrary to his more recent output, this does apply to towns. The thesis likewise goes beyond existing regeneration literature which – even in works by contemporary scholars – tends not to focus on industrial towns like St. Helens (preferring cities or ‘New Towns’) and tends not to be bold enough to suggest regeneration as an overarching theme in the way Tomlinson does for de-industrialisation.

The thesis focused on St. Helens because it was a multi-industrial town. Many de-industrialisation studies, particularly earlier ones, focused on mono-industrial towns and villages, where the decline of the one main employer was both devastating and tragically unsurprising. In St. Helens, though, as Chapters 1 and 2 showed, decline occurred across multiple industries, whereas it may have been hoped that losses in one could be cushioned by the other large employers. Meanwhile, the cities which scholars increasingly focus on
– a trend exemplified by a 2020 issue of *Urban History* including Tomlinson’s own turn towards the city – offer examples of regeneration based on the existence of other major employers or the buoyancy of emerging sectors like tourism and higher education. Whilst multi-industrial towns like St. Helens share with larger cities the characteristic of losing industrial employment across multiple sectors, tourism or education are unlikely to power their regeneration. Indeed, education may be the gateway *out* of towns like St. Helens for young people, even despite the town’s low average attainment level. This problem was identified long ago by St. Helens’ political representatives (allusions to the town’s further education college training people to leave), reiterated in recent reports by think-tanks like the Centre for Towns, and underlined in school-leavers’ testimonies, many desiring university education and an adult life away from St. Helens.

Moreover, the current political expediency of towns makes an academic focus on places like St. Helens urgent. Amidst ongoing, heated debates about ‘levelling up’ and the ‘Red Wall’ (and more fair-weather labels like ‘Workington Man’), understanding the impact of key post-war processes – like de-industrialisation and regeneration – on the places and communities seen to fit the criteria of these labels is crucial. St. Helens certainly fits many Red Wall characteristics: historically industrial and working-class, pride in that industrial past, a sense of ‘otherness’ compared to the South, an ageing population, over-reliance on low-quality employment, and a lack of local opportunities and amenities.¹ Red Wall areas are historically staunchly Labour – and St. Helens has returned Labour MPs since 1935.² A rugby league hotbed, St. Helens arguably matches the ‘Workington Man’ label briefly coined around the 2019 General Election to describe

the Conservative’s target voter: ‘an older white man who voted leave, has no degree and lives in a “rugby league town”’.³ 19 of 20 seats in so-called ‘rugby league towns’ ultimately swung to the Conservatives – although St. Helens, like Merseyside more widely, remained firmly Labour.⁴ St. Helens is a prime candidate for ‘levelling up’. The Introduction mentioned its bid for the government’s Towns Fund regeneration initiative, and bids for similar funding pots regularly receive local press coverage; whilst writing this Conclusion, St. Helens’ awarding of £25m from the government’s Towns Deal Fund was announced.⁵ Analysis of the town’s de-industrialisation noted the over-reliance on government employment initiatives (Chapter 1) and, still today, schemes like Kickstart (creating jobs for 16-24 year olds on Universal Credit) are relied upon to help shore up the town’s job market.⁶

In being both the sort of place – a multi-industrial town – often overlooked by de-industrialisation and regeneration studies and fitting many of the conceptions of current political debates around towns, St. Helens has provided a useful case study of de-industrialisation and regeneration’s impact on post-war Britain. It has particularly provided evidence of these as long-term processes rather than distinct stages demarcated by ruptures or turning points, coherent with Sherry Lee Linkon’s de-industrial ‘half-life’ and Tomlinson’s deindustrial meta-narrative conceptions. In seeing regeneration as part of a long-term process rather than a distinct phase of urban development, the thesis builds on and extends the moves by scholars who emphasise the continuities between inter- and post-war planning and development. Successive redevelopment/regeneration schemes in St. Helens shared similar aims and characteristics despite the evolving political and socio-economic climate in which they were elaborated. This trend towards long-termism is increasingly visible in industrialisation literature, too. When dealing with processes which impact communities and societies so widely, it is unsurprising that it is difficult to neatly compartmentalise and delineate them.

It was with this awareness of de-industrialisation and regeneration’s pervasiveness in mind that the thesis focused its analysis on how community/communities in St. Helens’

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experienced them. In so doing, the thesis successfully countered academic and popular discourse which argues for working-class and community decline due to de-industrialisation. It has shown de-industrialisation and regeneration’s capacity to forge community, with particularly strong examples being the resistance to Parkside’s closure (Chapter 1) and the wide-ranging regeneration activism (Chapter 4). Further, it has shown the benefit to historians of certain sociological approaches to studying community, notably Ray Pahl’s use of surveys and imagined futures essays (Chapter 5) and his later findings with Liz Spencer about personal communities based on choice and friendship rather than work or family. It has underlined the importance of considering not just large or obvious instances of community, like those linked to industries or workplaces, but also the often smaller and less easily traceable grass-roots micro-communities (as Jon Lawrence terms them), in the same vein but over a larger geographical area and population as Stefan Ramsden and Mark Clapson’s recent studies of persisting associational community across post-war Britain.

Throughout the thesis, a clear potential for community in St. Helens has been demonstrated. A key methodological challenge was how to define or measure this community. Numbers – how many people belong to a social club or attend events like rugby matches – are useful to an extent, for instance for demonstrating a particular community’s evolution over time or showing that more people engage with one community than another. However, especially with grass-roots micro-communities, these numbers are rarely available so definite measurement is essentially impossible. Ultimately, numbers may offer convenient or easy-to-conceive evidence but they do not reveal community’s whole story. Of greater importance than the quantification of community is how it is conceived of and experienced by people, the engagement with it. This thesis has accordingly embraced community’s messy, multi-faceted nature, hence its use of different lenses across the five chapters. The oral histories and surveys, close analysis of materials produced by local groups, and close attention paid to the local press – looking, as Robert Colls advocates, at community from the ‘inside-out’ – have demonstrated not just potential for community but clear and tangible engagement with community across the thesis, whether within or surrounding the workplace, through opposition to closure or in reaction to regeneration, as part of localised associational or micro-communities, or by identifying with the town and institutions which represent it.

Of course, in a town so shaped by its industries and its industrial past, this inside-out focus has necessarily included the industries and industrialists alongside the communities and workers which formed around them. These industries constructed
frameworks for community by providing the employment, drawing the labour which formed the local population, taking the lead in matters of local government, and making provisions for leisure and recreation. Across the thesis is clear evidence of their ongoing influence, even beyond the end of the industries themselves, further reinforcing the thesis’ tendency towards long-term explanations. For example, the 1970 Pilkington’s strike (Chapter 1) clearly showed industrial paternalism’s strength in St. Helens (even if this was finally being challenged), Chapter 2 demonstrated industry’s contributions towards economic regeneration amidst early uncertainties about the town’s industrial future, and Chapter 3 showed the importance of their leisure and recreation provisions to fostering community amongst the industrial workforce and the town more widely, plus their unsurprising centrality to local heritage.

Likewise, particularly as decline set in, attempts by local and central government to build or foster community were examined throughout the thesis, both small-scale efforts (supporting community centres, the Community Leisure Department, local heritage) and larger initiatives based around economic and environmental regeneration and planning and development. Like the industries’ efforts, these provided a framework for community but also acted as a form of community governance. Some reflected the idea of ‘government through community’, notably the expansion of economic regeneration initiatives (Chapter 2) where locally-rooted community-focused models became political tools incapable of fostering or maintaining community when rolled out over a larger area.

The Community of St. Helens Trust (Chapter 2), Operation Groundwork (Chapter 4), and the persisting influence of St. Helens’ paternalist industries suggest community frameworks are more likely to be met positively when firmly locally-rooted. However, as this thesis has shown, providing a framework for community cannot guarantee the nature or extent of engagement with it. The communities studied here reflect the interaction between the frameworks offered by industry and/or government and the experiences, needs, and efforts of the people themselves. Tony Lane and Kenneth Roberts’ 1971 suggestion that St. Helens is the product of both its industrialists and its workers was true then – and remains true fifty years later.7

De-industrialisation and regeneration literature comes thick and fast. Whilst finishing this thesis, much interesting material was published which it would have been hard to do

justice to in the main analysis. Notably, Huw Benyon and Ray Hudson’s recent *The Shadow of the Mine* represents – at last – serious consideration in mainstream literature of the enterprise culture’s impact in combatting de-industrialisation, reinforcing Chapter 2’s findings.\(^8\) It cites various data showing only 2% of ex-miners were self-employed by the 1990s and just 10% put redundancy money towards new businesses. At some collieries, barely two-thirds registered with British Coal Enterprise.\(^9\) Its analysis of post-industry life, likewise, highlights short-term contracts, occupations unrelated to mining, and workplaces lacking teamwork or community, issues coherent with the sense of loss uncovered in this thesis’ interviews with industrial workers.\(^10\)

New studies continue to emphasise how understanding de-industrialisation and its impact on communities remains important to understanding contemporary social, political, and economic issues. This thesis concurs, hence its analysis coming right up to the present moment, and argues likewise for regeneration. De-industrialisation and regenerations continued relevance reflects their ongoing nature – they are meta-narratives without, as yet, obvious endings. Although lingering industrial decline in places like St. Helens, for instance Pilkington’s recent announcement of 90 job losses, does not entail the hundreds and thousands of redundancies seen previously, the difference in scale does not make these events any less painful.\(^11\) Issues to which understanding de-industrialisation is often presented as central include neo-liberalism’s future as a political project;\(^12\) Covid-19’s impact and aftermath;\(^13\) ongoing questions around ‘community’ and ‘class’;\(^14\) far-right activism, racial tensions and trends of rising political populism; Brexit; and the recent ‘Red Wall’ collapse.\(^15\) These issues are never far from the surface, as shown by the negative reaction across ‘Red Wall’/de-industrialised communities to current Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s crass joke about mine closures giving Britain a head-start.

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9 Ibid., pp.164, 171.
10 Ibid., pp.173, 178-179.
14 Lawson, ‘…smoke and mirrors…’, 165-168.
in combating climate change. This sort of comment reinforces suspicions that ‘levelling-up’, supposedly the remedy to de-industrialisation, is just rhetoric pedalled by politicians who do not understand these communities’ true needs.

Like with this thesis’ analysis of community, the relationship between de-industrialisation and such issues is rarely straightforward. Locally-rooted studies like this thesis are windows onto this complexity and show the danger of generalisations, for instance the much-evoked link between community decline, the ‘left behind’ ‘white working-class’, and developments like Brexit. Whilst St. Helens voted Leave by 58%, in Scotland, where de-industrialisation has fuelled the independence movement, de-industrialised areas voted Remain. The same is true of other generalisations, like the Red Wall label: as noted, St. Helens matches many Red Wall characteristics but is highly unlikely to turn Tory. Localised studies are also a starting point for considering the wider ramifications of processes like de-industrialisation and regeneration. For instance, these processes have encouraged environmental regeneration in the West, as in Chapter 4. They have also, though, revealed a conflict in ‘de-industrialised’ nations between macroeconomic needs for greener climate-friendly economies and microeconomic needs of providing employment – not always of the greenest sort – in depressed areas. Looking globally, they have simultaneously shifted industry and its effects, like pollution, to other regions. Humanity still consumes increasing amounts of coal, minerals, petrol, and plastics each year. The so-called third industrial revolution, towards an information technology-driven post-industrial society, has reduced the West’s reliance on dangerous, dirty manual labour at huge environmental cost through the extraction of materials for electronic goods, the challenges of managing and recycling waste from obsolete devices, and the sheer energy consumption of increasingly digitised lifestyles.

20 Ibid., pp.329, 337-338.
industrialisation and regeneration’s ongoing consequences can be seen both locally and globally.

Clearly, de-industrialisation has had – and is still having – as much of an impact on the world as industrialisation did previously. So too its corollary regeneration. In particular, this thesis has shown their impact on community. A new study of post-war Scotland says ‘episodes of deindustrialization reveal that [the working-class] is also present at its own unmaking’, paralleling E.P. Thompson’s famous line about the working-class’ formation.\(^{21}\) Rather than ‘unmaking’, this thesis has suggested *evolution* in communities and places like St. Helens previously dominated by working-class, industrial employment. Another new work, focusing on Pittsburgh in America, similarly talks of working-class ‘recomposition’ in its study of male-dominated heavy industries being replaced with female-dominated health and social care.\(^{22}\) This recomposition reflects work’s changing nature in de-industrialised areas and the negative socio-economic and health issues of de-industrialisation’s half-life.\(^{23}\)

In this thesis, this evolution of community has seen the loss of St. Helens’ large, locally-rooted, paternalistic employers and their attendant community framework. Initiatives to replace them struggled to preserve work-based community. Today’s fragmented work landscape, overly reliant on poorly-paid low-grade employment, has translated into a sense of loss amongst those whose industrial jobs were taken away and seems unequal to the ambitions of current younger residents. This is why the thesis searched for community and its manifestations beyond the workplace. In finding community in various forms and a persistent, if evolving, attachment to these different communities over time, the thesis has rejected the association between industrial and community decline.

The ongoing influence of the town’s paternalistic industries and industrialists, visible across the thesis, no doubt contributes to this attachment given the long-standing predominance of the work-based community which grew up around and in reaction to the framework they provided. At no point did everybody in St. Helens belong – or want to belong – to this community, and at no point was this community a singular fixed bloc. Community-belonging and attitudes towards community are highly personal – one man’s civic-minded regeneration activist is another’s NIMBY busybody – and variable. How

\(^{23}\) Ibid., pp.2, 4-5, 16-19, 22-24.
community will look in St. Helens in the future is impossible to say – although Chapter 5’s essay and survey respondents gave it a good go. Community has been – and will continue to be – influenced by de-industrialisation and regeneration. The declining relevance of St. Helens’ industrial past revealed in the essays and surveys – the same industrial past the other communities encountered in this thesis were very aware of – could, seen negatively, reflect a decreasing interest in community. However, the future of towns like St. Helens and their communities has already been written off erroneously once before following industrial closures. Seen more positively, there is ongoing attachment to community as a concept and, in being less tied to the town’s industrial past, hope of a move out of de-industrialisation’s half-life shadow. Community in the future will in all likelihood be decreasingly rooted in geography or place and increasingly based on choice. Whatever its precise form, what is for sure is that it will definitely still exist.
## Appendix to the Introduction:  
**primary sources and fieldwork methodologies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter title</th>
<th>Archival collections/documents</th>
<th>Oral history and fieldwork</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1) Community and de-industrialisation | St. Helens Local History and Archives  
- coal mining and industry in St. Helens  
- local press cuttings and photographs related to industry, the Pilkington’s strike, and the Parkside pit camp  
- Tony Lane and Kenneth Roberts papers about the Pilkington strike  
Lancashire Archives, Preston  
- coal mining and industry in St. Helens  
Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick  
- the Pilkington strike  
Working Class Movements Library, Salford  
- Pilkington strike and its aftermath  
- Lancashire Women Against Pit Closures  
National Coal Mining Museum (Wakefield)  
- Miners’ Strike and anti-pit closure campaigns  
British Newspaper Archive  
- press articles related to Parkside pit camp  
Other  
- Hansard (various) | - Lane and Roberts oral interview transcripts with Pilkington’s strikers and management |
| 2) Work and work-based community | St. Helens Local History and Archives  
- Community of St. Helens Trust  
- press cuttings about local unemployment  
The National Archives, Kew  
- regional aid to coalfield areas  
- Coalfield Communities Campaign  
- Business in the Community  
- British Coal Enterprise  
National Coal Mining Museum  
- Coalfield Communities Campaign  
- British Coal Enterprise  
Other  
- Hansard (various) | - Oral interviews with St. Helens residents collected by the author (2018-2019)  
- Oral history interviews with former industrial workers (1985)  
- ‘suttonbeauty.org.uk’ (local history website with written testimonies of St. Helens residents) |
| 3) Community beyond the workplace | St. Helens Local History and Archives  
- Pilkington’s Recreation Club (and other workplace social clubs)  
- rugby league material  
- material related to community centres, residents'/tenants' associations, Women's Institute, parish councils, etc.  
- municipal leisure provision  
Cheshire Archives and Local Studies  
- Greenall-Whitley material  
Glaxo-SmithKline Archives  
- Beecham’s material  
Other  
- online resources related to community centres, residents'/tenants' associations, parish councils, etc. | - Oral interviews with St. Helens residents collected by the author (2018-2020)  
- Local press cuttings (author’s collection)  
- Photographs of industrial heritage landmarks (author’s collection) |
- studies/surveys and online resources related to heritage provision in St. Helens

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4) Community and regeneration</th>
<th>St. Helens Local History and Archives</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Central Area Redevelopment</td>
<td>- Operation Groundwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- older St. Helens-based action/pressure groups</td>
<td>British Library, London</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Operation Groundwork</td>
<td>St. Helens Town Centre District Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>British Library, London</td>
<td>The National Archives</td>
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<tr>
<td>- approaches to urban planning (1960s)</td>
<td>- The Skeffington Report (1969)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- St. Helens Central Area Redevelopment</td>
<td>- Operation Groundwork (especially following expansion beyond St. Helens pilot area)</td>
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<td>St. Helens Council</td>
<td>Local Plan documents for St. Helens</td>
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- Oral interviews with St. Helens residents collected by the author (2018-2020)
- Local press cuttings (author’s collection)
- Social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter), websites, and documents for current St. Helens-based action/pressure groups
- Spatial mapping (by author) of local area support for action/pressure groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5) Looking to the future: communities of choice</th>
<th>Keele University Special Collections and Archives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Ray Pahl papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UK Data Service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Questionnaires and ‘imagined futures' essays conducted by author with 6th Form students in St. Helens (2018-2019)

### Successful interviews/fieldwork

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee Name/Ref</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Method of Contact</th>
<th>Interviews Conducted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PhD/001 Jackie Kells</td>
<td>Ex-Pilkington’s employee</td>
<td>Local newspaper appeal (see below)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD/002 Ken Bailey</td>
<td>Ex-coal miner</td>
<td>Local newspaper appeal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD/003 Labour councillors</td>
<td>Local government</td>
<td>Email request</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD/004, /005 Conservative councillors</td>
<td>Local government</td>
<td>Email request</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD/006, /009 Su Barton</td>
<td>Residents association member (ECRA)</td>
<td>Email request</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD/007, Gary Brunskill</td>
<td>Ex-local press photographer (+various other jobs)</td>
<td>Email request following suggestion by local archivist</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD/008, Nick Dyer</td>
<td>Teardrops Hub manager</td>
<td>Email and phone request</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD/010, John Fairclough</td>
<td>Residents association member (RSOGB)</td>
<td>Email request</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Unsuccessful interviews/fieldwork

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Method of Contact</th>
<th>Reason Unsuccessful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Barton</td>
<td>Ex-Beechams worker</td>
<td>Email/phone, summer 2018</td>
<td>Health reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colin Molyneux</td>
<td>Ex-chemicals worker</td>
<td>Email, summer 2018</td>
<td>Lack of free time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gary Conley</td>
<td>Ex-coal miner/ St. Helens Arts Service</td>
<td>Email, summer 2018</td>
<td>Lost touch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of Contact</td>
<td>Type of Contact</td>
<td>First Contact Method</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Helens Townships Family History Society</td>
<td>Group of local residents</td>
<td>Email, summer 2018, Christmas 2018</td>
<td>Request circulated amongst group members – no uptake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilkington’s Family Trust</td>
<td>Supports retired Pilkington’s employees</td>
<td>Phone, summer 2018</td>
<td>Another project had recently conducted interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart of Glass</td>
<td>Arts group in St. Helens</td>
<td>Email, summer 2018</td>
<td>Had conducted the Pilkington interviews, unsuccessful in obtaining transcripts of these. Lost contact thereafter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen Beckwith</td>
<td>Academic with knowledge of Parkside pit camp</td>
<td>Email, December 2018</td>
<td>No reply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maxine Peake</td>
<td>Actress with knowledge of Parkside pit camp</td>
<td>Written letter</td>
<td>No reply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaine McCahill</td>
<td>Daily Mirror journalist who covered St. Helens for Mirror’s ‘Town 2020’ series</td>
<td>Email request/phone (multiple), autumn 2019</td>
<td>Never sent over research notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eamonn McManus</td>
<td>St. Helens RFC Chairman</td>
<td>Written letter, autumn 2019</td>
<td>No reply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saints Community Development Foundation</td>
<td>Local community support (linked to rugby club)</td>
<td>Email/phone request, autumn 2019</td>
<td>No follow on to initial acknowledgement of request</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkside Action Group</td>
<td>Residents association</td>
<td>Email request, summer 2018, autumn 2019</td>
<td>No reply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rainford Action Group</td>
<td>Residents association</td>
<td>Email request, summer 2018, autumn 2019</td>
<td>No reply</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cowley</td>
<td>6th Form College</td>
<td>Email/phone request, autumn 2019, spring 2020</td>
<td>Unable to organise surveys for Chapter 5 prior to Covid-19 pandemic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Helens College</td>
<td>6th Form/Further Education College</td>
<td>Email/phone request, autumn 2019, spring 2020</td>
<td>Unable to organise surveys for Chapter 5 prior to Covid-19 pandemic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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EG26/73 Coal 1B Interest in British Coal Enterprise
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EG26/260 Job Creation and Retraining in Colliery Areas
EG26/261 Job Creation and Retraining in Colliery Areas
EG26/262 Job Creation and Retraining in Colliery Areas
EG26/264 Job Creation and Retraining in Colliery Areas
EG26/265 Job Creation and Retraining in Colliery Areas
EG26/267 Job Creation and Retraining in Colliery Areas
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HLG136/20 Planning Bulletins No1: Town Centres: Approach to Renewal

HLG156/1399 Groundwork North West

LAB9/599 Business in the Community: Local Enterprise Agencies Grant Scheme

National Coal Mining Museum (Wakefield)

622 (06) BC British Coal Enterprise booklets, pamphlets, reports


93:622:39 Box 1 Women Against Pit Closures

93:622:331.109 Box 1 1984-1985 Miners’ Strike

People’s History Museum (Manchester)

WAIN/1/5 Hilary Wainwright Collection

St. Helens Local History and Archives

306STH Newscuttings regarding unemployment in St. Helens


A15 P Leaflets on the activities of the St. Helens Operation Groundwork

A25.8P Leisure Courses in St. Helens

A26 2(P), Clinkham Wood, Moss Bank and Carr Mill Tenants’ and Residents’ Association – Newsletters

A26.3 St. Helens (Metropolitan) Borough Council – Community Leisure Dept

A26 PET(P) St. Helens History of Peter Street Community Centre

A28.9(P) St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council Community Leisure Department

A29(P) Report of the study group appointed by the Sports Council to investigate industry and community recreation at St. Helens

A29.35 (P) Newscuttings regarding St. Helens Rugby League Football Club (1988-97)

A29.5(P) “Ankle deep in pea soup”; an unofficial history of Boundary Road Baths

A30.2 Community of St. Helens Trust
A36.2 List of abandoned collieries in the St. Helens area. 1841-1971
A36.2 Newscuttings regarding Sutton Manor Colliery
A36.2 (P) Colliery profiles
A36.2 (P) Save Newton and Winwick campaign newsletters
A37.8 Newscuttings regarding United Glass Bottle Manufacturers, St. Helens
A70(P) Citadel Arts Centre, St. Helens
A78.2(P), SHMBC Leisure and Recreation Dept
A96ECCP Christ Church Calling
CSH St. Helens Parish Church
CX/6 Magazines and bulletins for St Peter’s Church, Newton-le-Willows, St. Helens
DIRSTH Trade directories, St. Helens
GE/2 Photographers’ diaries for the South Lancashire Newspapers, mainly relating to the St. Helens Reporter
GE/3 Photographic negatives for South Lancashire Newspapers, mainly relating to the St. Helens Reporter
GW/10 Miscellaneous items relating to Greenall, Whitley and Company Limited
LAN Research material produced by Tony Lane and used in the composition of ‘Strike at Pilkingtons’ by Tony Lane and Kenneth Roberts, (Fontana, 1971)
MTH Theses and essays on St. Helens
MWD/1/2 Aspects of St. Helens and District. Miscellaneous newscuttings on local history topics
OH St. Helens oral history recordings
PH/16 Photos donated by the St. Helens Reporter
Pilkington Brothers Reports and Accounts 1978
RWI Rainford Women’s Institute, near St. Helens
SAW Geoff Simm and Ian Winstanley collection
SHC St. Helens Hockey Club (formerly St. Helens Recreation Hockey Club)
ST10 Items deposited by St. Helens Borough Council Chief Executive’s Department

ST24 St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council – Leisure And Recreation Department (later Community Leisure Department)

ST29/1 General records of St. Helens libraries services

ST29/2 Specific libraries and library services in the Borough of St. Helens

STASTH Census Statistics 1981. Report No. 2

STSD/19 Countryside Commission Urban Fringe Experiment (Operation Groundwork)

UG/1 Photographs, negatives and notes primarily relating to United Glass factory, Peasley Cross, St. Helens

VU/18 Collection of glass and film negatives used in ‘Vulcan Magazine’ – the magazine of Vulcan Foundry Limited, Newton-le-Willows, Lancashire

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Rainhill Save Our Greenbelt

Twitter

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Rainhill Save Our Greenbelt @RainhillSOGB

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