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**Industrialising Communities:  
A Case Study of Elsecar Circa 1750-1870**

**by**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis takes as its subject the village of Elsecar in Yorkshire. In the period circa 1750-1870 this small rural hamlet was developed by the local landowners, the Earls Fitzwilliam, into a thriving industrial village, with an economy based on the twin industries of coal-mining and iron-smelting. As a well-documented example of a rural/industrial complex, Elsecar offers the historian the opportunity to view in microcosm the processes of social and economic change as a consequence of industrialisation, issues of national significance in the context of late eighteenth and nineteenth century social history.

Using the records of the Earls Fitzwilliam as its main research material, this thesis examines the social and economic aspects of industrialisation as they affected the village and, in particular, the ways in which they influenced the development of a specific village community during this period. In so doing, the thesis engages with ideas of social cohesion, identity, class, gender and their relationships to structures of power, authority and the environment. These issues illuminate the central themes of the thesis, which are the relationship between structures of authority, the agency of the villagers and the physical environment in creating the idea of community. In examining these issues, this thesis argues that community is a form of site-specific social identity, and that the development of the industrial community of Elsecar in the period 1750-1870 is the story of the emergence of a powerful sense of place and identity, rooted in the particular collective histories and experiences of the villagers.

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my mum, Betty Ripley Cavanagh (1929-2009).  
She would have been proud.

# Industrialising Communities: A Case Study of Elsecar Circa 1750-1870

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## **Industrialising Communities: A Case Study of Elsecar Circa 1750-1870**

**Nigel Andrew Cavanagh**

### **Introduction**

#### **The Village of Elsecar**

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the small hamlet of Elsecar became the focus of a sustained programme of industrial development. By 1870 it had grown into a sizeable village that contained collieries, an engineering works, two extensive ironworks, a canal, extensive railway communications and other ancillary industrial concerns, such as coke ovens. This industrial development was complemented by an expansion of the village infrastructure and amenities, which by 1870 included terraces of workers' houses, public houses, purpose-built retail shops, schools, a church, a miners' lodging house, a public reading room and a market place. Although similar patterns of development and growth can be discerned in numerous communities throughout Yorkshire and the north-east of England, Elsecar was unusual in that its development was instigated, planned, controlled and financed by the local landowners, the second Marquis of Rockingham, and his successors, the 4th and 5th Earls Fitzwilliam. Under the control of this aristocratic dynasty, Elsecar became in effect a planned industrial settlement, numerous elements of which, such as the provision of planned workers' housing, presaged the development of mid-Victorian planned settlements such as Saltaire.

The circumstances of Elsecar's development make it an important case study through which to consider the social impacts of industrialisation. In the first instance, the

village is a relatively small, circumscribed community, in which it is possible to examine many significant aspects of social interaction in microcosm. Secondly, Elsecar is a rural industrial settlement and, notwithstanding the growth in cities, industrialisation in Britain in the period circa 1750-1870 was predominantly experienced in the rural environment, where natural resources, such as minerals and water power, were exploited in previously undeveloped or underdeveloped locations. Rather than being isolated backwaters, rural industrial communities like Elsecar were thus at the heart of the processes of social and economic change during the long nineteenth century.

With this in mind, this thesis examines the development of the village in relation to the themes of authority, power, community and environment, and considers its historical significance, both as a unique microcosm of the processes of industrialisation, and in terms of its wider significance within the context of late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century social, economic and industrial change in Britain. Whilst the sources, methodologies, detailed research questions and conclusions of each chapter of the thesis are laid out at the end of this introduction, the primary argument of this thesis is that the process of industrial development in the period 1750-1870 was accompanied by a parallel process of social development in which the relationship between structures of authority, the agency of the villagers and the physical environment created a distinct community identity. This community identity was a site-specific construct peculiar to Elsecar; a product of its own particular circumstances' of growth and development. The development of the industrial community of Elsecar in the period 1750-1870 is thus the story of the emergence of a powerful sense of place and identity, rooted in the particular collective histories and

experiences of the villagers. Despite the loss of its industries, this identity remains powerful to this day.

### **The Changing Village**

Before continuing with a consideration of published work on Elsecar and related subjects, it is important to have a brief overview of the development of the village in the period 1750-1870. As I explore below, this period was one of both social and industrial development, and so an understanding of the scale of industrial changes that took place in the village during this time is essential in framing and placing the social changes, events and historical actors that are discussed in the later chapters of this thesis.

Elsecar lies in the parish of Nether Hoyland, approximately five miles to the south of Barnsley (**Figure 1.1** below). It formed part of the extensive Rockingham/Fitzwilliam Wentworth Estate and was situated approximately one mile from the country seat of the Earls Fitzwilliam at Wentworth Woodhouse. In the first half of the eighteenth century, the settlement consisted of a few cottages set around a green, surrounded by fields and woodland. A Wentworth Estate rental document of 1750 lists just five tenants in the hamlet, each renting a 'house and garden'.<sup>1</sup> The parish of Nether Hoyland itself was also predominately rural, but from the sixteenth century onwards had developed as a centre for the trade of nail-making. Nail-making was organised as a form of piece-work, in which nailers cut and forged nails from iron bars supplied by gang-masters. Minimal equipment was required and so the industry was essentially a domestic one, often undertaken by farmers in the quiet winter months. In 1750, for

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<sup>1</sup> List of Wentworth Estate rentals in Hoyland, 1750, Barnsley Archives (hereafter BA), NBC 294.

example, Benjamin Hague, a nailer, rented a house and garden in a hamlet called Commonsides, approximately one mile to the west of Elsecar.<sup>2</sup> With this in mind, it is possible that the three 'shops' in Elsecar that are also mentioned in the 1750 rental document may represent nail-making workshops or similar domestic industries.<sup>3</sup>

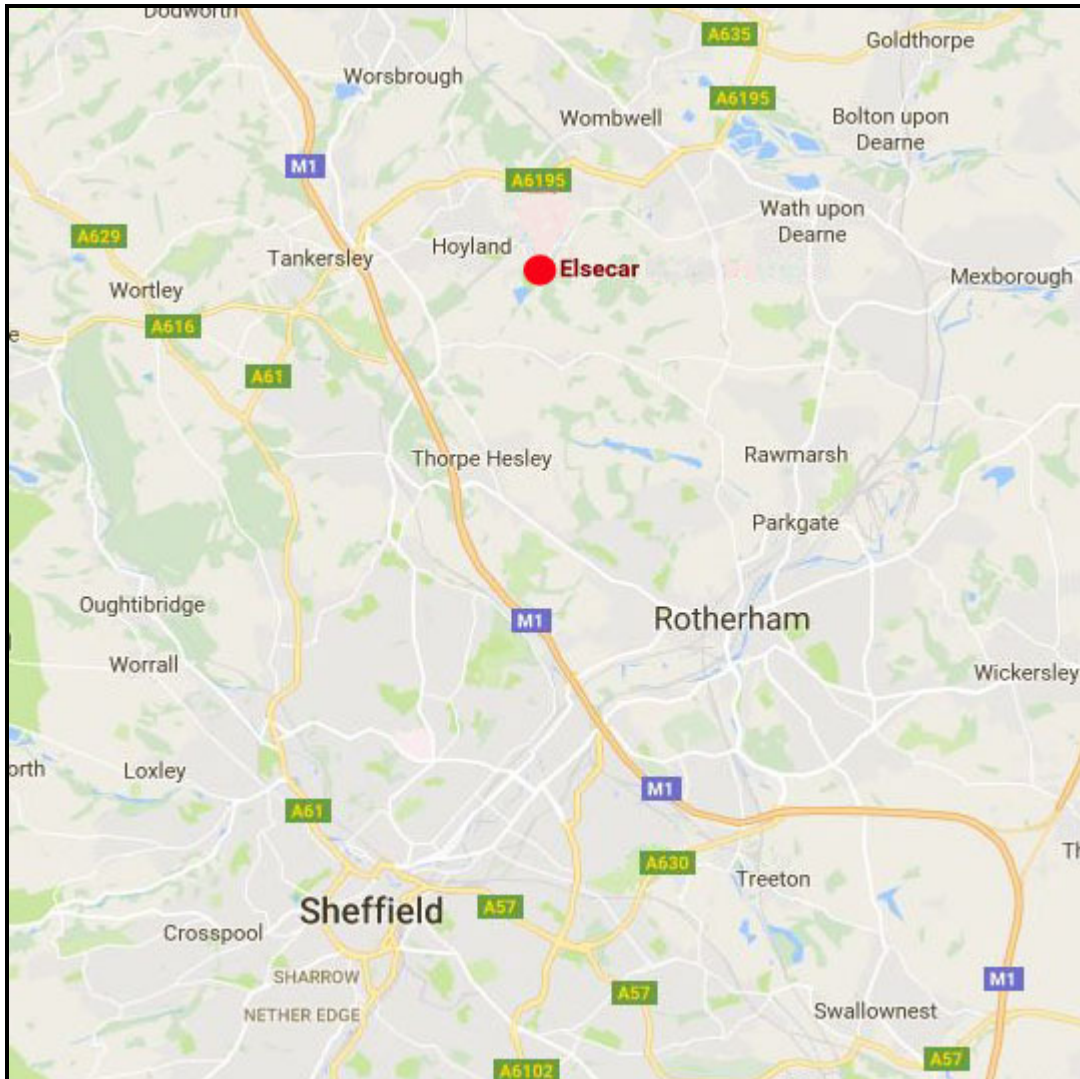


Figure 1.1: Modern Location Map of Elsecar (extract, not to scale). *Source:* digimap.edina.ac.uk

<sup>2</sup> Composite parish registers for the Chapelry of Hoyland Nether, 1748-1864, entry for 20th April 1742, Sheffield City Archives (hereafter SA), microfilm no. SY 337/xi/86.

<sup>3</sup> List of Wentworth Estate rentals in Hoyland, 1750, BA, NBC 294.

The earliest references to coal mining in the parish date to 1609, this occurring in shallow pits located at those points where the Barnsley coal seam outcropped.<sup>4</sup> However, the earliest known coal mine in the vicinity of the village, Lawwood Colliery, dates to circa 1723. Lawwood was situated in the valley bottom approximately 200 metres to the south of Elsecar Green. George Copley, one of the five Elsecar tenants listed in 1750, was a mine labourer at Lawwood.<sup>5</sup> By circa 1750 a second colliery, known as Elsecar Old Colliery, was also in operation. This was situated further up the valley side, to the west of Elsecar Green. Both collieries were on land owned by the 2nd Marquis of Rockingham and were leased out to tenant coal masters. The planned industrial development of Elsecar can be dated to 1752 when the 2nd Marquis of Rockingham took direct control of Elsecar Old Colliery on the expiry of the lease. Lawwood Colliery was taken under direct control in circa 1760, this second takeover marking the point at which it was decided to commit to a pattern of owner control.

Both Lawwood and Elsecar Old Colliery continued to be developed and extended after their takeover by the Marquis and a third colliery in the vicinity of the village, Westwood Colliery, is known to have been in operation by 1757.<sup>6</sup> However, the main period of planned industrial growth appears to have occurred after the 4th Earl Fitzwilliam inherited the Wentworth Estate in 1783. Following the excavations of a series of test pits at various locations around the village, a new deep colliery which

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<sup>4</sup> Arthur K. Clayton, 'Coal Mining at Hoyland', *Transactions of the Hunter Archaeological Society* 9.2 (1966), p. 76.

<sup>5</sup> Lawwood Colliery Accounts, 26th May 1769, SA, Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments collection (hereafter WWM), F/99-A.

<sup>6</sup> Fairbanks' survey book, 1757, SA, FB 12, p. 67. This volume contains a survey of Westwood Colliery, dated 5th September 1757. Although the colliery is thought to have been located to the south of Elsecar, its location is now lost.

accessed the Barnsley Seam was established to the east of Elsecar Green in 1795.<sup>7</sup> At around the same time, an ironworks was opened in Elsecar, and two rows of purpose-built workers' cottages, Old Row and New Row, are also thought to date from this period. The colliery, known as Elsecar New Colliery, was opened in anticipation of the completion of the Elsecar Branch of the Dearne and Dove Canal, the construction of which had been authorised by an Act of Parliament in 1793.<sup>8</sup> The 4th Earl Fitzwilliam, who had been instrumental in the passing of this Act, personally financed the construction of the canal. A document of December 1797, written shortly before the canal opened, demonstrates the Earl's intentions to use coal from Elsecar New Colliery to supply the Elsecar Ironworks, whilst coal from Elsecar Old Colliery was to supply a new ironworks on the western side of the valley, at the site which is now known as Milton.<sup>9</sup> Both ironworks were to be rented out to tenant ironmasters, whose furnaces would be obliged to use ironstone (iron ore) from ironstone mines on the Earl's land at Elsecar and Tankersley.<sup>10</sup> The resulting iron goods were to be transported along the newly built canal, carriage charges being paid to the Dearne and Dove Canal Company, of which the 4th Earl was a major shareholder. By circa 1800, the 4th Earl had thus succeeded in creating the seed of an integrated, interdependent industrial system in which the exploitation of natural resources of coal and iron ore was made possible by the development of transport and village infrastructure.

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<sup>7</sup> Arthur K. Clayton, *Hoyland Nether* (Barnsley, 1973), p. 41.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Bowns to the 4th Earl Fitzwilliam, December 10th 1797, SA, WWM/F/70-93.

<sup>10</sup> Both the ironworking companies involved at this date, Darwins (Elsecar Ironworks) and Walker Brothers (Milton Ironworks) mined their own ironstone at Tankersley, paying mineral rights to the Earl Fitzwilliam. See Melvyn Jones, 'Ironstone Mining at Tankersley in the Nineteenth Century for Elsecar and Milton Ironworks', in Brian Elliot (ed.), *Aspects of Barnsley* 3 (Barnsley, 1995), pp. 80-115.

The development of Elsecar continued in the first half of the nineteenth century, with the creation of an inclined plane (gravity railway) that linked Milton Ironworks to the canal basin (circa 1828), the establishment of a new mine and second inclined plane at the hamlet of Jump (circa 1840)<sup>11</sup> and a further mine at Hemingfield (circa 1842).<sup>12</sup> A coal tar distillery was established to the east of the canal in 1828. However, this enterprise proved unsuccessful and the buildings were converted into a schoolhouse by 1840. Two new rows of workers' housing, Meadow Row (circa 1830) and Reform Row (1837), were also created. The growing status of the village was marked in 1843 by the opening of Elsecar Holy Trinity Church (the construction of which was financed by the 5th Earl), and in 1850 the coming of the railway prompted the major redevelopment of both ironworks, an extensive remodelling of the market area and the area around the former green, the establishment of a new colliery and the erection of a complex of estate workshops.

Some idea of the pace and scale of this growth can be appreciated by the fact that Baines' 1822 *Directory of Yorkshire* recorded the total population of the Township of Nether Hoyland at 1226, an increase from a total of 1064 in 1811.<sup>13</sup> By 1862, the population of Nether Hoyland Township had increased to 5352.<sup>14</sup> Clearly, it is not possible to attribute all of this increase solely to the growth of Elsecar, but some idea of the relative growth of the village can be discerned in the fact that the number of

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<sup>11</sup> Jump Colliery was the only Elsecar colliery to be inspected by the Royal Commission in 1842.

<sup>12</sup> Hemingfield Colliery, also known as Elsecar Low Colliery, is today the only Fitzwilliam colliery where the surface features and buildings survive substantially intact.

<sup>13</sup> Edward Baines, *History, Directory and Gazetteer of the County of York* (Leeds, 1822), p. 18.

<sup>14</sup> *Drake's Directory of Rotherham, Masbro', Holmes, Kimberworth, Rawmarsh, Parkgate, Greasbro', Brinsworth, Dalton, Catcliffe, Treeton, Whiston, Wickersley, Orgreave, Tinsley, Wath, Swinton, Mexbro', Kilnhurst, Conisbro', Thorpe Helsley, Wentworth, Elsecar, Hoyland, Brampton and The Adjoining Parishes, Townships and Villages* (Yorkshire, 1862), p. 85.

colliers employed by the Earls Fitzwilliam at Elsecar rose from approximately seven in 1752 to 84 in 1818, and to 452, with an additional 108 workers at the estate workshops, in 1855.<sup>15</sup> Census evidence shows that the population of the village was 586 in 1841, 587 in 1851 and 818 in 1861.<sup>16</sup> In essence, the period from 1750 to circa 1870 thus witnessed the first stage in the industrial development and expansion of Elsecar, providing the basis for the subsequent massive expansion of the village, and its associated mines and industrial infrastructure, in the period from circa 1870 to circa 1910. This thesis is thus concerned with this primary phase of innovation, in which the social, spatial and economic structuring of the village was undertaken and came to maturity.

### **Elsecar: Previous Research**

The speed and diversity of industrial development at Elsecar, together with the evidence of strong aristocratic involvement, has exercised a considerable fascination for historians. As a result, there is a considerable body of published research which focuses upon the village and its owners. This corpus of work is joined by an extensive literature examining the causes, nature and effects of industrialisation at both national and regional level. The purpose of this introductory chapter is thus to examine both the directly relevant material and the wider literature relating to industrial

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<sup>15</sup> 2nd Marquis of Rockingham to Thomas Smith, 1st September 1752, SA, WWM/F/96-8; list of colliers at Elsecar New Colliery, July 30th 1818, SA, WWM/Stw P/13/a-48; *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 29th December 1855, p. 7; this article gives an account of the annual gift of beef and sixpence to each of the Earls' employees.

<sup>16</sup> 1841 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Township, Yorkshire Enumeration District 4b (hereafter 1841 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Township); 1851 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Township, Yorkshire Enumeration District 4b (hereafter 1851 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Township); 1861 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Township, Yorkshire Enumeration District 07 (hereafter 1861 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Township); all viewed online at [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) [accessed 20/01/2014 to 31/01/2014].



development, in order to identify and bring into focus those issues that have arisen through earlier research.

Elsecar is fortunate that an extensive archive of documents generated by the local landowning family has survived, providing a focus and starting-point for many pieces of research.<sup>17</sup> The local historian, Arthur Clayton, for example, researched and published on numerous aspects of the industrial development of the village, basing his work largely, but not wholly, on information contained within the archives. A retired miner, Clayton's approach can be seen in his 1966 article, 'Coal Mining at Hoyland'<sup>18</sup> in which he successfully established a narrative historical account of the early coal mining industry in and around Elsecar. The article contains a wealth of well-researched social and economic detail, much of which remains of interest, and by establishing a dated sequence of development, Clayton successfully accomplished much of the groundwork underlying subsequent research. His work on early mining is complemented by an exceptionally thorough MA dissertation by R. M. Cox<sup>19</sup> and similar work by G. G. Hopkinson,<sup>20</sup> both of which provide a regional context for the development of the coal industry. As well as exploring early coal mining in the region, Arthur Clayton researched the development of both the Milton and Elsecar ironworks<sup>21</sup> and wrote a definitive history of the Elsecar collieries that highlighted the significant role that was played in their development by the Wentworth Estate

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<sup>17</sup> The Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments, housed at Sheffield City Archives.

<sup>18</sup> Clayton, 'Coal Mining at Hoyland'.

<sup>19</sup> R. M. Cox, 'The Development of the Coal Industry in South Yorkshire Before 1830', MA Thesis (University of Sheffield, 1960).

<sup>20</sup> G. G. Hopkinson, 'The Development of the South Yorkshire and North Derbyshire Coalfield 1500-1775', *Transactions of the Hunter Archaeological Society* 7.6 (1957), pp. 295-319.

<sup>21</sup> Arthur K. Clayton, *The Elsecar and Milton Ironworks to 1848* (Rotherham, 1974).

stewards, Joshua and Benjamin Biram.<sup>22</sup> Drawing heavily upon both his mining expertise and local knowledge, Clayton's work contains a wealth of historical background and thus remains an essential starting point for exploring the industrial development of the Wentworth Woodhouse estate. Much of his work on Elsecar is collated and synthesised in his 1973 book *Hoyland Nether*, which sets the development of the village within the context of the parish as a whole.<sup>23</sup>

Following on from Clayton's work, Graham Mee explored the relationship between the Earls Fitzwilliam, industry and Elsecar in his PhD thesis<sup>24</sup> and his subsequent 1975 book *Aristocratic Enterprise*.<sup>25</sup> The latter remains the standard book on the Earls Fitzwilliam and is a comprehensive narrative history of the development of each of the main industrial enterprises with which the Earls were involved. The book also contains biographical information on the Earls and an account of their management style, together with chapters on working conditions, welfare provision and labour management. The book identifies some of the major themes relating to the Earls and their enterprises, of which the most important is probably that of paternalism. Mee highlights this as the guiding principle for the 4th and 5th Earls, who 'might well be viewed as archetypal paternalists, for whom the poor were indeed children to be cared for and controlled in a fatherly manner'.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Arthur K. Clayton, 'The Elsecar Collieries Under Joshua and Ben Biram', unpublished typescript in Sheffield Local Studies Library, (1964).

<sup>23</sup> Clayton, *Hoyland Nether*.

<sup>24</sup> L. G. Mee, 'The Earls Fitzwilliam and the Management of the Collieries and Other Industrial Enterprises on the Wentworth Estate 1795-1857', PhD thesis (Nottingham University, 1972).

<sup>25</sup> Graham Mee, *Aristocratic Enterprise: The Fitzwilliam Industrial Undertakings 1795-1857* (Glasgow, 1975).

<sup>26</sup> Mee, *Aristocratic Enterprise*, p. 187.

Whilst Mee's work stresses the benefits of paternalism, it is less clear on its origins. The Fitzwilliam's paternalism, for example, is seen as rooted in the traditions of the landed aristocracy and its adoption as a management policy is located in the context of the 5th Earl's religious outlook.<sup>27</sup> However, there is no real engagement with the cultural or social context within which these traditions and religious outlooks originated. Similarly, whilst a number of events relating to questions of authority and control are recounted in the book, the ways in which the Earls and the people of Elsecar interacted, and the ways in which areas of control and authority were delineated, is not explicitly addressed within the book. A second publication by Graham Mee specifically explores the topic of industrial relations at Elsecar.<sup>28</sup> Whilst presenting some fascinating apparent contradictions in the Earl's behaviour to his employees, this article is essentially a distillation and amplification of themes explored in *Aristocratic Enterprise*. In keeping with the overall tone of that volume, Mee stresses the active role of the Earls and their officials in industrial relations, rather than focusing upon the grievances, aims, goals and agency of their industrial workers. In contrast, I will in this thesis explore the active agency the villagers demonstrated in negotiating, contesting and shaping the relationship between themselves and the Earls.

The approach adopted by Mee is largely followed in an unpublished PhD thesis by D. J. Gratton, although Gratton extends the scope of his research to include chapters regarding the 5th Earl's political career, patronage, his involvement in parliamentary

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>28</sup> Graham Mee, 'Employer/Employee Relationships in the Industrial Revolution: The Fitzwilliam Collieries', in S. Pollard & C. Holmes (eds), *Essays in the Economic and Social History of South Yorkshire* (Barnsley, 1976), pp. 46-58.

reform, and the management of the Earl's Malton estates.<sup>29</sup> As in Mee's book, the work is a historical narrative that contains a wealth of information, but which does not discuss in detail many of the wider thematic issues raised by the research. Perhaps the most useful chapter for my thesis is the one documenting the scale and nature of the Earl's patronage. This formed the basis of a published article which, although not strictly relating to Elsecar, is nevertheless interesting in describing the webs of patronage and the types of applicant, and in highlighting the importance of personal contacts in influencing the Earl's decisions.<sup>30</sup> Gratton explores patronage as a means by which the Earls structured their relationships with elite and middle-class clients and I will develop these themes further through an exploration of the plebian experience of paternalist aid.

Two researchers who have followed an economic history approach to the Earls and their industries are J. T. Ward and Paul Nunn. Ward presents an economic overview of the estate in the nineteenth century and notes that, although extensive, the income derived from industrial enterprises remained low in comparison to that raised by agricultural rents.<sup>31</sup> Nunn included Wentworth Woodhouse in his published examination of the economic impact of aristocratic estates,<sup>32</sup> an approach which he refined and amplified in his subsequent PhD thesis.<sup>33</sup> As well as assessing the

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<sup>29</sup> D. J. Gratton, 'Paternalism, Politics and Estate Management: The Fifth Earl Fitzwilliam, 1786-1857', PhD thesis (University of Sheffield, 2000).

<sup>30</sup> D. J. Gratton, 'The Fifth Earl Fitzwilliam's Patronage in the Church and in Education: A Whig Nobleman Does His Duty', *Northern History* 38.2 (2001), pp. 274-294.

<sup>31</sup> J. T. Ward, 'The Earls Fitzwilliam and the Wentworth Woodhouse Estate in the Nineteenth Century', *Yorkshire Bulletin of Economic and Social Research* 12.1 (1960), pp. 19-27.

<sup>32</sup> P. J. Nunn, 'Aristocratic Estates and Employment in South Yorkshire 1700-1800', in S. Pollard & C. Holmes (eds), *Essays in the Economic and Social History of South Yorkshire* (Barnsley, 1976), pp. 28-41.

<sup>33</sup> P. J. Nunn, 'The Management of Some South Yorkshire Landed Estates in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, Linked With the Central Economic Development of the Area, 1700-1850', PhD thesis (University of Sheffield, 1985).

economic output of the Fitzwilliam mines, the thesis gives a detailed account of the development of agriculture on the Wentworth Woodhouse estate, paying particular attention to landlord-tenant relationships, enclosure and agricultural improvement. Nunn complements this with an examination of the economic and financial impact of the construction of Wentworth Woodhouse and its park, and an analysis of household finances relating to the day-to-day running of the estate.

Building on the work of Ward, Nunn, Mee and Clayton, a number of authors such as Melvyn Jones, John Goodchild and Ian Medicott have turned their attention to specific aspects of the Fitzwilliam industries and estates. Ian Medicott, for example, has undertaken a comparative study which highlights the idiosyncratic management of the Fitzwilliam coal mines in comparison to the approach taken by the Dukes of Norfolk in running their own mining enterprises.<sup>34</sup> He explored the same subject again in a subsequent article, 'Coal Mining on the Wentworth Estate 1740-1840',<sup>35</sup> and also distilled his research into a third, specifically Elsecar-focused, article.<sup>36</sup> Following Medicott, John Goodchild has also published on the Elsecar mines, in his case focusing upon developments in the 1850s.<sup>37</sup> Melvyn Jones has contributed to our understanding of mining at Elsecar by mapping the sales distribution of coals from the Elsecar and Lawwood collieries.<sup>38</sup> Jones has also written on the organisation of

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<sup>34</sup> Ian Medicott, 'The Development of Coal-Mining on the Norfolk and Rockingham-Fitzwilliam Estates in South Yorkshire 1750-1830', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 59 (1987), pp. 104-118.

<sup>35</sup> Ian Medicott, 'Coal Mining on the Wentworth Estate 1740-1840', in Melvyn Jones (ed.), *Aspects of Rotherham* 3 (Barnsley, 1998), pp. 134-152.

<sup>36</sup> Ian Medicott, 'Elsecar: The Making of an Industrial Community 1750-1830', in Brian Elliott (ed.), *Aspects of Barnsley* 5 (Barnsley, 1998), pp. 149-172.

<sup>37</sup> John Goodchild, 'The Earl Fitzwilliam's Elsecar Colliery in the 1850s', *Memoirs 2005: British Mining* 78 (2005), pp. 5-22.

<sup>38</sup> Melvyn Jones, 'The Mapping of Unconsidered Trifles: a Yorkshire Example', *Local Historian* 14.3 (1980), pp. 156-163.

the Fitzwilliam-owned ironstone mines at nearby Tankersley<sup>39</sup> and on the process by which the Wentworth Estate was expanded in the eighteenth century.<sup>40</sup>

Moving away from economics, industry and estate management, there are several articles which explore aspects of the Earls' political life. Donnelly and Baxter, for example, highlight the 4th Earl's role in maintaining public order through his position as Lord Lieutenant of Yorkshire.<sup>41</sup> Their research demonstrates his extensive and enthusiastic role in what would today be called intelligence-gathering and surveillance activities and serves to remind us that his personal and private authority as landowner and master of the Wentworth Woodhouse estate was reinforced by a wide-reaching public authority as an agent of government. Two articles relating to the Malton elections of 1806-7 are also of interest. In the first, Kirsten McKenzie explores the language of authority and tradition used by the Fitzwilliam interest and their opponents in legitimising their campaigns,<sup>42</sup> whilst in the second, Anthony Smith explores the mix of coercion and compromise employed by Fitzwilliam in order to secure votes and continued support amongst the Malton electorate.<sup>43</sup> Again, the ideas of authority and legitimacy which both articles explore are of relevance to Elsecar, particularly in terms of characterising the relationship between the elite and the wider community. Finally, Marjorie Bloy's unpublished PhD thesis unpicks the political career of the Second Marquis of Rockingham, taking a biographical

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<sup>39</sup> Jones, 'Ironstone Mining at Tankersley'.

<sup>40</sup> Melvyn Jones, 'The Expansion of A Great Landed Estate', in Melvyn Jones (ed.), *Aspects of Rotherham 3* (Barnsley, 1998), pp. 80-98.

<sup>41</sup> F. K. Donnelly & J. L. Baxter, 'Sheffield and the English Revolutionary Tradition, 1791-1820', in S. Pollard & C. Holmes (eds), *Essays in the Economic and Social History of South Yorkshire* (Barnsley, 1976), pp. 398-422.

<sup>42</sup> Kirsten McKenzie, "'My Voice is sold, & I must be a Slave': Abolition Rhetoric, British Liberty and the Yorkshire Elections of 1806 and 1807', *History Workshop Journal* 64 (2007), pp. 49-73.

<sup>43</sup> E. Anthony Smith, 'Earl Fitzwilliam and Malton: A Proprietary Borough in the Early Nineteenth Century', *The English Historical Review* 80.314 (1965), pp. 51-69.

approach which reveals much about the Marquis' early life, upbringing, character and personal beliefs.<sup>44</sup> This wide-ranging work also includes an important section detailing the Marquis' active involvement in estate management. A subsequent article by Bloy condenses some of this research into an account of the Marquis' relationships with his servants.<sup>45</sup> This article explores relationships within the Marquis' household in terms of power, authority, deference and resistance; themes that intersect with my later discussions of paternalism, conflict and the structuring of social relationships between the Earls and the Elsecar villagers.

As this survey makes clear, Wentworth Woodhouse, the Earls Fitzwilliam and Elsecar have proved to be a fruitful area of study for numerous historians. However, this body of research in general employs an economic history perspective, which tends to stress the agency of the Rockingham/Fitzwilliam elite. With the exception of Bloy's work and Jones' article on ironstone miners, this results in a curiously depopulated account of the past, in which the overwhelming majority of the Rockingham/Fitzwilliam tenants and workers remain silent and anonymous. Where such characters do appear, they tend to do so as passive recipients of elite authority, rather than as active historical agents in their own right. Because of this, much of the cited research fails to engage with themes that have risen to the fore in more recent historiography, such as gender, masculinity, community, the negotiation of power and the relationship between these themes and issues of class and identity. With this in

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<sup>44</sup> Marjorie Bloy, 'Rockingham and Yorkshire: The Political, Economic and Social Role of the Second Marquis of Rockingham', PhD thesis (University of Sheffield, 1986).

<sup>45</sup> Marjorie Bloy, 'The Trouble With Servants... Domestic Life at Wentworth Woodhouse in the Eighteenth Century', in Melvyn Jones (ed.), *Aspects of Rotherham* 3 (Barnsley, 1998), pp. 99-112.

mind, I will examine below the wider historiographical themes that are relevant to the development of Elsecar.

### **Aristocratic Enterprises**

The intimate role played by the Marquis of Rockingham and, later, by the 4th and 5th Earls Fitzwilliam in the development of Elsecar highlights an important debate within the study of industrialisation: the role of aristocratic land-owners in stimulating and promoting industrial growth. From a Marxist perspective, the role of landowners in industrial development has been seen as essentially passive, largely restricted to the leasing out of land and mineral rights to more dynamic entrepreneurs.<sup>46</sup> This rentier function, it is argued, allowed the aristocracy to benefit financially from industrial development whilst at the same time avoiding direct involvement in essentially ungentlemanly activities,<sup>47</sup> a process that has, for example, been identified in an examination of the development of coal mining in the areas around Halifax, Huddersfield and Bradford.<sup>48</sup> However, as Raybould's study of the Black Country demonstrates, the role of aristocratic land owners in promoting development could be quite dynamic, and several in the region, such as the Earl of Dudley, the Earl of Dartmouth and Lord Hatherton, were directly involved as entrepreneurs in developing industrial enterprises on their estates.<sup>49</sup> A similar role has also been identified for the Marquis of Stafford and his family on their estates at Trentham and Lilleshall,<sup>50</sup> and

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<sup>46</sup> Theodore Koditschek, *Class Formation and Urban-Industrial Society: Bradford 1710-1850* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 46.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> W. P. Hartley, 'Five Landed Estates in Yorkshire and the Development of Coal Mining in the Nineteenth Century', *Local Historian* 23.4 (1993), pp. 188-198.

<sup>49</sup> Trevor Raybould, 'Aristocratic Landowners and the Black Country Experience circa 1760-1840', *Midland History* 9.1 (1984), pp. 59-86.

<sup>50</sup> Eric Richards, 'The Industrial Face of a Great Estate: Trentham and Lilleshall 1780-1860', *Economic History Review New Series* 27.3 (1974), pp. 414-430.



on the Lister estate near Halifax.<sup>51</sup> Finally, the third Marquis of Londonderry took an active role in the development of coal mining on his Durham estates.<sup>52</sup> Given that direct aristocratic involvement in industrial enterprises was thus not uncommon, it remains to explain why some elites took this path. In this respect, it is significant that the drive towards industrialisation has been seen as being intimately connected to the process of agricultural enclosure. In the case of the Dudley estate in the West Midlands, for example, the main purpose of the Enclosure Acts has been seen as 'to procure the most favourable conditions for mineral and industrial enterprise',<sup>53</sup> particularly by legitimising the monopolisation of mineral rights.

By generating increased agricultural rents, enclosure acted as a means to sustain industrial development through the creation of investment capital. However, the economic consequences of enclosure are just one aspect of a phenomenon that can be seen as both a symptom of, and a response to, fundamental changes to attitudes relating to nature and the natural environment during the early modern period. These ideas have been explored by the archaeologist Matthew Johnson, who sees these attitudes as being influenced by the biblical conception of the Garden of Eden: Creation ordered, tamed and delineated from the surrounding wilderness by an enclosing fence.<sup>54</sup> Enclosure, agricultural improvement and industrial development can all thus be seen as the results of religiously-inspired ideology in which, following the Biblical precedent, Man's role was to bring order and harmony to nature, and make the land fruitful by enclosing and taming the waste.

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<sup>51</sup> Hartley, 'Five Landed Estates in Yorkshire', p. 196.

<sup>52</sup> R. W. Sturgess, *Aristocrat in Business: The Third Marquis of Londonderry as Coalowner and Portbuilder* (Durham, 1975).

<sup>53</sup> Raybould, 'Aristocratic Landowners and the Black Country', p. 64.

<sup>54</sup> Matthew Johnson, *The Archaeology of Capitalism* (London, 1996).

Johnson's work is significant because it suggests a new avenue to explore in thinking about industrialisation, one that adds the exploration of belief and ideology in the rise of capital (ideas that were relevant to the process of aristocratic industrialism) to more traditional Marxist economic theory. In considering masculinity and the English landed elite, for example, Henry French and Mark Rothery identify a set of fundamental idealised masculine virtues, such as 'virtue, honour, authority, independence and self command',<sup>55</sup> to which the elite male could aspire and which could sustain him through the life journey from home and family, through youth and young adulthood, to maturity as a figure of authority in the wider world.

In her recent book, Karen Harvey explores the way in which these masculine virtues, rooted in the home and the family, were projected into the outside world through the concept of *oeconomy*.<sup>56</sup> It is thus possible to perceive an elite ideology where the good governance of self, family, home, estate, county and country were all seen as dependent upon the application and amplification of fundamental personal principles and qualities. Conversely, it follows that the well-managed estate or home represented a self-evident affirmation of the sterling qualities of its master. Daniel Defoe, in his approving description of the estate of the Earl of Pembroke, encapsulates this ideal:

The lord and proprietor, who is indeed a true patriarchal monarch, reigns here with an authority agreeable to all his subjects (family); and his reign is made agreeable, by his first practicing the most exquisite government of himself, and then guiding all under him by the rules of honour and virtue; being also himself perfectly master of all the needful arts of family government [...] the governor

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<sup>55</sup> Henry French & Mark Rothery, *Man's Estate: Landed Gentry Masculinities c.1660-c.1900* (Oxford, 2012), p. 2.

<sup>56</sup> Karen Harvey, *The Little Republic: Masculinity and Domestic Authority in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2012), p. 167.

and law-giver to the whole [...] Nor is the blessing of this noble resident extended to the family only, but even to all the country round, who in their degree feel the effects of the general beneficence; and where the neighbourhood, however poor, receive all the good they can expect, and are sure to have no injury, or oppression.<sup>57</sup>

Defoe's comments are thus both a blueprint and justification for the aristocratic exercise of power. The wider social purchase of these ideals, and their specific relevance to the Earls Fitzwilliam, have been highlighted by Marjorie Bloy, who recounts a letter from the first Marquis to his son on his coming of age, which stressed the duties of the landowner and the importance of 'a large Estate virtuously Employed'.<sup>58</sup> With these concepts in mind, industrialisation, through the exploitation and ordering of natural resources, could function as a desirable extension of the 'exquisite government' of self, family and estate. Indeed, this outlook is encapsulated in the 1708 pamphlet *The Compleat Collier; Or, The Whole Art of Sinking, Getting, and Working Coal-Mines &c.* This volume, presented in the form of a dialogue between a knowledgeable servant and an interested, but inexperienced landowner, is a practical manual on all aspects of coal mining written 'in order to encourage Gentlemen (or such), who have Estates or Lands wherein Coal Mines are wrought or may be won, to carry on so useful and beneficial an Employment [sic], as this is'.<sup>59</sup>

At Elsecar, the relationship between estate management, industrial development and paternal authority that both Defoe and the author of *The Compleat Collier* saw as key components of masculine aristocratic identity, exerted considerable influence over the Earls' activities. This is evident in the fact that the Earls retained direct personal

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<sup>57</sup> Daniel Defoe, *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, London, 1971), p. 197.

<sup>58</sup> SA, WWM R220-4, cited in Bloy, 'Rockingham and Yorkshire', p. 33.

<sup>59</sup> 'J. C.' [Anon.], *The Compleat Collier; Or, The Whole Art of Sinking, Getting, and Working Coal-Mines &c. As Is Now Used in the Northern Parts, Especially about Sunderland and New-Castle* (London, 1708), p. 9.

control of the Elsecar collieries until the establishment of the Earl Fitzwilliam Collieries Ltd mining company in the early twentieth century, long after the direct involvement in industrial enterprises had ceased to be a fashionable way of expressing aristocratic authority and virtues.<sup>60</sup> The significance of the Earls' continued private ownership of the Elsecar collieries thus lies in the way in which this ownership functioned as the expression of a particular social relationship between themselves and the villagers. In this respect, the Earls' approach to the village can be explored through the concept of paternalism.

### **Paternalism**

Daniel Defoe, in expecting a fatherly flow of 'general beneficence' from the 'lord and proprietor', anticipates one of the core themes in understanding the motives for the Earls' actions in regard to Elsecar; that of paternalism. Paternalism, the conception that elite landowners were morally responsible for the welfare of those over whom they had authority, was a guiding principal of the 4th and 5th Earls Fitzwilliam that framed and dictated their relationship with their tenants and workforce. Similarly, it has been identified as an important aspect of aristocratic industrialisation on the Earl of Stafford's estates<sup>61</sup> and on the Lister estate where 'wages were still negotiable in the deferential manner of farm labourers and seasonal gifts were distributed by the estate'.<sup>62</sup> In regard to Elsecar, Graham Mee has shown that paternalism was manifested through the provision of schools, workers' welfare arrangements, the

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<sup>60</sup> See, for example, David Spring, 'English Landowners and Nineteenth-Century Industrialism', in J. T. Ward & R. G. Wilson (eds), *Land and Industry: The Landed Estate and the Industrial Revolution* (Newton Abbott, 1971), p. 51.

<sup>61</sup> Richards, 'The Industrial Face of a Great Estate', p. 429.

<sup>62</sup> Hartley, 'Five Landed Estates', p. 196.

provision of workers' housing and a concern for mining safety.<sup>63</sup> However, he also notes that the provision of these benefits created lines of obligation that reinforced the authority of the elite and 'the conditioning of employees to their subservient roles'.<sup>64</sup> It was, as Pearce argues in his study of the model communities of Wilshaw and Meltham Mills, 'an ideology which consciously sought to marry the needs and practices of industrial communities with the social code of the landed estate'.<sup>65</sup> It thus legitimised a pyramidal social structure where 'the great house is at its apex and all lines of communication run to its dining room, estate office or kennels'.<sup>66</sup>

Given its widespread adoption by elite families such as these who were directly involved in industrial activities, paternalism can be viewed as a response, based in tradition and concepts of aristocratic duty, to the demands of newly-emergent forms of industrial organisation and management. Moreover, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, paternalism in various forms was adopted and expressed by an emergent mercantile elite in the development of numerous industrial communities<sup>67</sup> and can also be identified as a fundamental element of later Victorian philanthropy.<sup>68</sup> Even in communities far removed from the traditional aristocratic estates of Britain, however, paternalism acted to reinforce and delineate hierarchies of authority. It was also adapted as a management concept in North America, so that in mid nineteenth-century Vermont, for example, it acted as an important form of social control in

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<sup>63</sup> Mee, *Aristocratic Enterprise*, p. 132.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 187.

<sup>65</sup> C. Pearce, 'Paternalism and the Industrial Village- The Cases of Wishaw and Meltham Mills', in J. A. Jowitt (ed.), *Model Industrial Communities in Mid-Nineteenth Century Yorkshire* (Bradford, 1986), p. 89.

<sup>66</sup> E. P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (London, 1993), p. 22.

<sup>67</sup> See, for example, J. A. Jowitt (ed.), *Model Industrial Communities in Mid-Nineteenth Century Yorkshire* (Bradford, 1986).

<sup>68</sup> See, for example, I. Bradley, *Enlightened Entrepreneurs: Business Ethics in Victorian Britain* (Oxford, 2007).

isolated mining communities, where the relationship between resident mine proprietors and their workforces can be seen as broadly analogous to those at Elsecar.<sup>69</sup> Similarly, Donald Reid has examined paternalism in the industrial firms of France, where 'management mobilized a wide variety of religious, political, and technological arguments to create a symbolic universe in which management was not the oppressor of the workers but the workers' natural intermediary in dealings with capital'.<sup>70</sup>

Paternalism thus had two contradictory elements. On one hand, as many commentators on Elsecar have noted, it functioned to mitigate the living and working conditions of the industrial workforce.<sup>71</sup> On the other, it served to bind the workforce within essentially traditional structures of elite authority and control by promoting deference and discouraging independent action on the part of its beneficiaries. The tensions inherent in paternalism, and the ways that they might be manifested at Elsecar, are therefore of great significance not only in terms of outlining areas of elite authority, but also in defining the development and characteristics of the wider community. In this thesis, I will therefore explore the structures and mechanisms by which the Earls maintained their elite paternal authority, and the way in which this authority in turn influenced and shaped the dynamic formation of social relationships within the village.

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<sup>69</sup> Ben Ford, 'Workers' Housing in the Vermont Copper Belt: Improving Life and Industry Through Paternalism and Resistance', *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 15 (2011), p. 738.

<sup>70</sup> Donald Reid, 'Industrial Paternalism: Discourse and Practice in Nineteenth-Century French Mining and Metallurgy', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 27.4 (1985), p. 584.

<sup>71</sup> See, for example, Medlicott, 'Coal Mining on the Wentworth Estate', p. 145; Mee, 'Employer: Employee Relationships', p. 49 and Goodchild, 'The Earl Fitzwilliam's Elsecar Colliery', p. 9.

## **Community**

As is readily evident from this discussion, the intimate role played by the Earls Fitzwilliam in the process of industrialisation at Elsecar has meant that much of the published material discussed thus far has inevitably focussed upon the actions and ideology of the aristocratic elite, rather than upon the structures and social relationships evident in the wider community. This is unfortunate given that the transition from small-scale cottage-based industry to a fully-developed capitalist industrial system in the period from circa 1740 to the end of the nineteenth century is widely acknowledged to have been accompanied by considerable social upheaval. Elsecar, as a microcosm of the wider process of industrialisation, thus provides the opportunity to view these social developments and tensions at a local level. This is what I attempt to do in this thesis, by considering the development of community, identity and agency in this period, and by examining how the relationship between the villagers and the Earls was defined by a process of negotiation, deference and opposition. I will do this by examining issues such as authority, paternalism, work, hierarchies of power and gender, identity and the role of the physical environment of the village.

In seeking to characterise Elsecar in relation to these issues, this thesis will inevitably need to engage with a key historical concept; the idea of 'community'. Community is a concept that resonates through both early modern and nineteenth-century historiography, and yet has no clear agreed definition. As Alexandra Shepard and Phil Withington have noted, the diffuseness of the term has allowed it to be applied to a variety of diverse historical studies and to support a variety of historical

interpretations.<sup>72</sup> In their discussion of the historiography of community and community studies, Shepard and Withington explore a number of different interpretations and definitions of the term, the common key concept of which may be characterised as a dynamic, self-enforcing entity with its own rules of behaviour and hierarchy, its own sense of identity and belonging, and its own criteria of inclusion and exclusion.<sup>73</sup> It will be readily appreciated that a key component of concepts such as 'belonging' and 'exclusion' is the idea of location or place, so that community studies tend to have either an explicit or implicit basis in geographical space. In terms of early modern studies, the spatial entity which has been most used to define community has been the parish or village, partly because of the richness of parish records and partly because the parish has a discernible, defined boundary which forms a *de facto* limit to the community under study. K. M. D. Snell, for example, has demonstrated how paupers applying for relief to their parish of settlement conceived of this process as a recognition of their status as a member of the parish community; an unsuccessful application for relief thus meant that 'the sense of belonging for such people was not being recognized by their home community: they were out on a limb, discarded, unacknowledged, the tie unreciprocated'.<sup>74</sup>

In the case of industrial communities, the limits of the community are not so clear cut; industrial development relies on a series of inter-related factors – geography, natural resources, transport and other infrastructure, access to a workforce, entrepreneurialism – which transcend parish boundaries. The picture is further

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<sup>72</sup> Alexandra Shepard & Phil Withington (eds), *Communities in Early Modern England: Networks, Place, Rhetoric* (Manchester, 2000), p. 3.

<sup>73</sup> Shepard & Withington (eds), *Communities in Early Modern England*, p. 7.

<sup>74</sup> K. D. M. Snell, 'Belonging and Community: Understandings of 'Home' and 'Friends' Among the English Poor, 1750–1850' *Economic History Review* 65.1 (2012), p. 21.



confused by differing historical interpretations of the processes affecting community so that, whilst early modern historical studies tend to focus on the perceived breakdown of local, communal modes of interaction amongst the 'better sort' (the rural elites active in parish governance) in favour of an individualistic, acquisitive, proto-capitalist individualism, studies of industrial communities generally seek to identify the development of community spirit, association, class consciousness and working-class agency amongst the industrial poor. This latter goal has inevitably given rise to considerable historical debate, both as to the definition of an industrial community and as to the critical point at which 'community' could be said to have evolved in a particular industrial settlement. In her work on the coal-mining community of Madeley, Shropshire, for example, Jan Ensum has considered a number of definitions of a 'mining community', eventually rejecting a variety of statistically-based definitions (based on the percentage of workers involved in the industry) as unnecessarily arbitrary. Ensum instead defines the mining community in deliberately diffuse terms, 'a community dominated by mining'<sup>75</sup> and defines community study as 'the study of the social relationships between all individuals living in a given locality'.<sup>76</sup> This definition broadly follows that expressed by Tony Nicholson in his study of the ironstone mining communities of Cleveland. In searching for the origins of working-class community consciousness, Nicholson argues:

we should view the concept of community as Edward Thompson viewed class [...] as something that happened, and that can be shown to have happened, in human relationships lived at the local level. Viewed from this perspective,

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<sup>75</sup> Jan Ensum, 'A Coal-Mining Community in Late Nineteenth Century Shropshire: Frontier Settlement or Close-Knit Community?', PhD Thesis (University of Nottingham, 2000), p. 29.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

Cleveland ironstone mining communities came into being when the first migrants entered the locality and began experiencing shared space.<sup>77</sup>

For Stefan Ramsden, the locus of community is the workplace. In his study of post-war Beverly, East Yorkshire, he employs oral histories of former workers to demonstrate the important role that workplaces played in 'underpinning local social networks and sense of belonging at a town level', arguing that the centrality of the workplace to community life remained a key continuity into the post-war era.<sup>78</sup> In his focus upon oral testimony from retired workers, Ramsden's work is significant in that it reminds us that the meanings of community partly derive from shared experiences and partly from discussion and reflection upon these experiences. These two aspects of community have been explored by the sociologist Gerard Delanty in his 2010 work *Community*. Delanty highlights the differing interpretations of communities as on the one hand, 'shared social interaction based on locality' and on the other as 'culturally-defined units of meaning'.<sup>79</sup> However, rather than being exclusive, he argues that communities embody both of these differing interpretations – 'community' does in fact designate both an idea about belonging and a particular social phenomenon [...] To invoke the notion of community is [to] recognise that it is an ideal and is also real; it is both an experience and an interpretation'.<sup>80</sup>

As this discussion makes clear, historians have taken a number of differing approaches to community, highlighting concepts such as belonging, co-operation,

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<sup>77</sup> Tony Nicholson, 'Community and Class: The Cleveland Ironstone Field, 1850-1914', *Labour History Review* 60.2 (1995), p. 82.

<sup>78</sup> Stefan Ramsden, 'The Role of the Industrial Workplace in Working-class Community, 1945-1980', *Family & Community History* 19:1 (2016), p. 36.

<sup>79</sup> Gerard Delanty, *Community* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, London, 2010), p. xi.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

shared experience, place and the cultural construction of meaning. With this work in mind, in this thesis, I will follow Gerard Delanty's formulation of community as both 'experience and an interpretation', using this approach as a means of thinking about, and exploring, the relationship between space, place, lived experience, social interaction, contestation and scrutiny in the construction of community meaning and identity.

### **Identity and Class**

As this thesis is concerned with notions of community and identity, it will also need to engage with the issue of class. This is because class has been seen as the key category underpinning the creation of social identities. The primacy of class as a category derives from Marxist theory, which posits that an emergent working-class communal identity, or class consciousness, was defined and formulated primarily through its opposition to capitalist exploitation. In essence, this model sees social relationships as being fundamentally structured by the conditions of material life, and social change as the result of class struggle.<sup>81</sup> This approach is perhaps best articulated in Edward Thompson's 1963 book *The Making of the English Working Class*, which charts the development of working-class consciousness in terms of the struggle to resist social, political and economic inequalities inherent in the development of the system of industrial capital.<sup>82</sup> For Thompson, class consciousness is a thus form of collective identity that is characterised by shared goals and aims, which are formulated through strategies of activism and resistance. It is thus a statement of both economic and political relationships, occupying a central place in

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<sup>81</sup> Geoff Eley, *A Crooked Line: From Cultural History to the History of Society* (Michigan, 2005), p. 16.

<sup>82</sup> E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1963).

Marxist understandings of social change. Patrick Joyce, for example, has encapsulated the centrality of class to Marxist thought – 'If society was the system, or the machine, class was the motive force, and historical principle, which drove the machine'.<sup>83</sup>

Marxist theory assumes that the development of class consciousness occurs as an inevitable consequence of the structural relationships of capitalism. It is thus a normative, ahistorical description of social relations and, for this reason, there has been a disjuncture between theoretical descriptions of class and its practical application as a model to understand historical change. Thompson himself was acutely aware of this issue and stressed that his interpretation of class formation was based in historically observable events. He contrasted this approach to ahistorical theories of class which, in his view, reduced class 'to a static category, or the effect of an ulterior structure, of which men are not the makers but the vectors'.<sup>84</sup> Nevertheless, since its publication, *The Making of the English Working Class* has been criticised by historians who fail to see the same common intent, scale and homogeneity that Thompson sees in the various popular protest movements, disputes and social unrest in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.<sup>85</sup> Similarly, Marxist studies of industrialising communities, such as those by Theodore Koditschek and John Foster, have struggled to accommodate the historical evidence to a theoretically-derived model of class formation, to the extent that any real impression of life within the

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<sup>83</sup> Patrick Joyce, 'The End of Social History?', *Social History* 20.1 (1995), p. 75.

<sup>84</sup> E. P. Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays* (London, 1978), p. 46.

<sup>85</sup> These criticisms are summarised in R. J. Morris, *Class Consciousness in the Industrial Revolution 1780-1850* (London, 1979), pp. 43-45.

study communities is lost.<sup>86</sup> In this respect, the primacy of class struggle as an all-encompassing description social relations has been questioned. As H. F. Moorhouse states:

While the organization, in struggle, of work is a starting point, it is only that, and an over-devotion to tracing some movement from 'the formal to the real subjection of labour to capital' [...] can quite easily fail to provide any taste of what was the real lived experience of work: day in and day out.<sup>87</sup>

Moorhouse therefore argues for move away from delineating homogenous class blocs to a more nuanced reading of the experience of work which recognises that, 'There must have been a good deal of negotiation of status and pretension here [in the workplace], the recognition of personal qualities and idiosyncrasies and, surely, the development of ties that must have spilled into the world outside work'.<sup>88</sup>

Other specific criticisms of Marxist labour history include the charge that, in its emphasis on the workplace, trade associations and industrial relations, it marginalises other aspects of working-class experience and in particular marginalises the role and agency of women. This issue has been explored by Sally Alexander, for example, who asks 'How can women speak and think creatively within Marxism when they can neither enter the narrative flow as fully as they wish, nor imagine that there might be other subjectivities present in history than those of class?'<sup>89</sup> Other work, informed by postmodernist and poststructuralist scepticism, has questioned the structural

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<sup>86</sup> Koditschek, *Class Formation*; see also John Foster, *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution* (London, 1974).

<sup>87</sup> H. F. Moorhouse, 'The Significance of the Labour Aristocracy', *Social History* 6.2 (1981), p. 232.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Sally Alexander, 'Women, Class and Sexual Differences in the 1830s and 1840s: Some Reflections on the Writing of a Feminist History', *History Workshop* 17 (1984), p. 128.

assumptions and meta-narratives of Marxist dialectic.<sup>90</sup> Martin Hewitt, for example, has argued that the growing rhetoric of class and its conceptualisation in the nineteenth century represents only one of a number of different co-existing categories of identity.<sup>91</sup> In her 1986 book *Landscape for a Good Woman*, for example, Carolyn Steedman powerfully explores the construction and shaping of identity, using her own autobiography and her relationship to her mother as a case study through which to explore the subjective embodiment of difference:

The story of two lives that follows points finally to a consideration of what people [...] come to understand of themselves when all they possess is their labour, and what becomes of the notion of class-consciousness when it is seen as a structure of feeling that can be learned in childhood [...] Class and gender, and their articulations, are the bits and pieces from which psychological selfhood is made.<sup>92</sup>

Following on from Steedman, more recent work by Henry French and Jonathan Barry also points to a historiographical shift away from impersonal, involuntary collective identities (such as class, social group or religion) to a consideration of personal identities (based for example in gender, individual power relations and cultural knowledge) as an explanation of agency.<sup>93</sup> For French and Barry, 'the individual becomes the site in which these structural "identities" are enacted'.<sup>94</sup> Although the power of the individual to act may be limited by structures of power and inequality, French and Barry's work opens the way to an examination of the way in which

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<sup>90</sup> See Katrina Navickas, 'What happened to Class? New Histories of Labour and Collective Action in Britain', *Social History* 36.2 (2011), pp. 192-204.

<sup>91</sup> Martin Hewitt, 'Class and the Classes', in Chris Williams (ed.), *A Companion to Nineteenth Century Britain* (Oxford, 2007), p. 311.

<sup>92</sup> Carolyn Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman* (London, 1986), p. 7.

<sup>93</sup> Henry French & Jonathan Barry (eds), *Identity and Agency in England 1500-1800* (Basingstoke, 2004), p. 3.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

individuals, and by extension communities, function through use of strategies such as co-operation, consensus, pragmatism and compromise.

Moving from the focus upon the individual as the site of identity, much historical research has attempted to go beyond a Marxist interpretation of class struggle as the defining form of collective identity, towards ones in which the role of concepts such as agency, reciprocity, mediation, participation and negotiation are considered in relation to social change. Andy Wood, for example, has sought to examine the dynamic and fluid nature of industrial communities and their relationship to power. In his study of the early lead mining industry in the Peak District, he demonstrates how communities of 'free miners' defended their traditional rights and working customs in the face of stiff opposition from local landowners who sought to bring the industry under their own control.<sup>95</sup> In his study of Kirkby Malzeard and Nidderdale, he shows how traditions of popular resistance to enclosure and other incursions on traditional rights persisted, even within an atmosphere of coercion and intimidation occasioned by an ongoing power struggle amongst the local gentry.<sup>96</sup> Wood notes that class relationships are not the only lens through which to examine communities, highlighting the importance of other forms of identity, such as regional identity, religion and gender, and he also explores the way language is used in a social context to delineate and formalise power relationships.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Andy Wood, 'Social Conflict and Change in the Mining Communities of North-West Derbyshire, c. 1600-1700', *International Review of Social History* 38.1 (1993), pp. 31-58.

<sup>96</sup> Andy Wood, 'Subordination, Solidarity and the Limits of Popular Agency in a Yorkshire Valley c. 1596-1615', *Past & Present* 193 (2006), pp. 41-72.

<sup>97</sup> Andy Wood, 'Fear, Hatred and the Hidden Injuries of Class in Early Modern England', *Journal of Social History* 39.3 (2006), pp. 803-826.

Wood's work demonstrates that power relationships are not static, but are in a constant state of flux as the various parties involved manoeuvre to gain advantage. Douglas Hay, for example, reminds us that paternalistic employers, such as Lord Dudley, could be praised in popular ballads at one time for their apparent care for their workers, whilst at another being threatened with riot and destruction of their property.<sup>98</sup> His work also highlights the fact that power relationships between employers and workers were not homogenous, but varied according to industry and local circumstance. For example, whilst local protests at the social engineering carried out by the industrialists Boulton and Watt in the parish of Handsworth were met by a rigorous application of the Riot Act and the threat of armed retaliation, the protests of the Dudley colliers were met with discussion, compromise and appeals for peaceful dispersal.<sup>99</sup>

Moving from the Marxist idea of identity as being a product of class struggle, through concepts of gender, difference, individuality and embodiment, and with reference to individual and collective agency as it is revealed through case studies of elites and communities in opposition, it is possible to arrive at a more complex appreciation of the way in which power relationships worked in society. This has been explored by Mike Braddick and John Walter in their 2001 book *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society*.<sup>100</sup> In essence, Braddick and Walter argue that society encompasses a multiplicity of power relationships in which the autonomy and authority of the individual members depends not just upon wealth, but also upon their relative social

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<sup>98</sup> Douglas Hay, 'Patronage, Paternalism, and Welfare: Masters, Workers, and Magistrates in Eighteenth-Century England', *International Labor and Working-Class History* 53 (1998), pp. 27-47.

<sup>99</sup> Hay, 'Patronage, Paternalism, and Welfare', p. 34.

<sup>100</sup> Mike Braddick & John Walter (eds), *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society* (Cambridge, 2001).



position and the social role that they are playing.<sup>101</sup> Further, these power relationships are reinforced and legitimised through appropriate behaviours, rituals and language and are dependent upon context. Thus, for example, a workshop foreman might conduct himself in different ways and use different modes of language when reporting to his employer, than those he would use in dealing with a subordinate worker or within the home. Braddick and Walter also draw attention to the difference between the dominant mode of hierarchical interaction, characterised by deference (the public transcript) and an underlying mode of tension or resistance (the private transcript). James C. Scott characterises the relationship between public deference and private resistance as a 'dialectic of disguise and surveillance that pervades relationships between the weak and strong'.<sup>102</sup> Thus, the historically visible and prevailing patterns of power, as legitimised and promulgated by a dominant elite, mask underlying and less visible patterns of resistance and opposition amongst the apparently subordinate. It may be argued that these underlying patterns are most likely to manifest themselves and become visible during moments of crisis, causing the dominant power relationships to break down or be put under stress. Thus, Lord Dudley could find himself lauded at one moment and vilified the next, depending on the degree of economic hardship experienced by his miners and his response to that hardship. Similarly, when dominant power relationships have been challenged, they may be reiterated and reinforced (through coercion, defiance or punishment, for example) or modified (through compromise and negotiation).

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<sup>101</sup> Mike Braddick & John Walter, 'Grids of Power: Order, Hierarchy and Subordination in Early Modern Society', in Mike Braddick & John Walter (eds), *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 5.

<sup>102</sup> James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, 1990), p. 4.

This fluid interplay between deference and resistance has important implications in regard to the perceived uniformity of class consciousness and class action. As Patrick Joyce has explored, nineteenth-century factory workers did not differentiate employers as a class, but rather, as either 'good' or 'bad', adapting their responses to them accordingly.<sup>103</sup> Similarly, Ross McKibbin has shown how 'it was [...] perfectly possible for the working class to draw a distinction between the 'interests of labour' [...] and a received idea of the nation which could be accepted more or less uncritically'.<sup>104</sup> What unites the two authors is a reading of class as porous and changing; able to accommodate different conceptions of identity based, for example, on local conditions or national affiliations.

As I explore above, the work of historians such as Braddick and Walter, Patrick Joyce, Carolyn Steedman, Andy Wood, Ross McKibbin and others provides an exciting analytical framework in which to perceive social relationships through, across and between social strata. Rather than being wholly dependent upon a reading of class as the primary source of identity, this framework allows a more subtle explanation which stresses the importance of individual perception, social interaction, group identity and external categorization in the creation of social identities.<sup>105</sup> This is the approach which I intend to follow in this thesis, moving beyond a Marxist reading of class in order to present a more nuanced examination of the complex interactions, identities and hierarchies within Elsecar.

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<sup>103</sup> Patrick Joyce, *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class, 1848-1914* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 94.

<sup>104</sup> Ross McKibbin, *The Ideologies of Class: Social Relations in Britain, 1880-1950* (2nd edn, Oxford, 1998), p. 25.

<sup>105</sup> Henry French, *The Middle Sort of People in Provincial England 1600-1750* (Oxford, 2007), p. 12.

### **The Environment: Space and Place**

A major aim of this thesis is to frame the concepts I will be addressing, such as authority, identity, power and gender, in relation to the physical environment of the village. Elsecar is fortunate in that many of the structures and buildings that relate to its industrial past still exist. I will use these structures and their placing within the landscape in this thesis as a means to assess how space and environment influence the development of the village community. Much of this analysis will rest on two key concepts: space and place. In this thesis, I define space to be a delineated or discrete locale where human (inter)action occurs. Place I define as a space which is imbued with layers of cultural or social meaning, generally as a result of human interaction. Both of these concepts have been explored in the fields of archaeology and social geography (as well as history) and so the definitions used are therefore broadly in accord with already established definitions. The cultural geographer Denis Cosgrove, for example, neatly encapsulates both concepts: 'places are physical locations [spaces] imbued with human meanings'.<sup>106</sup>

In relation to space, there are two main ways in which to consider how the concept functions as a historical agent. Firstly, space provides the arena in which social interaction occurs. Secondly, it frames and regulates social interaction through the imposition of spatially-specific codes of behaviour. These two aspects of space thus mirror and complement the dual enabling and constraining aspects of social structure. Pierre Bourdieu, for example, has explored the role of space in orientating action and perception, leading to the creation of place-specific forms of identity and knowledge,

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<sup>106</sup> Denis Cosgrove, 'Power and Place in the Venetian Territories', in J. Agnew & Duncan, J. (eds), *The Power of Place* (London, 1989), p. 104.

whilst Michel Foucault has described space as being fundamental to understanding any form of communal life or any exercise of power.<sup>107</sup> Following Bourdieu and Foucault, Kevin Fox Gotham sees space as 'a social construction that shapes social action and guides behaviour'.<sup>108</sup>

A good practical example of the concepts that underpin Foucault, Bourdieu and Fox Gotham's approaches to space can be found in the archaeologist Charlotte Newman's work on the Madeley Union Workhouse. Newman shows how this complex of buildings, built in circa 1870 to enable the operation of the New Poor Law, consisted of a range of different, controlled spaces, progress through which (receiving ward, baths, uniform allocation, segregation into male and female wards) was designed to reinforce the individual's journey from pauperism to rehabilitation.<sup>109</sup> Structures of power and authority were implicit in the design and were highlighted by the architectural elaboration of the Poor Law Guardians' Board Room (where the fate of individual paupers was decided) and by the fact that a separate entrance allowed the guardians to come and go without scrutiny from the warders, a freedom not allowed to the inmates.<sup>110</sup> Finally, the vagrants' ward, situated at the margins of the complex, signalled the indigent poor's status as a social plague or disease that had to be kept away from contact with the main body of inmates, who were deemed to be more responsive to social and moral rehabilitation.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (London, 1977); Michel Foucault, 'Space, Power, and Knowledge', in S. Daring (ed.), *The Cultural Studies Reader* (London, 1984), pp. 134-142; both cited in Kevin Fox Gotham, 'Toward an Understanding of the Spatiality of Urban Poverty: The Urban Poor as Spatial Actors', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 27.3 (2003), pp. 723-737.

<sup>108</sup> Fox Gotham, 'Toward an Understanding', p. 723.

<sup>109</sup> Newman, 'An Archaeology of Poverty', p. 366.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 367.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 373.

Newmans' work demonstrates the constraining role of space in reinforcing hierarchy, authority and discipline, the buildings of the workhouse functioning as an arena which regulated behaviour and in which class and gender hierarchies were made explicit. Conversely, space, through its ability to facilitate new forms of social interaction, also has an emancipatory or liberating potential. In his 2003 volume *The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City* Patrick Joyce, for example, sees the increasing quantification, ordering, control and restructuring of the late-Victorian city as fundamentally empowering for its population, creating 'a city of wide streets, straight lines, improved visibility, a city where people and things could circulate freely [...] In short, a certain freedom was realised'.<sup>112</sup> For Joyce, the increasing regulation of the city paradoxically created 'conditions of possibility'<sup>113</sup> for new forms of action and interaction.

In relation to the concept of place, Anne Baldwin, Chris Ellis, Stephen Etheridge, Keith Laybourn and Neil Pye in their 2012 volume, *Class, Culture and Community: New Perspectives in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century British Labour History*, argue that 'sense of place', together with 'community', are the fundamental elements which underpin working-class identity.<sup>114</sup> However, in highlighting two trends in the historiography of labour – firstly, a tendency to romanticise and sanitise working-class culture and secondly, the prevalence of negative media portrayals – their work reminds us that none of these elements – sense of place, community, identity – are

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<sup>112</sup> Patrick Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City* (London, 2003), p. 11.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>114</sup> Anne Baldwin, Chris Ellis, Stephen Etheridge, Keith Laybourn & Neil Pye (eds), *Class, Culture and Community: New Perspectives in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century British Labour History* (Cambridge, 2012), p. 1.

spontaneously called into being through human social interaction, but are in fact culturally constructed. As Denis Cosgrove and Peter Jackson note, these culturally-constructed meanings are politically contested and site-specific, so that 'specific cultural forms can be related to specific material circumstances in particular locations "on the ground"'.<sup>115</sup> Work by Alicia Barber demonstrates that these shifting, diverse and contested cultural meanings attributed to space, which Cosgrove and Jackson term the 'symbolic qualities of landscape',<sup>116</sup> may be as much mythic or imaginary as they are based in fact.<sup>117</sup>

This process is illustrated, for example, by Jane Long's work on nineteenth-century Newcastle. Long demonstrates how the Sandgate district of Newcastle, a warren of narrow streets at some remove from the polite boulevards and civic spaces of the city, became a by-word for immorality and disorder. She explores the way contemporary observers saw links between the bodily disorder of the area's inhabitants (prostitutes, drunkards, the sick and diseased), the apparent moral disorder that underlay these 'symptoms', and the way in which both mirrored the spatial disorder of the crowded slums.<sup>118</sup> In common with Judith Walkowitz's work on Victorian London, Long demonstrates how contemporary fears of 'disorder' were expressly gendered, being focussed upon working-class women as perceived vectors of immorality and disease

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<sup>115</sup> Denis Cosgrove & Peter Jackson, 'New Directions in Cultural Geography', *Area* 19.2 (1987), p. 99.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>117</sup> Alicia Barber, 'Local Places, National Spaces: Public Memory, Community Identity, and Landscape at Scotts Bluff National Monument', *American Studies* 45.2 (2004), pp. 35-64.

<sup>118</sup> Jane Long, "'This Surging Tide Of Wretchedness": Gender, Danger And Progress in Nineteenth Century Newcastle Upon Tyne', *Australian Historical Studies* 27.107 (1996), p. 325.

who permeated, navigated and subverted the moral and physical spaces of the Victorian city.<sup>119</sup>

Andy Croll has explored similar themes to Walkowitz and Long in his work on nineteenth-century Merthyr Tydfil, emphasising, for example, the role of public space as an arena for the contemporary scrutiny of behaviour and morality.<sup>120</sup> Like Long and Walkowitz, his work demonstrates one of the key elements in the creation of meanings attributed to place, which is the process of scrutiny. In essence, this involves the 'measuring' and judgement of a particular locus in relation to prevailing cultural norms of behaviour, order and morality. This process has the potential to create powerful cultural associations, so that the perception of Sandgate or the back streets of Merthyr as 'disordered' and 'immoral' might have a social purchase as powerful and significant as the actual poverty and overcrowding that existed there. This phenomenon has also been explored by the archaeologist Paul Belford, who has shown how the late nineteenth-century perception of The Crofts area of Sheffield as a chaotic and ramshackle slum belies the origin of the site as a carefully planned industrial development.<sup>121</sup> In this way, the cultural meanings associated with particular forms of social interaction thus embody space with a particular identity, a 'symbolic' quality, real or imagined, that creates a specific sense of place.

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<sup>119</sup> Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight* (London, 1994).

<sup>120</sup> Andy Croll, 'Street Disorder, Surveillance and Shame: Regulating Behaviour in the Public Spaces of the Late Victorian British Town', *Social History* 24.3 (1999), pp. 250-268.

<sup>121</sup> Paul Belford, 'Work, Space and Power in an English Industrial Slum: 'The Crofts', Sheffield, 1750-1850', in Alan Mayne, & Tim Murray (eds), *The Archaeology of Urban Landscapes: Explorations in Slumland* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 106-117.

Whilst the physical boundaries of such places may be fluid, ill-defined or diffuse,<sup>122</sup> they can nevertheless function as important cultural and social constructs. As Paul Belford intimates, associations of place are fluid and changeable, reflecting and responding to the evolution of space over time. Similarly, the cultural meanings attributed to place are neither fixed nor exclusive. Working-class perceptions of Sandgate or The Crofts for example, will be likely to differ from those of the urban elites who sought to manage and control these spaces. In this respect, Michael Romyn's work on the inner-London Heygate Estate explores how its inhabitants maintained a powerful 'community resilience' and 'a sense of unity and belonging' in a decaying urban environment which was widely viewed by outsiders as a perilous, down-at-heel sink estate.<sup>123</sup> As Romyn's work demonstrates, the cultural meanings attributed to place are thus always open to challenge. Similarly, the social geographers Huw Thomas, Tamsin Stirling, Sue Brownill and Konnie Razzaque have demonstrated the way in which the disadvantaged and marginalised community of Tiger Bay, Cardiff, was able to mobilise in opposition to a local development plan which would have denied the liminality, identity and problems of the community through a sanitised and homogenised presentation of the city's spaces.<sup>124</sup> In this respect, the successful contestation by the Tiger Bay residents of meanings attributed to their community demonstrates the empowering and political aspect of place. As Andrés Di Masso notes, place, as a psychological construct 'may be socially deployed to provoke particular political effects aligned with people's individual or collective

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<sup>122</sup> Jane Long, for example, shows how Sandgate, essentially just a single street, came to stand for an entire area, the dimensions of which in the popular mind expanded 'beyond its reality as a geographical area'. Long, 'This Surging Tide', p. 324.

<sup>123</sup> Michael Romyn, 'The Heygate: Community Life in an Inner-City Estate, 1974–2011', *History Workshop Journal* 81 (2016), p. 199.

<sup>124</sup> Huw Thomas, Tamsin Stirling, Sue Brownill & Konnie Razzaque, 'Locality, Urban Governance and Contested Meanings of Place', *Area* 28.2 (1996), pp. 186-198.



interests and demands'.<sup>125</sup> This phenomenon can be seen in a historical context, for example, in Steve Poole's work on eighteenth and nineteenth-century Bristol. Poole shows how the utilisation of Brandon Hill as a venue for radical and political protest was inextricably linked to the hill's history as an open public resource, leading to 'the symbolic representation [of the hill] as a landscape of civic liberty'.<sup>126</sup>

Steve Poole's work also draws attention to the importance of memory in formulating associations of place. The protesters gathering on Brandon Hill, for example, were able to invoke the hill as a site of liberty because its long history as a site of free and open access was known and recalled. As the social geographers Michael Leyshon and Jacob Bull have observed, 'Memories are crucial to our construction of place [...] Memory allows different spaces, pasts, and futures to become embedded in particular locales'.<sup>127</sup> However, the landscape in itself does not embody memory. Rather, as Elissa Rosenberg argues, the meanings attributed to it are constantly made and remade in the present, so that an idea of place 'is continually created, negotiated and performed'.<sup>128</sup> Following her argument, it is the active agency of historical actors moving through the landscape that embodies it with meaning.

Space and place, then, are key concepts in understanding the development of Elsecar, by virtue of their role in the formation of identity, community, and social and power relationships. Space and place have been the subject of a diverse range of research,

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<sup>125</sup> Andrés Di Masso, 'Grounding Citizenship: Toward a Political Psychology of Public Space', *Political Psychology* 33.1 (2012), p. 124.

<sup>126</sup> Steve Poole, 'Till our Liberties be Secure': Popular Sovereignty and Public Space in Bristol, 1780–1850', *Urban History* 26.1 (1999), p. 44.

<sup>127</sup> Michael Leyshon & Jacob Bull, 'The Bricolage of the Here: Young People's Narratives of Identity in the Countryside', *Social & Cultural Geography* 12.2 (2011), p. 159.

<sup>128</sup> Elissa Rosenberg, 'Walking in the City: Memory and Place', *The Journal of Architecture* 17.1 (2012), p. 133.

much of which is of relevance in formulating the approach which I will follow in this thesis. Within the discipline of historical geography, Derek Gregory, for example, has drawn attention to 'the centrality of the local community and its collective response to the parochial circuits which circumscribe it',<sup>129</sup> emphasising the way in which these 'intersecting hierarchies and overlapping [local] domains'<sup>130</sup> necessarily form the basis of wider regional and national perspectives.

In terms of archaeological approaches to space, Ben Ford has explored the planned Vermont mining settlements of Elizabeth and Ely in a way which highlights the 'intersecting hierarchies and overlapping [local] domains]' that Derek Gregory has identified. Ford has shown how social stratifications within the workforce were mirrored in the relative architectural embellishment of their houses.<sup>131</sup> He also identifies an alternative narrative to the prevailing idiom of paternalism in the existence of 'Beanville', a small independent settlement to the east of Ely Mine village, where miners who wished to could live outside the area of company control.<sup>132</sup> Importantly, Ford's consideration of the settlements as a complete complex, rather than as simply industrial sites, reminds us of the vibrant community life that took place outside the work-place, as demonstrated by the presence of schools, hospitals, hotels, shops, recreation halls, sports fields and churches.<sup>133</sup> In this thesis, I will bring a similar approach to the study of Elsecar as a means of exploring hitherto neglected aspects of social interaction and daily life within the village.

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<sup>129</sup> Derek Gregory, 'Contours of Crisis? Sketches for a Geography of Class Struggle in the Early Industrial Revolution in England', in A. R. H. Baker & D. Gregory (eds), *Explorations in Historical Geography* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 73.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> Ford, 'Workers' Housing', p. 738.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 737.

<sup>133</sup> Ford, 'Workers' Housing', p. 739.

In similar work, Jamie Brandon and James Davidson's research at Van Winkle's Mill in the Ozark Mountains demonstrated how the changing functions and spatial arrangements of structures within this mid nineteenth-century mill complex mirrored and manifested patterns of social and cultural change.<sup>134</sup> Whilst Ford, Brandon and Davidson have examined industrial settlements in their entirety, the archaeologist Eleanor Casella has taken the opposite approach. Through a small-scale, targeted excavation of miner's cottages at Alderley Edge, Cheshire, she has successfully explored themes such as continuity, adaptation, belonging, kinship, affiliation, support, competition, and obligation within the local community.<sup>135</sup> Although archaeological work of the type conducted by Casella is beyond the scope of this research, I will nevertheless in this thesis examine the surviving workers' housing at Elsecar in terms of similar themes.

These various studies highlight the fact that industrial communities consist of much more than just industrial enterprises. In regard to Elsecar, this work reminds us of the narrow focus of much of the previous research on the village and of the possibilities of a more holistic interpretation. Rather than considering individual industries as distinct entities, it is possible to conceive of the village as a series of different, but overlapping, spheres, each with their own characteristics and actors. In the case of mining, for example, the underground world, with its particular rules and rituals,<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Jamie C. Brandon & James M. Davidson, 'The Landscape of Van Winkle's Mill: Identity, Myth, and Modernity in the Ozark Upland South', *Historical Archaeology* 39.3 (2005), pp. 113-131.

<sup>135</sup> Eleanor Casella, 'The Excavation Of Industrial Era Settlements in North-West England', *Industrial Archaeology Review* 27.1 (2005), pp. 77-85.

<sup>136</sup> For an examination of differing miners' working practices and their effect on social organisation, see M. J. Daunton, 'Down the Pit: Work in the Great Northern and South Wales Coalfields, 1870-1914', *The Economic History Review New Series* 34.4 (1981), pp. 578-597.

contrasted with the pit-head world of administration, offices and coal sorters. Both were distinct again from the world of blast furnaces, ironworks and workshops. Similarly, Elsecar remained an essentially rural environment, so that the rhythms, tempo and orchestration of industry were superimposed upon, and co-existed with, patterns of agriculture and cultivation that were still dictated by the rhythms of the traditional farming year. Away from the factories and fields, the homes, public houses, churches, chapels and shops of the village also exerted their influence on the patterns and rhythms of village life. Each of these different realms can be considered as an arena where social relationships were played out.

In the same way that space helps to frame and influence social relationships, so certain spaces exhibit or become associated with particular attributes, for example public and private spaces, or formal and informal spaces. One such attribute is the idea of gendered space, or the attribution of spaces to specifically male or female realms of interaction. This has tended to centre around the idea of the home and domestic life as feminine space, contrasting with the masculine world of work. In recent years this paradigm has been challenged; Lawrence Klein, for example, has questioned the idea of eighteenth-century women's lives as essentially domestic and private by highlighting their public interactions in the wider world.<sup>137</sup> Similarly, Craig Muldrew has emphasised the important roles played by women in commerce, estate management and financial transactions, roles which have largely been obscured by their subordinate legal status.<sup>138</sup> In her study of Norwich, Fiona Williamson notes that

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<sup>137</sup> Lawrence Klein, 'Gender and the Public/Private Distinction in the Eighteenth Century: Some Questions about Evidence and Analytic Procedure', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29.1 (1996), pp. 97-109.

<sup>138</sup> Craig Muldrew, "'A Mutual Assent of her Mind'? Women, Debt, Litigation and Contract in Early Modern England', *History Workshop Journal* 55 (2003), p. 64.

clear distinctions between private and public life were not possible in the densely-packed workshops, shops, alehouses and houses that lined the yards and alleys of the city. Women moved freely between the domestic home, the alehouse and the streets in a world where 'practical necessity dictated the use of space more than gender ideology'.<sup>139</sup> Klein, Muldrew and Williamson's research is highly relevant to Elsecar in that, whilst the apparently masculine world of the mines has been the subject of much research, any consideration of women and their role within the village community has been conspicuously absent. Following their conclusions, it is within the overlapping social arenas and spaces of the village, rather than just within the home, that evidence of women's lives may be sought.

A crucial aspect of the way that space acts as a theatre or stage for social interaction is the way in which space itself is defined. One of the main ways in which space is defined and characterised is through architecture; Sharon Steadman, for example, has considered its role in the symbolic organisation of space, as a mode of communication, and as a means to influence environment, behaviour and cultural process.<sup>140</sup> These elements can be discerned in Martha Zierden's study of eighteenth century Charleston, which highlights the way in which the polite and grandiose architecture and formal gardens of the main houses contrasted with the work-yards and slave quarters at the rear, so that social inequality and segregation was manifested and reinforced through the spatial zoning and embellishment of the buildings.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Fiona Williamson, 'Space And The City: Gender Identities in Seventeenth-Century Norwich', *Cultural & Social History* 9.2 (2012), p. 179.

<sup>140</sup> Sharon Steadman, 'Recent Research in the Archaeology of Architecture: Beyond the Foundations,' *Journal of Archaeological Research* 4.1 (1996), pp. 51-93.

<sup>141</sup> Martha Zierden, 'Landscape and Social Relations at Charleston Townhouse Sites, 1770-1850', *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 14 (2010), pp. 527-546.

In the case of Elsecar, the significance of architecture has been explored by Patrick Eyres.<sup>142</sup> Working from an art historical perspective, Eyres considers the estate architecture in its totality, seeing a unity of style and purpose between workers' cottages, industrial buildings, monuments within the park and the structure of Wentworth Woodhouse itself. Because of this unity of style, it is possible to conceive of the built environment, and the industrial structures and buildings of Elsecar in particular, as a consciously-created polite environment. This polite function still exists and is affirmed today by the fact that almost all the surviving buildings are protected by their inclusion in a Planning Conservation Area.<sup>143</sup> Whilst many contemporary late eighteenth-century workers' villages, such as Cromford, Belper, New Lanark and Copley, do not display the same level of architectural embellishment, Elsecar has clear affinities with the architectural pretensions of mid-Victorian planned settlements such as Ackroydon and Saltaire.<sup>144</sup> This is significant; Edward Ackroyd, the developer of Ackroydon, harked back to a mythical pre-industrial England: 'Mr Ackroyd is very desirous of keeping up the old English notion of the village – the squire and parson as the head and centre of all progress and good fellowship, then the tenant farmers and lastly the working population'.<sup>145</sup> For his part, Titus Salt conceived of Saltaire as his own personal fiefdom, located on virgin ground outside the control of the municipal authorities, and was disappointed when the

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<sup>142</sup> Patrick Eyres, 'Wentworth Woodhouse: A Classic Whig Landscape', *New Arcadian Journal* 59/60 (2006), pp. 52-108.

<sup>143</sup> Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, *Elsecar Conservation Area Appraisal Version 0.1* (Barnsley, 2008), p. 3.

<sup>144</sup> Neil Jackson, Jo Lintonbon, & Bryony Staples, *Saltaire: The Making of a Model Town* (Reading, 2010); this argument is based on a reading of Chapter One.

<sup>145</sup> *The Builder* Vol. 21 No. 1045, 14th February 1863, cited in J. A. Jowitt, 'Copley, Ackroydon and West Hill Park: Moral Reform and Social Improvement in Halifax', in Jowitt, J. A. (ed.), *Model Industrial Communities in Mid-Nineteenth Century Yorkshire* (Bradford, 1986), p. 77.

village was confirmed to be within the control of the Shipley Board of Health, to which he then had to pay rates.<sup>146</sup>

As these examples drawn from historical, geographical, archaeological and architectural research demonstrate, analyses of space take many forms, but at a fundamental level they are generally concerned with its role in structuring and enabling social interaction. In this thesis, I will use these various insights and approaches to illuminate the ways in which space and place, through both lived experience and the contested construction of cultural meanings, influence and shape community and the formation of identity at Elsecar.

### **The Collaborative Doctoral Award, the Sources and the Scope of the Project.**

Whilst there is considerable scope for further historical research into Elsecar, the approach of this thesis has nevertheless been shaped by certain constraints and considerations. These relate partly to the remit of the Collaborative Doctoral Award itself, and partly to the historical sources available for study. Before outlining in detail the research aims of this thesis, in this section I will consider these research issues and their impact on the project.

Firstly, the title of the thesis, 'Industrialising Communities: a Case Study of Elsecar', reflects the fact that the AHRC-funded Collaborative Doctoral Award has a tight focus upon the village, rather than upon a less circumscribed entity of study, such as the parish or the Wentworth Estate itself. Whilst the focus upon the village is (as I

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<sup>146</sup> J. Reynolds, *The Great Paternalist: Titus Salt and the Growth of Nineteenth Century Bradford* (London, 1983), p. 265.

argue elsewhere) historically valid, it is nevertheless important to recall that the village developed within these wider local and regional contexts. There is thus a danger that, in focussing upon Elsecar as a distinct, and in many ways unique, industrial community, this wider context will be lost. Accordingly, wherever possible, I have included comparative information into this thesis, so that Elsecar can be seen not only in its uniqueness, but also in its similarities to other industrial communities. In Chapter Six in particular, I draw out the tensions between the enclosed world of the village and its relationship to the wider regional trends through an examination of the 1858 South Yorkshire coal strike.

Secondly, the tight focus upon Elsecar has had the effect of reducing the available source material for study. The particular sources used in each chapter are discussed below and particular issues relating to the source material are discussed in the relevant chapters. Here, it is important to note that, whilst the main archive source for the project, the Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments, is impressive in extent, my research has focussed upon approximately 270 relevant documents within the collection, many of which contain only fleeting references to Elsecar. Similarly, court records for Elsecar do not survive and ecclesiastical records for the village are likewise scanty. Accordingly, in researching this thesis, I have on occasion come across the footprints in the archive of previous researchers, most notably Arthur Clayton, who was both thorough and indefatigable in his research. The fact that I have sometimes found myself following what I thought was an independent and unexplored path, only to arrive the same source material that Clayton and his followers identified, has both encouraged me that I was on the right track and spurred me on to use the material in new ways. In this respect, I have been able to supplement



material from the Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments with census data, Poor Law records and an analysis of newspaper accounts of the village in a synthesis which, to my knowledge, has not previously been attempted. As I have explained elsewhere in this introduction, my aim throughout the project has been to develop an innovative approach to the evidence which reflects modern historiographical concerns and historical perspectives. In so doing, I have been careful not to ask too much of the sources and so, whilst the sources relating to some specific issues are not as comprehensive as one would desire, I am confident in the inferences and interpretations that I have derived from them.

### **Research Aims**

This introduction has highlighted and explored the considerable body of published and unpublished work relating to the industrialisation of the village of Elsecar. In doing so, it has demonstrated that the majority of the work undertaken on this subject has been from a broad economic history perspective, focussing particularly on the development of individual industrial concerns. Because of this, there is much potential for future research to widen the focus and to look at the village and this crucial period in its history and development in greater detail. This discussion has thus examined some of the more recent archaeological and historiographical trends, demonstrating how and why a study of Elsecar must apply the insights of cultural and social history. Similarly, archaeological and social geographical approaches to space, buildings and landscape all offer important ways in which to develop a more rounded historical analysis of the village firmly within its particular spatial context. As I will demonstrate, Elsecar is a fertile environment in which to examine issues of class, gender, power, hierarchy, environment and their relationship to agency, the creation

of social identities and community. Moreover, these approaches will show that the historical significance of Elsecar lies as much in its potential for the study of social structures as it does in its reputation as a site of economic and industrial innovation and development. In particular, this focus will contribute to our understanding of how social identities, daily life and communities were wrought not only from economic conditions, but also by social and cultural factors.

Through adopting this approach, it will be possible to identify those areas of congruence and similarity between Elsecar and other industrialising communities, and also to determine those areas in which the history of Elsecar is unique and specific. Elsecar also offers the historian the opportunity to observe and test, at the local level, wider historiographical assumptions and assertions regarding the components of identity and community in the long nineteenth century.

The thesis explores these issues by employing a tripartisan structure, each section of which contains two related research chapters. Section One (Chapters One and Two) explores aspects of power and authority, charting the way that these structure social relationships within the village. The specific areas of study relate to the administration of the Wentworth Estate, the projection of power through the estate machinery by the Earls Fitzwilliam, and the power and influence of the Parish Poor Law authorities. Section Two (Chapters Three and Four) looks at the everyday lived experience of the villagers, both in terms of occupational activity and in terms of the wider world beyond work. It looks at themes of employment, class, gender, community conflict and masculinity in terms of their roles as components in the formation of individual and community identities. Section Three (Chapters Five And

Six) explores aspects of space and place, looking at the way village space shaped and influenced daily life and social relationships, and the ways in which men and women experienced space in different ways. It also explores the significance of public events, community life, and the contestation of meaning in creating a sense of place and community identity. In terms of the scope of the individual thesis chapters, the research aims of each chapter are given below:

In 'Chapter One: Authority and Lordship at Elsecar, 1750-1870', I examine the impact of the Wentworth Estate administration upon the villagers. Specifically, I look at the way the Estate and its principal officers, the household stewards, acted as a conduit for the authority of the Earls Fitzwilliam within Elsecar and the ways in which the villagers related to this paternalist management. As I argue, the relationship between the Earls and the villagers has hitherto remained largely unexplored, and yet it is crucial in understanding the structuring and development of the community. The key research aims are thus to identify the nature of the Fitzwilliam's authority, to explore how this was exercised, to characterise how this exercise of authority framed relationships between themselves and the villagers, and to explore how the Earls' intervention in the village affected and structured the daily lives of the villagers. I demonstrate how the exercise of the Earls' authority bound them to their tenants within a rigid and hierarchical social relationship that was characterised by deference, order and dependency. I argue that this form of paternalist management represents a continuation of eighteenth-century traditions of elite governance and that this form of control had become anachronistic by the mid-nineteenth century. I also demonstrate that the various social benefits associated with the Earls' paternalism, which have been seen as expressions of enlightened management, in fact functioned as a

mechanism of social scrutiny and control. The chapter is based primarily upon documentary sources from the Wentworth Woodhouse steward's correspondence and the 4th and 5th Earls' correspondence held in the Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments collection at Sheffield City Archives.

In 'Chapter Two: Welfare Provision: Alternatives to the Fitzwilliam Paternalist Model', I begin to widen the perspective away from a focus upon the Earls by examining the issue of welfare provision within the village and, in particular, the alternatives that were available to the paternalist provision of the Earls. This focus reflects the fact that working-class villagers were most likely to encounter authority when attempting to elicit relief, so that (as I argue in Chapter One) the negotiation of welfare provision was a major factor in the structuring of social relationships within the village. The particular issues that I will examine in this chapter will thus relate to social hierarchy and the exercise of power on the one hand, and to manifestations of plebian agency on the other.

In order to examine these issues, I will explore the role of the Hoyland Parish authorities, together with the structures of community organisation and self-help as evidenced in miners' accident funds. Despite the social welfare role of the Earls and the Parish, I will show that the villagers found it necessary and desirable to form their own networks of mutual support, which emphasised kinship, mutuality, workplace association and personal worth or status. The chapter is based primarily upon research into the Hoyland Parish Poor Law records, Hoyland poll books, trade directories, and material from the Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments.

In 'Chapter Three: The World of Work', I continue to explore the structuring of social relationships through an examination of the world of work and its relationship to issues of class, hierarchy and identity. The aim of this chapter is to characterise occupation within Elsecar, and in so doing, to broaden the focus of much of the previous work on the village away from a bias towards the male experience of work. Instead, I present a comparative study of the types of employment opportunities and working lives experienced by both men and women. The key issues I examine are the extent to which employment opportunities in the industrialising village differed for men and women, the economic marginalisation of women and the changing nature of women's employment over time. As I argue, men's and women's experience differed in that, whilst women became increasingly marginalised and excluded from industrial jobs, men's opportunities improved in terms of the diversity and the regularity of employment. Despite this, the economic contribution of women remained crucial to the survival of the household.

I also demonstrate how an increasing diversity of employment within the village led to striations of social status within the community, both between and within broad class groupings. As I will show, the role of employment was a critical factor in the creation of personal and collective identities, highlighting and shaping differences of class and gender. As such, the chapter underpins and helps to characterise the social alignments, networks of conviviality and fault lines of conflict which I will explore later in this thesis. The chapter is based primarily on data derived from the 1841, 1851 and 1861 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Parish, trade directories, the Elsecar colliery accounts from the Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments and account books from the Elsecar Ironworks which are held in Barnsley Archives.

In 'Chapter Four: Kinship, Conviviality, Gender and Conflict', I examine the world beyond work through the issues of kinship, conviviality, masculinity, gender and conflict, as they are portrayed and reflected in contemporary nineteenth-century newspaper reports of Elsecar. As I will demonstrate, these analytical categories and the way in which they interrelate are vital in understanding how the villagers interacted and functioned as a community. I therefore examine these themes as ways of thinking about the multiple structures of power and hierarchy that are manifested in the world beyond work, and the ways in which these influence community and identity. A key aim is to understand how these various issues relate to individual and collective identities, and how these in turn influence and create hierarchies of power and status within the community. I argue that individual identity relies upon context as well as category, and changes over time according to life-cycle patterns of dependence and independence. Identity in this sense is a product of gender, class, workplace, recreational and family/kinship interactions and affiliations, and so gradations of identity and status are constantly being read and negotiated according to situation and circumstance. I also demonstrate the social agency of women in forging alliances and maintaining kinship links within the village, as well as exploring their active role in participating in neighbourhood disputes. In so doing, I address the marginalisation of the role of women in the historiography of Elsecar, which has hitherto privileged the male experience of work. In relation to men, I demonstrate how masculine identity continued to be defined largely through the body and the demonstration of physical prowess. As I argue, daily life for plebian men and women in Elsecar involved acting within a dense weave of family, workplace and friendship associations, in which personal circumstances, combined with the particular

economic, demographic and social structures of the village, shaped individual lived experience. In this sense, I argue that community can be understood as the interplay between the changing positions of people within multiple interlocking structures of hierarchy and power. Whilst community structures may thus be supportive and beneficial in terms of generating mutual support, community identity and cohesion, they can also be divisive, leading to everyday tensions, disputes and arguments.

In 'Chapter Five: Space and Environment', I explore the spaces and physical environments of the village, and their role in influencing and framing social interaction. As I argue, the physical environment, through its ability to constrain or enable human agency, mediates, shapes, and enables social relationships. A key research aim of this chapter is thus to characterise the specific types and uses of space that arise as a result of the process of industrialisation. Through an understanding of this development, I demonstrate the ways in which the physical village impacted and influenced the lives of the villagers themselves. Firstly, I look at the relationship between domestic and industrial space and the way that this privileges certain types of activity over others. Secondly, I examine the way in which the threats and hazards of the industrial landscape impact upon the daily life of the villagers. Finally, I look at the differential experiences of men and women in negotiating and utilising village space and the significance of these experiences in highlighting the expression and maintenance of gender inequality. I conclude that the environment of Elsecar embodied hierarchical social relationships, privileging and prioritising industrial production over the domestic lives of its inhabitants, and the lives of men over those of women. This conclusion is significant in that it challenges previous interpretations of Elsecar, such as those of Graham Mee, who see the village as a fundamentally

benign environment, in which danger was mediated and social structures positively influenced by the intervention of the Earls Fitzwilliam. The chapter is based on an analysis of historic maps held in the Fairbanks Collection, the Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments and Barnsley Archives, together with nineteenth-century newspaper reports and supplementary census data.

In 'Chapter Six: A Sense of Place? Respectability and Protest in Elsecar circa 1830-1870', I explore two specific aspects of the links between place, memory and identity. The first is expressed in the creation and promulgation of the ideal of Elsecar as a 'respectable' village of social harmony, whilst the second is to be found in the language and theatre of resistance as employed by the Elsecar miners in the 1858 coal strike. I show how these two concepts, respectability and industrial militancy, were intimately concerned with issues of legitimacy, identity and place.

As I will show in this chapter, the proliferation of new kinds of village space in the mid-nineteenth century made possible new forms of social interaction, in particular public recreational and social gatherings. As I argue, these public events represent important novel forms of cross-class and gender-inclusive interactions within the village. In the same period, Elsecar became subject to increasing external scrutiny, which saw in these respectable events, in the fabric of the village, and in the relationship between the villagers and the Earls, a place worthy of note. As I will demonstrate, this produced a celebratory reading of place which framed Elsecar as a 'model' village, a physically and socially ordered community that embodied a perceived 'model' relationship between capital and labour. As I argue, plebian identities in Elsecar were forged both in accordance with, and in opposition to, this



culturally-constructed narrative of place. By 1870, Elsecar had thus emerged as a distinct community: a particular product of its structural relationships with power and authority, and of the shared, lived experience of generations of its inhabitants. Nevertheless, I demonstrate how, despite the creation of this celebratory identity, the village continued to experience poverty, social inequality and conflict. As I argue, the events of the 1858 coal strike emphasised these continuing tensions between the 'real' and the 'imagined' community. As I demonstrate, the emergence of a powerful and self-confident collective identity and voice amongst the Elsecar miners in 1858 exposed the tensions between deference and opposition, authority and agency, tradition and modernity and challenged the hegemonic interpretation of the model village. The chapter is based mainly upon nineteenth-century newspaper and other published accounts of Elsecar, together with material from the Earls' correspondence in the Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments.

In the Conclusion, I consider the historical significance of Elsecar, and its continuing resonance as a particular and significant place in the present, through a brief account of my external engagement work with my Collaborative Doctoral Award partner, Barnsley Museums Service. I conclude that the history of Elsecar is characterised by plebian agency and by the negotiation of structures of power and authority associated with industrialisation. Through this negotiation and through the everyday strategies of survival and co-operation, the villagers had by 1870 created a community with a powerful sense of its own identity. As I demonstrate in my discussion of my involvement in the collaborative interpretation project at Elsecar, this sense of community, place and identity survives into the modern world.

## **Chapter One: Authority and Lordship at Elsecar, 1750-1870**

### **Introduction**

Although the scale and chronology of industrialisation at Elsecar has been largely mapped out in previous research, the social and cultural impacts of these processes upon the village remain largely unexplored. It is with these impacts that this thesis is fundamentally concerned, and an obvious place to begin in characterising these wider social and cultural implications of industrialisation is with the administrative machinery of the Wentworth Woodhouse Estate. This is because in addition to its role in financing and directing industrial development, the Estate also had a pervasive social influence by virtue of being both the major employer and the major landlord within the village. It therefore affected and structured the daily lives of the villagers to a considerable extent. With this in mind, the key research aims of this chapter are to characterise the nature of the Estate's authority, to explore how this authority was exercised, and to understand how this exercise of authority was experienced and negotiated by the villagers.

In order to accomplish these aims, the chapter will focus upon the two most significant elements of the Estate administrative apparatus. Firstly, it will examine the role of the Earls themselves who, as the apex of the estate hierarchy, were ultimately responsible for directing policy. It will explore the motives of the Earls, demonstrating how the estate was micro-managed by them in accordance with paternalistic, hierarchical ideals of lordly governance. Secondly, the chapter looks at the Earls' principal officers, the stewards, and their role in influencing and carrying out the Earls' decisions. Most importantly, it analyses the role of the stewards as

intermediaries between the villagers and the Earls, and their role in facilitating appeals for help from the villagers to the Earls. I also examine the ways in which the villagers engaged with and negotiated the Earls' authority through the language and performance of deference. I will demonstrate how the Earls' authority, exercised through the administrative machinery of the estate, bound them to their tenants within a rigid and hierarchical social relationship that was characterised by deference, order and dependency. I argue that this form of paternalist management represents a continuation of eighteenth-century traditions of elite governance and that the Earls attempted to maintain this traditional form of control into the nineteenth century. As I will explore in Chapter Six, the tensions between this anachronistic form of authority and the modernising industrial village were to become manifest in the mid-nineteenth century. Finally, I demonstrate that the various social benefits associated with paternal management, such as pensions, sick pay and access to housing, had to be actively sought out and applied for by the Earls' tenants, who needed to demonstrate their suitability for assistance by adhering to certain moral standards of conduct dictated by the Earls. Whilst other researchers have seen these benefits as expressions of enlightened management, I argue that they are better understood as an expression of lordly authority and control.

### **The Earls and Paternalism**

Since the particular form of lordship practiced by the Earls has been characterised as benevolent paternalism,<sup>1</sup> in this section I will unpack this concept, before looking at the relationship between the Earls and the villagers in greater detail. As I explored in the previous chapter, the Earls' paternalism was an ideology that was based on

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example Medlicott, 'Elsecar: The Making of an Industrial Community', p. 171.

traditional conceptions of masculine authority, in which the obligations, duties and power of the elite males in the public sphere were held to be analogous to those of the family patriarch in the domestic sphere. As is implicit in this family analogy, paternalism rationalised and legitimised an autocratic, masculine power structure in which the head, or patriarch, had full control over decision-making, the family or subjects being cast as passive recipients of this power. Whilst this ideology placed an obligation upon the patriarch to consider the physical and moral welfare of his subjects in the exercising of his power, those subjects were expected to accept the wisdom of his decision-making with deference, obedience and gratitude.

Whilst paternalism was thus associated strongly with the traditions and preoccupations of a landed, aristocratic elite, it is interesting that it became increasingly pervasive during the later nineteenth century as a management strategy that was employed by both entrepreneurial and corporate industrial enterprises. David Jeremy, for example, in his study of William Hesketh Lever's creation of the industrial settlement of Port Sunlight, highlights the significance of paternalism as a means for employers to negotiate the fluid and unpredictable trend that developed during the nineteenth century, away from a culture of complete employee dependence and powerlessness to one of a deferential acceptance of employer authority.<sup>2</sup> John Hassan's study of the Midlothian coal industry broadly agrees with this approach; Hassan interprets an outbreak of paternalist welfare measures in the 1850s amongst elite mine-owners, such as the Duke of Buccleuch and the Marquis of Lothian, as essentially a pragmatic measure that was adopted in response to the collapse,

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<sup>2</sup> David J. Jeremy, 'The Enlightened Paternalist in Action; William Hesketh Lever at Port Sunlight Before 1914', *Business History* 33.1 (1991), p. 59.

primarily due to economic factors, of the 'Arling', the system of legalised bondage of miners, in which the two landowners had hitherto been enthusiastic participants.<sup>3</sup> Alice Russell places the idea of control inherent in Jeremy and Hassan's work centre stage; her study of the cloth-manufacturing towns of the north-west expressly identifies the main purpose of paternalism as being to ensure the continuing importance and authority of the existing town elites. For Russell, this control is exercised either by voluntary compliance (achieved through the promulgation of concepts of unity and common purpose) or, when this approach fails, by recourse to repression and sanctions. An important element of paternalism as articulated by Russell is the extension of its principles and structures beyond the workplace into the wider world, through the paternalist's control and participation as an actor in a network of interlocking social roles (which might be judicial, municipal, welfare-based or educational) in which control could be exercised over the community.<sup>4</sup>

Jeremy, Hassan and Russell all concur in their assessment of paternalism as a pragmatic strategy, to be adopted, modified or discarded at will. By the mid-nineteenth century, it had become one with a particular appeal to a large number of industrial entrepreneurs and employers, who were keen to modulate relations between themselves and their workforces in a favourable manner. As Patrick Joyce has noted, the key strategy of this new 'industrial paternalism' was to recreate in the new urban

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<sup>3</sup> John A. Hassan, 'The Landed Estate, Paternalism and the Coal Industry in Midlothian 1800-1880', *Scottish Historical Review* 59.167 (1980), p. 79.

<sup>4</sup> Alice Russell, 'Local Elites and the Working-Class Response in the North-West, 1870-1895; Paternalism and Deference Reconsidered', *Northern History* 23.1 (1987), p. 156.

industrial environments the kind of traditional, localised social relationships of deference which characterised pre-industrial and early-industrial rural communities.<sup>5</sup>

Whilst Joyce has emphasised paternalism as a 'paying proposition'; a lucrative 'answer to the continuing problems of industrialisation',<sup>6</sup> Robert Dewhurst raises a different point of some significance to Elsecar. In his brief biography of Titus Salt, he highlights the fact that Salt was already successful and wealthy at the time he began planning the model industrial settlement of Saltaire, and in effect had no pressing financial or economic motive to do so. Rather, he sees Salt's motives as being influenced by a social, religious and moral conscience that was partly informed by his enthusiastic reading of the reformist novels of Benjamin Disraeli.<sup>7</sup> Whilst it would clearly be naive to suggest that Salt was not aware that his decision had important implications in terms of the advancement of his personal prestige, authority and wealth, Dewhurst's work is an important reminder that factors other than naked self-interest and profit may play an important role in the formulation of paternalist strategies. At Elsecar, for example, the 5th Earl continued to work the Elsecar Ironworks in the period 1827 to 1841, despite making an overall loss of £9,995.<sup>8</sup> His decision to keep the works open reflects his understanding that its closure would have had a catastrophic effect on the village community and highlights the way in which financial considerations could take second place to the wider social goals of the paternalist.

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<sup>5</sup> Patrick Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics: The Culture of the Factory in Later Victorian England* (3<sup>rd</sup> edn, Manchester, 1991), pp. 143-145.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

<sup>7</sup> Robert K. Dewhurst, 'Saltaire', *Town Planning Review* 31.2 (1960), p. 136.

<sup>8</sup> Clayton, *Hoyland Nether*, p. 52.

As I demonstrated above, the paternalist strategies in which industrialisation at Elsecar evolved had their origins in ideologically-sanctioned traditions of aristocratic authority and duty that pre-date paternalism as conceived by later industrialists such as Salt and Lever. There also appear to be no parallels between the early history of industrialisation at Elsecar and management regimes such as those employed by the Duke of Buccleuch and the Marquis of Lothian in the early stages of industrial development on their estates. The early implementation of paternalist policies at Elsecar, the apparent absence of any preceding, explicitly exploitative relationship between the Earls and their workforce (the 'dependent' phase as articulated by Jeremy<sup>9</sup>), the adherence to paternalist policies throughout the nineteenth century, and the continued direct involvement of the Earls in industrial enterprises, against the general nineteenth-century trend of the landed elite to retreat into a rentier role, all suggest the innovative and unique nature that the community at Elsecar had in the context of early industrialisation.

### **The Sources**

This chapter is based primarily upon a close textual analysis of the correspondence of the 2nd Marquis of Rockingham, the 4th and 5th Earls Fitzwilliam and the correspondence of their household stewards, which is preserved in the Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments collection at Sheffield City Archive. The Earls and stewards' correspondence covers all aspects of their professional, political and private affairs, but the most significant elements of this material in relation to the present research are those letters which refer to estate management issues. These fall into two broad

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<sup>9</sup> Jeremy, 'The Enlightened Paternalist in Action', p. 59.

groups; correspondence between the Earls and the stewards themselves, and letters addressed to, and received from, third parties.

Of these two broad groups, the correspondence between the Earls and their stewards represents a wider, on-going process of estate management which was largely conducted via regular meetings between the Earls and their stewards. However, the frequent absence of the Earls from the estate also necessitated considerable written communication regarding estate matters, and it is this material which is preserved in the archive. The correspondence is characterised by an easy familiarity on the part of the Earls and a more formal, deferential tone adopted by the stewards. Since the correspondence was intended to be private, it is relatively easy to interpret, in the sense that the views it contains can be taken as indicative of the preoccupations, motives and intents of the Earls and their estate managers.

The second group of documents is more diverse and contains letters from other estate officials, from petitioners of various kinds and letters from the stewards to estate tenants and workers. Of these, the letters from petitioners are particularly significant in highlighting the ways in which estate tenants, villagers and others sought to engage with the estate management. The language and intent of these documents is discussed in the section 'Negotiating Authority: Petitions for Help' (p. 84). The letters from other estate officials are again relatively unproblematic as they echo the concerns expressed in the correspondence between the Earls and the stewards. The letters of the stewards to tenants are also relatively straightforward, generally taking the form of instructions for action, or of censure for misdemeanours of various kinds. As I will show, they are notable in being written in a stern, authoritative tone which it is



interesting to contrast with the deferential tone employed by the same stewards when addressing the Earls. All of the documents discussed in this chapter were intended as private documents. Some are problematic in that they contain observations, opinions or allegations that cannot now be substantiated. However, this failing is less significant than the fact that the documents, in raising perceived grievances and issues, can be read as an expression of, and an attempt to negotiate, the structured power relationships between the Wentworth Estate on the one hand and the villagers on the other.

### **The Nature of the Earls' Authority**

If one accepts that the paternalist agenda followed on the Wentworth Estate was shaped and instigated by the 2nd Marquis of Rockingham and his successors, in line with their personal conceptions of their roles and duties as overlords, it follows that some understanding of their personal concerns are necessary in order to explain the particular character of their management strategy. In this section, I will show how the Earls micro-managed the estate, expected deference from their tenants and were concerned with hierarchy, authority and the preservation of their status.

In his characterisation of the 5th Earl Fitzwilliam, Graham Mee emphasises the Earl's religious outlook and sense of moral purpose, but also highlights the idiosyncrasies of a man who was judged by his contemporaries to be 'an excessively proud, conceited, eccentric man, conceiving himself to be of another order of men'.<sup>10</sup> For the 5th Earl, a sense of moral duty towards the poor was balanced by the conception of an unassailable personal social superiority. Similar tensions can be seen with regard to

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<sup>10</sup> Lord Lyttleton, quoted in Mee, *Aristocratic Enterprise*, p. 7.

the 4th Earl Fitzwilliam. In December 1799, for example, at a time of high wheat prices and considerable countrywide distress and shortages, he wrote to the steward Benjamin Hall to urge a 'diminution of consumption in the house'<sup>11</sup> in order to demonstrate a certain empathy for the plight of the poor. This is also seen in his instructions to Hall that 'it is not the proper season for lessening charity or for withholding the supply of occasional comforts which we have been in the habit of furnishing to the neighbourhood'.<sup>12</sup> This apparent concern for the poor contrasts with an earlier occasion of regional political unrest in which protesters were characterised by the Earl as 'idle foolish people [...] looking for a drink'.<sup>13</sup> The Earl's widely differing responses to broadly similar episodes of social hardship rests primarily upon the passivity of the sufferers in the first example, as opposed to the active and threatening behaviour of the 'mob'<sup>14</sup> in the second. As with the 5th Earl, the 4th Earl Fitzwilliam's sympathy for the poor was thus tempered by an absolute belief in the existing social hierarchy and his personal position within it. Challenges to this social status quo, from whatever origin, were not to be tolerated.

This concern with social status and hierarchy extended beyond the interaction of social groups and classes into the realm of personal interactions and individual conduct. In June 1773, for example, the 2nd Marquis of Rockingham wrote to Benjamin Hall regarding the proposed dismissal of the housekeeper, Elizabeth Townley, and her husband Edward, the estate land surveyor.<sup>15</sup> Whilst Elizabeth was

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<sup>11</sup> 4th Earl Fitzwilliam to Benjamin Hall, 19th December 1799, SA, WWM/Stw P/3/8-55.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> 4th Earl Fitzwilliam to Benjamin Hall, 1st January 1791, SA, WWM/Stw P/3/5-18.

<sup>14</sup> 4th Earl Fitzwilliam to Benjamin Hall, 1st January 1791, SA, WWM/Stw P/3/5-18

<sup>15</sup> For more background on events leading up to the dismissal of the Townleys, see Bloy, 'The Trouble With Servants', pp. 102-104.

thought to have been guilty of embezzlement, the grounds given for Edward's dismissal were that 'thinking so high of himself [...] may have occasioned many of the improper things which he may have said, and the improper suggestions which he may have tried to inculcate into others'.<sup>16</sup> Townley's crime was thus to have assumed a personal importance incompatible with his social position in the estate hierarchy, and to have encouraged others to also challenge the status quo. In 1836, Thomas Hoyland, a colliery banksman at Elsecar,<sup>17</sup> found himself out of favour for a similar reason, having become implicated in an altercation between the colliery underground steward (supervisor), Joseph Cooper, and an un-named clerk. Cooper had 'thought it proper to visit him [the clerk] in the counting house and to launch out with every sort of abuse against Mr. Hartop [the manager of the ironworks] and the whole concern'.<sup>18</sup> Hoyland's presence during the altercation, the Earl thought, meant that he was 'mixed up with it, and has made himself morally responsible for it'. As a result, the Earl desired that Hoyland 'must quit his present situation'.<sup>19</sup> Although Hoyland's role was acknowledged by the Earl to be secondary to that of Cooper, his involvement in a disturbance that ignored and usurped the correct operation of the estate hierarchy could not go unpunished.

Both the Townley and Hoyland cases indicate the perils of acting in an 'improper' fashion, that is, without due deference and respect to the Earls' authority. However, even when an issue or grievance was raised in a correct manner, the unassailable primacy of the Earls' position could lead to difficulties. In 1831, for example, a

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<sup>16</sup> 4th Earl Fitzwilliam to Benjamin Hall, 1st January 1791, SA, WWM/Stw P/3/5-18.

<sup>17</sup> Banksmen were above-ground supervisors, responsible for keeping accounts of coal output from their respective collieries. Source: Chas Bowns to 4th Earl Fitzwilliam, 10th December 1797, SA, WWM/F/70-93.

<sup>18</sup> 5th Earl Fitzwilliam to Benjamin Biram, 6th May 1836, SA, WWM/Stw P/14/2-99.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

dispute arose at Elsecar Colliery over the reluctance of the colliers to work with an underground steward named John Winter. The 5th Earl Fitzwilliam wrote to the steward Joshua Biram, directing him to remind the colliers that he had spent 'several hours at Elsecar'<sup>20</sup> listening to their grievances, but had found them groundless. Referring to an unnamed transgression by Winter, he went on to say 'they must also recollect that he was suspended for an offence against me [original emphasis], and that if I chuse [sic] to forgive him, it is no concern of theirs'.<sup>21</sup> The Earl's decision in the matter was thus final and non-negotiable; the colliers must return to work under Winter, and Biram was given orders about how to proceed if they did not, 'If they continue purtinacions after this representation, you must hold yourself high, for I am sure that the employment is so important to them, that they cannot long persist in their demand unless it is much better founded than I am satisfied it is'.<sup>22</sup> The case illustrates how, even when a grievance was presented in such a way as to gain the Earl's consideration, a failure to agree or comply with his decision was seen as a challenge to his personal authority, which would occasion some form of sanction, in this case, the threat of dismissal.

As these examples demonstrate, there was a remarkable continuity of purpose from Earl to Earl across the study period in terms of their conception of, and desire to preserve, their personal authority and status. The inflexibility of this approach, which precluded compromise and negotiation, is a recurring cause of tension in the relations between the Earls and the village that is particularly evident in the context of

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<sup>20</sup> 5th Earl Fitzwilliam to Joshua Biram, 1st March 1831, SA, WWM/Stw P/4/6-57.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> 5th Earl Fitzwilliam to Joshua Biram, 1st March 1831, SA, WWM/Stw P/4/6-57.

industrial negotiations at Elsecar where, for example, membership of miners' unions was banned until 1872.<sup>23</sup>

In the same way that the Earls were insistent upon hierarchy and the preservation of their own authority, they were also keen to demonstrate that authority in action. The desire to be seen to be in control, to be seen to be the decisive instigators of events, rather than simply reacting to them, can be seen in the Earl's response to a proposed festival in 1838:

Dear Ben, so far to having any objection to the holiday and the wages, I quite approve of it, but would it not be still better to follow the Sheffield example and give the workmen a dinner? [...] there would then be the appearance [original emphasis] of rejoicing that there ought to be, and they will be under guidance, which is desirable, whereas, if they receive their wages and club together to feast, there will be intemperance on the part of some while others perhaps will not join in it- and I shall be left out of the question which will not be or look proper.<sup>24</sup>

As this extract shows, the Earl regarded the proposed festival as an occasion that required guidance and control. Similarly, his desire to become involved in an event which he clearly did not instigate demonstrates the fact that he fully understood that public holidays and festivals were occasions through which he could demonstrate and publicise his lordship and authority. Alice Russell has identified a similar phenomenon in her study of the manufacturing towns of the north-west. In Warrington, for example, the welfare arrangements, outings and social gatherings that the Crosfield family provided for their employees were always reported in the local press, allowing the family to express their paternalist aims of moral improvement

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<sup>23</sup> Goodchild, 'The Earl Fitzwilliam's Elsecar Collieries', p. 9.

<sup>24</sup> 5th Earl Fitzwilliam to Benjamin Biram, 20th June 1838, SA, WWM/Stw P/14/3-59.

from an assumed position of social superiority.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, the public enactment of 'good works' at both Warrington and Elsecar can be viewed as an extension of the idea of conspicuous consumption (expressed by the Earls most fully in the construction of Wentworth Woodhouse, which has the longest entrance facade of any country house in Europe), in which lavish expenditure on benevolence of itself helped to convey cultural capital and status. At Elsecar, the Earls funded outings, tea parties, fireworks displays and other events which publicly expressed and reinforced their role as benefactors and overlords.<sup>26</sup> In this respect, the visible provision of 'good works' was essential; as Patrick Joyce argues, 'paternalism [...] was most effective on a face-to-face basis [...] [where] the ties of dependency and hierarchy were everywhere apparent'.<sup>27</sup>

### **The Paternal Gaze**

The Earls Fitzwilliam have been described as the apex of the 'decision-making pyramid'<sup>28</sup> on the Wentworth Estate. In keeping with the conceptions of authority and hierarchy discussed above, the Earls reserved the vast majority of decisions regarding the estate to themselves, relying on an administrative structure of stewards, agents, overseers and other officials to implement those decisions by informing and directing the Earls' workers and tenants. In order to facilitate this decision-making process, news of important events and situations relating to the estate was gathered by the various estate officials and conveyed to the Earls for their attention.

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<sup>25</sup> Russell, 'Local Elites', p. 157.

<sup>26</sup> For newspaper accounts of such events see, for example, *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 6th June 1857, p. 8; *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 11th July 1847, p. 6; *Leeds Mercury*, 6th June 1857.

<sup>27</sup> Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics*, p. 94.

<sup>28</sup> Goodchild, 'The Earl Fitzwilliam's Elsecar Collieries', p. 6.

The close personal involvement of the Earls has been recognised as characteristic of the process of industrial development at Elsecar.<sup>29</sup> However, the stewards' letters demonstrate clearly that the process of information-gathering and decision-making was not confined merely to industrial matters, but extended into all areas of life. A typical letter from the steward Joshua Biram to the 4th Earl Fitzwilliam, for example, might contain news of the receipt of a character reference for a prospective mine employee and news of the death of a buffalo in the Wentworth estate menagerie,<sup>30</sup> or news of the housekeeper's illness, the bad weather, and a serious accident at Elsecar New Colliery.<sup>31</sup> The diversity of the information contained in letters such as these emphasise the fact that the industries at Elsecar, like the village itself, were considered to be part of the household estate and were run as such. Because of this, the Earls' administrative apparatus pervaded many aspects of village life, particularly since the Earls concerned themselves to a quite astonishing degree with even trifling estate matters.

This process is seen quite clearly, for example, in a series of letters relating to a single estate labourer, John Robinson. On the 26th December 1832, Robinson wrote to the 5th Earl Fitzwilliam to complain of unfair dismissal by his overseer, John Firth.<sup>32</sup> This prompted a letter from the Earl to Benjamin Biram, asking him to look into the details of the case.<sup>33</sup> After concluding his investigation, Biram wrote back to the Earl on the 30th January 1833, detailing Firth's 'ample proof of his [Robinson's]

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<sup>29</sup> Medlicott, 'The Development of Coal Mining', p. 116; for an account of the 5th Earl's growing interest and competence in mine management and technology, see Mee, *Aristocratic Enterprise*, Chapter Three.

<sup>30</sup> Joshua Biram to 4th Earl Fitzwilliam, 22nd January 1807, SA, WWM/Stw P/5/1-155.

<sup>31</sup> Joshua Biram to 4th Earl Fitzwilliam, 19th July 1809, SA, WWM/Stw P/5/2-96.

<sup>32</sup> John Robinson to 5th Earl Fitzwilliam, 26th December 1832, SA, WWM/Stw P/14/1-33.

<sup>33</sup> 5th Earl Fitzwilliam to Benjamin Biram, 26th January 1833, SA, WWM/Stw P/14/1-37.

misconduct generally', including an allegation of him 'being beastly drunk' whilst at work.<sup>34</sup> Earl Fitzwilliam then wrote back to Biram, giving his judgement of the case: 'I think John Firth has done perfectly right in dismissing Robinson, and if he is employed at all (which I by no means care about after hearing Firth's statement) it must be in a very humble situation'.<sup>35</sup> The manner in which the 5th Earl Fitzwilliam was prepared to involve himself in the fate of a single labourer on one of his many extensive estates demonstrates the way in which decision-making was micromanaged.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, issues such as pensions,<sup>37</sup> wages,<sup>38</sup> the development of the industrial infrastructure,<sup>39</sup> appointments and the allocation of housing,<sup>40</sup> were also all decided by the Earls, acting upon advice supplied by the stewards and other household agents. This apparent inability to devolve responsibility meant that, in practical terms, the access to employment, housing and other benefits of paternalistic management inevitably involved engaging with the Earls' administrative structure, with the strong likelihood that one's case would pass under the personal scrutiny of the Earl at some point.

The Robinson case, in which the probity and character of Robinson (he had emphasised both in his letter to the Earl) were judged and found wanting, emphasises the fact that this process was coloured by the importance of presenting moral and

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<sup>34</sup> Benjamin Biram to 5th Earl Fitzwilliam, 30th January 1833, SA, WWM/Stw P/14/1-38.

<sup>35</sup> 5th Earl Fitzwilliam to Benjamin Biram, 2nd February 1833, SA, WWM/Stw P/14/1-39.

<sup>36</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 20th December 1854, p. 6; this newspaper article gives the number of employees on the Wentworth Estate as 1617, of which the non-industrial complement of 298 is unlikely to have risen much from 1832. The Earls also owned extensive estates in Malton, North Yorkshire, Milton, Northamptonshire and Tinnaholey, Ireland, each with their own staff.

<sup>37</sup> 5th Earl Fitzwilliam to Joshua Biram, 18th April 1832, SA, WWM/Stw P/4/6-89.

<sup>38</sup> 5th Earl Fitzwilliam to Benjamin Biram, 13th March 1836, SA, WWM/Stw P/14/2-94.

<sup>39</sup> 5th Earl Fitzwilliam to Benjamin Biram, 8th January 1838, SA, WWM/Stw P/14/3-40.

<sup>40</sup> 5th Earl Fitzwilliam to Benjamin Biram, 3rd May 1837, SA, WWM/Stw P/14/3-20.



correct behaviour to the Earls. This concern with moral behaviour is also evident in the correspondence between estate officials, such as that between Chas Bowns, the land agent intimately concerned with the mines at Elsecar in this period, and the household steward Benjamin Hall:

If you and Jo[seph] Hague [mines overseer] think William Bailey's brother a proper person [to be employed] at Elsecar Old Colliery I can have no objection, and William may have any one of the dwellings at Skiers Hall [...] upon the conditions mentioned.<sup>41</sup>

The case of William Bailey's brother contrasts with that of John Berry:

Mr. Bowns with compliments to Mr. Hall informs him that he has heard such a character of John Berry that he could not wish him to have any of the houses at Elsecar at any future time, [original emphasis] therefore begs Mr. Hall, if any application is made, that he will only inform J. Berry that he cannot be accommodated with a house. Mr. B[owns] has heard that J. Berry has procured a recommendation [...] which in this case must not be regarded as his character is not in general good.<sup>42</sup>

The emphasis on morality and character extended beyond the workplace into family life and sexual relationships. In 1857, for example, Margaret Evans complained that her daughter Mary Waller, the widow of a miner, had had her two shillings a week pension from Earl Fitzwilliam stopped due to her 'misconduct' in having a child by an unnamed man after the death of her husband.<sup>43</sup> Even minor misdemeanours were also subject to scrutiny and censure. In 1845, for example, Joseph West, summonsed for breaking down an estate wall, vehemently protested his innocence: 'He said it would

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<sup>41</sup> Chas Bowns to Benjamin Hall, 17th March 1798, SA, WWM/Stw P/6/6-5.

<sup>42</sup> Chas Bowns to Benjamin Hall, 9th April 1800, SA, WWM/Stw P/6/6-87.

<sup>43</sup> Rev. George Scaife to Benjamin Biram, 1st January 1857, SA, WWM/Stw P/15/26/s-118; in this letter, Scaife presents a petition from Margaret Evans on behalf of her daughter, Mary Waller. Evans was herself a widow, having been left with 13 children after the death of her husband in a colliery accident in August 1855; Source: *Leeds Mercury*, 30th August 1855.

have been the height of madness in him, as he was in Earl Fitzwilliam's employ, to have thrown the wall down, or done anything to endanger his situation'.<sup>44</sup>

John Robinson's alleged drunkenness, John Berry's alleged bad character, Mary Waller's alleged sexual misconduct and Joseph West's fear of censure all illustrate the tensions that existed between the ideals of moral guidance and correct behaviour that were the sub-text of the Earls' paternalist agenda at Elsecar, and the actual realities of everyday life in the village, in which personal choices and personal conduct might well, for whatever reason, fall short of the ideal. They demonstrate clearly that the paternalistic benevolence of myth and nostalgic memory was in fact tempered by a system of social policing, in which those deemed morally unworthy might find themselves excluded from help. When allied to the Earls' desire to preserve the existing social hierarchy and their own position and authority within it, it becomes possible to conceive of Elsecar as a place strongly characterised by an imposed ideal of hierarchy, order, deference to authority and correct behaviour, in which access to the benefits of paternalistic lordship might be gained only by submission to scrutiny and the outward acceptance of the Earls' dominant public transcript of power.

### **The Role of the Stewards**

One of the most interesting aspects of the Earls' industrial enterprises is the way in which they were considered to be just one of a number of elements that made up the private and personal estate of the Earls, rather than as a separate commercial entity in their own right. This is seen, for example, in the fact that lists of Elsecar miners appear in the lists of household servants, along with grooms, butlers, and

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<sup>44</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 21st July 1845, p. 2.

chambermaids.<sup>45</sup> Because the Earls considered their industrial enterprises to be part of the estate, the responsibility for their administration fell to the Earls' estate officials, and in particular to the Wentworth Woodhouse household stewards. The aim of this section is thus to explore the ways in which the Earls' personal conceptions of their authority, and their concerns for order and morality, were translated into action by these key household officers. I will argue that the stewards exhibited a commonality of purpose with the Earls, using their authority in their dealings with tenants and estate workers in a way which reinforced the estate hierarchy.

In the period circa 1771 to 1857, the stewards consisted of Benjamin Hall (1771-1805), his nephew Joshua Biram (1805-1836) and Joshua's son Benjamin Biram (1836-1857). The stewards played a pivotal role in the hierarchy of power, being the points of contact between the Earls and the rest of their employees. They were responsible for implementing the Earls' orders and for protecting their interests, and were responsible for informing them of developments and the progress of projects relating to the management of the estate. In the estate hierarchy, the stewards were second in authority to the Earls, and senior to the other estate officials. During Benjamin Hall's tenure, management of the collieries and related infrastructure at Elsecar seems to have devolved in part to the land agent Charles Bowns,<sup>46</sup> whose letters to Hall and the 4th Earl Fitzwilliam regarding the collieries are an important early source of information regarding the village. Joshua Biram began working for the 4th Earl in circa 1795, assisting his uncle as a clerk.<sup>47</sup> He succeeded him as

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<sup>45</sup> List of household employees, August 1794, SA, WWM-a-1534.

<sup>46</sup> Mee, *Aristocratic Enterprise*, p. 95.

<sup>47</sup> Joshua Biram to Benjamin Hall, 1st December 1796, SA, WWM/Stw P/6/5-87; in this letter Biram, acting in an early official capacity, recounts the death of two miners named Muscroft and Ashforth at Lawwood Colliery.

household steward in 1805 and assumed responsibility for the management of the mines, for which he had a particular aptitude, becoming a skilled mining surveyor and engineer. He combined these skills with more traditional duties, so that at any given time he might have been expected to organise the hay-cutting on the estate,<sup>48</sup> to arbitrate in a dispute between the Wentworth housemaids and the housekeeper,<sup>49</sup> to survey a colliery,<sup>50</sup> to advise on technical issues relating to the Elsecar coal tar distillery,<sup>51</sup> or to organise the transport of pineapples from the hothouse at Wentworth to the Earls' house in Nottinghamshire.<sup>52</sup>

As the industrial concerns developed, so the amount of time that Joshua Biram spent on industrial and estate management increased to the point where his title as household steward was inadequate to describe the range and extent of his duties, a fact that was formally recognised in 1831 when he was given the title of Superintendent.<sup>53</sup> When his son Benjamin succeeded him as Superintendent it was intended that the responsibility for household matters should be devolved to a new, subordinate house steward.<sup>54</sup> However, since Benjamin Biram's correspondence includes references to replenishing wine stocks at Wentworth Woodhouse and to servants' dining arrangements as late as 1847, it seems that this separation of duties was never fully accomplished during his lifetime.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Joshua Biram to 4th Earl Fitzwilliam, 4th August 1806, SA, WWM/Stw P/5/1-120.

<sup>49</sup> Joshua Biram to 4th Lady Fitzwilliam, 23rd March 1811, SA, WWM/Stw P/5/2-308.

<sup>50</sup> Joshua Biram to 4th Earl Fitzwilliam, 8th July 1813, SA, WWM/Stw P/5/3-246.

<sup>51</sup> Joshua Biram to 4th Earl Fitzwilliam, 17th December 1813, SA, WWM/Stw P/5/3-267.

<sup>52</sup> Joshua Biram to 4th Earl Fitzwilliam, June 1813 (Exact date not given), SA, WWM/Stw P/5/3-183.

<sup>53</sup> Mee, *Aristocratic Enterprise*, p. 97.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Benjamin Biram to 5th Earl Fitzwilliam, 18th March 1847, SA, WWM/G/158-A.

As superintendants, the Birams were charged, 'To act in the absence of Earl Fitzwilliam in the prudent Management of the Affairs of the entire Establishment as his Lordship would himself do'.<sup>56</sup> The range of duties and responsibilities of both Joshua and Benjamin Biram in particular have led to the assessment that 'Under the Earls Fitzwilliam, they [the Birams] practically ruled the Wentworth Estate'.<sup>57</sup> Whilst their roles as mining engineers in the industrial development of the estate has been examined by a number of other authors,<sup>58</sup> it is perhaps fair to say that it is other aspects of their administrative roles that had a more far-reaching influence upon the wider community at Elsecar. In the first instance, the stewards were responsible for matters relating to employment, so that, whilst the final decision regarding an appointment might be taken by the Earls, the stewards would be responsible for identifying applicants, for assessing the most suitable candidate and for providing character references.<sup>59</sup> They also notified the Earls about deaths and illnesses, interceded on behalf of workers for pay rises and provided information to the Earls regarding the recipients of benefits and pensions.<sup>60</sup>

As well as these duties, the stewards took an active interest in the behaviour of the tenants. This might involve reporting to the Earls those tenants involved in criminal

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<sup>56</sup> Mee, *Aristocratic Enterprise*, p. 93.

<sup>57</sup> Clayton, *The Elsecar Collieries under Joshua and Ben Biram*, p. 1.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> Joshua Biram to 4th Earl Fitzwilliam, 25th December 1810, SA, WWM/Stw P/5/2-273; in this letter, Biram discusses the backgrounds and merits of three applicants for the post of cow-keeper.

<sup>60</sup> Joshua Biram to 4th Earl Fitzwilliam, 20th June 1810, SA, WWM/Stw P/5/2-237; in this letter, Biram conveys the estate carpenters' and masons' request for a pay rise, he also remarks on the difficulty of recruiting 'women haymakers' at 8d per day and suggests a rise for them; Benjamin Biram to 5th Earl Fitzwilliam 21st June 1833 SA, WWM/Stw P/14/1-75; in this letter, Biram provides notes on the payments and circumstances of those currently in receipt of a Wentworth pension. The document is an addendum to a list of Wentworth pensioners, 21st June 1833, SA, WWM/Stw P/14/1-76.

activity,<sup>61</sup> but perhaps more often would consist of censuring those guilty of minor infringements of the estate rules as seen for example, in Joshua Biram's letter to a tenant named William Beardshall: 'I am aware that you must know that the fruit growing upon Lord Fitzwilliam's trees at Skyer's Hall does not belong to you, this is to give you a caution to prevent you or your family from getting them without any further caution'.<sup>62</sup> This interest could also extend to behaviour which, whilst neither criminal nor an estate misdemeanour, was nevertheless deemed to be suspicious, as seen in this letter of Joshua Biram: 'William Chapman, hearing that you and two others were upon the wall between the Windmill Field Paddock and the Menagerie on Sunday evening, this is to request that you will acquaint me with your business there without fail'.<sup>63</sup> Both these examples show Joshua Biram intervening in the minutiae of everyday life, utilising the language of authority in the full expectation that his directives would be obeyed. The latter case is also interesting in that it implies that Chapman and his colleagues had been reported to Biram by a third party. This incident thus reminds us that the exercise of authority relies on deference and complicity.

As these examples demonstrate, the stewards had an exceedingly wide-ranging remit in their interactions with the village, becoming effectively the Earls' eyes and ears, and undertaking roles which in effect amounted to the social policing of the village. They were careful to remain informed about the tenants' activities, and to ensure that these activities complied to the estate standards and rules of correct behaviour

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<sup>61</sup> Joshua Biram to 4th Earl Fitzwilliam, 13th January 1812. SA, WWM/Stw P/5/3-8.

<sup>62</sup> Joshua Biram to William Beardshall, 15th September 1827, SA, WWM/Stw P/7/6-235. Skyer's Hall was a small hamlet on the outskirts of Elsecar.

<sup>63</sup> Joshua Biram to William Chapman Jnr, 26th March 1827, SA, WWM/Stw P/7/6-96.

through the threat of sanctions. Indeed, this function was actually formalised when the stewards' role was conflated to that of superintendant. In the list of his duties, the superintendant was charged 'by every possible means to prevent Idleness, Extravagance, Waste and Immorality'.<sup>64</sup> As this directive makes clear, the Earls' conception of the role of the superintendant/steward was expressly one in which industrial and social roles were combined.

As well as their formal roles in the administrative machinery of the estate, the stewards also occupied an informal, but critical, role as the point of contact between tenants, workmen, employees, outsiders and the Earls. The way that these roles worked and to some extent overlapped can be seen in a typical letter from Joshua Biram to the 4th Earl Fitzwilliam. In the first part of the letter, Biram acts in a formal, managerial manner, announcing the death of the miner John Bennett and passing on a (presumably verbal) job application from Thomas Cooper, together with an assessment of Cooper's suitability for the post:

I am sorry to acquaint your Lordship with the death of John Bennett, which happened at about 10 o'clock this morning, he is 51 years of age, he lodged at William Bailey's at Elsecar [...] In consequence of which, Thomas Cooper (who has had the management of the two Elsecar Collieries' underground work for several years and seems a sober steady man) is desirous (should it meet your Lordship's approbation) of succeeding John Bennett.<sup>65</sup>

In the second paragraph, Biram forwards a verbal petition from Elizabeth Bailey, who has apparently approached him at Elsecar:

I also most dutifully beg leave to acquaint your Lordship that William Bailey (who was formerly banksman at Elsecar Old Colliery) is now so much deranged and disorderly that his poor wife seems greatly distressed in being with him, and thinks it necessary that he should be confined, but is not able to bear the expense

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<sup>64</sup> Instructions for household, estate and colliery staff, circa 1827, SA, WWM/A/1389, p. 41.

<sup>65</sup> Joshua Biram to 4th Earl Fitzwilliam, 1st January 1807, SA, WWM/Stw P/5/1-145.

of procuring him a place in the Lunatic Asylum at York. If your Lordship has a recommendation [for admittance] and will be pleased to give it for his assistance it will be a great relief to his poor wife. I beg pardon for mentioning this to your Lordship, but while John Bennett was tolerable well, he had him [Bailey] in some awe and subjection.<sup>66</sup>

Biram's framing of the issue is clearly designed so as to elicit a favourable response from the Earl, whilst his assessment of the relationship between Bailey and Bennett suggests some prior knowledge of the individuals involved. Similarly, in order to have approached Biram about a personal matter in this way, Elizabeth Bailey must have made two very important assumptions. Firstly, that Biram would listen to her problem sympathetically, and could be trusted to pass it on to the Earl, and secondly that the Earl, if he were only appraised of her situation, would be moved to act in her favour. Her actions thus evince an understanding of the process, mechanisms and likely outcome of an appeal to the Earl. In these understandings she was proved correct: a second letter from Biram to the Earl records York Lunatic Asylum's acceptance of William Bailey as an in-patient, and the cost of his care.<sup>67</sup>

The idea that the stewards could intercede with the Earls on one's behalf is also demonstrated by the earlier case of Hannah Burgon. Hannah, a widow, wrote to Benjamin Hall in October 1783 with a succinct request: 'I want me Lord charrrity sir if I cold but get it [spelling as given]'.<sup>68</sup> She went on to describe how, following the example of another woman, which 'inBolding me to ask', she approached the 4th Earl Fitzwilliam whilst he was walking in Wentworth Park. The Earl, she related, exchanged pleasantries but 'he gave me nothing'. The failure of Hannah's direct

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<sup>66</sup> Joshua Biram to 4th Earl Fitzwilliam, 1st January 1807, SA, WWM/Stw P/5/1-145.

<sup>67</sup> Joshua Biram to 4th Earl Fitzwilliam, 10th January 1807, SA, WWM/Stw P/5/1-149.

<sup>68</sup> Hannah Burgon to Benjamin Hall, 29th October 1783, SA, WWM/Stw P/6/3-41.



approach, which surely took some personal courage to undertake, resulted in her plea to Hall to intercede on her behalf: 'I now a deale of want [...] I am a very poore beger I cannot a Bide to ask me self agane'.<sup>69</sup>

Elizabeth Bailey and Hannah Burgon's appeals for help to the stewards illustrate the fact that the stewards' pivotal role in the running of the estate gave them a frequency and ease of access to the Earls that could be exploited by tenants and estate workers. Burgon's case also indicates that, even when the Earls were available, a direct personal approach was not without peril. Enlisting the help of the stewards in petitioning the Earls thus brought two important benefits. Firstly, it raised the profile of the petition and increased the probability of it being brought to the Earls' attention. Secondly, the stewards could be relied upon to present the petition in a manner most likely to engage the Earls' interest. This latter point is especially significant for those petitioners whose literacy or verbal skills might not have been adequate for the task.

In both their formal roles as administrators and their informal roles, the stewards thus acted as intermediaries between the Earls and their tenants: by enlisting their help and support, tenants could more effectively negotiate the administrative structure, gaining access to jobs, housing, and when necessary, aid and help. Recent scholarship has begun to explore this wider social role of stewards in the context of other landed estates. Carol Beardmore, for example, has noted how the steward on the Marquis of

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<sup>69</sup> Hannah Burgon to Benjamin Hall, 29th October 1783, SA, WWM/Stw P/6/3-41.

Anglesey's estates, 'often found himself in the unenviable position of having to balance the relationships between landowner and tenants'.<sup>70</sup>

In the context of Elsecar, it can be readily appreciated how this role can only have enhanced the stewards' personal authority, for whilst the stewards could more readily be approached than the Earls, the process of eliciting their sympathy and support rested upon the maintenance of good relations with them. Similarly, since the stewards acted in accordance with the Earls' aims and objectives, their correspondence evinces the same concern for moral behaviour, deference, governance and hierarchy as the Earls. This commonality of purpose between the Earls and the stewards reinforced the estate hierarchy and made it difficult for those who had acted against the Earls' interest, for whatever reason, to gain support or sympathy. This is demonstrated by the case of John Gibson of Elsecar. In 1835 Gibson, who described himself as a 'humble servant and workman', was apparently given control of some petty cash associated with a miners' welfare fund.<sup>71</sup> In financial difficulties due to having seven children, a sick wife and low wages, Gibson was tempted and 'maid [sic] use of the money in hand hoping [sic] to make it good in due time'. On being unable to pay back the money, Gibson confessed to Benjamin Biram, hoping that he would intercede on his behalf with the Earl. He appears to have received little sympathy: 'I have laid down my case to Mr. Biram and I have desired him to represent my [case] to you and he tould [sic] me I had better do it myself'.<sup>72</sup> Biram's disinclination to help Gibson may have arisen from his personal revulsion at Gibson's

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<sup>70</sup> Carol Beardmore, 'Landowner, Tenant and Agent on the Marquis of Anglesey's Dorset and Somerset Estate, 1814-44', *Rural History* 26.2 (2015), p. 188.

<sup>71</sup> John Gibson to 5th Earl Fitzwilliam, 14th December 1835, SA, WWM/Stw P/14/2-81.

<sup>72</sup> John Gibson to 5th Earl Fitzwilliam, 14th December 1835, SA, WWM/Stw P/14/2-81.

'crime', or perhaps from his desire to distance himself from such an obvious lapse in the standard of moral behaviour expected by the estate. In either case, the message to Gibson was clear; his behaviour was such that all he could do was throw himself at the mercy of the Earl.

As I demonstrated above, the stewards occupied a key position within the estate management, acting as the mediators between the village community on the one hand and the Earls on the other. As R. A. Houston explores in his 2014 volume *Peasant Petitions*, the role that stewards played in estate business was crucial: 'a steward's knowledge, personality and influence could bear lightly or heavily'.<sup>73</sup> On the Wentworth Estate, the roles performed by the stewards were indeed extensive, but these practical roles were inseparable from a wider social remit to promote morality and order amongst the estate tenants in accordance with the Earls' wishes. At Elsecar, this social remit was made explicit in the Earls' instructions to the stewards, as opposed, for example, to Baron Suffield's estates in Norfolk, where the exact degree of 'moral improvement' that his stewards engaged in during the course of their duties was largely left up to the individual steward.<sup>74</sup> In contrast, the Fitzwilliam stewards were as much social engineers as they were mining engineers, reminding us that at Elsecar, the ordering and structuring of industry was inextricably linked with the ordering and structuring of the village community.

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<sup>73</sup> R. A. Houston, *Peasant Petitions: Social Relations and Economic Life on Landed Estates, 1600-1850* (Basingstoke, 2014), p. 45.

<sup>74</sup> Peter Monteith, 'The Management of the Harbord Family's Estate at Gunton in Norfolk', *The Local Historian* 42.4 (2012), p. 299.

### **Negotiating Authority: Petitions for Help**

As discussed above, the paternalistic project at Elsecar functioned via a clearly defined hierarchy of authority, in which even relatively minor decisions were referred by the stewards to the Earls themselves. This referral of strategy and decision-making to higher authority acted to reinforce the ideals of social order, deference and lordship that the Earls sought to promote.<sup>75</sup> In his work on paternalism and deference in an early modern context, Andy Wood has characterised 'the everyday nature of deference and paternalism: these were forces that defined age, gender, class and household relations, and which were lodged in everyday exchanges, unspoken rules, body language and etiquette'.<sup>76</sup> Wood's work, with its emphasis upon performance and negotiation, is a useful starting-point from which to consider the way in which the villagers engaged with the authority of the estate and Earls, not least because, as I have shown, the paternalist management of the Earls at Elsecar clearly represents a continuation of these earlier traditions and structures of elite governance.

Whilst the Earls demanded respect and deference from their tenants, it is also clear that their tenants in return expected, or at least hoped for, fair and impartial treatment and assistance in times of hardship.<sup>77</sup> A good example of this is a letter from the gamekeeper Jonathan Depledy to the 5th Earl Fitzwilliam, in which he drew the Earl's attention to the disparity between his wages and those of a higher-paid, but younger

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<sup>75</sup> For a discussion of the dynamics of hierarchical social relationships, see Braddick & Walter, *Negotiating Power in Early Modern Society*. Braddick and Walter draw attention to the difference between the dominant mode of hierarchical interaction, characterised by deference (the public transcript) and an underlying mode of tension or resistance (the private transcript). These concepts are of particular relevance in regard to the relationship between the Earls and their tenants.

<sup>76</sup> Andy Wood, 'Deference, Paternalism and Popular Memory in Early Modern England', in Steve Hindle, Alexandra Shepard & John Walter (eds), *Remaking English Society: Social Relations and Social Change in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge, 2013), p. 239.

<sup>77</sup> Douglas Hay has examined this idea of reciprocity in relation to the paternalistic management of Lord Dudley's estates; he demonstrates the way in which the tenants' loyalty to the Earl was conditional and dependent upon the fulfilment of his benevolent obligations. See Hay, 'Patronage, Paternalism, and Welfare'.

and less experienced gamekeeper, Joshua Crawshaw.<sup>78</sup> Similarly John Gascoigne, a miner at the Earls' Park Gate colliery, wrote to the Earl regarding stoppages of his wages: 'I think it is not your Lordship's wish for me to have five or six shillings per week took of [sic] my wages and others to remain as they was'.<sup>79</sup> Both cases demonstrate the widespread belief in the intrinsic fairness of 'the Earl', or in an ideal of fairness the Earls should enact, which appears to have persisted regardless of the actual incumbent of the post.

As the Depledge and Gascoigne letters demonstrate, the main way in which the estate administration was approached appears to have been by a process of personal petition. It is important to note that this process of petition was informal, in the sense that it was not undertaken as part of a legal or judicial process, nor was there any established or formalised administrative channel through which to present a petition. Rather, the process involved the individual approaching either the Earls or their agents directly, either in person or by letter. This process of petitioning reflects the lack of demarcation between the industrial and the household that was manifested in the administrative hierarchy of the estate, in that applying for a vacancy or pay rise, for example, might involve approaching the same official in the same way as asking for a hardship payment or for arbitration in a neighbourhood dispute. Evidence of this process can be discerned in letters preserved as part of the Earls' private correspondence or (more commonly) within the stewards' papers collections of the Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments. When the Earls were not in residence at Wentworth Woodhouse, the stewards, particularly Joshua Biram, wrote to them

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<sup>78</sup> Jonathan Depledge to 5th Earl Fitzwilliam, undated circa 1837, SA, WWM/G/83-261.

<sup>79</sup> John Gascoigne to 5th Earl Fitzwilliam, 7th July 1829, SA, WWM/G/48-1.

regularly regarding estate matters, and this material is significant in preserving verbal approaches for help that were made to the stewards. In this section, I examine these petitions and the process of presenting them more fully. In so doing, I will explore the content of the petitions, the authors, the language of petitioning and the evidence regarding the changing nature of petitioning over time. I show that the majority of Elsecar petitioners were plebian and argue that they employed tropes of loyalty, deference and morality within their petitions in order to elicit the Earls' support. Whilst this process of petitioning appears to have worked well in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, when the number of villagers was relatively low and individual petitioners could be exposed to the scrutiny of the estate with relative ease, I argue that, by the mid-nineteenth century, the increasing numbers of villagers requiring support meant that the process became increasingly inefficient.

As R. A. Houston notes, the process of petitioning was widespread upon landed estates and can be read as 'an expression of an established or desired relationship', which sheds light upon the dynamic relationship between the estate management and its inhabitants.<sup>80</sup> It is also possible to view the process of petitioning as an aspect of lordship and authority that is also expressed in the process of ecclesiastical and political patronage, there being a fundamental similarity in intent and approach between, for example, a collier applying for a promotion in the Earls' mines and a curate applying for one of the vacant livings under the Earls' control.<sup>81</sup> However, whilst patronage is intimately connected with middle-class aspirations, the petitions that originated in Elsecar and the Wentworth estate can be characterised as

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<sup>80</sup> Houston, *Peasant Petitions*, p. 24.

<sup>81</sup> For a discussion of ecclesiastical and educational patronage, see Gratton, 'The Fifth Earl Fitzwilliam's Patronage'.

predominantly working-class in origin. Those that were received from further afield appear to have a more mixed social origin, containing middle-class and gentlemanly requests for assistance, in addition to working-class appeals for help. Because of this, the surviving petitions are significant in exploring the ways in which the village community negotiated and interacted with the Earls and their administrative machinery. Although there has been few detailed studies of the wider social role played by estate agents and stewards of landed estates, recent work by Carol Beardmore is interesting in that it suggests that, on the Marquis of Anglesey's estates at least, direct petitions for help to the stewards tended to come from trades people and yeoman farmers, rather than from the working-class estate tenants. In contrast, payments to the poor were generally made by the estate through the Parish Overseers, rather than in response to individual requests.<sup>82</sup>

At Elsecar, significant number of petitions, such as that of Elizabeth Bailey,<sup>83</sup> appear to have been made verbally to the stewards to be conveyed to the Earls. As might be expected, these verbal petitions tended to be made by estate tenants of generally lower social status who had opportunities to meet with the stewards and who probably had neither the time or literary skills necessary to frame a written petition. It is also likely that enlisting the stewards' help sanctioned and strengthened the petitioner's request. In passing on the petitions, the stewards appear to have framed them in such a way as to elicit a favourable response from the Earls, often presenting additional information that they felt was relevant to the case. In August 1806, for example, Joshua Biram wrote to the 4th Earl Fitzwilliam regarding the case of a

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<sup>82</sup> Beardmore, 'The Rural Estate', p. 29.

<sup>83</sup> This case is discussed above on page 79.

mason named Samuel Sykes, whose son had suffered an injury at work. Biram revealed that Sykes' other son was also ill, and that the expense of looking after both 'is thought to distress him, though he is not a man who complains but on the contrary is very shy and afraid of giving trouble'.<sup>84</sup> He was correct in his assumption that his characterisation of Sykes as both stoical and deferential would elicit the Earl's sympathy: in a subsequent letter, he records Sykes' thanks, 'with a heart overflowing with gratitude', for a gift of five guineas from the Earl.<sup>85</sup> Similarly, Biram wrote to the 4th Earl in November 1808 regarding the death of the Elsecar collier Richard Jessop. In his letter, he pointed out that Jessop's widow, Elizabeth, had six children, stressing that her eldest daughter had recently been given a job as scullery maid at Wentworth House.<sup>86</sup> This depiction of family relationships, and the emphasis placed upon the links between Elizabeth and the extended family of the Earl's household again elicited a financial response, together with an apparent inquiry by the Earl for more information about the case. This can be deduced from a letter of December 1808, in which Biram noted the Earl's orders that a pension of half a crown a week should be awarded to Elizabeth, and provided additional information regarding the ages, occupations and health of Elizabeth's other children.<sup>87</sup>

The cases of Samuel Sykes and Elizabeth Jessop demonstrate the way in which the stewards stressed the worthiness of the petitioners and, in so doing, focussed upon issues of personal character, family, occupation and the position of the petitioner within the wider community of the estate and village. Whilst it is clear that the 4th

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<sup>84</sup> Joshua Biram to 4th Earl Fitzwilliam, 4th August 1806, SA, WWM/Stw P/5/1-120.

<sup>85</sup> Joshua Biram to 4th Earl Fitzwilliam, 8th August 1806, SA, WWM/Stw P/5/1-121.

<sup>86</sup> Joshua Biram to 4th Earl Fitzwilliam, 29th November 1808, SA, WWM/Stw P/5/2-73.

<sup>87</sup> Joshua Biram to 4th Earl Fitzwilliam, 3rd December 1808, SA, WWM/Stw P/5/1-66.



Earl was unacquainted with either Sykes or Jessop, his desire to learn of their predicaments, to understand their roles and affiliations within the context of the estate, and his desire to help them, all attest to the fundamental importance of such issues to the Earls.

In contrast to the verbal petitions, the written petitions vary considerably in terms of content, the social status of the author, geographical origin and the standard of literacy. At one end of the scale, for example, Isaac Phillips, a distressed 'chemical light and fancy box manufacturer' from London, wrote in a quasi-legal style: 'Your Petitioner therefore under the severe passion of his misfortunes humbly begs to submit his case to the notice of the benevolent', going so far as to subjoin a witness statement from a neighbour who could 'speak to the truth of the above'.<sup>88</sup> In contrast, the petition of a group of 'humble servants [sic] and workmen' from Elsecar used simpler, but nevertheless still respectful and deferential, language:

Most noble Earl, We the inhabitants of Elsecar in connection with the Weslean Society have requested a school and preching room and our faith hath not failed us in your promises and we shall be glad of any portion of time witch you pleas to let out for us [spelling as given].<sup>89</sup>

As with verbal petitions, written petitions could be sent directly to the Earls, or could be addressed to the stewards. The choice of who to petition appears to have been a personal one, there being no clear correlation between the substance of the petition and the recipient. The subject of the petitions ranges from those that might be characterised as 'polite' in origin, for example gentlemanly requests for permission to

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<sup>88</sup> Isaac Phillips to 5th Earl Fitzwilliam, 20th September 1849, SA, WWM/G/83-611-C.

<sup>89</sup> J. John Gibson, Joseph Uttley and Thomas Kay to 5th Earl Fitzwilliam, 9th June 1835, SA, WWM/G/83-262. I have not been able to trace a reply to this petition. However, it appears to have been successful because the 1855 First Edition Ordnance Survey map shows a Methodist Chapel situated immediately to the west of Meadow Row.

fish in the estate ponds,<sup>90</sup> for help with securing a government appointment,<sup>91</sup> or advice as to the correct care of emus,<sup>92</sup> to estate matters, disputes and petitions for help with financial hardship of various types.

Since the specific intent of each petition is to elicit a particular favour from the Earls, the manner in which the authors seek to engage the Earls' interest and the language which they employ in their attempts reveals much about the authors' understanding of their relationship to the Earls and their preoccupations. These issues have been explored by R. A. Houston, who notes that written petitions are characterised by common supplicatory forms, which he sees as developing in the eighteenth century through greater literacy and the publication of letter-writing manuals.<sup>93</sup> Houston also highlights the work of Erving Goffman, who is concerned with the idea of 'performance'; the presentation of the self in everyday life. For Goffman, social interaction is a 'theatrical performance' and so letters of petition can be seen as a form of epistemological theatre which rehearses social relationships.<sup>94</sup> Both these concepts; a formulaic, supplicatory form of address, and an emphasis on the performative aspect of the petition, are useful in reviewing and analysing the Elsecar evidence.

In the first instance, the Elsecar petitions show a preoccupation with loyalty to the Earls' interests and with reciprocity. Benjamin Bates, for example, in his petition for

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<sup>90</sup> C. W. Bingley to Benjamin Biram, 2nd August 1856, SA, WWM/Stw P/15/3/b-164.

<sup>91</sup> William Perkins to 5th Earl Fitzwilliam, 2nd July 1838, SA, WWM/Stw P/14/3-64.

<sup>92</sup> John Hays to Benjamin Biram, 10th July 1847, SA, WWM/Stw P/15/16/k-18; Hays has acquired an emu as a gift and writes to ask Biram for advice regarding its diet.

<sup>93</sup> Houston, *Peasant Petitions*, p. 28.

<sup>94</sup> Houston, *Peasant Petitions*, p. 29.

a farm tenancy, stressed that he and three of his relatives had all voted in accordance with the Earl's political interest.<sup>95</sup> Similarly John Beaumont, defending his right to cut hay in the Wentworth plantation in reply to a censure from Joshua Biram, wrote:

I shall ever remember Lord Earl Fitzwilliam & Lo Milton for being so kind to give me the grass in [the] plantation & if there be aney more election of Parliament me & my relations will give & cause to give a great maney votes & I shall ever remain your humble servant [spelling as given].<sup>96</sup>

Both petitioners clearly understood that the procurement of favours from the Earl brought with them implicit obligations regarding duty and loyalty, in this case expressed as political allegiance. In contrasting his own loyalty to other tenants who had encroached without permission on the Earl's land, Beaumont further demonstrated his understanding of the reciprocal nature of the relationship between lord and tenant; the miscreant tenants, he felt, had 'treate [sic] against Lord Milton very much' because of the imposition of a recent rent increase.<sup>97</sup>

Issues of loyalty are raised in other petitions, particularly those relating to disputes. Ann Crowder, for example, wrote to Benjamin Hall to complain that several people she named 'has borne me Malice'<sup>98</sup> ever since she reported them for poaching and cutting down trees in the Earl's plantation. Crowder's letter, which implicates at least two of her relatives, demonstrates how loyalty to the Earl's interests might clash with family and personal interests. John Walker, a miner sacked for his role in an embezzlement plot in 1835, stressed that he had 'been in your Lordship's employ ever

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<sup>95</sup> Benjamin Bates to 4th Earl Fitzwilliam, 20th July 1833, SA, WWM/G/7/83-179.

<sup>96</sup> John Beaumont to Joshua Biram, 1st July 1811, SA, WWM/Stw P/7/3-53.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> Ann Crowder to Benjamin Hall 28th December 1785, SA, WWM/Stw P/6/3-132.

since I was capable of work'.<sup>99</sup> In pleading for his job back, Walker drew attention to his previous loyalty and good character, emphasising that his involvement in the embezzlement had been due to the 'force and tyranny' employed by his supervisor in compelling him to become an accomplice.<sup>100</sup>

In his appeal, John Walker closely associated the idea of loyalty to that of service, and the same concept can be discerned, for example, in Jane ETTY's petition for a pension for her distressed mother, a Wentworth schoolmistress of twenty-six years' service.<sup>101</sup> The ideal of loyal service could even be invoked in cases where the petitioner was not actually an estate employee. In 1837, for example, a Mr. Stoney petitioned the 5th Earl Fitzwilliam on behalf of a woman named Mary Jenkinson, recalling that Mary's deceased father, Joseph, had been an employee of long standing:

His whole life was spent in the service of your Lordship's family and as he was at one time the means in the hand of God, of saving your Lordship from very great damage when attacked by a Deer, I doubt not your Lordship will feel a double jubillance [sic] in saving his eldest daughter from indigence and want.<sup>102</sup>

Stoney's masterful invocation of concepts of lordship service, loyalty, obligation, reciprocity and family in his petition clearly illuminates many of the principles upon which both the Earls and their employees understood that their relationship was constructed .

As these examples demonstrate, there was a consistent and established, if informal, means of petitioning help from the estate hierarchy throughout the study period,

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<sup>99</sup> John Walker to 5th Earl Fitzwilliam, 27th April 1835, SA, WWM/G/40-74.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> Jane ETTY to Benjamin Biram, 27th June 1836, SA, WWM/Stw P/14/2-108.

<sup>102</sup> Jas. Stoney to 5th Earl Fitzwilliam, 14th February 1837, SA, WWM/Stw P/14/3-2.

underpinned and informed by well-understood principles of behaviour and reciprocity. However, previous work on Elsecar has drawn attention to the inherent inefficiency of the hierarchical management system of the Wentworth estate and its increasing inability by the mid-nineteenth century to cope with the administrative demands of the estate industrial enterprises.<sup>103</sup> With this in mind, it is important to explore whether the system of petitioning continued to function effectively in the face of the increasing intensity of industrialisation and a concomitant rise in the village population.

Some evidence of a gradual breakdown in the system of petitioning can be discerned by contrasting the correspondence of Joshua Biram (steward 1805-1836) and Benjamin Biram (steward/superintendent 1836-1857). Most notably, the attention to detail, the personal involvement in trifling estate matters, the concern for villagers and estate workers evident in Joshua's correspondence is not so obvious in that of Benjamin, so that, whilst petitions are still addressed to him, tangible evidence of Benjamin's responses to the petitions are less evident. Similarly, in the early 1800s Joshua Biram meticulously filled in an estate record of sick pay and pension payments.<sup>104</sup> After his death, responsibility for compiling these records passed to Benjamin, and it is notable that, under Benjamin, the recorded information becomes less informative, before petering out altogether in 1839. Whilst it is possible that this is the result of a decline in the number of petitioners, it is more likely that this apparent decline in record-keeping reflects the greater work-load of Benjamin and his consequent inability to maintain the same degree of supervision over the village

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<sup>103</sup> Medicott, 'The Development of Coal Mining', p. 116.

<sup>104</sup> List of charitable donations, circa 1803-1839, SA, WWM/A/1411.

as his father. This is because evidence emerges during the mid-nineteenth century of new actors upon the estate stage, fulfilling roles in the estate administration which were previously occupied by the stewards. The Elsecar incumbent, the Reverend George Scaife, for example, emerged as an alternative focus for petitioners in the mid-nineteenth century, and his willingness to intervene on behalf of villagers, such as the miner's widow Margaret Evans, can be read as symptomatic of the erosion of the efficiency of the estate administration.<sup>105</sup> In this respect, it is significant that Scaife's pursuit of a pension for Evans occurred six weeks after the newspaper report of the death of her husband and its assertion that Earl Fitzwilliam 'that ever kind and benevolent Nobleman [...] will, no doubt, make some acceptable provision for the widow and fatherless children'.<sup>106</sup>

Similarly, a dispute between the mine manager Charles Dodgson and Benjamin Biram, in which Dodgson alleges that Biram's erroneous re-allocation of housing that he has already assigned has eroded his [Dodgson's] authority amongst the men,<sup>107</sup> and a second dispute, in which confusion regarding the respective duties and authority of Dodgson and a second mine official, Thomas Cooper, has been exploited by a miner to his advantage,<sup>108</sup> also seem to indicate the increasing inefficiency of the traditional estate mechanisms. The nineteenth century has been seen as a time when the

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<sup>105</sup> Rev. G. Scaife to Benjamin Biram, 1st October 1855, SA, WWM/Stw P/15/26/s-550. George Scaife was the first vicar of Elsecar church, which was consecrated on 6th June 1843. He lived in the village with his sister Sarah from 1843 till circa 1860 and appears to have played an active role in village affairs; his surviving correspondence in the Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments contains petitions from villagers, notes on welfare, charity and education and covers the period circa 1843-55.

<sup>106</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 30th August 1855.

<sup>107</sup> Charles Dodgson to Benjamin Biram, 25th July 1855, SA, WWM/Stw P/15/6/d-30; Dodgson writes to express his resentment at Biram's interference in his affairs; it has led to the double-letting of the same property, which has eroded Dodgson's authority, 'making me appear perfectly ridiculous and causing the men to set me at defiance'.

<sup>108</sup> Thomas Cooper to Benjamin Biram, 27th December 1856, SA, WWM/Stw P/15/5/c-10; Cooper writes to express his resentment at Dodgson, who is interfering in matters which are traditionally his responsibility; Cooper feels that the miner Robert Palmer has exploited this situation by playing the two men off against each other.

increasing administrative demands of diversifying mining, industrial, agricultural and property interests led to the increasing rationalisation and professionalism of estate management. In turn, this caused 'the rationalisation of rural relationships, gradually eroding the older, paternalistic character of rural society'.<sup>109</sup> In this respect, it is also significant that, following Benjamin Biram's death, the estate management was diversified, with the appointment of a separate household steward and general mineral agent.<sup>110</sup>

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has explored the nature of the administrative structure of the Wentworth estate and its relationship to Elsecar. In particular, it has looked at the roles played by the owners of the estate, the Earls Fitzwilliam, and their principal officers, the stewards. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, most commentators on Elsecar have seen the Earls' management policies as being characterised by a form of benevolent paternalism. In this chapter, I have examined the way in which paternalist power and authority were actually exercised by the Earls. I demonstrated the close interest that the successive Earls took in both the industrial development of the village and in the welfare of its inhabitants, showing how even minor matters were passed to the Earls for their decision and scrutiny. I further showed how the estate hierarchy operated and how the Earls, acting through their agents, the stewards, sought to create and manage the settlement through controlling access to housing, jobs and welfare provision.

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<sup>109</sup> James P. Bowen, 'A Landscape of Improvement: The Impact of James Loch, Chief Agent to the Marquis of Stafford, on the Lilleshall Estate, Shropshire', *Midland History* 35.2 (2010), p. 193.

<sup>110</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 18th July 1857, p. 6; an account of a 'colliers' tea' held at Elsecar to mark the appointment of the new General Mineral Agent, John Hartop.

In the second half of the chapter, I demonstrated the way in which, through the process of informal petitioning, the villagers and estate tenants actively engaged with the authority of the estate. Negotiating the estate hierarchy in the pursuit of assistance thus depended upon the demonstration and performance of the worthiness of their individual cases, in relation to the moral and social preoccupations of the Earls. Of necessity, this process involved and the public deference to, and acceptance of, the authority of the Earls.

In terms of its origins, its early implementation, and its persistence throughout the study period despite the rapidly-evolving scale and nature of the industrial community, the Earls paternalist ethos at Elsecar is one that is quite distinct from that which was expressed at later model industrial communities which it helped to inspire. As the process of petitioning the Earls demonstrates, neither the Earls themselves nor their tenants conceived of a system of universally applied benevolence; rather, the Earls' help and assistance was something that had to be applied for, the claim examined, and its worthiness judged. In order to be successful, the petitioner had to position themselves in alignment with the broad principles of loyalty and morality that the Earls held. As a result, the paternalistic agenda, rather than being simple acts of kindness or munificence on the part of a sequence of lordly individuals, functioned as a form of social contract between the Earls and their tenants, being both a medium for, and a product of, the expression of lordly authority and control. The Earls, acting through their agents, the stewards, sought to create and manage the settlement through controlling access to social and economic resources,



utilising these fundamental tools of paternalist management as a mechanism of social control.

## **Chapter Two: Welfare Provision:**

### **Alternatives to the Fitzwilliam Paternalist Model**

#### **Introduction**

In the previous chapter, I examined the paternalist management strategy of the Earls Fitzwilliam, the ways in which it was promoted and enacted through the stewards, and the ways in which the villagers of Elsecar engaged with and negotiated the Earls' authority. In particular, I examined the ways in which the villagers actively sought access to the most obvious manifestations of the Earls' paternalist management agenda, namely, welfare provision of various kinds. The issue of welfare provision is particularly important for two reasons. Firstly, it was the arena in which working-class tenants and employees were most likely to seek or encounter the direct intervention of the estate administration in their lives. Secondly, the negotiation of welfare provision acted as a mechanism which structured the social relationships between the Earls and their petitioners. Whereas previous commentators have tended to see the Earls' provision of welfare as an act of benevolence, I demonstrated how this aspect of paternal management acted as a means through which the Earls could exert a wider authority and social influence within the village.

In this chapter, I will widen the perspective away from a focus upon the Earls by considering alternative forms of welfare provision within Elsecar. This approach follows on from the previous chapter in that it will explore the role of alternative forms of welfare in structuring social relationships within the village. It is inspired in part by the work of Steven King and Alannah Tomkins, who stress that survival strategies of the poor necessarily involved utilising a range of statutory, charitable,

legal and semi-legal resources.<sup>1</sup> Their work reminds us that the Earls did not exercise power in isolation, nor were they the sole source of relief available to the inhabitants of the village. A fuller mapping of these alternatives will allow a better understanding of the structuring of social relationships, will place the authority of the Earls in a wider context, and will also allow a greater understanding of the overlooked or contested arenas in which the agency of the villagers might be expected to flourish. The particular issues that I will examine in this chapter will thus relate to social hierarchy and the exercise of power on the one hand, and to manifestations of plebian agency on the other.

In regard to the first of these issues, I will examine the committee members of the Hoyland Poor Law Union in order to determine their wider social status within the community, before looking at the records of the committee's decisions. I consider the way in which the poor petitioned the committee and the moral and social judgements inherent in the committee's rulings. Finally, I look at the relationship between the Poor Law committee and the Earls Fitzwilliam. As I will argue, this examination of the operation of the Poor Law reminds us that the Fitzwilliams' paternalist provision of welfare in fact existed alongside well-established structures of Parish welfare and relief. In so doing, it brings into sharper focus the wider structural relationships between poverty, gender, illness and authority within the community.

In regard to the issue of plebian agency, I will examine the evidence for mutual self-help at Elsecar, such as the evidence for collections for injured and sick miners

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<sup>1</sup> Steven King & Alannah Tomkins (eds), *The Poor In England 1700-1850: An Economy of Makeshifts* (Manchester, 2003), pp. 11-31.

(known as 'gatherings') and the setting-up in 1860 of the Simon Wood Colliery Accident Fund. I argue that, fragmentary though this evidence is, it nevertheless forms an important counterpoint to the assertion that Elsecar was a place characterised by the alleviation of poverty and its consequences through the actions of the Earls Fitzwilliam.<sup>2</sup> These records of mutual self-help are thus important evidence for the development of collective agency amongst the Elsecar villagers, showing the community to be actively engaged in shaping its own response to the uncertainties of the industrial world, rather than being merely the passive recipients of paternalist benefits. This community welfare provision avoided the requirement to negotiate structures permeated with elitist conceptions of class, morality and social order. In so doing, it emphasised social relationships between the villagers themselves. For this reason, it is important evidence for exploring issues such as identity and the structuring of the community.

### **The Role of the Parish Authorities**

Elsecar was situated within the Parish of Hoyland, which after 1850 formed part of the Barnsley Poor Law Union. This is significant in that both the Earls and their stewards resided in the neighbouring parish of Wentworth, part of the Rotherham Poor Law Union. As non-residents, they were not eligible to serve on the parish council in Hoyland and, as a result, were not able to exercise a formal control over its decisions. There seems little doubt that had the Earls' agents been able to play an active role in the Hoyland Parish authorities, they would have done so; instead,

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Mee, 'Employer-Employee Relationships', p. 48.

Benjamin Biram served as a Poor Law Guardian in Wentworth,<sup>3</sup> whilst the chairman of the Rotherham Poor Law Union was the 5th Earl himself.

The Hoyland Parish authorities are worthy of study for a number of reasons. Firstly, early modern historical studies have highlighted the role of the parish in fomenting social identities and relationships.<sup>4</sup> The parish, then, can be seen as an alternate form of community existing alongside, but not identical to, the industrial community of Elsecar. The question thus arises whether these two forms of community were complimentary or antagonistic. Similarly, the composition of the Parish officers and the ratepayers might be expected to give an insight into the parish elite, the 'better sort', and their relationship with the village community of workmen and poor petitioners that emerges so vividly from the stewards' correspondence examined in Chapter One. Finally, the relationship between applicants for parish poor relief and the Earls' tenants needs to be explored; are they one and the same, or did the Earls' system of hardship relief operate independently from the parish?

### **The Poor Law: Historiography**

As the primary manifestation of the secular administrative function of parish authorities, the operation of both the Old Poor Law (1600-1834) and the New Poor Law (1834 till circa 1948) have attracted considerable historical interest. Briefly summarised, the Old Poor Law of 1600, which established the legal obligation and

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<sup>3</sup> Benjamin Biram, diary entry for 1st July 1837, SA, WWM/Stw P/16; in this entry, Biram notes that he has been made Overseer of the Poor for Wentworth.

<sup>4</sup> Steve Hindle, 'A Sense of Place? Becoming and Belonging in the Rural Parish, 1550-1650', in Alexandra Shepard & Phil Withington (eds), *Communities in Early Modern England: Networks, Place, Rhetoric* (Manchester, 2000), p. 96. See also Martin Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640* (Cambridge, 1987) for a detailed examination of the role of parish authorities in policing and regulating sexual and social relationships.

framework for parish authorities to provide relief for the poor, persisted under increasing stress until 1834 when the New Poor Law legislation organised previously independent parish authorities into Poor Law Unions, answerable to a centralised body, the Poor Law Commissioners. This body was charged with implementing reform of the system to address the rising Poor Law rates and alleged maladministration.<sup>5</sup> The history of poor relief from the early modern period until the twentieth century is thus marked by a general decline of local autonomy and the move to more centralised administrative control, although recent studies have argued that this process was not as uniform as was previously thought.<sup>6</sup>

Leaving aside studies which focus on the various provisions, regulations and operations of the various Poor Law Acts, it is possible to discern two broad approaches within the historiography. The first examines the operation of the Poor Law as an instrument of social control, which, through its operation, reiterated existing social hierarchies and reinforced religious, moral and ideological norms. As mentioned above, it is fair to say that this approach arises from research into the early modern period, which tends to stress the varied interpretations and implementations of the legislation at local level, and hence the autonomous nature of parish authorities.<sup>7</sup> A second, more recent, strand has moved away from a focus upon the operation of the Poor Law and its implications in terms of the wider social sphere towards studies which focus upon the actual experiences of the poor in negotiating

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<sup>5</sup> Michael E. Rose, 'The Anti-Poor Law Movement in the North of England', *Northern History* 1.1 (1966), p. 71.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Peter Dunkley, 'The "Hungry Forties" and the New Poor Law: A Case Study', *Historical Journal* 17.2 (1974), p. 329 and John Benson, 'Poor Law Guardians, Coalminers and Friendly Societies in the North of England, 1860-1894: Statutory Provision, Local Autonomy and Individual Responsibility', *Northern History* 44.2 (2007), p. 162.

<sup>7</sup> Hindle, 'A Sense of Place?', p. 96.

and accessing poor relief.<sup>8</sup> Stephen King's work is an example of this kind of approach, stressing as it does the agency of the poor, their understanding of their rights and their expectations of authority.<sup>9</sup> For King, the application for and the receipt of poor relief were part of a dynamic dialogue between the poor petitioner (aware of their rights) and the poor law authorities (aware of their obligations) in which rhetoric, claim and counterclaim could be employed by both sides in pursuit of an acceptable outcome.<sup>10</sup>

Both these approaches, stressing as they do the differing aspects of structure and agency, have been applied to studies of the Old Poor Law and the New Poor Law, so that considerations of structure and authority on the one hand and lived experience on the other underlie the historiography of the changing nature and implementation of poor relief from the period 1600-1948. Marjorie Levine-Clark, for example, takes a broadly structured approach, highlighting the administration of poor relief as both a manifestation and a reinforcement of idealised gender roles, in which the role of men as breadwinners and women as dependents within the family unit was assumed and stressed.<sup>11</sup> Ginger Frost, in contrast, demonstrates how idealised family roles that were enshrined in the 1834 legislation were, for reasons of pragmatism, ignored or circumvented by Poor Law authorities. This was achieved through such means as regarding cohabiting couples as effectively married, a move which allowed them to access out-relief for their children, a more desirable option for the family (and a

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<sup>8</sup> For a comprehensive survey of the historiography of parish poor relief, see King & Tomkins, *The Poor In England*, Chapter One.

<sup>9</sup> Steven King, 'Negotiating the Law of Poor Relief in England 1800-1840', *History* 96.324 (2011), pp. 410-434.

<sup>10</sup> Steven King, "'Stop this Overwhelming Torment of Destiny" Negotiating Financial Aid at Times of Sickness Under the Old English Poor Law 1800-1840', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 79.2 (2005), pp. 228-260.

<sup>11</sup> Marjorie Levine-Clark, 'The Gendered Economy of Family Liability: Intergenerational Relationships and Poor Law Relief in England's Black Country, 1871-1911', *Journal of British Studies* 45.1 (2006), pp. 72-89.

cheaper one for the parish) as opposed to the legal stipulation that illegitimate children should be provided for in the workhouse.<sup>12</sup> Other researchers, such as Richard Dyson, have explored the demography of the parish poor, using parish records to highlight such issues as life cycle poverty (poverty due to specific events or crises, such as the death of a spouse or injury), structural poverty (unemployment, poor pay etc.) and the implications of these in terms of an individual's susceptibility to poverty over their lifetime.<sup>13</sup> Finally, numerous local studies have clearly demonstrated that the interpretation of the legislation continued to vary considerably from parish to parish even after the introduction of the New Poor Law.<sup>14</sup>

As this brief survey has indicated, the Poor Law and its administration offers considerable scope for the study and exploration of the historical themes of hierarchy, authority, community and their interaction. Accordingly, I will explore the potential of the Hoyland Poor Law committee documents in illuminating the exercise of power within the community. Through a study of the committee members, I examine which individuals had authority within the parish, and the ways in which they expressed this through the discharge of their duties. I also examine the ways in which the poor petitioned the committee and the moral and social judgements inherent in the committee's rulings. Finally, I look at the relationship between the Poor Law committee and the Earls Fitzwilliam.

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<sup>12</sup> Ginger Frost, 'Under the Guardians' Supervision: Illegitimacy, Family and the English Poor Law 1870-1930', *Journal of Family History* 38.122 (2013), pp. 22-39.

<sup>13</sup> Richard Dyson, 'Who Were the Poor of Oxford in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries?', in Andreas Gestrich, Steven King, & Raphael Lutz (eds), *Being Poor in Modern Europe: Historical Perspectives 1800-1940* (Berlin, 2006), pp. 43-68.

<sup>14</sup> King, 'Negotiating the Law of Poor Relief', p. 411.



## The Sources

A small but significant set of Hoyland parish records survive in the form of an account book and a minute book, both now held in Barnsley Archives.<sup>15</sup> Both documents were originally donated to Sheffield archives by the Hoyland local historian, Arthur Clayton. Clayton acquired them from a colleague who reputedly rescued them from a rubbish skip during the demolition of an unspecified council office.<sup>16</sup> Given the circumstances of their preservation, there can be no doubt that the surviving records are fragmentary and incomplete. Taken together, the two documents cover the period from 1815 to 1848. This is a shorter period than that generally covered by this thesis (circa 1750-1870) but it does encapsulate a period of major social and economic development within the village. Nationally, this period also witnessed the transition from the administrative machinery of the Old Poor Law to that of the New Poor Law. It also saw the introduction of the Sturges Bourne Acts of 1818 and 1819. These two Acts were reforms that were intended to address the rising cost of poor relief following economic depression in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars. The Acts allowed a number of measures including the establishment of select vestries, the appointment of assistant overseers and the introduction of weighted voting rights for vestry members according to their property. The two Acts were overshadowed by the 1834 Poor Law, and for this reason they have largely been overlooked by historians. However, recent work by Samantha Shave has reassessed their significance. Shave argues that, in their express intention to limit the access to poor relief, the Acts established the mechanisms whereby parish

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<sup>15</sup> Hoyland Poor Law Committee account book, 1815-1838; Hoyland Poor Law committee minute book, 1838 to 1848, BA, LD/1994/38. This archive reference covers both volumes and an associated letter of deposition.

<sup>16</sup> Arthur Clayton, photocopied letter of deposition outlining acquisition history of the documents, filed with BA, LD/1994/38.

authorities could be more proactive, inquiring more fully into the circumstances of the poor and policing the provision of relief more effectively.<sup>17</sup> This proactive approach was manifested in more detailed and specific parish accounting and record-keeping on the one hand, and by an increasingly overt focus upon the character and conduct of the claimants on the other. For example, successful claimants were expected to demonstrate their gratitude for relief and to maintain standards of sobriety and church-going.<sup>18</sup> Shave's work thus demonstrates a hardening of attitudes to the poor, and a shift in administrative practices, prior to the introduction of the New Poor Law. Whilst the Rotherham Poor Law Union (of which Earl Fitzwilliam was chairman) was formed in July 1837,<sup>19</sup> the Barnsley Poor Law Union, which included the Parish of Hoyland, was not formed until January 1850.<sup>20</sup> In terms of their historical context, the Hoyland records considered here thus predate the actual implementation of the provisions of the 1834 Act and instead relate to the dying years of the operation of the Old Poor Law. It is thus in relation to changes in attitudes to the poor identified by Shave that we should site the Elsecar evidence.

Whilst the records cover a period of only twenty-three years and thus offer little opportunity to study structural changes in poor relief over time, they nevertheless offer a snapshot of an important period of transition in poor law administration. The account book runs from April 18th 1815 until 1838 and consists of weekly, and later monthly, lists of monies received, together with accounts of weekly expenditure that are arranged under the following headings: 'By [i.e. spent on] weekly pensioners, by

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<sup>17</sup> Samantha A. Shave, 'The Impact of Sturges Bourne's Poor Law Reforms in Rural England', *Historical Journal* 56.2 (2013), pp. 399-429.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.workhouses.org.uk/Rotherham/> [accessed 04/03/2014].

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.workhouses.org.uk/Barnsley/> [accessed 04/03/2014].

bastardy, by poor rents and coals, by incidentals, by constable accounts'.<sup>21</sup> The account book gives the name of the Overseer of the Poor, together with those parish officials who certified the accounts. It also contains occasional details regarding particular payments or receipts. Whilst the account book thus gives a detailed record of the scale and relative variations in parish expenditure over time, it does not allow any assessment of the numbers of people supported by the parish. Similarly, the names of the recipients of relief, their circumstances, and details of individual cases, are not given. The historical research potential of the account book is therefore somewhat limited and is confined to giving an impression of the scale and variety of parish interventions on behalf of the poor, together with an idea of the officers and the running of the committee.

The minute book runs from 1838 to 1848 and gives details of the parish officials present at each meeting of the Poor Law Committee. It gives details of the committee decision in a number of cases and also lists of ratepayers and of parish officials. In terms of the cases decided upon, the information is confined to the name of the applicant and the decision, with no further discussion of the case being given in the minutes. Thomas Sokoll's work on pauper letters gives an insight into how to read this information. His work relates to written petitions for poor relief from people who were no longer resident in their parish of settlement, and who were therefore not able to appear in person before the Poor Law Commissioners.<sup>22</sup> With this work in mind, it can be deduced that the decisions given in the Hoyland minute book are likely to refer

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<sup>21</sup> Hoyland Poor Law Committee account book, 1815-1838, BA, LD/1994/38, p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Sokoll, 'Writing for Relief: Rhetoric in English Pauper Letters 1800-1834', in Andreas Gestrich, Steven King, & Raphael Lutz (eds), *Being Poor in Modern Europe: Historical Perspectives 1800-1940* (Berlin, 2006), p. 96.

to personal applications for relief, or to interviews for which the records have now been lost. In a number of cases, a certain leeway in decision-making was also afforded to the Overseer of the Poor, for example in the case of Elizabeth Stancey, who was to have some relief 'if Mr Lorimer [the Overseer of the Poor] after inquiring into her circumstances thinks right'.<sup>23</sup> Again, this hints at a greater level of inquiry and activity than is actually encompassed in the minute book. Similarly, since the minute book records decisions relating to new or reviewed cases only, it gives no indication of the total number of on-going cases active at any one time.

It will be readily perceived that the scope, depth and quality of the material in the minute book is somewhat limited, particularly when compared to, for example, the corpus of over 750 documents that formed the basis of Thomas Sokoll's study of pauper letters,<sup>24</sup> or the 7679 applications for relief to the Stourbridge Poor Law Union that formed the basis of Levine-Clark's research.<sup>25</sup> The short period of time covered by the minute book and the relatively few cases that it records, for example, make it particularly difficult to trace changes in the provision of poor relief in Hoyland over time. Neither is it possible, except in a very few cases, to get any sense of the changing circumstances of individual petitioners over time, nor to determine whether the decisions taken by the committee resulted in successful or beneficial outcomes. In the light of these limitations, the evidence from the minute book is perhaps best regarded as a historical snapshot, in which the decisions, awards, attitudes and concerns expressed in relation to each case can, in the absence of any evidence or reason to suspect the contrary, be regarded as typical of the operation of the Hoyland

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<sup>23</sup> Hoyland Poor Law Committee minute book, entry for 1st March 1844, BA, LD/1994/38, p. 16.

<sup>24</sup> Thomas Sokoll, *English Pauper Letters 1731-1837* (Oxford, 2006).

<sup>25</sup> Levine-Clark, 'The Gendered Economy of Family Liability'.

Poor Law authorities. Despite these limitations, the information that the two books contain is useful in two major respects. Firstly, it allows deductions to be made regarding the composition and status of the committee members, and secondly, it allows an insight into the way the committee functioned, particularly in regard to its attitudes and duties towards the poor.

### **The Committee**

**Table 2.1** (Appendix 1) gives a breakdown of the information relating to the total of 52 named individuals who either occupied specific posts within the parish machinery or were present at parish committee meetings. This information is derived from the Hoyland Parish account book (1818-1838) and minute book (1838-1848) with the exception of the information presented in the 'Additional Information' column. This information is derived from a number of additional sources, which consist of the composite parish registers for the Chapelry of Hoyland Nether 1748-1864,<sup>26</sup> the 1841 Census Returns for Hoyland Nether Township, the 1841 *Poll Book for Hoyland Nether*, the 1848 *Register of Electors for Hoyland Nether*, Baines' *Directory of the County of York* for 1822 and Drakes' *Directory of Rotherham* for 1862.<sup>27</sup>

Given that the information covers a thirty year period, **Table 2.1** emphasises the relatively small numbers of individuals who were active in parish decision-making. To further put this number into context, the total number of males within the parish in

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<sup>26</sup> Composite parish registers for the Chapelry of Hoyland Nether, 1748-1864, SA, microfilm no. SY 337/xi/86.

<sup>27</sup> E. S. Drake & Co., *Drake's Directory of Rotherham* (1862); Edward Baines, *A History, Directory and Gazetteer of the County of York* (1822). The register of electors and poll books were viewed at [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) [accessed 20/01/2014 to 31/01/2014].

1827 was put at 727 (presumably including minors) out of a total of 1467.<sup>28</sup> The small total number of individuals involved also demonstrates the relative stability of the membership throughout the period. William Vaines, for example, was active in parish affairs for at least nineteen years, references to his activities in the books spanning the period 1819 to 1842. Like others, Vaines served and re-served in a variety of roles, including as a committee member, as Overseer of the Poor (five terms) and as Collector of the Queen's taxes. Similarly, Robert Wigfield served from 1825 until 1844, acting as a committee member, Overseer of the Poor (two terms) and being a co-certifier of the yearly accounts on no less than five occasions. Against this trend towards long service are the records of a number of men, such as George Nettley, whose involvement or commitment appears to have been short-lived. Taking these two contrasting trends together, it is possible to characterise the authorities as being dominated by a long-serving and experienced core of men who perhaps discouraged or did little to foster the involvement of others.

One factor that might further hint at the exclusivity or restricted entry to the authorities is the prevalence of similar surnames amongst the committee members. Whilst it is important, in the absence of other corroborating evidence, not to assume familial or kinship links between similarly-named individuals, there is nevertheless reason to posit some kind of link in a number of cases. For example, the distinction between 'William Grey' and 'William Grey Junior' in the sources suggests they may have been related. Similarly, the fact that 'William Wigfield' held a one third freehold

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<sup>28</sup> Hoyland Poor Law Committee account book, 1815-1838, BA, LD/1994/38; the entry for 1st January 1827 gives these figures in what it describes as an 'accurate state of population from actual enumeration'.

stake in a property with 'Robert Wigfield Junior'<sup>29</sup> suggests an association between himself and the committee member 'Robert Wigfield Senior', as does the fact that both were engaged in the same business.

Is there any evidence that members of the committee were linked by other forms of association? In the first instance, it is striking that, of the eighteen individuals for which it has proved possible to identify occupations, no less than nine were farmers. This is perhaps a surprisingly high figure given the rapidly industrialising nature of the parish and hints at the importance of tradition within the parish authorities. Similarly, four of the other committee members were nail-makers, a skilled craft occupation that was prevalent in and around Hoyland from the late seventeenth century onwards.<sup>30</sup> Although nail-making would appear to be a relatively humble occupation, it was, like farming, evidently one in which gradations of wealth, status and upward social mobility were possible; both William and Robert Wigfield, for example, were described as nail-makers in 1822 but ended their careers as gentlemen.<sup>31</sup>

If tradition can be regarded as being represented by the farmers, nail-makers and parish stalwarts such as the vicar and schoolmaster, the increasing importance of newly-emergent industries was represented by the involvement of William Goodison, the colliery agent (manager) at Jump Colliery, and by that of Henry Hartop, manager of the Elsecar Ironworks, and his counterpart, William Graham, the lessee of the

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<sup>29</sup> *Register of Electors for Hoyland Nether Parish* (1848).

<sup>30</sup> South Yorkshire Archaeology Service, *South Yorkshire Historic Environment Characterisation Project: Barnsley Character Zone Descriptions*, <http://www.sytimescapes.org.uk/files/u1/docs/barnsley-industrial.pdf> [accessed 28/01/2014].

<sup>31</sup> E. S. Drake & Co., *Drake's Directory of Rotherham* (1862).

Milton Ironworks. Goodison, Hartop and Graham are only referenced once in the sources, however, so the scale of their involvement is not fully clear. Nevertheless, since Hartop and Graham were both industrial tenants of the 5th Earl Fitzwilliam, whilst Goodison was the Earl's employee, their involvement provides direct evidence of networks of association between the Earls and the parish authorities.

Some further information regarding the status and wealth of the members can be ascertained from the electoral poll books which indicate that, of the 26 individuals for which information has been forthcoming, 24 were wealthy enough to have satisfied the £50 property qualification to vote by 1848. Eleven committee members were eligible to vote in the 1841 election, a considerable number given that the entire electorate of Nether Hoyland ward at that date was only 36. It is further interesting to note that in the 1841 election, all the committee members, and all the other Hoyland Nether electors bar one, voted for Lord Milton (later the 6th Earl Fitzwilliam).<sup>32</sup> This result, although perhaps not unexpected, nevertheless demonstrates the pervasive influence that the Earls exerted in the parish. The available information thus seems to suggest that the majority of the Poor Law Committee consisted of men of solid middle-class occupation – masons, schoolmasters, vicars, nail-makers and farmers – who were relatively well off, at least in comparison to the other parishioners. Here then, were the 'better sort' of the parish who were linked not only through their service, but also by kinship and occupational, social and political ties.

As this study has shown, the membership of the Poor Law Committee was predicated upon social hierarchy and status. It was thus both a manifestation and demonstration

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<sup>32</sup> *Poll Book for Hoyland Nether* (1841).



of social inequality within the Parish. It was also, of course, an expression of gender inequality, in that all the committee members were male. In the following section, I will explore the ways in which the Committee expressed its power and structured social relationships through its interventions in the lives of the parish poor.

### **The Petitioners**

In the section above, I considered the composition of the Poor Law officials and demonstrated how these individuals, drawn together by the shared purpose of parish administration, shared other affinities and associations which firmly linked them to the wider vistas of parish life. The Poor Law officials, then, can be regarded as a parish elite, whose statutory legal powers were both an expression and a reinforcement of personal social status and authority. In this section, I consider the ways in which this authority was manifested. **Table 2.2** (Appendix 1) gives details of a total of 77 decisions that were made by the committee from 1838 to 1848. These appear to relate to approximately 56 specific 'cases' involving individuals or families. It is possible from the decisions to discern the links between a number of cases as, for example, in the case of the assessment of 'the poor Walker child'<sup>33</sup> and the summons against 'Mr Walker',<sup>34</sup> which clearly refer to the application made by Christiana Woodhead in regard to the father of her child.

The decisions of the committee demonstrate a number of different forms of intervention. These range from one-off payments of cash or provisions of goods to alleviate short-term need, as in the cases of Amos Norton, Hannah Parkin, William

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<sup>33</sup> Hoyland Poor Law Committee minute book, entry for 5th October 1843, BA, LD/1994/38, p. 12.

<sup>34</sup> Hoyland Poor Law Committee minute book, entry for 8th March 1844, BA, LD/1994/38, p. 17.

Stenton or Jane Uttley, to the awarding of weekly allowances for those deemed to be in more long-term chronic need, such as Betty Smith or John Howland. The decisions show much about the base-level of poverty within the parish, where a pair of shoes, a bucket of coal, a few shillings or the loan of a shovel might be enough to preserve a family from complete destitution. In this respect some of the cases, such as that of Jane Wigfield or Samuel Bishop, hint at the life of families at the economic margins through the evidence of repeated interventions across an extended period of time. Interventions of this type hint at the existence of structural poverty; that is, persistent poverty as a result of unemployment, underemployment or low wages.

In his work on community in the rural parish, Steve Hindle has outlined how the attitudes and decisions of the parish authorities in the early modern period were influenced by a system which divided applicants into the categories of 'deserving poor', 'able-bodied unemployed' and 'idle poor'.<sup>35</sup> Hindle's work relates specifically to the working of the Old Poor Law, but work by Marjorie Levine-Clark has shown that the operation of the New Poor Law was also predicated on a similar categorisation of the poor as either 'deserving' or 'undeserving'.<sup>36</sup> As Levine-Clark argues, the New Poor Law viewed the able-bodied unemployed as essentially undeserving of relief, in that they were theoretically able to provide for themselves through their labour. The harsh system of indoor relief within the workhouse was thus explicitly designed in order to discourage able-bodied applicants, who were perceived as being idle through their own choice.

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<sup>35</sup> Hindle, Steve 'A Sense of Place?', p. 99.

<sup>36</sup> Marjorie Levine-Clark, 'Engendering Relief: Women, Ablebodiedness, and the New Poor Law in Early Victorian England', *Journal of Women's History* 11 (2000), p. 108.

The Hoyland evidence, which dates to the transitional period between the Old Poor Law and the implementation of the New Poor Law, shows a similar preoccupation with the perceived worthiness of the applicant. To judge from the decisions made in her favour, Jane Wigfield, for example, appears to have been regarded by the committee as one of the 'deserving poor'; those whom economic or personal circumstance had rendered impotent and in need of Christian charity. In contrast, the cases of both John Burtoft, who the committee decided should 'be made to work' and Samuel Bishop, to whom the committee loaned a shovel 'that he may work on the railway' demonstrate the coercive power of the Poor Law authorities to demand labour in return for relief.<sup>37</sup> Samuel's continued inability to find or retain work marked him out as undeserving and idle in the eyes of the committee, which eventually took out a summons against him.<sup>38</sup> As these examples demonstrate, the committee assessed applicants according to broadly traditional, established norms in which the character and deservedness of the applicant was judged in accordance with established categories of perceived social difference and morality.

As well as intervening in the matter of employment, the committee used its power to look into matters of the family, particularly in regard to the welfare of children and to the apportioning of responsibility for their care. In October 1843, for example, Christiana Woodhead sought the help of the committee in getting William Walker to contribute to the upkeep of their child, and in March 1844 a summons was taken out against him by the committee. In a ruling in December 1843, the committee decreed that Ann Goddard should 'affiliate [i.e. legally identify the father of] her bastard

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<sup>37</sup> Hoyland Poor Law Committee minute book, entry for 3rd November 1844, BA, LD/1994/38, p. 13.

<sup>38</sup> Hoyland Poor Law Committee minute book, entry for 8th March 1844, BA, LD/1994/38, p. 17.

child'.<sup>39</sup> These interventions are particularly interesting given that the 1834 legislation was specific in making illegitimate children the sole legal responsibility of the mother.<sup>40</sup> The committee's action in these cases follows a tradition of searching out nominal fathers for illegitimate children as a pragmatic means of lessening the burden of their care on the parish, a tradition which, as Ginger Frost notes, persisted despite the enactment of the 1834 law.<sup>41</sup>

A further interesting factor to emerge from the committee decisions relates to the high number of women involved as petitioners. Whilst single mothers or widows might be expected to approach the committee, it is also clear that a substantial number, such as Jane Wigfield or Joseph Mirfield's un-named wife, were involved in negotiating relief for their husbands and families. In her work on the gender assumptions underlying the operation of the Poor Law, Marjorie Levine-Clark has demonstrated the way in which women were regarded as dependents and men as primary breadwinners, irrespective of their actual economic contributions to the family economy.<sup>42</sup> Appeals by women thus rehearsed and confirmed these stereotyped gender assumptions by emphasising their dependency upon the male members of the committee. In this respect, such appeals might be viewed in a more favourable light than those by men. For example, whilst Joseph Dickinson's application was rejected, those made by his wife met with a more favourable response. As the Hoyland evidence thus demonstrates, the actual agency employed by women in managing household

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<sup>39</sup> Hoyland Poor Law Committee minute book, entry for 8th December 1843, BA, LD/1994/38, p. 14.

<sup>40</sup> Newman, 'An Archaeology of Poverty', p. 360.

<sup>41</sup> Frost, 'Under the Guardians' Supervision', p. 23.

<sup>42</sup> Levine-Clark, 'The Gendered Economy', p. 74.

economies and in negotiating relief is obscured by the structuring of gender relations inherent in the committee's decision-making.

Whereas the appeal of a wife, dutifully struggling to survive despite a feckless, idle or unable husband, might arouse the committee's sympathy, **Table 2.2** suggests that an unmarried mother might expect more brusque treatment. Thus, Ann Goddard was reprimanded by the committee for her 'misconduct'.<sup>43</sup> The misconduct under censure is clearly the sexual activity that has resulted in the birth of her 'bastard child',<sup>44</sup> the term itself being a common contemporary euphemism for perceived sexual transgressions of this kind. The policing of female sexuality in this way is a phenomenon which is also apparent in the context of the Earls' management of Elsecar where, as I have explored, the Earls' officials were expressly ordered to concern themselves with the perceived moral welfare of the village.<sup>45</sup>

The evidence regarding the Poor Law decisions thus raises a number of themes relating to the governance of the poor. In particular, the decisions of the committee clearly demonstrate a contemporary perception of the poor in which economic need and poverty was inextricably linked to issues of morality and eligibility. As the examples examined above demonstrate, it is possible to go through the committee decisions given in **Table 2.2** and discern in each one elements of charity, sympathy, coercion or censure that are excellent indices to the perceived worthiness of the case and the individual petitioners. For the poor, applying to the Poor Law authorities was to invite scrutiny and judgement and to risk possible censure or sanctions.

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<sup>43</sup> Hoyland Poor Law Committee minute book, entry for 6th April 1839, BA, LD/1994/38, p. 3.

<sup>44</sup> Hoyland Poor Law Committee minute book, entry for 8th December 1843, BA, LD/1994/38, p. 14.

<sup>45</sup> See for example, the case of Mary Waller, outlined on p. 62.

As this survey demonstrates, the Hoyland Poor Law Committee, through its ability to intervene in a coercive way in the daily life of the poor, and through its conflation of perceived codes of moral behaviour with categories of applicant, functioned in such a way as to reinforce the existing social hierarchy within the parish. In this respect, the Committee acted in a similar way to the Fitzwilliams who, as I demonstrated in the preceding chapter, used the provision of welfare to promote their conception of hierarchy, deference, and social and moral order. The parish authorities and the Earls can thus be seen as parallel structures of authority which the Elsecar villagers were required to negotiate.

### **The Relationship Between the Poor Law Authorities and the Earls Fitzwilliam**

From the discussion above, it will be appreciated that the poor of Elsecar were faced with two alternatives when applying for relief, namely, applying to the parish or petitioning the Earls. Before exploring the factors which influenced that choice it is important to determine the ways in which the Earls and the Parish, with their common aim of providing welfare, interacted with each other. In this section, I examine this relationship as it is revealed in the Hoyland Poor Law Records.

In terms of the relationship between the Poor Law authorities and the Earls it is first important to note that, as major landholders in Hoyland, the Earls were legally obliged to contribute considerable sums to the parish authorities as ratepayers. However, whilst they accepted these legal obligations, they did not accept the direct intervention of the Parish in their affairs. In 1816, for example, the 4th Earl accepted a £10 fine 'in lieu of taking Mary the daughter of Benjamin Owland as a parish

apprentice'.<sup>46</sup> Whilst the committee failed in its intentions for Mary Owland, there are a number of other examples of collaboration, or attempted collaboration, between the Poor Law authorities and the Earls. The earliest of these examples would appear to be the case of William Bailey in 1807, which was referred to in Chapter Two. William was apparently suffering from some form of mental illness and Joshua Biram, at the request of William's wife, Elizabeth, looked into the possibility of admitting him to York Asylum. Biram recounted that the asylum fees were 9 shillings per week:

In consequence of which and his wife being in low circumstances, Mr. Lowe has desired the Overseer of the Poor of Hoyland to call a meeting of the principal inhabitants to consider of an allowance for William Bailey, which they have done, and which Mr. Lowe acquaints one will be five shillings per week – After which, I think it my duty to acquaint your Lordship with it, waiting your Lordship's further orders.<sup>47</sup>

The inference is clearly that the committee expected the 4th Earl to contribute the remaining four shillings a week for William's care. There would appear to be no legal requirement for the Earl to do this; rather, it would appear to be some kind of informal understanding between the Poor Law authorities and the Earl that was based on a reading of the philanthropic obligations of his role. That the committee continued to hope for and expect the intervention of the Earl to lessen the financial burden of relief upon the parish ratepayers is also demonstrated by the case of Jack Wigfield in 1843. The minute book records the decision in September of that year 'That the town agrees to allow 50s towards clothing Jack Wigfield and family if Lord [5th Earl] Fitzwilliam will give the same to fit him out to go to America'.<sup>48</sup> It is known that the Earl subsidised the emigration of tenants from his Irish estate to

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<sup>46</sup> Hoyland Poor Law Committee account book, 1815-1838, BA, LD/1994/38, p. 11.

<sup>47</sup> Joshua Biram to 4th Earl Fitzwilliam, 10th January 1807, SA, WWM/Stw P/5/1-149.

<sup>48</sup> Hoyland Poor Law Committee minute book, entry for 7th September 1843, BA, LD/1994/38, p. 12.

America during the Famine, and it is possible that the determination of Jack to better himself by this drastic means would attract the Earl's approval. In any case, the willingness of the Parish and the Earl to collaborate and share the costs of Wigfield's emigration demonstrates a shared commonality of purpose.

A final example demonstrating the way in which the Parish perceived the Earls' role comes from the last entry in the minute book which records 'a special vestry meeting of the rate payers of the township of Hoyland'<sup>49</sup> which took place on October 27th 1848 in order to discuss the imposition of a new county rate. At the meeting it was proposed and carried unanimously that the new rate should be objected to on the following grounds:

1 – the very great increase in the assessment on which the rate is made over that of the neighbouring townships. 2 – the closing of the Milton Ironworks and consequent falling off of a large sum available to the poor rate. 3 – The discontinuation of a colliery belonging to Earl Fitzwilliam rated at £500. 4 – The consequent reduction of the value of property in the township.<sup>50</sup>

The resolution refers to the effects of a prolonged period of economic decline, which saw the shutting-down of the Milton Ironworks for seven months and the resulting temporary closure of the colliery supplying the ironworks. It demonstrates the significance of the industrial infrastructure to the economy of the parish, but also shows the reluctance of the parish ratepayers to shoulder the additional burden of relief (the new rate) that this had imposed on the parish. The meeting further decided:

That the Churchwardens and Overseers of the Poor be deputed to wait on Earl Fitzwilliam at their earliest convenience stating the depressed state of trade in the neighbourhood and the large quantity of men who are applying for relief or work

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<sup>49</sup> Hoyland Poor Law Committee minute book, entry for 27th October 1848, BA, LD/1994/38, p. 34.

<sup>50</sup> Hoyland Poor Law Committee minute book, entry for 27th October 1848, BA, LD/1994/38, p.34.



to the Overseers and to request his Lordship's influence with the Yorkshire railway or elsewhere to obtain work for them.<sup>51</sup>

In petitioning for the Earls' help, the committee, and indeed the wider community as represented by the ratepayers, demonstrated its understanding of the role of the Earls in mitigating economic hardship. In both 1830 and 1842-1843, for example, the Earl had paid for unemployed iron-workers and colliers to level pit spoil-heaps, rather than leaving them to apply for poor relief.<sup>52</sup> Within this context, it is significant that work on the new railway spur to Elsecar began in February 1849, possibly in response to this petition.<sup>53</sup> For the Parish authorities, there was thus a clear understanding that the Earls would act decisively during periods of economic distress and, in so doing, mitigate the burden of relief upon the parish ratepayers.

### **Options of the Poor**

In the preceding section, I demonstrated that there was in many respects a commonality of purpose and intent between the Parish authorities and the Earls, which resulted in a degree of collaboration in regard to their approaches to the poor. However, the period covered by the Hoyland Poor Law Records relates to the transitional period between the Old Poor Law and the full implementation of the New Poor Law. This is significant in that this period has been seen as one which witnessed a 'sharp reversal of pauper agency' as traditional customs, rights and negotiations between the petitioners for relief and the Poor Law authorities entered a state of

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<sup>51</sup> Hoyland Poor Law Committee minute book, entry for 27th October 1848, BA, LD/1994/38, p. 34.

<sup>52</sup> Clayton, *Hoyland Nether*, pp. 48-49.

<sup>53</sup> *The Times*, February 23rd 1849, p. 8.

flux.<sup>54</sup> In essence, this involved a hardening of criteria for relief and an increasing emphasis on the moral status of applicants. As Marilyn Button and Jessica Sheetz-Nguyen argue, the operational logic of the New Poor Law made the moral component of poverty and the categorisation of the poor into deserving or undeserving explicit in its operation.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, Michael E. Rose has drawn attention to the important distinction being made in this period between poverty, as an endemic condition amongst the manual working-classes, and pauperism. He argues that pauperism, the condition of being reliant upon public relief, was widely regarded as 'a degenerate state in which the will to work was lost, the urge to self-help was broken, and degradation and dependency were the results'.<sup>56</sup> The conflation of hardening attitudes to the dependent poor and a welfare regime of intended harshness led, as Jessica Sheetz-Nguyen argues, to a system which was 'disastrous in every respect for the people it aimed to help' and one which the poor strove to avoid.<sup>57</sup> With these issues in mind, this section explores the ways in which the changing social, legal and cultural contexts of welfare impacted upon the Elsecar poor and influenced their efforts to negotiate and secure relief. I argue that the Earls' welfare provision, rooted as it was in traditional social relationships of authority and deference, provided a welcome alternative to the Parish authorities.

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<sup>54</sup> Steven King, 'Rights, Duties and Practice in the Transition Between the Old and New Poor Laws 1820s-1860s', in Peter Jones & Steven King (eds), *Obligation, Entitlement and Dispute Under the English Poor Laws* (Cambridge, 2015), p. 290.

<sup>55</sup> Marilyn D. Button & Jessica A. Sheetz-Nguyen (eds), *Victorians and the Case for Charity: Essays on Responses to English Poverty by the State, the Church and the Literati* (Jefferson, 2014), p. 9.

<sup>56</sup> Michael E. Rose, 'The Disappearing Pauper: Victorian Attitudes to the Relief of the Poor', in Eric M. Sigsworth (ed.), *In Search of Victorian Values: Aspects of Nineteenth-Century Thought and Society* (Manchester, 1988), p. 57.

<sup>57</sup> Jessica A. Sheetz-Nguyen, 'The Case for Charity: 'But if I were you, I should Certainly go into the Workhouse'', in Marilyn D. Button & Jessica A. Sheetz-Nguyen (eds), *Victorians and the Case for Charity: Essays on Responses to English Poverty by the State, the Church and the Literati* (Jefferson, 2014), p. 21.

In exploring the ways in which the poor viewed and negotiated both the Parish and the Earls, it is important to note that there appears to have been little correlation between the individuals who were the subject of the Poor Law decisions recorded in **Table 2.2** and those who petitioned the Earls for help, as recorded in the stewards' letters and other collections within the Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments. This raises the possibility that, from the petitioner's point of view, the welfare systems of the Parish and those of the Earls were seen as mutually exclusive. Work by Naomi Tadmor indicates why this might be so: Tadmor has demonstrated the way in which Poor Law authorities had little compunction about breaking up family units that were no longer seen as economically viable due to death, illness or unemployment of the main breadwinner.<sup>58</sup> This fact, together with the possibility of being consigned to the workhouse, or being coerced into forced-labour schemes such as cinder-breaking, must have acted as a powerful disincentive to all but the most desperate to apply for relief. Similarly, applying for relief involved exposing oneself and one's family to public personal and economic scrutiny by an institution that was backed by the power of the law. As I demonstrated in Chapter One, those who approached the Earls were still subject to moral scrutiny and judgement, but this process was very much a form of personal contract or understanding between the Earls and the petitioner, without the same threat of legal sanction. For this reason, petitioning the Earls for relief, rather than the parish, may have been a more attractive option for the Earls' tenants and employees.

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<sup>58</sup> Naomi Tadmor, 'Where was Mrs. Turner? Governance and Gender in an Eighteenth Century Village', in Steve Hindle, Alexandra Shepard & John Walter (eds), *Remaking English Society: Social Relations and Social Change in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge, 2013), p. 97.

With this in mind, it is significant that, of the cases recorded in the minute book, only one relates to someone who is definitely known to be in receipt of the Earls' charity, whilst a second relates to a probable recipient. The confirmed recipient was one 'Widow' Beaumont, most likely Ann Beaumont, who in the 1841 Census is recorded as living at Old Row, Elsecar, with her three sons. The census lists Ann's occupation as 'ind' [independent means]. This is a common term used in the 1841 Census to indicate people living on their own means.<sup>59</sup> Of the 40 individuals living in Elsecar in 1841 who are described thus, only three are male, whilst of the remaining 37 females, none are married and seven are described as heads of households.<sup>60</sup> In the context of Elsecar, the term thus seems to be applied mainly, but not exclusively, to women and widows who were in receipt of a Fitzwilliam pension. The second, probable recipient is Hannah Bailey, who lived at Elsecar Green and who, like Ann Beaumont, was described in the 1841 Census as being a head of household of independent means.<sup>61</sup>

In regard to Ann Beaumont, the committee ruling 'that Widow Beaumont's pay of [from] Elsecar be taken off' clearly indicates that the Parish authorities regarded the Earls' welfare provisions as a means by which the financial burden to the parish of the statutory duty of poor relief could be reduced.<sup>62</sup> In this, the committee followed a practise that has been examined in detail by John Benson in regard to miners' Friendly Societies. Under the terms of the New Poor Law, guardians were directed to include in their assessment any payments made by friendly societies, sick clubs and similar bodies to their members, reducing the level of relief support provided by the

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<sup>59</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_Kingdom\\_Census\\_1841](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom_Census_1841) [accessed 11/08/2015].

<sup>60</sup> 1841 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Hoyland Poor Law Committee minute book, entry for 5th January 1844, BA, LD/1994/38, p. 13.

parish accordingly. Benson notes that this directive was often ignored in coalmining districts, to the extent that in 1840 a Poor Law Commission minute was issued which condemned the practice.<sup>63</sup> Although reducing parish payments to members of Friendly Societies was widely regarded in mining districts as a disincentive for working people to take their own steps to insure against the ever-present likelihood of accident or injury, it remained official Poor Law Commission policy until 1894.<sup>64</sup> Whilst clearly in the spirit of the law, the Hoyland committee's attitude in including the Earl's welfare payments in their assessments appears retrograde when viewed in the context of the more pragmatic and sympathetic approach in other mining communities. Some idea of the actual human impact of such a parsimonious interpretation of the legislation can be seen in the newspaper report of the death of 16-year-old Joseph Stocks, killed in a railway accident at Hemingfield, near Elsecar, in May 1858. At the inquest into his death, the Coroner, noting the poverty of his family, suggested that the parish should pay for his funeral. They declined, stating that as the deceased had a few shillings wages due to him, they could not justify the expense. After some discussion, Stock's employer volunteered to pay for the funeral himself, whilst the general unhappiness amongst those present at the parish overseer's decision resulted in a spontaneous collection for the family, to which the Coroner himself contributed.<sup>65</sup>

For the poor, this attitude, and the method of calculation used in Ann Beaumont's case, clearly demonstrate that the likelihood of substantially improving the level of assistance they could get by making multiple applications to different authorities was

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<sup>63</sup> Benson, 'Poor Law Guardians', p. 161.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 1st May 1858, p. 6.

extremely slight. Ann herself was only granted one additional shilling a week from the parish to supplement her Fitzwilliam pension which, in keeping with the amounts paid by the estate to other industrial widows in the village, is likely to have been two shillings sixpence per week. Anne's total allowance was thus only sixpence per week higher than 'Widow' Crossley, who was supported by the parish with a three shilling a week pension and 'a load of coals'.<sup>66</sup> As this example demonstrates, the opportunities for increasing one's income substantially by appealing to both the Parish and the Earls was severely limited.

As this study demonstrates, the Hoyland Poor Law Committee and the Earls Fitzwilliam demonstrated similar concerns in their attempts to relieve poverty within the parish, forming parallel structures which, in times of acute distress, could act in concert. Each had a similar goal to provide for the physical welfare of the poor, but each also had a concern for imposing and promoting moral behaviour, deference and hierarchy. For the poor, negotiating these structures thus necessarily involved exposure to moral inquiry, and both the Committee and the Earls were able to wield a coercive power in their relations with the poor. However, whilst the power of the parish authorities was legally-sanctioned and was in a transitional period which would ultimately lead to the harsher regime of the new Poor Law, the Earls' structures of relief, as I explored in Chapter One, were based on the continuation of traditional relationships of deference and obligation. The significance of the Earls' paternalistic welfare thus lies in providing an alternative to the Poor Law in which the applicant could continue to be sure of their rhetorical and strategic place, a welcome alternative

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<sup>66</sup> Hoyland Poor Law Committee minute book, entry for 3rd October 1845, BA, LD/1994/38, p. 21.

to applying to what John Broad terms the 'last resort'<sup>67</sup> of the Poor Law. However, as he argues, by appealing to charity providers such as the Earls, local 'power relationships were brought into play [...] thereby reinforcing deference'.<sup>68</sup> As I explore in the concluding chapter to this thesis, contemporary Elsecar villagers' perceptions of the Earls are largely coloured by the Earls' welfare provision. As a result, this facet of their historic role plays a part in popular memory that seems to be out of all proportion to the actual scale and extent of their interventions. The fact that the Earls provided a useful and necessary alternative to the Poor Law and in so doing, as John Board implies, strengthened traditional social bonds, goes some way to explain this phenomenon.

### **Magor Cusworth's Gathering and the Simon Wood Colliery Accident Fund**

Whether appealing to the Earls Fitzwilliam or to the parish, the common experience of petitioners in applying for relief in times of hardship was the need to engage with structures of authority that had the power of scrutiny, censure and sanction. Such an engagement was both a reflection and a manifestation of social inequality, and in recognition of this, some researchers into the Poor Law in particular have sought to stress the agency of the poor in negotiations of this type.<sup>69</sup> Other research has looked at the wider social and economic context of poor relief, emphasising that an appeal to the parish or a local charity institution was only one of a number of strategies that the poor utilised in attempting to survive economic hardship.<sup>70</sup> Margaret Hanly's work on Lancashire, for example, points to the 'economy of makeshifts' of the poor, in which

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<sup>67</sup> John Broad, 'Parish Economies of Welfare, 1650-1834', *Historical Journal* 42.4 (1999), p. 986.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 987.

<sup>69</sup> King, 'Negotiating the Law of Poor Relief', p. 413.

<sup>70</sup> King & Tomkins, *The Poor in England*, p. 13.

recourse to the Poor Law or to the 'charitable donation' were strategies to be employed where necessary, along with 'work [...] the help from kin and neighbours, [...] credit both social and fiscal', and 'the place of crime in the survival of many at the very edges of destitution'.<sup>71</sup> Hanly's work is important in that it sites the agency of the poor in diverse locations and situations which are not necessarily dependent upon the engagement with external authority. In this section, I will look at one of those aspects of welfare in which, as Hanly suggests, engagement with the authorities might be avoided, namely the recourse to informal community structures of mutual support. I will demonstrate how the Elsecar villagers, working together, organised and structured their own responses to poverty, an example of community co-operation and agency which existed alongside, and subverted, the authoritarian structures of welfare provided by the parish and the Earls.

Jamie L. Bronstein has examined the phenomenon of mutuality in the context of industrial accidents, and has demonstrated how various forms of mutual support amongst industrial workers were a viable means through which communities could share the burden, and thus limit the economic impact, of crises such as death, disease and injury.<sup>72</sup> Bronstein's particular insight is not to view this as a desperate strategy of individuals who were otherwise devoid of assistance, but rather as a deliberate and successful coping strategy, a demonstration of community agency.

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<sup>71</sup> Margaret Hanly, 'The Economy of Makeshifts and the Role of the Poor Law: A Game of Chance?', in Steven King & Alannah Tomkins (eds), *The Poor In England 1700-1850: An Economy of Makeshifts* (Manchester, 2003), p. 79.

<sup>72</sup> Jamie L. Bronstein, *Caught in the Machinery: Workplace Accidents and Injured Workers in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Stanford, 2008), p. 48.



One key strategy identified by Bronstein is the 'gathering', a collection organised by workmates in an informal manner for an individual or individuals in need. The significance of the gathering is that, whilst various forms of public collection and subscription were common in the nineteenth century, particularly as responses to major disasters, these inevitably involved administration by some form of social elite who, as in the cases of the Parish authorities and the Earls' administration, controlled access to the collected funds and judged the worthiness of the recipients. Gatherings, by contrast, entirely circumvent the involvement, and interference, of the 'better sort'. Similarly, whilst payments from friendly societies, sick clubs and even disaster relief funds could attract the attention of the poor law authorities, gatherings by their nature would have been less visible, and so might offer the recipient a means of securing additional financial assistance above the base subsistence level of relief offered by the Parish or the Earls.

In May 1850, the Sheffield and Rotherham Independent published a 'humorous' article, designed to entertain its readers, which drew attention to standards of literacy amongst the Elsecar miners. In so doing, the newspaper inadvertently preserved for posterity vital ephemeral evidence regarding the practice of gatherings at Elsecar:

A SCHOOLMASTER WANTED ABROAD – the following is a verbatim copy of a public notice, which has been posted about Elsecar coal-pits:

May 11th 1850. They Will Be a Gathering at Mr. J. Cooper office for all that are Disposed to Give aney small will be thankefulley Recd for Magor Cusworth who as being a Long time of Work 31 Weeks. Collectors – John Beardshall, Thomas Hoyland [spelling as given throughout].<sup>73</sup>

This rare chance survival clearly demonstrates the practice of gatherings at Elsecar. It is confirmed by a letter from the miner John Gibson, who, as I noted in Chapter One,

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<sup>73</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 18th May 1850, p. 6.

had embezzled money belonging to a miners' fund. Gibson wrote 'In January the 18th 1835 I received the charge and care of the gathering book and money in hand the sum I think was £3 15s accordingly to *our custom* [my emphasis] to pay the sick and lame'.<sup>74</sup> Gibson's testimony thus demonstrates that Magor Cusworth's gathering was part of a custom of miners' self help that had been established at Elsecar for at least 15 years.

This evidence of gatherings provides a window through which details of the informal association of the Elsecar miners come briefly into focus. Magor (or Major) Cusworth, for example, was a miner aged approximately 40, who lived at Reform Row, Elsecar.<sup>75</sup> He was clearly well-enough known and regarded in the village and mining community for a notice of his predicament to be expected to lead to a financial demonstration of community support. Similarly, both John Beardshall and Thomas Hoyland were middle-aged miners<sup>76</sup> whose personal authority, status or integrity must have been such that their self-appointed role of collectors would be accepted. In this respect, **Table 2.1** makes it clear that Hoyland had served as a parish constable in the 1840s and so was probably well-known in the village. The day of the collection (a Saturday) and the place (the mine agent Joshua Cooper's office) are both significant, making it clear that Beardshall and Hoyland intended the gathering to be made whilst the Elsecar miners were collecting their wages at the end of the working week. Magor Cusworth's gathering thus indicates the existence of informal structures of support that run parallel to the official channels explored above. These structures

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<sup>74</sup> John Gibson to 5th Earl Fitzwilliam, 14th December 1835, SA, WWM/Stw P/14/2-81.

<sup>75</sup> 1841 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

<sup>76</sup> 1841 and 1851 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

of support functioned through a sense of worthiness that derived from individual and collective agency and interaction, rather than from an imposed hierarchical authority.

The final evidence of networks of mutual support dates to approximately ten years after Magor Cusworth's gathering. It comes in the form of a printed document entitled *Rules of the Simon Wood Colliery Accident Fund, Elsecar, Established Oct. 1, 1860*. This document sets out a total of 23 rules to be observed by the subscribers to the accident fund, each of whom was to pay 1s per month for a full membership and 6d per month for a half membership.<sup>77</sup> The benefits of membership included sick pay of 7s per week for 26 weeks for a full member, 3s 6d per week for 26 weeks for a half member, with a reduction in payments for both types of member if they remained off work for over 26 weeks. Finally, each full member was to receive '£3 as Funeral Money', should his accident 'terminate in death within 12 months from the time of [the accident] happening'.<sup>78</sup> The last clause in particular is a sobering reflection on the likelihood of suffering severe and long-lasting injury within the Elsecar mines.

Graham Hobson has drawn attention to the fact that the average Fitzwilliam widow's pension declined from approximately £12 per year in 1795 to £7 in 1856.<sup>79</sup> Similarly, the average weekly payment to injured miners in 1852 was 2s 6d,<sup>80</sup> an apparent reduction in relation to the amounts paid to earlier colliers, such as John Jessop, who

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<sup>77</sup> *Rules of the Simon Wood Colliery Accident Fund, Elsecar, Established Oct. 1, 1860* (Hoyland, 1860); Simon Wood Colliery was located on the canal bank in Elsecar and was opened in circa 1850. In 1860 it would have been the major Fitzwilliam colliery in the village, and the major employer of Elsecar miners, along with the Earls' Hemingfield (also known as Elsecar Low) Colliery, located a mile along the canal bank to the north-east.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>79</sup> Graham Hobson, *Wentworth: A Brief History Volume 4: The Rockingham and Fitzwilliam Industries* (Rotherham, 1997), p. 152.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.

was awarded 7s per week in October 1818.<sup>81</sup> With these observations in mind, it seems likely that the colliery fund was at least in part a response to the diminishing actual value over time of the Earls' provision for the poor. However, as the rules also demonstrate, the role of the fund was not solely economic. In setting out the terms and conditions of membership, the document contains a number of interesting clauses which were designed to prevent the abuse of the fund. Clause 14, for example, states that 'any member being found drunk and disorderly, or doing any kind of work towards obtaining a livelihood while receiving accident pay, shall be fined 2s 6d'.<sup>82</sup> Significantly, 'any member knowing of the same' who did not inform the committee was to be fined the same amount whilst, in Clause 15, 'any member going above the distance of two miles from his residence whilst receiving sick pay' or 'being found out of doors after nine o'clock at night while receiving the benefit of this fund' was also to be subject to a fine.<sup>83</sup> These clauses are significant in that they are a clear expression of the desire to regulate and police the moral behaviour of the society members. Whereas Magor Cusworth might expect help from his workmates by virtue of his personal qualities and status within the community, the subscribers to the Simon Wood Colliery fund acquiesced to formal rules and standards of conduct which were set down and mutually agreed.

Daniel Weinbren has explored the social significance of friendly and mutual societies. Drawing upon Marcel Mauss' theories of gift exchange, he argues that participation in

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<sup>81</sup> List of charitable donations, circa 1803-1839, SA, WWM/A/1411.

<sup>82</sup> *Rules of the Simon Wood Colliery Accident Fund, Elsecar, Established Oct. 1, 1860.* (Hoyland, 1860), p. 3.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

such societies involved a 'triple obligation to give, receive and return "gifts"'.<sup>84</sup> Through this cyclic transfer of gifts (in this context, the subscriptions and payments outlined in the rule book) the members of the society were bound together by social ties, in which 'reciprocity was more than an economic survival strategy, it helped to create communities based on obligation'.<sup>85</sup> As Carolyn Steedman notes, such societies, by promoting common interests and sociability, 'formalised the relationships of common life'.<sup>86</sup> From a Marxist perspective, the formalisation of informal networks of neighbourhood reciprocity represented by the growth of friendly societies has been seen as indicative of the formation of a nascent class identity, 'the first real opportunity [for the proletariat] for self-government in a world where they were otherwise dominated and dispossessed'.<sup>87</sup> In this respect, it is important to note that the Simon Wood Colliery fund was set up just two years after the 6th Earl had suppressed attempts by Elsecar miners to join a trade union.<sup>88</sup> Similarly, Andy Wood has demonstrated how the lead miners' friendly societies in the Peak District at the end of the eighteenth century took an active role in labour politics and industrial disputes.<sup>89</sup> Returning to the Elsecar evidence, the establishment of informal networks of support that are represented by Magor Cusworth's gathering, and the formalisation of these networks evident in the Simon Wood accident fund, represent important examples of community agency and community self-governance.

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<sup>84</sup> Daniel Weinbren, 'Supporting Self-help: Charity, Mutuality and Reciprocity in Nineteenth Century Britain', in Paul Bridgen & Harris Bernard (eds), *Charity and Mutual Aid in Europe and North America Since 1800* (London, 2007), p. 68.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> Carolyn Steedman, *An Everyday Life of the English Working Class: Work, Self and Sociability in the Early Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 73.

<sup>87</sup> Koditscheck, *Class Formation*, p. 463.

<sup>88</sup> This event, which took place in the context of the 1858 coal strike, is examined in Chapter Six.

<sup>89</sup> Andy Wood, *The Politics of Social Conflict: The Peak Country, 1520-1770* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 318.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I examined the operation of the Hoyland Poor Law committee, and the ways that the committee intersected with the lives of the poor. As I discussed in the introductory chapter, the historiography of Elsecar has hitherto been dominated by studies which have looked at the actions of the Earls Fitzwilliam in isolation. This study reminds us that the Fitzwilliams' paternalist provision of welfare in fact existed alongside well-established structures of Parish welfare and relief. As I demonstrated, the Parish authorities and the Earls shared a broad common outlook in their provision of welfare and on occasion collaborated together to that end. However, whilst the Earls' paternalist provision of welfare continued to be based in traditional social relationships and hierarchies of deference, Parish welfare provision in the transitional period from the Old Poor Law to the New Poor Law was characterised by hardening of attitudes towards the poor and a consequent decline in pauper agency. As a result the Earls' welfare provision functioned as a welcome and necessary alternative to the Parish authorities.

I also examined the evidence relating to a third option for the poor, namely the recourse to alternative, informal strategies of welfare provision that were organised by the village community itself. This community welfare provision avoided the requirement to negotiate structures permeated with elitist conceptions of class, morality and social order. Rather, the informal networks of support discussed in this chapter emphasised the importance of social relationships between the villagers themselves, stressing issues such as kinship, mutuality, workplace association and personal worth or status. For this reason, they are important evidence for not only the collective agency, but also for issues such as identity and the structuring of the

community. In the second section of this thesis (Chapters Three and Four), I will continue to explore the structuring of social relationships through different categories of meaning and identity.

### **Chapter Three: The World of Work**

#### **Introduction**

In the previous two chapters, I explored the relationship between the inhabitants of Elsecar and two distinct but complementary structures of authority, the Earls Fitzwilliam and the Hoyland Parish authorities. I showed how, rather than being a passive relationship, engagement with these authorities involved active individual and collective agency on the part of the villagers. I also demonstrated how, despite the social welfare role of the Earls and the Parish, the villagers found it necessary and desirable to form their own informal and formal networks of mutual support. These networks of support gave structure to social relationships between the villagers, emphasising kinship, mutuality, workplace association and personal worth or status. In this second section of the thesis (Chapters Three and Four), I will continue to explore the structuring of social relationships. In this chapter (Chapter Three), I will begin by looking at the world of work and its relationship to issues of gender, hierarchy and identity. In Chapter Four, I explore aspects of everyday life beyond work. As I will demonstrate, these analytical categories and the way in which they interrelate are vital in understanding how the villagers interacted together and functioned as a community.

In a sense, the focus of this chapter follows the preoccupations of traditional labour historiography, which holds that the experience of work is the primary factor in the formation of plebian identity and agency. However, this foregrounding of work, and the emphasis which it has placed upon class, has tended to obscure other aspects of plebian lived experience and their significance. This has been recognised, for



example, by Anna Clark, who suggests that the historical idealisation of plebian communities as cohesive, monolithic nurseries of class consciousness in particular marginalises the role of women both at work and in the wider world beyond the workplace.<sup>1</sup> Clark's work is important in reminding us of a fundamental limitation of many of the more traditional labour history studies of work and class, namely that they tend to stress the male experience of work. As Amanda Vickery argues, this has led to historical analyses which tend to focus on 'the making of a class with the women left out'.<sup>2</sup> As Vickery notes, the female experience of work in the period circa 1780-1850 is crucial in illuminating the relationship between two dominant narratives of women's history, namely, the perceived separation of the spheres of public power and private domesticity in the nineteenth century, and the related social and economic marginalisation of women as a consequence of the development of industrial capitalism.<sup>3</sup>

It will be readily appreciated that the development of Elsecar forms a unique opportunity to explore the veracity of these historical narratives of gender at a local level and to engage with the historiographical debate surrounding them. To this end, the aim of this chapter is to broaden the focus of much of the previous work on Elsecar away from an emphasis towards the male experience of work, and instead to present a comparative study of the types of employment opportunities and working lives experienced by both men and women. The key issues I address are the extent to which employment opportunities in the industrialising village differed for men and

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<sup>1</sup> Anna Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches: Gender and the Making of the British Working Class* (California, 1995), p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Amanda Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *Historical Journal* 36.2 (1993), p. 394.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 383.

women and, following on from this, the extent to which women in the village experienced economic marginalisation due to industrialisation. Implicit in this examination is the issue of changing opportunities over time, and so the identification of change in employment structures is also an important theme in this research. These issues – employment opportunities, change and gender difference – are of crucial importance because they feed into the wider historical debate regarding the perceived economic, social and spatial marginalisation of women in the nineteenth century.

Characterising the nature of men's and women's employment in Elsecar will also facilitate a consideration of the role of employment as a factor in the creation of personal and collective identities. As I will argue, occupation is a component of identity which helps to frame and structure wider social relationships within the community, with a direct relationship to other analytical categories such as class and gender. A key aim of this chapter is thus to understand how employment influenced and structured the development of the community over time. As I will show, employment, whilst not the sole source of social identity, was nevertheless of great importance in the structuring of social relationships. It structured hierarchies and gradations within particular trades, functioned as an indicator of social status and influenced personal networks of association. These workplace-derived gradations of status were thus important factors in the formation of personal identities, and so the study of work as an analytical category is important in characterising the social alignments, networks of conviviality and fault lines of conflict which I will explore later in this thesis.

As I will show, women's work in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Elsecar was organised in relation to kinship networks and involved seasonal agrarian work, as well as employment opportunities within the nascent industries of coal and iron-working. This work was predominantly short-term, of low status and was closely linked to life cycle. As I will demonstrate, these employment opportunities for women decreased as the nineteenth century progressed, in marked contrast to the opportunities available to men. This study of women's employment in Elsecar in circa 1750-1860 is thus important in allowing us to view the processes of industrialisation, and economic marginalisation, and their impact upon gender and social relationships in microcosm. As Nigel Goose notes, such local studies are important in adding detail to a picture of women's experiences of industrial work which in many respects still remains unclear.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Sources**

The main sources for this chapter are the 1841, 1851 and 1861 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Parish. I have compiled these into a searchable database to allow cross-referencing between individuals and families. These sources provide detailed employment and social information for the decades at the very end of the study period, a period of significant change and growth for Elsecar. With regard to the period from circa 1750 to 1840, the available sources are less comprehensive and consist mainly of documents relating to the Earls' colliery and household accounts. The colliery accounts prior to 1811, for example, list payments to named workers, whilst the household accounts contain several lists of employees in the latter half of

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<sup>4</sup> Nigel Goose, 'Working Women in Industrial England', in Nigel Goose (ed.), *Women's Work in Industrial England: Regional and Local Perspectives* (Hatfield, 2007), p. 14.

the eighteenth century. A further significant source of employment information for this period is the composite register of the Chapelry of Hoyland Nether.<sup>5</sup> This covers the period 1748-1864 and the list of baptisms gives the fathers' employment. Used together, these sources provide valuable information on the nature of employment within Elsecar prior to the 1841 Census.

With regard to the censuses themselves, it is important to note that, as Edward Higgs has demonstrated, census information is highly problematic in that, due to particular biases inherent in both the questions asked of householders and the way in which information was collated by enumerators, particular categories of information, in particular those relating to female occupation, were underrepresented or misrepresented.<sup>6</sup> Robert Shoemaker has also addressed this problem, noting the under-recording of home-based, part-time and multiple occupations undertaken by women, and remarking that in the 1851 Census 'half the adult female population of London were listed with no occupation, which is implausible'.<sup>7</sup> He also argues that, as masculine identity was closely linked with occupational status, men tended to define themselves in the census by their most prestigious occupation, regardless of whether this was their sole or main occupation.<sup>8</sup> As a result, male occupations tend to be over-recorded. Despite these problems, which will be more fully addressed below, the census data does allow some important insights into the economic and occupational characteristics of the village. Equally importantly, the extrapolation of data from the 1851 Census and the cross-referencing of this to the 1841 and 1861 Census data has

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<sup>5</sup> Composite parish registers for the Chapelry of Hoyland Nether, 1748-1864, SA, microfilm no. SY 337/xi/86.

<sup>6</sup> Edward Higgs, 'Women, Occupations and Work in the Nineteenth Century Censuses', *History Workshop* 23 (1987), pp. 59-80.

<sup>7</sup> Robert B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society* (London, 1998), p. 149.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

allowed an insight into the social organisation of the village through the analysis of household relationships and inter-household kinship ties.

### **Women's Employment**

In examining the apparent marginalisation of women, as explored by Anna Clark in her 1995 book *The Struggle for the Breeches*, Mary Hartman argues that women actually played a key, but largely unrecognised role in decision-making and the formulation of family strategies and that, because of this, 'married women in the new working classes attained more power and autonomy within households in the nineteenth century'.<sup>9</sup> Women's considerable contribution to the household economy was often tacitly acknowledged by the Poor Law Guardians, for example, even though in their rulings they strove to preserve the ideal of the male as the main breadwinner.<sup>10</sup> However, whilst the economic contribution of women is thus not in doubt, locating hard evidence of women's employment in historical sources is not easy. As Keith McClelland observes, it involves locating 'a few snippets here and there, the fragmentary reference, but mainly silence'.<sup>11</sup> In his examination of bias in mid nineteenth-century census returns, Edward Higgs has shown that this 'silence' is largely a question of indifference in that the census designers, enumerators, and indeed probably many of the census participants were fundamentally uninterested in women's work, particularly when this occurred in a domestic or part-time context. The explanation for this indifference was one of gender:

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<sup>9</sup> Mary S. Hartman, *The Household and the Making of History: A Subversive View of the Western Past* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 238, 266.

<sup>10</sup> Levine-Clark, 'The Gendered Economy', p. 74.

<sup>11</sup> Keith McClelland, 'Some Thoughts on Masculinity and the "Representative Artisan" in Britain, 1850-1880', *Gender & History* 1.2 (1989), p. 165.

This process [of compiling the census] was a predominantly male affair. The basic means of data collection was a schedule to be filled in by the 'household head' who was usually male. Indeed the individuals in the household were to be explicitly arranged in terms of their relationship to this patriarch. The enumerators were appointed by male registrars and women were not eligible for such employment until 1891.<sup>12</sup>

Higgs' analysis reaches a similar conclusion to that of Katrina Honeyman and Jordan Goodman, who argue that women had been marginalised in an unskilled, low status, insecure labour market since at least circa 1500.<sup>13</sup> Notwithstanding the crucial role played by female labour in industrialisation, they argue that this marginalisation was reinforced from the 1820s onward through a combination of interlocking factors. These included legislation which excluded women from certain trades, a growing cultural discourse which foregrounded the role of the male breadwinner, and the idealisation of domesticity, all of which emphasised gender inequality in the labour market.<sup>14</sup>

It is fair to say that these contemporary constructions of gender and social relations have to an extent permeated the historiography of the period, which emphasises the male experience of work, the social relations of the male workplace and male association and co-operation as the fundamental motors of the development of working-class consciousness. Other work has, however, begun to challenge interpretations of this kind. Maxine Berg, for example, has argued strongly for the importance of the hitherto largely overlooked economic contribution made by women

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<sup>12</sup> Higgs, 'Women, Occupations and Work', p. 62.

<sup>13</sup> Katrina Honeyman & Jordan Goodman, 'Women's Work, Gender Conflict, and Labour Markets in Europe, 1500-1900', *Economic History Review* 44.4 (1991), p. 610.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

in the industrial revolution.<sup>15</sup> Sally Alexander has made a devastating critique of traditional Marxist and labour history's inability to accommodate feminist perspectives, framing her call for a history that deals with 'women's subjectivity and active agency'<sup>16</sup> with an illuminating account of her own experience of a call for a 'Women's History' study group at the 1969 Ruskin History Workshop being met with 'a gust of masculine laughter'.<sup>17</sup> Finally, noting developments in labour history since the 1970s, Keith McClelland argues that gender is the 'fundamental category of difference' in the structuring of social and technical divisions of labour.<sup>18</sup> In the light of work by Vickery, Clark, Alexander and McClelland, it will be readily appreciated that the study of gender inequalities as they are manifested in the world of work is important in illuminating the fault lines of gender which permeated the wider social world, their role in structuring social interaction and, hence, their role in the formation of identity.

In terms of the specific historiography of Elsecar, it is fair to say that a focus upon the male industrial worker and the paternalist overlord has dominated the historical debate, leading to a particularly gendered narrative of the development of the village. For example, Graham Mee states that two female miners were employed at Elsecar in 1795, a gin-driver and a hurrier (a transporter of coal underground), but that 'by the early nineteenth century no females appeared on the list of mine employees'.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, Arthur Clayton, in his examination of the Elsecar Colliery accounts, notes

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<sup>15</sup> Maxine Berg, 'What Difference Did Women's Work Make to the Industrial Revolution?', *History Workshop* 35 (1993), pp. 22-44.

<sup>16</sup> Alexander, 'Women, Class and Sexual Differences', p. 127.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> McClelland, 'Some Thoughts on Masculinity', p. 165.

<sup>19</sup> Mee, *Aristocratic Enterprise*, p.133. Mee gives no document reference for this statement.

that 'the only times women are mentioned are in connection with work in the fields'.<sup>20</sup> However, neither author fully explores the social or historical implications of their findings. For Mee, the information regarding women's employment is only of significance in that it highlights the progressive nature of the Earls' paternalistic management. He states, for example, that the concerns of the 1841 Children's Employment Commission regarding female mine labour 'did not apply [in the Fitzwilliam pits] for no females were employed and had not been for a very long time',<sup>21</sup> a fact that, for him, illustrated that 'the Fitzwilliams were somewhat exceptional employers'.<sup>22</sup> Mee's assessment of the significance of women to the history of Elsecar is perhaps best summed up by the fact that, having located two of the exceptionally rare records relating to female miners at Elsecar, he neglects to record the name of either woman. Given this paucity of both evidence and previous interpretation, the aim of this section is to explore and interpret aspects of women's working lives and experiences in the village, as they are revealed by the available evidence. Since the evidence relating to women's lives and work at Elsecar is considerably more fragmentary and opaque than that for men, the aim will be to examine individual examples and case studies, supported by census data, in order to identify any underlying structures or trends relating to women's employment and to consider their social significance within the development of the village.

### **Evidence for Women's Employment: The Census Data**

Some indication of the nature and scale of women's employment in Elsecar can be gleaned in the first instance through an examination of the 1841, 1851 and 1861

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<sup>20</sup> Clayton, 'Coal Mining at Hoyland', p. 91.

<sup>21</sup> Mee, *Aristocratic Enterprise*, p. 133.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*



Census returns. A comparison of these three sources is useful in that it gives a picture of employment in a period which witnessed the expansion and consolidation of Elsecar's industrial base, as well as straddling the introduction of important government legislation regarding the employment of women in mines.

The occupational results for women from the 1841 Census are given in **Table 3.1** (Appendix 2). Clearly, a major problem in interpreting these results stems from the fact that no occupational information was recorded for over 70% of the female population. Following the census critiques of Higgs and Shoemaker, this figure undoubtedly masks the real contribution that was made by women to the domestic economy, both in terms of unpaid work within the household and in terms of the participation as partners or collaborators in family businesses. In this respect, the fundamental disinterest of the compilers of the census in domestic occupation is perhaps best demonstrated by the entry for Margaret Dixon of New Row, Elsecar. Margaret, aged 35, lived with seven-year-old Henry Dixon and five-year-old Ann Dixon, and appears to have been either a single mother or a widow, there being no adult male listed within the household. The enumerator has written Margaret's occupation as 'housewife'.<sup>23</sup> He has also used the same term to describe Olive Ross of the nearby village of Stubbin and Jane Wilkinson of the hamlet of Skier's Hall. However, in all three cases, the word 'housewife' has been crossed out.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> 1841 Census Returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

<sup>24</sup> 1841 Census Returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

A second category of difficulty is that of 'independent means'.<sup>25</sup> As I discussed in Chapter Two, this term is commonly used in the 1841 Census to indicate people living on their own means.<sup>26</sup> The term is perhaps best understood as a means of recording pensions and multiple, part-time, temporary or informal non-domestic occupations which, whilst generating an income in the sense that was understood by the census enumerators, nevertheless did not fit tidily into any one particular category. The final category of interest is that of 'female servant'. Again, in the light of the census instruction quoted above, this category would relate to waged servants only, as opposed to women assisting in the running of a family business or within the home. It is significant that, of the nine female servants, eight were aged from 15 to 19 (Martha Hawk, Margaret Evans, Elizabeth Bingley, Elizabeth Swift, Jane Kay, Mary Bailey, Nancy Fish and Ann Cook), whilst only one was aged over 20 (Ann Boid, aged 25). This confirms the idea that, for young women, employment as servants tended to be a lifecycle stage 'which was typically abandoned on marriage'.<sup>27</sup>

The results from the 1851 Census, which are presented in **Table 3.2** (Appendix 2), are very similar to those of 1841. Once again, no occupational information was supplied for the majority of the women in the village. This category has actually increased in size, perhaps due to the abandonment of the term 'independent means' which was used in the 1841 Census. The instructions for the 1851 Census state that 'the occupations of women who are regularly employed from home, or at home, in any but domestic duties, [are] to be distinctly recorded'.<sup>28</sup> With this in mind, the great

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<sup>25</sup> 1841 Census Returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

<sup>26</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_Kingdom\\_Census\\_1841](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom_Census_1841) [accessed 11/08/2015].

<sup>27</sup> Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society*, p. 178.

<sup>28</sup> Higgs, 'Women, Occupations and Work', p. 63.

silence regarding women's employment manifest in the census returns would itself be strong evidence for the significance of domestic and irregular working patterns amongst women.

In terms of the other categories, it is interesting to note a slight increase in the number of house servants. The house servants and servants listed range in age from 12 to 43, all being unmarried women. Of these, all appear to have received wages except Jane Hinston. Hinston, 23, lived with widower William Wigfield, 36, a coal mine labourer, and his three young children. She is listed as 'servant' in the column headed 'relationship to head of household' but, unlike the other servants listed in the census, does not have an entry in the 'occupation' column. Whether Jane was a member of Wigfield's extended family who was given bed and board in return for looking after his home and children, or whether the census return actually masks a more intimate relationship between Jane and William, is not readily apparent. Also of interest is Ann Spince, 15, from Knottingley. Spince is recorded as a 'servant', living on board a canal boat moored at Elsecar basin that was captained by Ambrose Hendrix. Also on board were Hendrix's wife, Hannah, their eleven month old son (also Ambrose) and Timothy Crowther, 21, listed as a 'boatman'.<sup>29</sup> The gendered professional distinction between Crowther and Spince is an interesting one in that the preservation of strict gender roles aboard a cramped barge with minimal domestic or living space seems somewhat unlikely.

In relation to the increase in dressmakers, Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall point to millinery and dressmaking as a major occupational category for middle-class

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<sup>29</sup> 1851 Census Returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

women in the 1850s as opportunities for employment in other sectors narrowed.<sup>30</sup> Jane Tozer and Sarah Levitt also see dressmaking as being 'one of the few areas open to the many women forced to support themselves',<sup>31</sup> but their association of dressmakers with a particular class is less explicit. They instead draw attention to the fact that 'most classes'<sup>32</sup> had their dresses made professionally in the mid-nineteenth century, as cutting the fabric in an era before the introduction of paper dress patterns was a skilled process.<sup>33</sup> Of the five Elsecar dressmakers, three (Sarah Boyd, Mary Hawke and Mary Walker) were single women, whilst Ann Hoyland and Hannah Cusworth were both married. Hannah Cusworth was the wife of Magor Cusworth, the miner whose prolonged illness in the previous year had prompted a 'gathering' (a collection) for him amongst his workmates.<sup>34</sup> None of the five women could be termed middle-class, although the fact that all five appear to have obtained regular employment through dressmaking would tend to indicate an increasing market demand, perhaps due to a growing middle-class element within the village.

The 1861 Census information is presented in **Table 3.3** (Appendix 2). Once again, no occupational information is provided for over 70% of the adult female population. For the remainder, service of various kinds continued to be an important source of employment, with 24 of the 64 women (37.5%) for whom information is provided being employed in this category. The census data also indicates women in a widening variety of retail roles, such as 'assistant beerhouse keeper', 'servant bar maid',

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<sup>30</sup> Leonore Davidoff & Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (London, 1987), p. 313.

<sup>31</sup> Jane Tozer, & Sarah Levitt, *Fabric of Society: A Century of People and Their Clothes 1770-1870* (Cardiff, 1983), p. 79.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Tozer & Levitt, *Fabric of Society*, p. 79.

<sup>34</sup> See page 127 of this thesis.

'smallware dealer' and 'greengrocer', as well as dressmaking and millinery (eight individuals or 12.5% of those women for whom information is provided). The 1861 Census returns thus demonstrates a diversification of employment for women, but it is important to note that the number of women employed within these new retail professions remained low.

One point to emerge from the data is the inclusion under 'profession' of details which are related to social situation and background, rather than occupation. These include categories such as 'receiving parochial relief', 'collier's widow', 'deserted wife' and 'idiot', the latter being a bald assessment of one individual's disability. From this, it is clear that there is a system of social judgement implicit in the enumerator's categorisations and, given the foregrounding of male breadwinners in this period, it is telling that many women are categorised in relation to male occupational identities. These include categories such as 'brickmaker's daughter' and 'iron puddler's wife', whilst the category 'charwoman, husband in penal servitude' seems to have been intended as both a description and an explanation of this particular woman's employment.

Returning to service occupations, 'house servant' is statistically the largest employment group, followed by 'house keeper'. Of the twenty women within these two groups, only one is described as being married. Similarly, all of the women described as either 'seamstress' or 'dressmaker' are unmarried, suggesting that participation in these professions was closely related to life stage. In this respect, it is important to note that, of the three unmarried women listed as dressmakers in 1851, only one, Mary Walker, was still working as a dressmaker and still unmarried in

1861. In contrast to servants and dressmakers, however, women involved in the running of various businesses in Elsecar were generally married. Mary Kenworthy, described as a 'milliner and dressmaker', ran her business from the same premises as her husband, a boot maker. Similarly, 'small ware dealer' Anne Fieldsend was married to a mason, whilst 'grocer' Charlotte Evans was married to a coal-miner.

### **Other Evidence for Women's' Employment**

In general terms, the 1841, 1851 and 1861 census returns show a snapshot of employment opportunities for women towards the end of the study period of this thesis. Although the 1861 census shows increasing diversity in terms of the jobs performed by women, the number of women listed as employed remained low, and a common feature of all three censuses is the continuing importance of domestic of service of various kinds. Further additional information which helps to clarify this picture is given in a number of sources, such as the Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments. In this section, I consider this additional evidence and its implications for the changing nature of women's employment.

In the first instance, it would appear that Elsecar, as part of a great country estate and situated in a predominantly rural environment, offered opportunities that might not be immediately obvious within the context of a mining community. In 1827, for example, Joshua Biram ordered the Wentworth Estate gardener, William Jackson, to get ten women to 'gather the dung upon the lawn and rake the mown grass there, also get their plows [sic] for clearing the roads'<sup>35</sup> and in 1832 he asked John Firth to get

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<sup>35</sup> Joshua Biram to William Jackson, 28th June 1827, SA, WWM/Stw P/7/6-168.

four women with hoes to clear grass from the causeway at Wentworth House.<sup>36</sup> As well as short-term seasonal work of this nature, the estate could also offer more secure employment for women, either as servants at Wentworth House or within the estate farms, dairies and ancillary buildings. When Elizabeth Jessop's husband died in 1808, for example, both of her grown up daughters were working on the estate, one as a scullery maid at Wentworth House and the other as a maid for the estate groom Joshua Cobb.<sup>37</sup>

Whilst estate work, horticulture and agriculture thus remained important areas of female employment, it is also clear that the increasing industrialisation and economic diversification of the village and its environs presented an increasing diversity of opportunities for women as the nineteenth century progressed. In particular, shop-keeping appears to have increased, so that, by 1862, the village contained two female shopkeepers (Ann Selby and Nancy Hargreaves) and a female grocer (Mary Wigfield). Two school mistresses, Mary Tingle and Mary Allen, lived at the nearby hamlet of Stubbing, whilst Nether Hoyland boasted a female tobacconist, Emma Holshaw, and Catherine Poles, an infant school mistress.<sup>38</sup> It is important to note that the 1862 directory entries only refer to those businesses actually run by women and that a considerable number of women may have found employment as waitresses and shop assistants. Occasionally, some of these women come into brief focus in the sources, such as Martha Wilton, a servant at the Milton Arms in 1849,<sup>39</sup> Elizabeth

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<sup>36</sup> Joshua Biram to John Firth, 1st November 1832, SA, WWM/Stw P/7/6-332.

<sup>37</sup> Joshua Biram to 4th Earl Fitzwilliam, 3rd December 1808, SA, WWM Stw P/5/2/-75.

<sup>38</sup> E. S. Drake & Co., *Drake's Directory of Rotherham*, p. 85.

<sup>39</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 15th September 1849; Martha was a witness in the case against Thomas Hirst, who was accused of obtaining liquor by false pretences.

Hague, who fulfilled the same role in 1860,<sup>40</sup> or the un-named wife of William Walters, who helped her husband evict the drunken and violent Henry Johnson from their beer-shop in 1866.<sup>41</sup> Other sources shed light on less well-defined or formalised occupations, such as the scrap dealers Elizabeth Lockwood<sup>42</sup> and 'two women named Darly and Hayes'<sup>43</sup> (all of whom were implicated at different times in the theft of metal from the Elsecar Ironworks) or the widow Hannah Bottomley, who 'obtained a living by selling yeast'.<sup>44</sup>

A final case to consider is that of Mary Smith, who worked at the Elsecar Ironworks as a cleaner. In May 1827, Mary was paid 2s 6d for 'whitewashing the weigh house'.<sup>45</sup> Thereafter, she appears regularly in the accounts, earning 1s 4d every fortnight for cleaning the office and weigh house. Mary's experience sheds light on the importance of part-time or incidental work to women and to the family economy. Since the weekly pension paid by the Earls to miners' widows was 2s 6d per week, the money Mary received cannot be regarded as a living wage. Most likely, her job at the ironworks was only one of a number of employments, and she may have had a list of regular clients that she regularly cleaned for. Mary's partner, Benjamin, appears to have gained occasional work at the ironworks 'breaking limestone'.<sup>46</sup> It is telling to note that whenever Benjamin appears in the accounts, Mary's wages are added to his to create a total figure that presumably represents the combined household wage. The

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<sup>40</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent (supplement)*, 9th June 1860, p. 7.

<sup>41</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 17th November 1866.

<sup>42</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 2nd September 1843, p. 2.

<sup>43</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 27th October 1849, p. 6.

<sup>44</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 13th July 1850, p. 8; Hannah died after suffering a fatal laudanum overdose at Mayberry's chemist shop in Elsecar.

<sup>45</sup> Elsecar Ironworks accounts book, 1827-1829, BA, A/2054/F/4/1.

<sup>46</sup> Elsecar Ironworks accounts book, 1827-1829, BA, A/2054/F/4/1.



value judgements that this implies between Benjamin's labour (physical, monotonous, irregular and unreliable, but nevertheless valued and legitimised) and Mary's labour (physical, monotonous, regular and reliable, but undervalued and marginalised) stands as a powerful metaphor for the contemporary conception of the relative status of men and women's work in the village. In general then, the Elsecar evidence suggests that female employment was categorised by short-term, low-status jobs which, as the period progressed, became more focussed upon opportunities in service and retailing. Moreover, employment was loosely linked to lifecycle, so that the full-time employment of married women outside of the home seems to have been rare. However, as the case of Mary Smith demonstrates, it is likely that opportunities for part-time work outside the home continued to be a significant factor in the domestic economy.

Given this picture of employment, it is important to ask whether the Elsecar evidence can be usefully contrasted with women's experience of work in other mining communities. However, in this respect, it is important to note that there are relatively few studies which explore this issue in detail, and those that do tend to focus on the later-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, a period in which data from institutional, governmental, autobiographical and oral history sources is more abundant. There is thus no comparable study of a similar community in a similar period against which the Elsecar evidence can be tested. Despite this, it is possible to see similar themes emerging between Elsecar and studies of later mining communities, which tend to stress the dearth of employment opportunities for women

and the reliance upon domestic service and shop-keeping.<sup>47</sup> In her study of Featherstone, West Yorkshire, for example, Tina James notes that only 10% of women are recorded as being employed in the 1911 Census.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, Mari A. Williams notes that in the coal-mining area of the Rhondda in 1911, only 14.4% of women were employed.<sup>49</sup> This economic marginalisation is significant in that it is held to have resulted in a very marked genderisation of social life in mining communities into a domestic, feminine sphere and a public, masculine sphere. Valerie G. Hall, for example, argues that 'few communities revealed such rigidly segregated sex roles' as mining communities where, 'employment for women was almost totally lacking'.<sup>50</sup>

Whilst both the temporal and geographical distance from Elsecar makes a direct comparison with these later examples problematic, it is interesting to note that the overall percentage of working-age women recorded in employment in Elsecar is 15.3% in 1841, 14.7% in 1851 and 19.4% in 1861, figures somewhat higher than those cited by James and Williams. In a national context, the Elsecar figure of 14.7% for 1851 compares to the 17% adult female participation rate in employment recorded in the colliery district of Easington in the 1851 Census, itself the lowest figure recorded in that census.<sup>51</sup> It is important to recall that the Elsecar figures only relate to

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<sup>47</sup> See, for example, Mari A. Williams, 'Aspects of Women's Working Lives in the Mining Communities of South Wales, 1891-1939', *Folk Life* 38.1 (1999), p. 57, and Tina James, 'The Experiences of Employment for Women in Mining Communities: Then and Now', *Labour History Review* 60.2 (1995), p. 101.

<sup>48</sup> James, 'The Experiences of Employment for Women', p. 100.

<sup>49</sup> Williams, 'Aspects of Women's Working Lives', p.57.

<sup>50</sup> Valerie G. Hall, 'Differing Gender Roles: Women in Mining and Fishing Communities in Northumberland, England, 1880-1914', *Women's Studies International Forum* 27 (2004), p. 522.

<sup>51</sup> Leigh Shaw-Taylor, 'Diverse Experiences: The Geography of Adult Female Employment in England and the 1851 Census', in Nigel Goose (ed.), *Women's Work in Industrial England: Regional and Local Perspectives* (Hatfield, 2007), p. 44.

the village itself, not the enumeration district of Nether Hoyland as a whole. Nevertheless, they seem to mirror the general trend of coal-mining communities nationally in having the fewest occupational opportunities available for women.<sup>52</sup>

### **The Mining and Industrial-related Employment of Women**

As I intimate above, a key structural change in women's employment was the legal exclusion of women from underground work as a result of the 1842 Coal Mines Act. In this section I will examine the evidence for women's participation in mining and other industrial activities at Elsecar before that date. The purpose of this is to explore aspects of women's experience that have hitherto been overlooked, but also to examine how this participation in industry influenced the structuring of social relationships within the village. I will demonstrate how women's industrial employment was closely linked to kinship ties and networks of association.

As Arthur Clayton noted, women employed by the Elsecar collieries were, in the first instance, involved in the provision of fodder for colliery horses. The Elsecar Colliery accounts for July 1769, for example, record payments 'to Margaret Hague and Co. for labouring at the hay'.<sup>53</sup> Margaret Hague has signed the document in receipt of payments for the entire group, which places her as the leader of this particular workforce. In addition to Margaret, the gang contains seven women (Martha Beaumont, Mary Copley, Martha Duke, Sarah Lewis, Elizabeth Wigfield, Hannah Wigfield and Martha Wigfield) and four men (William Beaumont, Michael Hague,

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<sup>52</sup> Shaw-Taylor, for example, suggests that the number of adult women who were economically active ranged from 30%-50% across 'most of the country'; Shaw-Taylor, 'The Geography of Adult Female Employment', p. 45.

<sup>53</sup> Elsecar Colliery accounts, 29th July 1769, SA, WWM F/98/18-2.

John Knight and Joseph Watson).<sup>54</sup> Of these latter, colliery accounts for January to February 1769 indicate that all four men worked in the colliery in various capacities, together with a miner called Robert Beaumont, and a labourer called Joseph Hague.<sup>55</sup> The Lawwood Colliery accounts for May 1769 record the labourers George Copley and John Lewis,<sup>56</sup> whilst the accounts for August 1769 indicate that Marthey [Martha] Copley, Mary Crowder, Sarah Lewis and Ann Wigfield were engaged in hay making (as was a Thomas Lewis), for which George Copley was employed as a mower.<sup>57</sup> A second account 'to Margaret Hague and Co. for making hay at Elsecar Colliery',<sup>58</sup> dated 13th August 1772, lists the group as consisting of Ann Copley, Mary Copley, Anne Crowder, Elizabeth Crowder, Martha Duke and Hannah Wigfield, together with William Beaumont, William Duke, Michael Hague, Joseph Watson and George Wigfield.<sup>59</sup>

As these accounts demonstrate, there appears to be a close correlation between the surnames of female employees and male mine-workers, which may be taken as evidence of close familial or kinship bonds. As Angela John has noted, women and children played an important part in the economy of early small-scale mining<sup>60</sup> and it is this process that seems to be represented in the early mine accounts at Elsecar, where seasonal opportunities for employment, such as haymaking, were apparently taken up when available by family members. The presence of known male miners

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<sup>54</sup> Elsecar Colliery accounts, 29th July 1769, SA, WWM F/98/18-2.

<sup>55</sup> Elsecar Colliery accounts, 11th February 1769, SA, WWM F/98/6.

<sup>56</sup> Lawwood Colliery accounts, 26th May 1769, SA, WWM F/99/A (part).

<sup>57</sup> Lawwood Colliery accounts, 28th August 1769, SA, WWM F/99/A (part).

<sup>58</sup> Elsecar Colliery accounts, 13th August 1772, SA, WWM F/99/B1/996.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Angela V. John, *By the Sweat of Their Brow: Women Workers at Victorian Coal Mines* (London, 1980), p. 20.

within the hay-making teams emphasises the seasonality of mine employment at this time, where the slackest time in terms of demand for coal (later summer) coincided with opportunities for work in the fields and meadows. That this work was, at least in some cases, directed and controlled by women is of particular interest. Nevertheless, the phenomenon that Robert Shoemaker has identified, whereby gender divisions in agricultural work tended to cast women in a subordinate economic role to men,<sup>61</sup> seems to be highlighted in the fact that, whilst the women hay-makers in 1769 were generally paid the same rate (6d per day), the task of building the hay-stack itself was undertaken by John Knight (1s per day) and Michael Hague (1s 3d per day).<sup>62</sup> This disparity between the wages of the men and the women seems to be a recognition of the lower status of the women's work and of the established earning power of the men. Hague, for example, had previously received exactly the same wage for stacking coals at the colliery. Similarly, John Knight had previously filled 20.5 'pit loads' of coal over an 11 day period, for which he had been paid 10s 3d.<sup>63</sup> His payment of 1s per day for stack-making was thus a good approximation of his earning power. Even in the cases where men were paid less than the women, this seems to be an indication of their own existing status, rather than reflecting their actual role within the hay-making team. Joseph Watson, for example, was paid only 5d per day for hay-making (1d less than the women), this being the same amount he had received as a colliery gin-driver (windlass operator).

The somewhat fragmentary and haphazard eighteenth-century colliery accounts were succeeded from circa 1800 onwards by a much more formalised system of

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<sup>61</sup> Shoemaker, *Gender*, p. 152.

<sup>62</sup> Elsecar Colliery accounts, 29th July 1769, SA, WWM F/98/18-2.

<sup>63</sup> Elsecar Colliery accounts, 11th February 1769, SA, WWM F/98/6.

accounting, in which payments to individual named workers ceased to be recorded. In consequence, it becomes increasingly difficult to find evidence of women's employment. However, it is clear that the system of seasonal employment of women haymakers continued for some time. In June 1810, for example, Joshua Biram wrote to the 4th Earl Fitzwilliam bemoaning the fact that 'we have given 8d per day for women haymakers [...] and [are] having difficulty in getting them at such wages'.<sup>64</sup> Similarly, a surviving reckoning (wages) account book from Elsecar Ironworks, which dates to the short period when the ironworks was in direct ownership of the Earls, records payments in 1828 to Elizabeth Boid, Hannah Cooper, Mary Cooper, Sarah Cooper, Sarah Moon, Mary Naylor, Elizabeth Oxley, Jane Oxley and Rebecca Oxley for 'cutting hay and allowances'.<sup>65</sup> Once again, the preponderance of similar surnames amongst the group suggests close family or kinship ties, whilst the surnames Boid (or Boyd), Cooper, Oxley and Naylor in particular commonly occur amongst nineteenth-century lists of male iron-workers and miners at Elsecar.<sup>66</sup>

As well as hay-making, the fragmentary evidence from the accounts also clearly demonstrates the participation of women in other tasks that are more closely related to the industries at Elsecar. The earliest of these entries, for example, refers to Mary Crowder receiving payment of 5d per day for 'swing 13 days' at 'No. 4 pit'<sup>67</sup> at Lawwood Colliery in 1769. The entry is under 'labourers' (i.e. above-ground workers rather than miners) and relates to the movement of workers and materials up and down the mine shaft. Mary's name only appears once in relation to work of this kind,

<sup>64</sup> Joshua Biram to 4th Earl Fitzwilliam, 20th June 1810, SA, WWM Stw P/5/2-237.

<sup>65</sup> Elsecar Ironworks accounts book, 1827-1829, entry for 12th July 1828, BA, A/2054/F/4/1.

<sup>66</sup> All four surnames appear, for example, on the list of colliers at Elsecar New Colliery, July 30th 1818, SA, WWM/Stw P/13/a-48.

<sup>67</sup> Lawwood Colliery accounts, 26th May 1769, SA, WWM F/99/A (part).

although she was involved in hay-making in the same year.<sup>68</sup> The second entry appears in an account book, compiled in August 1794, of all the Fitzwilliam estate staff, including the mine workers. This book and a similar volume, dated October 1795, offer a snapshot of the estate employees immediately before and immediately after the opening of Elsecar New Colliery in 1795. The 1794 volume records Mary Wigfield as a 'Gin Driver' at Elsecar (Old) Colliery.<sup>69</sup> Mary received 6d per day, the same amount as two male gin drivers, but considerably less than the underground workers, who generally received 2s 6d per day.<sup>70</sup> By the following year Mary had been replaced as gin driver by Ann Burtoft, who was at that time the only gin driver at the Old Colliery.<sup>71</sup>

The October 1795 list of workers also includes the name of the 'hurrier' Ann Wroeback at Westwood Colliery.<sup>72</sup> 'Hurrying' involved loading and hauling waggons of coal to the surface, the work generally being undertaken by women, children and younger males. Under the 'butty system', hurriers worked in a group for a particular miner, generally a family member, who would actually excavate the coal from the seam.<sup>73</sup> Since the list of workers at Westwood Colliery also contained the hurriers Benjamin and Thomas Wroeback and the 'pickmen' (miners) Joseph and William Wroeback, it is likely that these individuals represent a family work-gang.

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<sup>68</sup> Lawwood Colliery accounts, 28th August 1769, SA, WWM F/99/A (part).

<sup>69</sup> Names of all persons in all categories employed at Wentworth, August 1794, SA, WWM/A/1534, p. 11.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Names of all persons in all categories employed at Wentworth, October 1795, SA, WWM/A/1535, p. 13.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Hopkinson, 'The Development of the South Yorkshire Coalfield', p. 319.

Due to the partial and incomplete nature of the colliery records, it has not been possible to trace the careers of Ann Wroebuck, Mary Wigfield or Anne Burtoft any further. However, evidence for the continuing employment of women in a mining context comes from the Elsecar ironworks account book for 1827-29. This volume lists payments to Mary Allott, Lydia Allott and Elizabeth Bamforth 'for sinking [an ironstone pit]' in October 1827. The payments appear under the heading 'ironstone getting' [mining] so the identification of all three women as ironstone miners is clear.<sup>74</sup> However, the fact that all three women appeared under the heading 'ironstone labouring' at the previous reckoning (reckonings were held every two weeks), and do not appear in the records after October 1827, would tend to suggest that this employment was temporary in nature, perhaps related to a short-lived increase in demand for ironstone for the Elsecar furnaces.

The final record of a female collier at Elsecar dates to 1841, the year before women were banned from underground work. The woman in question is Hannah Hurst, aged 20, who lived at Old Row, Elsecar, and is recorded in the 1841 Census as a 'coal miner'.<sup>75</sup> Given the problems in interpreting census data that have been discussed above, it is important to consider the contemporary guidelines that were issued in regard to the completion of this category. As Edward Higgs observes, 'In 1841 householders were advised that the "profession &c of Wives, or of sons or daughters living with and assisting their parents but not apprenticed or receiving wages, need not be inserted"'.<sup>76</sup> From this, it seems clear that Hannah received a wage in her own right, was not perceived by either herself or by the enumerator to be a subordinate

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<sup>74</sup> Elsecar Ironworks accounts book, 1827-1829, entry for 12th July 1828. BA, A/2054/F/4/1.

<sup>75</sup> 1841 Census Returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

<sup>76</sup> Higgs, 'Women, Occupations and Work', p. 63.



contributor to a larger family economy, and given the general omission of multiple or part-time occupations in the census, it would appear that coal mining was her primary occupation. Hannah lived with her parents, Charles and Mary Hurst (both 45), and her siblings Miles (21), Mary and Martha (both 12), Samuel (10), Maria (5), and Sally (3).<sup>77</sup> Whilst her father is described as a 'coal miner', no occupation is given for her brother Miles. This is unusual for an adult male and may be indicative of disability, incapacity or illness. With this in mind, it is interesting to speculate whether Hannah's presence in the mine filled a social and economic role within the family that Miles, as the first born son, would normally have been expected to fill.

Evidence for two other female miners comes from the Earl Fitzwilliam's St. Thomas' Day donations list for 1841. This document is a compilation of lists of all the employees who were eligible for a yearly donation of sixpence and a portion of beef from the Earl. The lists were written by the managers of the various estate departments and the list entitled 'Elsecar New and Jump Collierys [sic.] Workmen Employed 21st Dec 1841' includes 'No. 48 Eliz<sup>h</sup> Bailey'.<sup>78</sup> Similarly, the list entitled 'Elsecar Old Colliery, Workmen Employed 21st Dec 1841' includes 'No. 86 Eliz<sup>h</sup> Evans'.<sup>79</sup> Neither woman appears in the lists of workers eligible for the 1851 St. Thomas' Day donation, but two other women, Elizabeth Beardshall and Charlotte Widdowson, are listed in this latter document as 'persons being regularly employed

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<sup>77</sup> 1841 Census Returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

<sup>78</sup> St. Thomas's Day list, 21st December 1841, SA, WWM/A/1412.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

by Earl Fitzwilliam in the department of Elsecar Works and Railroad, Entitled to the St. Thomas' Day Donation'.<sup>80</sup>

The presence of Hannah Hurst, Elizabeth Bailey and Elizabeth Evans raises questions regarding the extent of women's participation in mining at Elsecar. As Angela John points out, the 1841 Census figures for women's and girls' employment in coal mines were 'seriously deficient',<sup>81</sup> being considerably lower than the estimates included in the Children's Employment Commission of the same year, figures that themselves were regarded as 'incomplete'<sup>82</sup> by the Commissioners. In the light of this, and given the massive under-recording of women's employment in general that is evident in the 1841 Census returns (see below) it is difficult to accept that Hannah was the sole female miner in the village at the time. Such a role would surely have invited comment, given the controversy surrounding women's employment in mines that was occurring at the time. Finally, there is a demonstrable tradition of employing women underground in the Barnsley region<sup>83</sup> and, as a newspaper report of 1846 that recounts an alleged assault by colliery steward Thomas Mawson upon Mary Brown, a mine worker 'employed at the Smithy Wood colliery, near Elsecar',<sup>84</sup> makes clear, women continued to be employed in an above-ground capacity in the region after the 1842 Coal Mines Act prohibited underground work for women.

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<sup>80</sup> List of persons entitled to the St. Thomas' Day donation 1851, 17th December 1851, SA, WWM/A/1420. Although the donation took place annually, only the employee lists for 1841 and 1851 survive.

<sup>81</sup> John, *Women Workers*, p. 24.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *Children's Employment Commission 1842: Report by Jelinger C. Symonds Esq on the Employment of Children and Young Persons in the Mines and Collieries in the West Riding of Yorkshire, and on the State, Condition and Treatment of such Children and Young Persons*, ed. Ian Winstanley (Wigan, 2000), p. 46.

<sup>84</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 28th August 1846, p. 3. Smithy Wood colliery was situated approximately 3½ miles to the south west of the centre of Elsecar, to the south of the village of Thorpe Hesley. The colliery appears to have been quite small; although obviously in operation by 1846, it was not named on the Ordnance Survey map of the area until the 1890 edition. The original lessee at the time of the Brown/Mawson dispute is not known, but the colliery was subsequently taken over by the firm of Newton Chambers Ltd.

Navigating from fragmentary source to fragmentary source, it has been possible to map out something of the shape of women's employment in the industrial enterprises at Elsecar for the first time. In particular, it has been established that women continued to be employed in various capacities in coal-mining from at least circa 1769 to 1841, a period of 72 years which covers the crucial early development of the Elsecar industries. As I will demonstrate below, male employment in Elsecar was characterised by family and kinship networks, so that brothers, relatives, fathers and sons all worked together in the mines. In the case of women, mining and industrial work was also an extension of family and kinship networks, so that Hannah Hurst, Ann Wroebuck and Mary Wigfield, for example, were likely to have worked alongside members of their immediate or extended family. As Angela John notes, coal mining was closely bound to family structures in which women were traditionally accepted as part of the family economy; one part of the formation of mining communities that were characterised by solidarity, self-sufficiency, introspection and isolation.<sup>85</sup> Consequently, the move in mining and heavy industry in the mid-nineteenth century to more clearly gender-defined employment roles had an important impact upon the social structures and relationships between men and women. In the following section, I will explore these issues further, arguing that the identification of a tradition of female employment at Elsecar places the village back into the national context of legislation, exclusion and changing gender relationships.

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<sup>85</sup> John, *Women Workers*, p. 26.

## Economic Exclusion and Gender

Although an appreciation of the full extent of women's involvement in mining in Elsecar remains elusive, it is nevertheless of great significance in terms of mapping out the relationship between gender and work. In the first instance, this is because of the furore which developed regarding women's employment in mines and which culminated in the Children's Employment Commission and the subsequent 1842 Coal Mines Act. As Katrina Honeyman and Jordan Goodman make clear, these were expressly gender conflicts, in which men strove to re-establish primacy in the industrial labour market through the marginalisation and exclusion of women.<sup>86</sup> However, whilst in many forms of industrial work this process was marked by male artisans actively resisting the intrusion or persistence of female competition in the workplace, the exclusion of women from underground work in mines was achieved through government legislation that was informed, instigated, framed and legitimised by an elite and middle-class discourse on gender, femininity and morality. Anne McClintock, for example, explores the ways in which the sight of trouser-wearing women, working alongside men in the confined darkness, 'alike vulgar in manner'<sup>87</sup> to the extent that it was 'impossible to distinguish [...] an atom of difference between one sex and the other',<sup>88</sup> was deeply troubling to the middle-class psyche in that it 'conjured up anxious images of racial and sexual degeneration, evoking a cluster of associations between women, madness, sexual abandon and the irrational'.<sup>89</sup> Ivy Pinchbeck has noted how the employment of women passed largely unremarked until

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<sup>86</sup> Honeyman & Goodman, 'Women's Work', p. 615.

<sup>87</sup> Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London, 1995), p. 116.

<sup>88</sup> *Children's Employment Commission*, p. 18.

<sup>89</sup> McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, p. 116.

the early nineteenth century.<sup>90</sup> Thereafter, the increasing exposure of mining communities to external scrutiny and censure can be read as part of an accommodating process. As Anne McClintock says '[In order] to bend this rich, militant, rural culture to the logic of industrial discipline, the world of mining had to be rationalised'.<sup>91</sup> Clearly, this was achieved through the process of exclusion of women, which allowed the transformation of miners from being 'but one remove from the beasts that perish'<sup>92</sup> to being expressly male 'heroes' exhibiting 'a glorious record of British pluck'.<sup>93</sup> The identification of a tradition of female employment at Elsecar thus places the village back into the context of this process of exclusion and its consequences, issues which have hitherto been mostly overlooked or sidestepped through a focus upon the alleged beneficial aspects of the Earls' paternal management.

In terms of the issues raised by the exclusion of women, Valerie G. Hall, for example, has made the links between the economic marginalisation of women and the wider structuring of gender inequality explicit, arguing that in mining communities, 'A homosocial male culture centered on sport, gambling, and drinking in the club [...] predominated and strengthened the cult of masculinity [...] Restriction to the home, characteristic of working-class women in general, was pronounced'.<sup>94</sup> Similarly,

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<sup>90</sup> Ivy Pinchbeck, *Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution 1750-1850* (London, 1969), p. 242.

<sup>91</sup> McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, p. 115.

<sup>92</sup> John Wesley, letter to 'Mr D' regarding the colliers of Kingswood, November 1739, reprinted in Humphrey Jennings (ed.), *Pandaemonium: The Coming of the Machine As Seen by Contemporary Observers* (London, 1987), p. 50.

<sup>93</sup> T. W. Wilkinson, 'Heroes of the Coal-mine: Daring Deeds in the Underground World', *Chums*, 15th July 1896, p. 743.

<sup>94</sup> Valerie Gordon Hall, 'Contrasting Female Identities: Women in Coal Mining Communities in Northumberland, England, 1900–1939', *Journal Of Women's History* 13.2 (2001), p. 110.

Keith McClelland argues that the emergence of the Victorian archetype of the independent, respectable working man was predicated on female acquiescence to gendered roles of employment and 'the willingness and ability of women to maintain the household in respectable forms'.<sup>95</sup> At Elsecar, evidence for the importance of women in the construction of viable and respectable households can be seen in the fact that, of the 147 households that are recorded as being headed by men in the 1861 Census, only three contained no spouse, female relative or female servant.<sup>96</sup> These issues of gender, masculinity, respectability, the genderisation of space, and their relationship to the themes of identity and community, will be explored in later chapters of this thesis.

This survey has examined the fragmentary and incomplete evidence regarding women's employment at Elsecar, and has identified traditions of both rural, agrarian employment and employment within the emerging industries in the village. In the latter part of the eighteenth century, these two elements formed mutually dependent aspects of a seasonal economy, so that women (and men) who appear in the records as mine workers in winter also appear as hay-makers in summer. This pattern of seasonal employment is less readily apparent in the early to mid nineteenth-century records, although at least some women continued to find employment in the fields and mines. In addition, the fragmentary evidence seems to suggest that domestic service and dressmaking, together with opportunities in local shops, were becoming significant towards the end of the period. Of these, domestic service remained

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<sup>95</sup> McClelland, 'Some Thoughts on Masculinity', p. 172.

<sup>96</sup> 1861 Census Returns for Nether Hoyland Township. The three all-male households consisted of two containing a solitary miner who had lost his wife, and one household consisting of two unmarried brothers. The only women referred to as heads of household in the 1861 census are widows and a 'deserted wife'.

nationally the single biggest occupational category for women during the nineteenth century.<sup>97</sup> If one discounts domestic service, Joyce Burnette's analysis of nineteenth-century trade directories has shown that the category 'milliner and dressmaker' was the most numerous employment category for women in Birmingham in 1850, whilst 'shopkeeper, and dealer in groceries' was fourth in importance. Evidence from Derby in the same period was similar, with 'milliner and dressmaker' again being the most numerous category, whilst 'shopkeeper, and dealer in groceries' was third.<sup>98</sup> The Elsecar evidence is very similar to these findings, although the relative importance of these categories in itself emphasises the limited opportunities available to women. As Emma Griffin argues, 'the industrial revolution was undoubtedly a time of economic opportunity, but the weight of existing social structures and cultural expectations kept women firmly shut out.'<sup>99</sup>

In general terms, the Elsecar evidence suggests that women engaged in multiple or part-time employments, moving from opportunity to opportunity as they arose. For example, the Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments, whilst they contain evidence of female employment that suggests different generations of a particular family engaged in similar tasks, they do not show evidence of the same length of service for female employees as they do for some of the male miners. Partly, of course, this reflects the close links between female life stages and employment opportunities, so that marriage, child birth and child care all placed constrictions on the duration and type of work available to women. In contrast, a young boy entering the Fitzwilliam mines at the age of ten could confidently expect, if he survived that long, to be employed in

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<sup>97</sup> Joyce Burnette, *Gender, Work and Wages in Industrial Revolution Britain* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 22.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>99</sup> Emma Griffin, *Liberty's Dawn: A People's History of the Industrial Revolution* (Yale, 2013), p. 106.

essentially the same capacity for the next 50 years or so.<sup>100</sup> Despite the immeasurable contribution made to plebian households by women's work both within and outside the home, it is hard to escape the conclusion that this contribution was marginalised economically by employment structures that reinforced gender inequality, socially by patriarchal indifference and moral and social ideologies that privileged and celebrated male status and power, and historically by a dearth of relevant information that has lead to the foregrounding of the male experience of work.

### **Male Employment**

As I discussed above, the changing nature of women's employment and the economic marginalisation of women have been seen as fundamental to the structuring of gender relationships and social inequalities during the long nineteenth century. In this section, I look at the evidence for male employment in Elsecar in a similar way. That is to say, I consider male work less in terms of the creation of class identities and affinities, and more in terms of its influence upon the wider structuring of social relationships within Elsecar. In order to accomplish this, I will explore the evidence for male working patterns within the Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments and the 1841, 1851 and 1861 Census returns for Nether Hoyland. I will highlight the ways in which men's working patterns and expectations differed to those of women, and I also look at the relationship between occupation, masculinity and male social identities. I highlight the way in which family and kinship networks permeated the masculine work environment, and I also demonstrate how the age at which boys entered into the work environment was dependent upon the economic viability of the household.

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<sup>100</sup> List of charitable donations, circa 1803-1839, SA, WWM/A/1411; this list of pension recipients includes, for example, Thomas Wainwright, a miner who received a pension from the 4th Earl in November 1828 after retiring at the age of 91.



Finally, I conclude that, dangerous and arduous as it undoubtedly was, the male experience of work in Elsecar was characterised by a longevity and stability of employment which set it apart, not only from the opportunities available to women workers within the village, but also from that of other mining communities in the region.

As might be expected, the history of male employment in Elsecar is to a large extent related to the development of the twin industries of coal and iron. Men described as colliers appear in the Hoyland parish records from 1748 onwards, but the references are infrequent and the main industrial occupation within the parish at this time appears to have been nail-making.<sup>101</sup> Although the evidence in the parish registers relates only to the occupations of fathers bringing children to baptism, and so is in no sense an exhaustive or quantitative survey of occupation, it nevertheless appears to corroborate the evidence of the Elsecar colliery accounts, which show a limited number of colliers until the last decade of the eighteenth century. Estate records from 1795 show that there were at that time a total of 79 individuals working in the Fitzwilliam collieries, with 31 at Lawwood Colliery, ten at Elsecar Old Colliery, 19 at Westwood Colliery and 19 at Elsecar New Colliery. The names and numbers of individual workers do not appear in the surviving Fitzwilliam colliery accounts for the years 1811-1851, but an estate document from 1818 does list the names of 84 workers at Elsecar New Colliery. From this, it is clear that there had been a marked expansion in the number of colliers following the creation of Elsecar New Colliery, the opening of the canal for coal traffic in 1798 and the establishment of the Milton Ironworks and Elsecar Ironworks. Again, this is corroborated by evidence from the

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<sup>101</sup> Elsecar Ironworks accounts book, 1827-1829, BA, A/2054/F/4/1.

parish records. Of the 73 entries in the parish records which refer to colliers in the period 1748-1838, all but five post-date 1800.<sup>102</sup>

In contrast to the collieries, few records survive for either the Milton Ironworks or Elsecar Ironworks, both of which were leased to tenant firms for much of their lives. However, a surviving account book for Elsecar Ironworks gives some idea of the number of employees. A typical entry for the 'Number 12 Reckoning' on November 24th 1829, for example, lists payments to a total of 59 employees.<sup>103</sup> The most comprehensive record of estate employees at Elsecar comes from the 1841 St. Thomas' Day list, which gives a total of 189 workers at Elsecar New Colliery and Jump Colliery, 105 at Elsecar Old Colliery and 109 at Elsecar Ironworks.<sup>104</sup> This record complements the 1841 Census returns for Nether Hoyland, which are the first records to give an extensive picture of male employment in the village (**Table 3.4**, Appendix 2).

Of 172 working-age males within the village in 1841, a total of 75, or approximately 40%, are listed as 'coal miners'.<sup>105</sup> The second largest group are labourers. Since the coal mining accounts from circa 1769 onwards make the distinction between 'miners' and 'labourers' (unskilled workers generally working above-ground in the collieries), this category is likely to be mainly unskilled mine workers or unskilled iron-workers. In regard to the ironworks, puddlers, moulders and rowlers can all be regarded as

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<sup>102</sup> Composite parish registers for the Chapelry of Hoyland Nether, 1748-1864, SA, microfilm no. SY 337/xi/86

<sup>103</sup> Elsecar Ironworks accounts book, 1827-1829, BA, A/2054/F/4/1.

<sup>104</sup> St. Thomas's Day list, 21st December 1841, SA, WWM/A/1412.

<sup>105</sup> Since the youngest coal miners listed in the 1841 census returns are just ten years old, this had been taken as the threshold for working age in my analysis. The high proportion of people in Table 3.4 for which no occupation is given are mostly boys aged between 10 and 14 years.

skilled workers.<sup>106</sup> Similarly, jobs such as engine fitters, iron weighers, carpenters, masons, blacksmiths, engine tenters (operators) and engine firemen are all industrial trades requiring levels of skill and training. The census returns thus remind us that rather than thinking in terms of monolithic blocs of employment, such as 'miners' and 'iron-workers', even a relatively small settlement such as Elsecar could accommodate a graded and hierarchical employment structure, where status, work identity and wages varied from individual to individual. This is seen most clearly, for example, in a list of employees at Elsecar workshops in 1849 which, although it does not indicate specific roles, does show that wages varied from 10d to 4s 10d per day depending on the individual, whilst certain workers, presumably in supervisory or management roles, were paid weekly salaries ranging from £2 to £3 3s 6d.<sup>107</sup> As John Benson notes, the historiography of mining tends to focus on the experience of underground workers, rather than those employed on the surface.<sup>108</sup> Partly, this reflects the perceived higher levels of danger and skill required in underground work, which is reflected economically in the differing rates of pay recorded at Elsecar. However, as I explored above, it also reflects the fact that the danger, skill, peril and physical hardships of below-ground work all combined to create a popular image of the underground coal-miner as a totemic manifestation of dynamic masculinity. Benson's call for a focus upon the 'forgotten' work of above-ground labourers thus reminds us that work identity and status is inextricably bound up with tropes of masculinity, so that the differentiation between labourer and coal-miner in the 1841 census reflects perceived degrees of masculinity as much as it does economic stratification.

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<sup>106</sup> For an account of the production processes of wrought iron and the roles of the various workers involved, see Trevor Lodge, 'The Wrought Iron Era- With Recollections of Sheffield's Last Puddler', in Melvyn Jones (ed.) *Aspects of Sheffield* 1 (Barnsley, 1997), pp. 153-165.

<sup>107</sup> List of Workmen Employed at the Elsecar Works, 1849, SA, WWM/G/45/22.

<sup>108</sup> Benson, *British Coalminers*, p. 29.

The 1851 and 1861 Census returns (**Tables 3.5** and **3.6**, Appendix 2) again show the continuing importance of coal-mining within the village, whilst the increasingly elaborate categorisation of profession within these censuses also help to highlight stratification within the workforce. If we accept the notion that work formed a key component of identity and status for Victorian males, then subtle gradations between, for example, 'iron puddler' on the one hand and 'Iron puddler, employs one boy'<sup>109</sup> on the other, are significant in highlighting the individual interviewee's understanding of the social importance of these signifiers of status. Similarly, the proliferation of different categories of workers within the collieries are also indicators of employment hierarchy and status, ranging from trappers (ventilation door openers ranging from ten to twelve years in age), trammers (unmarried youths aged thirteen to 20) to coal mine labourers, coal-miners, specialist engine drivers and management. Away from the industries of coal and iron, the 1861 Census in particular (**Table 3.6**) highlights the growing mercantile class within the village, which contained two boot and shoe makers, three tailors (one with four employees), a postmaster, a small ware dealer, four grocers (one a Wesleyan preacher), a confectioner, a druggist, an earthenware dealer and two hairdressers. These new businesses reflect the growing prosperity of the village after the takeover of the Elsecar Ironworks lease by Dawes Brothers in 1849 and their subsequent expansion of the ironworks, together with the physical rebuilding of the area around the former Elsecar Green, in the period circa 1850-1860, to incorporate purpose-built retail premises.

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<sup>109</sup> 1861 Census Returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

An important issue that emerges from the census information relates to the nature of inter-generational employment. In the 1851 Census, for example, twenty three (57.5%) of the forty heads of households who are described as coal-miners also had working-age sons working in the collieries.<sup>110</sup> This is a considerably higher number than in the nearby coalmining communities of Low Valley, Snape Hill and Wombwell Main, where Andrew Walker has identified percentages of coalmining households with heads and other co-resident kinsmen that were occupied in the coal industry as rising from 19.9% in 1861 to 40.6% in 1891.<sup>111</sup> Similarly, certain family names recorded in the 1851 Census, such as Boid, Bailey, Beardshall, Beaumont, Cooper, Dickinson, Evans and Uttley, all appear in earlier estate and mining records.<sup>112</sup> The stability of employment that this implies is further emphasised by considering the birthplaces of Elsecar miners, as recorded in the 1851 Census, which are presented in **Table 3.7** (Appendix 2).

As **Table 3.7** demonstrates, the Elsecar mining workforce came predominantly from Elsecar, Hoyland and the surrounding local villages and hamlets. Taken together, the census and surname evidence suggests a continuity of employment from generation to generation, a phenomenon that Graham Mee has characterised as 'an expectation of secure employment among the workmen in Fitzwilliam service'.<sup>113</sup> Similarly, Patrick Spaven has demonstrated how, by the mid-nineteenth century, the apparent stability of employment at the Fitzwilliam collieries contrasted sharply with conditions

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<sup>110</sup> 1851 Census Returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

<sup>111</sup> Andrew Walker, 'Pleasurable Homes? Victorian Model Miners' Wives and the Family Wage in a South Yorkshire Colliery District', *Women's History Review* 6.3 (1997), p. 320.

<sup>112</sup> For example, the surnames Bailey, Dickinson, Hirst, Kay and Hargreaves all appear on the 1795 list of colliers and on the 1841 St. Thomas' Day lists.

<sup>113</sup> Mee, 'Labour Relations', p. 56.

elsewhere in the South Yorkshire coalfield, where it was common for miners to move from colliery to colliery and from village to village in search of continued employment.<sup>114</sup> The significance of this apparent stability and security is highlighted in work by John Seed. In his analysis of the concept of the reserve army of labour, Seed argues that the transient workers, paupers and displaced poor encountered in London by nineteenth-century social commentators such as Henry Mayhew were not random victims of circumstance, but were in fact a structural phenomenon that was central to the working of industrial capitalism, 'a condition of existence of the capitalist mode of production'.<sup>115</sup> Central to this theory, is the idea of the instability of the labour market, in which 'constant restructuring of production means a constant transformation of parts of the labouring population into casual labour or the unemployed'.<sup>116</sup> If we accept this analysis, then it seems likely that Elsecar, with its relatively stable employment patterns, might indeed be a haven where the working poor could hope to weather the worst storms of early nineteenth-century industrial and economic change.

The particular stability and security of men's employment at Elsecar thus created a working environment which was characterised by inter-generational kinship links, and by the close correlation between employment, status and masculinity. One further significant aspect which relates to the male experience of work is the age at which boys first entered the labour market. This is significant in that, as Michael J. Childs

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<sup>114</sup> Patrick John Spaven, 'Accommodating the Miners: A Comparative Study of Industrial Relations and Community Involvement in Some South Yorkshire Coalmining Townships 1858-1894', PhD thesis (University of Warwick, 1978), p. 379.

<sup>115</sup> John Seed, "'Free Labour = Latent Pauperism' Marx, Mayhew and the 'Reserve Army of Labour' in Mid Nineteenth Century London", in Simon Gunn & James Vernon (eds), *The Peculiarities of Liberal Modernity in Imperial Britain* (Berkeley, 2011), p. 60.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

notes, the ability of an individual to earn a wage signalled a fundamental change in the structure and power relationships within the family, which were 'based largely on sex, age and earning power'.<sup>117</sup> One way to begin exploring this issue is to consider the two coal mine trappers referred to in the 1861 Census. Andrew Firth, aged 10, lived at Cobcar Terrace, whilst Henry Hough, aged 12, lived a little way along the road at Reform Row. Both boys came from relatively large families, each having five siblings. As well as their youth and profession, the two boys were also united in that they had both lost their fathers and lived in a household where their mothers, Matilda Firth and Charlotte Hough, were each described as a 'collier's widow'.<sup>118</sup> Clearly, the fact that both boys were working at an unusually early age reflects the economic necessity of working in order to keep the family viable in the face of the loss of the major breadwinner. Similarly, Thomas Duke, an 11-year-old miner recorded in the 1861 Census, was clearly fulfilling the economic role that would ordinarily have been filled by his father, his mother Mary being described as a 'deserted wife'.<sup>119</sup> Even in cases where the loss of the major breadwinner does not appear to have been an issue, the employment of young boys seems to be related to specific economic circumstances. The 1841 Census, for example, contains the details of two ten-year-old miners. Of these, Thomas Kay lived at Elsecar 'barricks [sic]'<sup>120</sup> with his father and two older brothers, who were also miners, and his sister. The location of the 'barricks' is not known, but since 'barracks' is a term generally applied to miners' lodgings, it is likely that this building was a temporary precursor of the Elsecar miners' lodging house, which was constructed in the following decade. The other boy,

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<sup>117</sup> Michael J. Childs, *Labour's Apprentices: Working Class Lads in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (London, 1992), p. 14.

<sup>118</sup> 1861 Census Returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> 1841 Census Returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

John Fletcher, lived at Old Row in an extended family of ten individuals who shared three surnames. Since the 1841 Census does not record family relationships in detail, it is difficult to unravel the relationships between these ten individuals. However, like Thomas Kay, John Fletcher's living arrangements seem to reflect a partially dismantled or fractured household unit, in which the ability of the boys to provide economically for themselves was paramount.

Elsewhere, the financial imperatives behind early employment are less easy to discern, as in the case of George Beardshall and John Bamforth, both employed in the coal mines at the age of 11 and Ezra Wilkinson, aged 10, who is described in the 1861 Census as an 'ironworks forge man'.<sup>121</sup> These two latter cases remind us that, whilst the economic pressures upon families that are not obviously in crisis may be difficult to discern historically, they nevertheless exerted a profound influence in decision-making and life choices, even within relatively prosperous communities such as mid-Victorian Elsecar.

As Jane Humphries has explored in her work on child labour, the age at which children entered the workforce was directly related to the economic viability of the family, in that working-class families generally avoided sending their children to work unless it was absolutely necessary for economic reasons.<sup>122</sup> Poverty, then, was the primary motor for children entering the workplace early. Humphries asserts that the decline in paid work opportunities for women led to an increasing dependence

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<sup>121</sup> 1861 Census Returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

<sup>122</sup> Jane Humphries, 'Childhood and Child Labour in the British Industrial Revolution', *Economic History Review* 66.2 (2013), p. 407.



upon male earnings, leaving families increasingly vulnerable to the economic consequences of the injury, death or desertion of the main male breadwinner. In consequence, child labour became an increasingly necessary family survival strategy during the nineteenth century.<sup>123</sup> The Elsecar evidence mirrors this general trend, in that the cases of hardship I have explored above all saw children being employed at a younger age than the norm, which for Elsecar in 1861 was generally between the ages of 12 or 13.<sup>124</sup>

## Conclusion

In this chapter I explored the evidence for both male and female employment within Elsecar. The most striking factor to emerge from this is the massive disparity between the stability, availability and longevity of the employment opportunities that were available to men and to women. In the case of women's employment, the evidence indicates that opportunities for women narrowed in the period circa 1750 to 1860, with industrial activities in particular becoming more exclusively associated with male employment. Where women's occupations are given in the census, the evidence suggests a growing reliance on service, either as unspecified servants, or household servants, during this period. In terms of the wider debate regarding women's roles in the nineteenth century, Judy Lown, for example, sees the process of exclusion from industrial occupations as being inextricably linked to the development of separate spheres and tropes of working-class masculinity, in which 'the desire to perpetuate the gender divisions and authority [...] of the patriarchal household'<sup>125</sup> were paramount.

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<sup>123</sup> Humphries, 'Childhood and Child Labour', p. 414.

<sup>124</sup> 1861 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

<sup>125</sup> Judy Lown, *Women and Industrialisation: Gender at Work in Nineteenth Century England* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 175.

As part of this process, Lown argues that 'the wage-earning wife' [...] [became] a symbol of masculine degradation'.<sup>126</sup> Nevertheless, Andrew August's study of poor women's employment in nineteenth-century London shows the essential contribution made by the working wife to the household economies of the very poor, arguing that this financial contribution 'would bring these families away from the brink of want'.<sup>127</sup> This apparent contradiction between the ideology and the actuality of work stresses the importance of separating the dominant nineteenth-century discourse and rhetoric surrounding work, masculinity, femininity and domesticity out from women's actual experiences of work.

Returning to Elsecar, the employment of women in mining and ironworking does not seem to have occurred on a long-term basis. This is in contrast to men's employment in the same industries, which is characterised by continuity from year to year and from generation to generation. In contrast, women's employment was related closely to lifecycle, with certain groups, such as unmarried young women, widows or married women in particular financial hardship, being far more likely to seek work outside the home. Having said that, the greater part of women's economic activity, whether in the home, casual or part-time, remains historically invisible due to the lack of adequate source material.

As well as exploring the differences between men's and women's experiences of work, this chapter has demonstrated the emergence of a nascent mercantile class within the village in the mid-nineteenth century, in which both men and women

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<sup>126</sup> Lown, *Women and Industrialisation*, p. 175.

<sup>127</sup> Andrew August, 'How Separate a Sphere? Poor Women and Paid Work in Late Victorian London', *Journal of Family History* 19.3 (1994), p. 292.

participated. Milliners, dressmakers, shopkeepers and trades people of various types all begin to make their appearance in the 1851 and 1861 Census returns ranging, for example, from a hairdresser to the manager of a large grocery shop. Similarly, the later censuses allow us to begin to appreciate the different gradations of workers in the coal and iron industries, from the 'very low status'<sup>128</sup> above-ground coal workers to engine men and engineers. As a result, the village became socially more complex and diverse.

Taken together, the evidence for men's and women's employment in Elsecar allows an important insight into the way employment shaped social relationships in the village. For women, the lack of economic opportunities emphasised a subordinate social status, whilst for men, employment was loaded with powerful cultural meanings of masculinity, identity and status. For these reasons, work is perhaps better considered as a key element in the structuring and reflecting of wider gender and class relationships, rather than as a *de facto* indicator of class identity and affiliation in its own right. It functioned as a critical factor in the creation of personal and collective identities and as such, underpins and helps to characterise the social alignments, networks of conviviality and fault lines of conflict which I will explore in the following chapters of this thesis.

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<sup>128</sup> Benson, *British Coalminers*, p. 29.

## **Chapter Four: Kinship, Conviviality, Gender and Conflict**

### **Introduction**

In Chapter Three I examined the evidence relating to employment patterns of both men and women within Elsecar. I demonstrated that men and women's experiences within the industrialising village were radically different in that, whilst women became increasingly marginalised and excluded from industrial jobs, men's opportunities in terms of the diversity and the regularity of employment actually improved. Despite the fact that women's economic input into the household remained crucial to its survival, the limiting of opportunities for women outside the home meant that the process of industrialisation, in favouring men over women, increased gender inequality.

I also demonstrated how an increasing diversity of employment within the village led to striations of social status within the community, both between and within broad class groupings. Occupation, then, became an increasingly nuanced form of social identity within the village. However, as Henry French argues, rather than being the product of 'monolithic' structures such as class or gender, identity arises from the individual negotiating a complex web of social relationships which incorporate forms of distinction based on class, race, gender, ethnicity, status and culture, but in which there is 'no single hierarchy of power' and 'no single site of power'.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, in his study of tradition and custom in working-class culture, John Rule observes that, whilst the experience of work has long been central to historical explorations of working-class experience, the idea that work forms a distinct, empirical entity that

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<sup>1</sup> French & Barry (eds), *Identity and Agency in England*, p. 13.

can be separated from the wider, deeper structures of everyday life is an erroneous one. Historians, he argues, 'must try to go deeper in search of the everyday'.<sup>2</sup>

With this in mind, in this chapter I will widen the focus to examine a number of different issues that are apparent within the available sources and which are linked, in the first instance, by being sited in the world beyond the workplace. The specific issues which I look at are family structure, conviviality, gender and conflict. Whilst this might appear to be a disparate grouping, these issues are in fact also linked at a more profound level by virtue of being different aspects of the shared, lived experience of the Elsecar villagers. Accordingly, in this chapter I approach these issues as individual aspects of the complex structuring of power and hierarchy within the village. In this respect, they help to illuminate the wider themes of this thesis, namely the formation of community and identity.

This is a significant avenue of research in that the structural entities that I have examined in previous chapters – the authority of the Earls, the role of the parish authorities, and occupational categories – are all in a sense external structures that are imposed upon the village. In contrast, this chapter looks at evidence relating to the internal structuring of social relationships within the village. In this chapter, I will explore the links between family structure, conviviality, masculinity and conflict as a means of understanding the ways in which the village community functions. A key aim is to understand how these different elements feed into individual and collective identities, and how these identities in turn influence and create hierarchies of power

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<sup>2</sup> John Rule, 'Against Innovation? Custom and Resistance in the Workplace, 1700-1850', in Tim Harris (ed.), *Popular Culture in England, c. 1500-1850* (London, 1995), p. 168.

and status within the community. A second aim is to explore these structures in terms of gender relationships, in order to determine whether the economic marginalisation of women that I identified in Chapter Three translated into a similar social marginalisation within the community.

### **The Sources**

The main source material for this chapter comes from a research database that I have compiled, containing approximately 300 newspaper articles relating to Elsecar and its inhabitants that were published between 1800 and 1867. The newspaper articles refer to a diverse range of events, including public meetings, accidents, accidental deaths, reportage of strikes and disputes, crimes, petty misdemeanours, and social events. In particular, the newspapers provide the only evidence for criminal activities such as assaults, since the relevant court records no longer survive. Whilst many of the events chronicled are of limited historical importance in themselves, many of the reports contain incidental information, background material and witness statements that are extremely useful in building up a picture of life within the village. However, the newspaper reports are not unproblematic, and present a number of challenges in terms of historical interpretation. In the first instance, as James Mussell has observed, nineteenth-century newspapers were fixated upon the new – the onrushing tide of events, moments and change. However, sense was given to this seemingly diverse and apparently chaotic information by framing it within a particular world-view that the readership understood and identified with.<sup>3</sup> In essence, nineteenth-century newspaper editors looked for stories of humour, pathos, the singular and the

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<sup>3</sup> James Mussell, 'Cohering Knowledge in the Nineteenth Century: Form, Genre and Periodical Studies', *Victorian Periodicals Review* 42.1 (2009), p. 95.

threatening (in its widest sense) with which to engage their audience, filtering and presenting this information in such a way as to accord with the wider social perceptions and prejudices of their target audience. Although Judith Knelman has drawn attention to an increasing willingness by the 1840s for newspapers to highlight class and gender inequalities,<sup>4</sup> it is perhaps fair to characterise the press in this period as being both predominantly middle-class and male-orientated in outlook.<sup>5</sup> In terms of the Elsecar newspaper reports, this bias is evident in the predominance of stories about genteel social gatherings (tea parties, flower shows, concerts etc.) on the one hand and violence, drunkenness and industrial disputes on the other. It is not difficult to perceive in this dichotomy a concern for social order and hierarchy (and for the perceived threats to that order) which permeates and colours much of the reportage of working-class experiences in the village. This leads to a tendency on the part of the newspapers to construct a moralising narrative around the reported events, whether these be, for instance, the destructive consequences of excessive drinking,<sup>6</sup> the death of a miner due to his own (perceived) folly,<sup>7</sup> or the 'athletic and healthful contest' of a cricket match.<sup>8</sup>

The second problem regarding the newspaper sources relates to the first, in that the filtering of news in accordance with the social concerns and predilections of the

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<sup>4</sup> Judith Knelman, 'Class and Gender Bias in Victorian Newspapers', *Victorian Periodicals Review* 26.1 (1993), pp. 29-35.

<sup>5</sup> Mark Hampton, for example, has highlighted the Victorian perception that newspapers attracted a predominantly male readership, whereas magazines were thought to be a more feminine medium. Mark Hampton, 'Newspapers in Victorian Britain', *History Compass* 2.1 (2004), p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, the account of the death of labourer William Copley, who was seen to fall into the canal whilst making his way home drunk. Source: *Hull Packet and East Riding Times*, 6th May 1853.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, the account of the death of Elsecar miner John Hurst, who was held to have 'foolishly' returned to a dangerous part of the mine in order to retrieve his pickaxe. Source: *Sheffield Independent & Yorkshire & Derbyshire Advertiser*, 26th November 1836.

<sup>8</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 15th June 1857, p. 10.

readership affects the depth, tone and extent of reporting. In the Elsecar material, for example, deaths as a result of industrial accidents tend to be more fully reported if the victim is a child, leaves a family and widow, or dies in a particularly unusual or gruesome manner. Since it is often the incidental detail and background information contained in the newspaper reports that provides the richest historical information, it follows that much of the historical context of less spectacular (and hence less fully-reported events) is lost to the historian. Similarly, it must be remembered that the historical actors that appear in the newspapers as protagonists, victims, bystanders and witnesses form only a small part of the village population, with most people living lives that did not attract press interest. This makes it difficult to assess, for example, the prevalence of issues such as violence, drunkenness and disorder from the newspaper reports alone, since only the most extreme cases (typically, those that end in court appearances) tend to be reported. Nevertheless, despite these problems, the newspaper reports about Elsecar form an important resource. For all their shortcomings, they allow an insight into the lives and actions – as reported – of named individuals.

The newspaper articles are complemented by a number of documents from the stewards' correspondence, and the correspondence of the 4th and 5th Earls Fitzwilliam, held in the Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments. Most of these documents focus on specific narrow issues and relate to the process of petitioning the Earls that was examined in Chapter Two. Some are problematic in that they contain observations, opinions or allegations that cannot be substantiated, but even though specific charges, for example those relating to corruption and bullying amongst workmates, may be hard to verify, the fact that the particular petitioner was moved to



write about them can be seen as a significant indicator of a specific social problem or tension. Moreover, in outlining the background to particular circumstances and grievances, the documents contain a wealth of social and historical background information that helps to illuminate aspects of daily life in Elsecar. Further historical context for these, and for events that were reported in the newspapers, is derived from the 1841, 1851 and 1861 Census returns for Nether Hoyland.

### **Family Composition and Extended Families**

As I demonstrated in Chapter Three, the relationship between employment and family structures within Elsecar was of great importance, so that children, for example, were more likely to be employed at an earlier age if the family was particularly large or if the economic role of a primary adult breadwinner appeared to be vacant. This reminds us of the close correlation between family structure and economic viability that historians have seen as central to the lifecycle of the poor. J. F. C. Harrison, for example, outlines how a child born into a labouring family could expect poverty and hardship until they and their siblings were old enough to work and contribute to the family economy. Similarly, the relative prosperity of young unmarried adults within the family generally ended with marriage, the setting up of an independent home and the birth of children. As their children grew to adulthood and were able to work, a married couple might again expect their financial hardships to ease, only to return again with the onset of old age, infirmity and illness.<sup>9</sup> Of course, at any point this cycle could be further complicated and disrupted by illness or death within the family. In relation to mining communities, John Benson has drawn attention to the ways in which this cyclic pattern of economic hardship, the ever-present threat of injury or

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<sup>9</sup> J. F. C. Harrison, *The Early Victorians 1832-51* (London, 1973), p. 45.

disease and the lack of women's economic opportunities outside the home, all led to the formation of close-knit communities in which family ties were paramount, so that 'it was the family which helped its members to survive the rigours of life in the coalfield. The nineteenth-century mining family was strong and resilient and altogether more responsible than it is given credit for'.<sup>10</sup> With Benson's comment in mind, one research aim of this section is to explore further the relationship between family structure, the household and economic viability at Elsecar. How, for example, did the need to weather the economic uncertainties associated with unexpected death, injury or the lifecycle influence the composition of households in the village? Similarly, were family and kinship ties fundamentally supportive, as Benson attests, or did they in fact act on occasion as social fault lines and sites of tension? In order to examine these issues I will look at two factors influencing family composition, namely widowhood and the augmentation of the household by the taking-in of lodgers.

In relation to widowhood, it is clear that the ever-present risk of death and injury amongst the industrial workforce of Elsecar led to a high occurrence of widowhood within the village. Of the list of 24 widows of estate workers in receipt of pensions from the Wentworth estate in 1833 for example, half were the widows of miners.<sup>11</sup> In 1851, 14 out of a total of 103 households in Elsecar (13.6%) contained women identified as widows. This compares to a study of 100 communities in the period 1574-1821, which puts the mean percentage of households headed by widows

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<sup>10</sup> Benson, *British Coalminers*, p. 141.

<sup>11</sup> List of Wentworth pensioners, 21st June 1833, SA, WWM/Stw P/14/1-76.

throughout this period at 12.9%.<sup>12</sup> However, whilst the Elsecar figures appear similar to these national trends, of the Elsecar women, 12 were aged between 60 and 82 whilst only one, Elizabeth Hurst, was under 40.<sup>13</sup> This suggests that the incidence of widowhood was actually much higher in Elsecar, but has been masked by the subsequent remarriage of younger women. In this respect, the 1833 list of Wentworth pensioners refers to nine widows who had remarried.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the tendency for successive generations of families to be employed in the mines meant that families often suffered multiple bereavements. Elizabeth Boyd, for example, lost her first husband in a mining accident in 1811, whilst one of her sons, a married man with children, was also killed in the mines in 1831.<sup>15</sup> Her grandson George, a miner then aged about 12, narrowly escaped death in another mine accident in 1840.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, Margaret Evans, a mother of thirteen, was widowed in 1855 when her husband was struck by falling coal.<sup>17</sup> By 1857 one of her daughters, Mary Waller, had also been widowed as a result of a colliery accident.<sup>18</sup> As John Benson notes, an average of approximately 1000 British miners died in colliery accidents every year from 1850 to 1914, a steady 'drip-drip of death' behind which lay 'great misery and struggle'.<sup>19</sup>

As Jamie Bronstein has demonstrated, the experience of widowhood generally placed a cataclysmic economic burden upon the family in addition to its personal and

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<sup>12</sup> Peter Laslett, 'Mean Household Size in England Since the Sixteenth Century', in Peter Laslett & Richard Wall (eds), *Household and Family in Past Time* (Cambridge, 1972), p. 147.

<sup>13</sup> 1851 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

<sup>14</sup> Benjamin Biram to 5th Earl Fitzwilliam, 21st June 1833, SA, WWM/Stw P/14/1-76.

<sup>15</sup> *Sheffield And Rotherham Independent*, 26th April 1845.

<sup>16</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 21st November 1840, p. 8.

<sup>17</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 30th August 1855.

<sup>18</sup> Rev. G. Scaife to Benjamin Biram, 1st January 1857, SA, WWM/Stw P/15/26/s-118.

<sup>19</sup> Benson, *British Coalminers*, p. 39.

emotional consequences. As a result, plebian families utilised a number of different approaches or coping strategies in attempts to mitigate the effects.<sup>20</sup> At one level, this might involve an application for help to either the Parish or Fitzwilliam authorities. On a more informal basis, the financial, social and cultural implications of widowhood could be mitigated through the accessing of community and kinship networks of assistance. Elderly widows, for example, might call upon the support of grown-up children. Of the 14 women listed in the 1851 census, seven lived with their unmarried adult children or grandchildren, four lived with their sons-in-law and their families, and one lived with her own young children. Of the remaining two women, Sarah Moon, aged 82, is described as a lodger living with the Taylor Family at New Row, whilst Mary Turner, aged 72, is described as being housekeeper to the miner and widower, Richard Kay, aged 68.<sup>21</sup> Of those widows who could draw upon family support, it is interesting that those living with unmarried adult sons are referred to as heads of the household. Since the Victorian census was focussed around the relationship of family members to the nominal head of the family (generally the senior male) the description of widows as heads of households suggests that they were regarded, in theory at least, as inheritors of the authority of their deceased husbands. This appears to have ended with the marriage of children and particularly sons, so that, rather than living in their married sons' households, widows moved in with married daughters, occupying a place within the household structure that was nominally subordinate to their sons-in-law. The only exception to this is the case of Rachel Morton, who in 1851 lived with her daughter and son-in-law, but who was recorded as the head of the household. This reflects Rachel's status as an innkeeper

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<sup>20</sup> Bronstein, *Caught in the Machinery*, pp. 30-49.

<sup>21</sup> 1851 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

and businesswoman, and the fact that her son-in-law, George Naylor, a coal-miner, had lodged with her for a number of years prior to marrying her daughter.<sup>22</sup>

The presence of widows within households was a phenomenon that could be of mutual benefit, both to the widow and the host household. Mary Hurst, for example, lived with her 18-year-old unmarried son Samuel and her unmarried daughters, Maria and Sophia, aged 16 and 11 respectively. Also living with her was her oldest son James, aged 34, a widower with two young children. Within this household structure, it is likely that Mary and her daughters provided the child-care and domestic labour that enabled Samuel and James to pursue careers outside the home as coal-miners. Similarly, Elizabeth Evans lived with her daughter, aged 21 (also named Elizabeth), her adult grandson George Horsliffe, aged 20, and another grandson, Edwin Litchfield, aged 8. The presence of her mother in the household clearly enabled the younger Elizabeth to gain work outside the home as a servant, whilst George, a coal-miner, probably also contributed to the household finances. Even where living arrangements were not so well-defined, it is clear that family and kinship played an important part in issues such as childcare and accommodation. Margaret Evans, for example, looked after her widowed daughter Mary Waller's new baby for nine months a year, despite having six of her own children still living at home.<sup>23</sup> As Marjorie Levine-Clark has demonstrated, the importance of extended family support networks such as these was implicitly realised by the Poor Law authorities, who

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<sup>22</sup> 1841 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

<sup>23</sup> Rev. G. Scaife to Benjamin Biram, 1st January 1857, SA, WWM/Stw P/15/26/s-118.

expressly sought to determine and enforce family obligations of care in an effort to minimise the financial burden to the parish.<sup>24</sup>

In cases where family structure and support networks were insufficient to create economically viable households, an alternative option was to augment the household by taking in paying lodgers. In 1851, for example, widow Ann Swift shared her house with two lodgers, Charles Stringer and Daniel Allen, both of whom were apparently married men living away from their families.<sup>25</sup> Some idea of what this process entailed is provided by the widespread reporting of the asphyxiation of the widow Phoebe Sadler and her family in 1853, which occurred as a result of cyanide fumes seeping into her cottage from an adjacent blast furnace at Elsecar Ironworks. The inquest into the deaths revealed that Phoebe, 53, occupied the front bedroom of the four-room building, where she shared a bed with her nineteen year-old daughter Anne and her fifteen year-old 'lame' son, John.<sup>26</sup> The reason for this was that the back bedroom was given over for the use of the lodger, William Warwick, aged 48. Although Phoebe was described as a 'labouring woman',<sup>27</sup> it would seem likely that either herself or Anne or both would have had to devote at least some time to the care of the disabled John, and so the inconvenience of their living arrangements was clearly less important to the family than the financial support of Warwick's rent money.

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<sup>24</sup> Levine-Clark, 'The Gendered Economy', pp. 72-89.

<sup>25</sup> 1851 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

<sup>26</sup> *Morning Post*, 6th December 1853, p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 11th December 1853, p. 3.

In 1861, 29 out of a total of 159 Elsecar households (18.23%) contained at least one lodger. This compares to work by Barbara Laslett, which puts the percentage of nineteenth-century urban households containing lodgers at any one time between 15 and 20%.<sup>28</sup> The Elsecar evidence is interesting in that, whilst it is broadly in accordance with the pattern established by Laslett, it contrasts with the experience of lead-mining communities on the Duke of Cleveland's estate, where a prohibition on lodgers was rigorously enforced.<sup>29</sup> As Leonore Davidoff has explored, by 1850 the practice of lodging was becoming viewed with suspicion by middle-class observers, who saw a threat to morality and social order in its potential to break down sex and class barriers.<sup>30</sup> Within this context, it is important to note that the Wentworth Estate attempted to address the practice of sub-letting rooms to lodgers by the creation of a Model Lodging House 'replete with every comfort' in 1854.<sup>31</sup> This was intended to be a regulated, ordered environment where alcohol and female visitors were forbidden, and where the inmates were subject to an evening curfew that was enforced by a male superintendent.<sup>32</sup> This strict regime ensured that the lodging house was a dismal failure; of the 36 'boarders' and two 'lodgers' that were recorded as living in Elsecar in 1861, only one, a 14-year-old iron-worker, is recorded as living in the lodging house itself.<sup>33</sup>

The failure of the lodging house reflects its inability to provide men with the home comforts, sociability and conviviality that were part of the attractions of lodging with a family in the village. One aspect of this lodging experience that exercised the minds

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<sup>28</sup> Barbara Laslett, 'Family Membership, Past and Present', *Social Problems* 25.5 (1978), p. 479.

<sup>29</sup> Leonore Davidoff, *Worlds Between: Historical Perspectives on Gender and Class* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 158.

<sup>30</sup> Davidoff, *Worlds Between*, p. 157.

<sup>31</sup> *Manchester Times*, 7th March 1855.

<sup>32</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 3rd November 1859.

<sup>33</sup> 1861 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

of the Earl and his officials was the ambiguous nature of the lodger/landlady relationship and its potential for masking and facilitating sexual relationships. This is expressly referred to by the Reverend George Scaife in a letter of 1855 to Benjamin Biram, in which he brought up the case of a widow, Elizabeth Mallinder, who had given birth to 'a child which she fathered on a lodger, a married man [original emphasis] and whom she well knew to be such a man with a family'.<sup>34</sup> A second widow, Mary Kay, whom Scaife described as 'not much if at all less disreputable'<sup>35</sup> than Elizabeth Mallinder, is mentioned in a separate newspaper report as 'cohabiting' with her partner, Henry Cartledge.<sup>36</sup> Scaife's correspondence to Biram, which discusses the morality of other widows and single mothers, highlights an important phenomenon, namely the formation of sexual relationships between unmarried couples. Whilst it is difficult to judge the stability or longevity of the relationships of this kind, work by Ginger Frost has shown that relationships between unmarried cohabiting couples could indeed persist for considerable lengths of time, to the extent of being considered as *de facto* marriages in assessments made by the Poor Law authorities.<sup>37</sup> However, as Tanya Evans' work on lone mothers in the eighteenth century reveals, the goal of family and economic stability could prove elusive. She demonstrates that women generally became poorer with age, a situation that was exacerbated by large numbers of dependent children. These economic strains, and efforts to alleviate them, resulted in many women who had become widows 'living lives riddled with poverty and crises'.<sup>38</sup> With this in mind, it is important to note that,

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<sup>34</sup> Rev. G. Scaife to Benjamin Biram, 2nd January 1855, SA, WWM/Stw P/15/26/s-28.

<sup>35</sup> Rev. G. Scaife to Benjamin Biram, 2nd January 1855, SA, WWM/Stw P/15/26/s-28.

<sup>36</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 18th August 1855, p. 10.

<sup>37</sup> Frost, 'Under the Guardians', p. 29.

<sup>38</sup> Tanya Evans, *'Unfortunate Objects': Lone Mothers in Eighteenth Century London* (London, 2005), p. 42.



whilst George Scaife was clearly disapproving of the perceived immorality of the women he mentions, all of his letters to Benjamin Biram on this subject are in fact interventions on behalf of the women concerned for the Earl to alleviate their financial distress.

It is clear that extended family networks, the need to maintain the economic viability of the family unit, the need to accommodate elderly family members, the practicalities of childcare, the practice of sub-letting to tenants and the need to mitigate the effect of family disintegration due to bereavement, created complicated family structures at Elsecar, with 10.25% of Elsecar households in 1851 containing three generations.<sup>39</sup> This is significantly higher than the mean figure of 5.8% for three-generation households that Peter Laslett has given for the period 1574 to 1821.<sup>40</sup> The organisation and accommodation of the family was, then, of particular importance in structuring social relationships. Rather than being based solely on class or occupational identities, daily life involved inter-generational and inter-gender contact between related individuals and those, such as lodgers who, for the reasons outlined above, became part of the extended household. As Barbara Laslett notes, the presence of non-kin members within the household is likely to have strengthened bonds of association within the wider community.<sup>41</sup>

Many of these factors can be discerned in the family structures revealed in the 1841 Census. The household of Joseph Wigfield, a labourer living in a terraced cottage at Old Row, for example, consisted of himself, his wife Anne, his children Harriet,

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<sup>39</sup> 1851 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

<sup>40</sup> Laslett, 'Mean Household Size in England', p. 153.

<sup>41</sup> Laslett, 'Family Membership', p. 480.

William, Charlot [sic], John, James, Martha and Sarah, together with Sarah Coopers, aged 73, Lidia Coopers, aged 53 (probably her daughter) and Hannah and Christiana Coopers, aged nine and 16 respectively.<sup>42</sup> John Swift, a 70-year-old carpenter, lived at Elsecar Green with his wife Anne (also 70), Joseph, Samuel, Mary and Sarah Swift (all in their 30s) and Charles and Harry Swift (aged three years and one year respectively). Also living with the family was James Palman, a boy aged 11. Next door lived Hannah Bailey, aged 72, Benjamin Wood, an apprentice moulder, aged 15, Thomas Wood, a 13-year-old labourer and Henry Wood, aged 10.<sup>43</sup> All in all, 28 of 84 households (33.35%) recorded in the 1841 Census, and 34 out of a total of 103 households (33%) in the 1851 Census, contained at least one person that did not share the same surname as the head of household.<sup>44</sup>

The mean household size in Elsecar fell from 6.97 individuals in 1841 to 5.14 individuals in 1861, largely as a result of the expansion and rebuilding of the village.<sup>45</sup> These figures are somewhat higher than the mean household size of '4.75 or a little under' that Peter Laslett has argued persisted in Britain until circa 1901.<sup>46</sup> In this respect, it is important to note that agglomerative households of ten or more individuals were common in the village. In part, this also reflects the demographic make-up of the village and the extreme youthfulness of its population. In 1851, for example, 29.87% of the population were aged 10 or below, whilst a further 26.29%

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<sup>42</sup> 1841 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

<sup>43</sup> 1841 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

<sup>44</sup> 1841, 1851 and 1861 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

<sup>45</sup> 1841 and 1851 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

<sup>46</sup> Laslett, 'Mean Household Size in England', p. 126.

were aged from 11-20.<sup>47</sup> Whilst this latter group were economically active, they were not independent in the sense that they had not married and formed their own households. Again, the 1851 Census reveals that only two individuals below the age of 20 were married. Marriage only becomes common amongst individuals in their mid to late twenties, with 39.28% of men and women in the age-group 20-29 being married.<sup>48</sup> Whereas some historians, such as F. M. L. Thompson, have assumed that nineteenth-century miners married early,<sup>49</sup> the Elsecar evidence is more in accord with the figure presented by John Benson, who cites an average age of marriage for all miners in 1884-5 of 24.04, slightly below the national average age of first marriage of all male workers of 25.5 to 26.6.<sup>50</sup>

From the census information discussed above, the picture emerges of Elsecar as a demographically young village, permeated by extended networks of family and kinship. In this, the village is comparable to other nineteenth-century urban industrial settlements although certain aspects, such as the high number of three-generation households noted in 1851, appear unusual. In general terms, the structuring of Elsecar households mirrors the wider importance of kinship and family networks in ensuring the economic survival of plebian families. Of course, these networks, both within and between households, were themselves structured by hierarchies of gender and family status, so that these structures existed alongside, and interacted with, the associations, hierarchies and common interests that resulted from the shared experiences of work.

In the following section, I will examine the significance of social interactions that

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<sup>47</sup> 1851 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

<sup>48</sup> 1851 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

<sup>49</sup> F. M. L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Victorian Britain 1830-1900* (London, 1988), p. 93.

<sup>50</sup> Benson, *British Coalminers*, p. 121.

occurred outside the home and their relationship to workplace and kinship association.

### **Outside the Home: Drink and Sociability**

If work is one aspect of plebian lived experience that has traditionally been foregrounded, another is the important social role played by alcohol. As John Rule observes, 'Drink played a large part in the customary culture of the workplace',<sup>51</sup> promoting camaraderie amongst workmates and providing focus and structure to many of the customs and rituals which governed working practices. The social importance of alcohol extended beyond the workplace to the pub and beer-shop which, as Anna Clark argues, functioned as places where male associations could be forged, where masculine identities could be rehearsed and constructed and where social bonds and alliances with workmates and peers could be reinforced.<sup>52</sup> In regard to Elsecar, it is clear that a large proportion of the contemporary newspaper reports feature alcohol as an agent in the unfurling of a particular sequence of events with, in many cases, the beer-shop or pub the arena in which the events unfold. With this in mind, the research aim of this section is to follow the villagers, with their dense networks of family, kinship and workplace associations, beyond the workplace and the home, into the streets and pubs of the village, in order to explore the significance of drink and drinking in influencing and framing social relationships. As I argue, alcohol and the workplace were closely linked, so that camaraderies that were formed and bound by communal drinking in leisure time permeated the workplace, whilst

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<sup>51</sup> Rule, 'Against Innovation?', p. 172.

<sup>52</sup> Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches*, p. 30.

associations that were forged between individuals in the workplace were reinforced in the pubs and beer-shops. of the village.

On Thursday the 21st December 1837, the body of John Law, a stonemason employed at the Milton Ironworks, was discovered in the Dearne and Dove Canal, close to the Elsecar Ironworks.<sup>53</sup> He had been missing since the 26th November. John Law's death is an important starting point in considering the relationships between family, work and drink within the village, particularly since many details of his life were raised in the subsequent Coroner's inquest and were preserved in the press reporting of the case.<sup>54</sup> Originally from Aberdeen, Law was 37, apparently single, and lodged with Mary Haigh, a widow. He left his lodgings on the morning of Sunday 26th November and found his way to a public house in the (then) hamlet of Hemingfield, approximately 4km to the east of his lodgings in Hoyland. He evidently found the company in the pub convivial and stayed there until around seven o'clock in the evening, when he left 'in a state of inebriation'.<sup>55</sup> It is likely that he intended to return home for his dinner, as he had previously arranged with his landlady. However, despite being shown the way home, Law appears to have got hopelessly lost, and at some point appears to have fallen into the canal.

Law's death illustrates the central role that alcohol played in the recreational life of men. Indeed, to spend all day drinking in the way Law did does not appear to have been unusual, either in the context of the village generally or in the context of iron-

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<sup>53</sup> *Sheffield Independent and Yorkshire and Derbyshire Advertiser*, 30th December 1837; all the subsequent details regarding the circumstances of Law's death are taken from this source.

<sup>54</sup> *Sheffield Independent and Yorkshire and Derbyshire Advertiser*, 30th December 1837; the original court records of the inquest do not survive.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

workers in particular. Thomas Jones, for example, a worker at Elsecar Ironworks, is recorded as having finished one night shift at 6am and then gone straight to a beer-shop where he continued to drink until 5pm, at which point 'having drunk a good deal, he became noisy'.<sup>56</sup> Edward Thompson notes that the widespread custom of 'Saint Monday' (i.e. taking Monday off work) was closely associated with 'heavy week-end drinking'<sup>57</sup> and, at Elsecar, documentary evidence suggests that Saint Monday or 'Miners' Monday' traditions persisted, and were a cause of concern for the Earls' managers from the 1770s until at least 1860.<sup>58</sup> These concerns were echoed by the presiding coroner at Law's Inquest, who 'strongly condemned the practice of allowing public houses and beer-shops to be opened on Sundays, and permitting men to remain therein till they got into a beastly state of intoxication'.<sup>59</sup>

The pub offered recreation and refreshment to be sure, but also functioned as a space in which various forms of social interaction could occur. Indeed, the pub could remain an important venue for defining an individual's status even after death. Although it is not specifically stated in the Law case, the local public houses in the vicinity of Elsecar, such as the Milton Arms and The Ship, were often the venue for inquests into the frequent industrial-related deaths in the village, where the body of the deceased could be scrutinised as it lay 'on view'<sup>60</sup> and where the circumstances of death could be asserted by public testimony. In such cases, the pub could act as a

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<sup>56</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 20th January 1866, p. 11; this was the report of a court case in which Jones accused Thomas Walker (a beer-shop keeper) of assaulting him whilst attempting to removing him from his beer-shop.

<sup>57</sup> E. P. Thompson, 'Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism', *Past and Present* 38.1 (1967), p. 74.

<sup>58</sup> Mee, *Aristocratic Enterprise*, pp. 161, 174.

<sup>59</sup> *Sheffield Independent and Yorkshire and Derbyshire Advertiser*, 30th December 1837.

<sup>60</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 24th December 1859; this article reports the inquest at Elsecar into the death of miner John Firth at Elsecar Low Pit.

venue for social affirmation, for the reinforcement of community ties and values, and for the creation of shared narratives. This is seen, for example, in the case of the inquest into the death of John Dunston, held at 'the house of John Hague, publican'. Dunstan's body, 'much disfigured', was viewed, and his final moments described, by his 'brother miners' who had experienced, but survived, the explosion which killed him.<sup>61</sup>

For the living, the pub could be the venue for quasi-official meetings, as for example in the case of the committee of striking puddlers (iron-workers) from Elsecar who met at Jacob Uttley's inn at Hoyland,<sup>62</sup> or could be where more informal groupings of workmates could assemble. It was also the venue in which social interactions associated with sporting events could occur. Running races, the traditional ball game of 'nurr and spell', pigeon-shooting and pigeon-racing contests, for example, were all popular working-class activities, the events invariably involving cash prizes and being organised around particular pubs.<sup>63</sup> In his work on nineteenth-century industrial Lancashire, Peter Swain has drawn attention to the central role played by the public house in plebian conviviality, and to the links between masculinity, drinking, gambling and competitive sport:

Within the nineteenth century the public house [...] was the very centre of working class culture, being the most important recreational institution for the working class. [...] The pub was also a bastion of male privilege, drinking and sport, reinforcing masculinity in the place where men almost exclusively would meet.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> *Sheffield Independent and Yorkshire and Derbyshire Advertiser*, 3rd October 1829.

<sup>62</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 7th April 1866, p. 11.

<sup>63</sup> See, for example, *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 11th September 1859, p. 6, in which Edwin Hawke of Elsecar issues an open challenge to 'any pigeon fancier within six miles' to a race for a purse of either £5 or £10, the match to be arranged at Henry Oxley's Stubbin Hotel (on the outskirts of Elsecar).

<sup>64</sup> Peter Swain, 'Pedestrianism, the Public House and Gambling in Nineteenth-century South-east Lancashire', *Sport in History* 32.3. (2012), p. 385.

In Elsecar, too, it is possible to discern this close link between conviviality, robust masculinity, sport and alcohol. Regular nurr and spell contests were held at the suitably virile-sounding 'Bombshell Inn' for example,<sup>65</sup> whilst the proprietor, miner George Evans, was also a well-known race-runner.<sup>66</sup> Other more illicit activity, in particular cards and gambling, also took place in the Elsecar pubs.<sup>67</sup>

That the public house was widely considered to be a social space with its own conventions and rules of behaviour can be seen in a letter from Benjamin Biram concerning the conduct of Thomas Hoyland, the miner sacked by the 5th Earl for his alleged involvement in a dispute between the mine manager Cooper and Henry Hartop, the manager of the Elsecar Ironworks.<sup>68</sup> In inquiring further into the details of the incident, Biram wrote to the Earl to inform him that it did not occur in the counting house at Elsecar colliery, as the Earl had thought,<sup>69</sup> but 'in the public house at Elsecar. This being the case [...] I think it will materially alter the degree of culpability in him [Hoyland]'.<sup>70</sup> The inference from Biram's letter is that the public house was somewhere in which grievances could be aired, and opinions voiced, in an informal way. In contrast, the same altercation, if it had occurred in the more structured and hierarchical work environment of the counting house, may have been viewed as insubordination.

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<sup>65</sup> See, for example, *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 20th August 1848, p. 7.

<sup>66</sup> *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, 15th August 1847, p. 3.

<sup>67</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 25th March 1858; report of the conviction of John Hall, publican of the Milton Arms, Elsecar, for allowing gaming on his premises.

<sup>68</sup> See page 67 of this thesis.

<sup>69</sup> 5th Earl Fitzwilliam to Benjamin Biram, 6th May 1836, SA, WWM/Stw P/14/2-99.

<sup>70</sup> Benjamin Biram to 5th Earl Fitzwilliam, 19th May 1836, SA, WWM/G/40/95.



Although the pub and alcohol were both a venue and stimulus for social interaction, the apparent conviviality of such gatherings could mask male posturing for status and acceptance. This is demonstrated vividly in a letter from an anonymous miner to Benjamin Biram. The letter complains of the conduct of John Bennet, a bookkeeper at an Elsecar colliery 'whose chiefe [sic] business is weighing is [sic] neighbours pigs and beting [sic] wagers on them'<sup>71</sup> and who had apparently formed a corrupt cadre with his brother, Thomas Bennet, and with another miner called Thomas Evans and his son. As well as allegedly defrauding the Earl Fitzwilliam by claiming money for work they had not done, the gang:

are drinking four or five nights in the week regularly and since he [Bennet] got to be bookkeeper he is alwayes [sic] wanting the men to club for drink he is a shilling to their three pence as of as they like to club. This is not chimeria [sic] it is a real fact.<sup>72</sup>

As Anna Clark observes, 'drinking bound workmen together'<sup>73</sup> and, in the case of Bennet's gang, the act of clubbing together and sharing drinking expenses can be seen as an example of this bonding process. Convivial though this might have been, the fact that Bennet paid in more to the drinking kitty than the other men demonstrates how drink reinforced social bonds that could be framed in terms of hierarchy and obligation. This seems to echo, in form if not in detail, aspects of the close relationship between the provision and consumption of alcohol, workplace customs and worker hierarchies that have been identified by John Rule.<sup>74</sup> In essence, Bennet allegedly sought to buy support and influence, and to create obligation amongst his workmates through the provision of drink.

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<sup>71</sup> Anonymous miner to Benjamin Biram, 24th January 1848, SA, WWM/Stw P/15/1/a-7.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches*, p. 30.

<sup>74</sup> Rule, 'Against Innovation?', p. 171.

The Bennet case demonstrates the extent to which the prevalent drinking culture intersected with the workplace. Indeed, for particular groups such as the iron-workers, it was an essential part of the working experience, being a means of combating dehydration resulting from the heat of the furnaces. This is demonstrated by a case in which Thomas Hirst was convicted of obtaining ten quarts of ale and five pennyworths of tobacco from the Milton Arms public house by claiming he had been sent by John Swift, 'a workman at the Elsecar furnaces'.<sup>75</sup> Hirst's successful fraud suggests that an order for this amount of alcohol from the iron-workers during a working day (the fraud occurred on a Friday) was entirely normal. Moreover, the fact that he attempted the same fraud at the same pub later on the same day suggests that this was the amount consumed by each shift at the furnaces.

Whilst it could reinforce social bonds, the Bennet case also demonstrates how drinking could exacerbate conflict and factionalism amongst different groups of workers. These undercurrents are vividly revealed in a letter from Thomas Shaw, a banksman (above ground supervisor) at an Elsecar colliery who, as was discussed in Chapter Two, found himself in 1833 the subject of bullying and malicious rumours from his workmates. In his letter to the steward Benjamin Biram, Shaw firmly attributed the maliciousness of his enemies to his failure to engage in social drinking with them:

If I was accustomed to frequent the public house and spend my money to the neglect of my family, I should be esteemed by most of them a good hearty fellow as they commonly say, but I don't know that I have been as many times in all the

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<sup>75</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 15th September 1849.

alehouses in Elsecar, Wentworth and Hoyland as I have worked years at the place, except on business.<sup>76</sup>

Shaw's experience demonstrates that the consequences of not engaging in the culture of sociability and drinking could involve social isolation, ostracism and loss of professional and personal status. His case also highlights the tensions and divisions within working-class communities that coalesced around the idea of respectability. In his letter to Biram, for example, he stressed his sobriety, conscientiousness and loyalty, all qualities that he clearly felt were appropriate to his position of authority as a banksman. These issues can be viewed from a different perspective by considering estate correspondence relating to Joseph Cooper, a miner who was appointed as underground steward at the Earls' Park Gate Colliery in circa 1833.<sup>77</sup> In addition to these duties, Cooper ran a public house from his home, a practice that he continued until 1837, when the matter attracted the attention of the 5th Earl, who wrote 'I must insist on his [Cooper's] leaving the Public House and the locality [original emphasis], for it is not a proper situation for a person in his office'.<sup>78</sup>

Shaw, in following a pattern of personal conduct which he felt was in accordance with his position, and which he clearly understood was in accordance with the expectations and assumptions of his employers, appears to have distanced himself from his workmates, in the process emphasising through his behaviour the social and occupational hierarchy inherent in his position as banksman. His behaviour can be contrasted with that of Bennet, whose use of drinking rituals as a means of creating an

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<sup>76</sup> Thomas Shaw to Benjamin Biram, 19th August 1833, SA, WWM/Stw P/15/25/s-27.

<sup>77</sup> Park Gate colliery, near Rotherham, was established in 1828. As one of the Earls' collieries, it was run and managed along similar lines to the Elsecar collieries.

<sup>78</sup> 5th Earl Fitzwilliam to Benjamin Biram, 17th May 1837, SA, WWM Stw P/14/3-23.

impression of camaraderie, allowed him to transcend his similarly elevated position as a bookkeeper.

As these examples have demonstrated, alcohol, the pub and the workplace were closely linked, so that camaraderies that were formed and bound by communal drinking in leisure time permeated the workplace, whilst affinities and associations that were forged between individuals in the workplace persisted after work in the pubs and beer-shops. By engaging with the drinking culture and observing its particular rituals, rules and hierarchies, an individual could thus hope to 'fit in' to the workplace, to avoid confrontation, and be in a position to access those positive aspects of mutual support, for example, the gatherings described in Chapter Two.

Like family and kinship ties,, conviviality and the drinking culture within the village thus structured and enabled social relationships, in particular allowing the individual to access and participate in networks of mutual support. However, despite these positive aspects, it is important to note that this process would appear to be gendered. Women are conspicuously absent in the sources that relate to drinking and public houses in Elsecar, except where they appear in a supporting role as servants and waitresses. In consequence, although the early-nineteenth century has been seen as a period in which women frequented public houses in increasing numbers,<sup>79</sup> it has not been possible to gauge the extent of women's participation in the drinking culture of Elsecar, or whether this allowed their access to similar networks of support and association.

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<sup>79</sup> Shoemaker, *Gender*, p. 274-5.

### **Working-class Masculinity and Conflict**

In the preceding section, I explored the significance of conviviality and communal drinking in Elsecar. As I intimated, the significance of this phenomenon lies less in it being a form of recreation and more in terms of being a mechanism whereby social networks were formed and maintained. Since all the available evidence suggests that these networks were explicitly male, convivial drinking can be seen as an expression of masculine identity, with a direct relevance in terms of the structuring of social relationships within the community in general and gender relationships in particular. In this section, I will push this idea further by exploring the insights that drinking and its consequences can offer into working-class rituals and norms of masculine and manly behaviour. Since these masculine tropes of behaviour tend to be revealed during male disputes and are often exaggerated through the prism of alcohol, I will explore this issue by examining the newspaper evidence of male violence and conflict within Elsecar and the role that alcohol played in fuelling this violence. I argue that as well as facilitating male association, communal drinking created an environment in which petty grievances and insults frequently led to the public enactment of tropes of masculinity based on physicality and the violent defence of status.

In terms of studies of masculinity in the nineteenth century in general, the period has been seen as one of change stimulated by the pressures of the emergent capitalist industrial economy. This change was characterised very broadly by the increasing importance of occupation or profession as a touchstone of masculine identity, and a corresponding sentimental focus upon the home and domestic life as 'an emotional reaction to a sense of alienation [...] Materially, the home was counterpoised to the

noise and ugliness of the city; morally, it was counterpoised to the cynicism and cruelty of market relations'.<sup>80</sup> A third element, related to these first two, is a decline in violence between men as a means of signifying, contesting or preserving masculine status.<sup>81</sup> However, these emerging ideas originated within the middle classes and the extent to which they permeated the world of the industrial poor is still the subject of debate. Although this is partly due to the difficulty in locating suitable sources where such evidence may reside, the issue also relates to the nature of masculine identities themselves. As Karen Harvey and Alexandra Shepard have noted, masculine behaviours and identities in any particular society are generally constructed in reference to a dominant ideology or code of behaviour. This dominant code or hegemonic masculinity demarcates 'the masculine norms and practices which are most valued by the politically dominant class and which help to maintain its authority [...] at the heart of hegemonic masculinity are the processes that serve to maintain patriarchy, both in relation to deviant and cadet masculinities but primarily in relation to women'.<sup>82</sup> It thus follows that the hegemonic code masks and obscures other deviant and cadet masculinities which exist in conflict or accord with it to varying degrees. These issues are explored by Lynne Alexander, for example, who contrasts the actual behaviour and attitudes of plebian fathers with their perception and judgement through the prism of a middle-class hegemonic code of masculinity.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> John Tosh, 'Masculinities in an Industrialising Society: Britain, 1800–1914', *Journal of British Studies* 44.2 (2005), p. 333.

<sup>81</sup> Robert Shoemaker, 'Honour and the Decline of Public Violence in Eighteenth-Century London', *Social History* 26.2 (2001), pp. 205-6; Tosh, 'Masculinities', p. 334.

<sup>82</sup> Karen Harvey & Alexandra Shepard, 'What Have Historians Done with Masculinity? Reflections on Five Centuries of British History, circa 1500–1950', *Journal of British Studies* 44.2 (2005), p. 278.

<sup>83</sup> Lynn M. Alexander, 'Labouring Fathers: Parenthood, Class, And Gender', *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies* 4.3 (2008), paragraph 4. No page references are given in this on-line volume <http://www.ncgsjournal.com/issue43/alexander.htm> [accessed 11/05/2016].

Returning to the newspaper sources, it is perhaps unsurprising that much of the evidence for drinking and its rituals at Elsecar stems from reportage of court sessions dealing with the aftermath of incidents of violence of varying degrees of severity. Partly, this reflects the perceived newsworthiness of these accounts, but it is also important to note that reportage of this type sits within a particular historical context. In this respect, work by Nicholas Mason has highlighted the way in which the passing of the 1830 Beer Act, which de-regulated the sale of alcohol and allowed the establishment of beer-shops, prompted an anxious response from 'England's privileged classes', who were appalled by the alleged subsequent rise in working-class drunkenness and its effects upon morality and social order.<sup>84</sup> Reports of drunkenness and disorder at Elsecar thus fit into a wider picture of the increasing scrutiny of plebian behaviour in the light of these growing concerns.

Whilst on one level, drinking and drunkenness led to behaviour which can be viewed as chaotic and disorderly, on another level, the actors in these drunken dramas still acted within a framework of socially-defined moves and countermoves which were bound up with concepts of masculinity and status.<sup>85</sup> For this reason, the newspaper reports can give an interesting insight into plebian masculine identities as they were lived and experienced. At the same time, the newspapers were written and read by middle-class men who subscribed in greater or lesser degree to a hegemonic masculinity based in middle-class experience. Many of the newspaper articles reflect this, so that a particular event, which in itself might be deviant or unlawful, can nevertheless be reported sympathetically or censoriously, depending on whether the

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<sup>84</sup> Nicholas Mason, "'The Sovereign People Are in a Beastly State': The Beer Act of 1830 and Victorian Discourse on Working-Class Drunkenness", *Victorian Literature and Culture* 29.1 (2001), p. 110.

<sup>85</sup> Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2003), p. 105.

plebian actors involved act in accordance with, or in opposition to, the codes of this hegemonic masculinity. This curious double focus thus, on occasion, allows both these elements of plebian masculinity, the rehearsed and the perceived, to be explored.

In the plebian world, concepts of masculinity were firmly rooted in the body, physicality, strength and physical prowess.<sup>86</sup> These concerns reflected the daily reality of existence, in which the ability to earn sustenance relied to a very great degree on one's ability to undertake physical labour. In the coal mines of Elsecar and elsewhere, for example, the *butty* system, whereby colliers were paid by the amount of coal they excavated, meant that the relationship between the body (tired and aching), work (tubs of coal, weighed and counted) and reward (wages, counted, received and signed for) were clear for all to see. For the middle classes and the emergent bourgeoisie, this intimate link between work, physicality and masculinity had ceased to be of similar significance, resulting in a shift towards the idea of profession or calling as a mark of status and identity. Despite, or more likely, because of this shift, physical work, physicality and muscular masculinity, as exhibited by plebian men, exercised a particular fascination for the middle classes. The artist Ford Madox Brown, for example, in discussing his 1865 painting *Work* could describe 'the young navvy who occupies the place of hero' in the painting as being 'in the full swing of his activity (with his manly and picturesque costume) [...] with the rich glow of colour [...] in the pride of manly health and beauty'.<sup>87</sup> It is possible to view this fascination as an opposing trend to the middle-class fear of plebian disorder explored

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<sup>86</sup> Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, p. 91.

<sup>87</sup> Ford Madox Brown, quoted in J. M. Golby, *Culture and Society in Britain 1850-1890* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 112-114.



by Nicholas Mason, so that these oscillating viewpoints form a frame of reference in which to site the newspaper reportage.

A good example of a censorious newspaper report is an account of a fracas involving the puddler [iron-worker] Henry Johnson that was published in the Leeds Mercury. Under the headline 'SAVAGE CONDUCT OF PUDDLERS NEAR BARNESLEY',<sup>88</sup> the article recounted the dispute that arose between Johnson and William Walters, also a puddler and beer-shop keeper, when the latter refused to serve him ale after hours. Johnson threatened that 'he would run his [Walters'] head up the chimney'<sup>89</sup> and broke a table and window before being evicted. Together with two companions, he then broke down the door of a neighbouring house, accusing the occupants of robbing him. In hearing details of the case, the magistrate remarked that 'he could hardly believe that we were in the nineteenth century and in England'.<sup>90</sup> The newspaper report, then, presents the episode, in which the themes of violence, disorder, drunkenness and the mob coalesce, as a kind of anthropological study of a 'savage', other-worldly, community that was isolated from the reader not only by space, but also by its own primitive brutality. In this respect, it is important to note that the dispute took place in Sevastopol Row, a newly-built development of several streets of densely-packed terraced cottages, built by the firm of Dawes Brothers to house their workers at the expanding Milton Ironworks.<sup>91</sup> The development was on the margins of Elsecar village and was not under the Earls' direct control, and so in these respects may well have been perceived as a liminal settlement.

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<sup>88</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 17th November 1866.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 17th November 1866.

<sup>91</sup> Clayton, *Hoyland Nether*, p. 65; the entire Sevastopol development was demolished in circa 1960.

Another interesting example of masculine behaviour comes from the hamlet of Jump, also on the outskirts of Elsecar, where in 1855 Henry Cartledge accused William Wildsmith of unprovoked assault. When the case came to court, it transpired that Cartledge 'was drunk and challenged any man in Jump to fight him',<sup>92</sup> a challenge apparently enthusiastically taken up by Wildsmith, who was the brother of Cartledge's partner, Mary Kay. As Karen Downing points out 'Defending one's honour with one's fists was a traditional notion of manhood [...] in eighteenth-century working-class culture'<sup>93</sup> and the challenge issued by Cartledge clearly echoes the rituals and conventions of boxing. Downing explores the development of this sport as a key element in the formulation of a masculine identity that was refined, controlled and civilised, but which could nevertheless be potently physical. Moreover, since lucrative prize-fighting was one way in which working-class men could escape poverty and navigate class boundaries, 'the fighter's aspiration to gentlemanly status'<sup>94</sup> made this form of masculinity one which plebian men could aspire to.

In the light of this, it is unfortunate that Wildsmith apparently defeated Cartledge in the ensuing contest. The loss of face suffered by Cartledge, which probably occurred under the gaze of his partner, at 'the door of his lodgings'<sup>95</sup> and which was witnessed by at least three other men (all of whom he tried to implicate in the 'assault') seems to have prompted his accusation. In any case, the newspaper report had little sympathy for Cartledge, focusing instead upon his morality in 'cohabiting' with Kay, and his

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<sup>92</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 18th August 1855, p. 10.

<sup>93</sup> Karen Downing, 'The Gentleman Boxer: Boxing, Manners, and Masculinity in Eighteenth-Century England', *Men and Masculinities* 12.3 (2010), p. 330.

<sup>94</sup> Downing, 'The Gentleman Boxer', p. 340.

<sup>95</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 18th August 1855, p. 10.

drunkenness, and noting that Jump was 'more notorious than all the other villages in this petty sessional division'<sup>96</sup> for cases of assault. In this last observation, the newspaper mirrors the reporting of violence in the Johnson case by placing the events within a perceived savage and lawless environment at the edges of civilised society.

Henry Cartledge was clearly a victim of his own drunken attempt to assert his manhood. In other situations, events moved swiftly to the point of violence precisely because masculine codes of behaviour made it difficult to back down and lose face. The unspoken, but well-understood, script of these types of encounters is revealed in an altercation between Thomas Hurst and Thomas Hague. The two men had spent a convivial evening together, drinking and practicing music in a public house, both being members of the same 'country [sic] band'.<sup>97</sup> On the way home with the rest of the band, the two men were apparently joking together, but at some point, Hague inadvertently overstepped the mark, at which point 'Hurst began to threaten'. Realising his error, Hague 'went up to him, and wanted to shake hands with him, saying he thought it was all a joke'. The substance of Hague's insult is not recorded. Clearly, however, Hurst felt that it could not go unpunished without sending the wrong signals to Hague and the rest of the company, and instead of taking Hague's hand, he 'knocked him to the ground twice, and severely abused him when on the ground'.<sup>98</sup> Robert Shoemaker demonstrates how trivial arguments between men could escalate rapidly into violence, largely due to 'a high sensitivity to insult and such a keen desire to prove their physical strength and courage'.<sup>99</sup> As the argument between

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<sup>96</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 18th August 1855, p. 10.

<sup>97</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 20th March 1840, p. 6.

<sup>98</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 20th March 1840, p. 6.

<sup>99</sup> Shoemaker, 'Honour', p. 195.

Hague and Hurst demonstrates, masculine codes of behaviour in Elsecar similarly revolved around a sensitivity to insult. In 1838, for example, the Elsecar iron-worker George Settles was convicted of the stabbing of Thomas Lambert. The two men, each accompanied by a group of friends, had chanced to meet on a canal bridge, on which Settles apparently jostled Lambert. The situation escalated into violence when Lambert asked Settles 'do you call that a manly action', to which Settles 'called out "bullass", a cant word used amongst the workmen'.<sup>100</sup>

Loss of face and status could thus arise through betterment in a physical contest, as occurred to Henry Cartledge, or through the failure to contest inappropriate teasing or disrespect, the issue at the heart of the Hurst/Hague and Lambert/Settles cases. Loss of face was also suffered by Michael Brotherick, although in his case, not through violence. Brotherick, in his own words, incautiously 'lay down and fell asleep'<sup>101</sup> in a field whilst making his way home on a Sunday. When he awoke, his boots and trousers were missing, 'the only thing in the shape of "unmentionables" left being his drawers, and in that plight he had to make his way to his lodgings'.<sup>102</sup> Brotherick's reticence about the actual circumstances surrounding the theft, the somewhat arch tone of the article in referring to him 'retiring to rest'<sup>103</sup> and the fact that the incident took place on a Sunday all strongly suggest that he was drunk at the time. The fact that the culprit, Thomas Dangerfield, was apprehended sporting the missing trousers can have done little to restore Brotherick's injured sense of masculine dignity. The incident is an interesting one which contrasts with both the Cartledge and the

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<sup>100</sup> *Sheffield Independent and Yorkshire and Derbyshire Advertiser*, January 13th 1838.

<sup>101</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 22nd July 1867, p. 12.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

Hurst/Hague cases in that Dangerfield's symbolic unmanning of Brotherick was no less successful for being accomplished without actual violence. This is demonstrated by the tone of the reporting, which casts the whole episode as a humorous anecdote, with Brotherick firmly cast in the role of buffoon.

Whilst the ability to hold ones' drink was prized, the Brotherick case demonstrates clearly how actual drunkenness and drunken incapacity could be read as a condition of unmanliness and vulnerability. Brotherick's loss of the very symbol of his masculine identity, his trousers, echoes an earlier, more serious case, that of Thomas Smith. Smith, having provided evidence which led to the conviction of William Burgan and Benjamin Wainwright for hare-coursing, retired to the pub where, having 'got some liquor and having laid his head down upon the table'<sup>104</sup> he was attacked by Richard Froggatt, a friend of Burgan and Wainwright, who 'came and took Smith's liquor and drank it and then began punching him'.<sup>105</sup> In an action which has parallels with the Brotherick case, Froggatt targeted the most obvious symbols of Smith's identity, 'he [...] pulled both Smith's ear rings off and tore his ears and gave the rings to some boys'.<sup>106</sup>

Smith, like Brotherick, had laid himself open to attack through his own actions. Both men had in effect unmanned themselves through incapacity, a fact that was recognised by their attackers in the humiliating nature and theatricality of their assaults. This correlation between drunkenness, incapacity and vulnerability seems to have a wide social purchase, tying in as it did with middle-class concerns revolving

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<sup>104</sup> Joshua Biram to 4th Earl Fitzwilliam, 13th January 1812, SA, WWM/Stw P/5/3-8.

<sup>105</sup> Joshua Biram to 4th Earl Fitzwilliam, 13th January 1812, SA, WWM/Stw P/5/3-8

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

around alcohol and disorder generally. It can be seen, for example, in a number of newspaper reports, in which the narrative account of men being robbed, or leaving themselves open to potential robbery, stressed the significance of the victim's imbibing of alcohol in leaving themselves open to threat.<sup>107</sup> Jonathan Brown, for example, a rate collector, went to a beer-shop after work, where after enjoying a drink he, 'in a boasting manner pulled a handful of silver from his pocket and indiscreetly exposed it to the gaze of the company'. Brown remained in the beer-shop till closing time but was assaulted and robbed on the way home. In the subsequent court case, the landlord testified that Brown 'was worse for liquor'.<sup>108</sup> Brown was deemed culpable for the robbery by his own drunken actions, with the result that 'the Bench dismissed the charge [of robbery] remarking strongly on the conduct of the complainant'.<sup>109</sup> Brown's case conflates the issues of intemperance and incapability with those of class. In exposing his silver, he sought to display a visual symbol of his status that his fellow drinkers could immediately understand. Both the bench and the newspaper readership recognised this as an inflammatory act, undertaken by Brown when his judgement of the situation was imperilled by alcohol.

The Brown case is interesting in highlighting the relationship between class, masculinity and violence. These issues also feature in the case of James Yates, 'a dirty looking fellow' employed at the Elsecar Ironworks, who in 1857 was charged with stealing five sticks of celery from an Elsecar garden.<sup>110</sup> Yates had been apprehended by an overlooker at the ironworks, named Maybury. Concerned at repeated vegetable

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<sup>107</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 6th August 1842.

<sup>108</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 6th March 1852, p. 3.

<sup>109</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 6th March 1852, p. 3.

<sup>110</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 24th October 1857, p. 12.

thefts from his own garden, Maybury had armed himself and concealed himself in his garden all night until about 4am, when he spotted Yates entering a neighbour's property. Maybury 'shortly made toward him [Yates], fired a pistol, and succeeded in capturing him'.<sup>111</sup> The inequalities of class inherent in this case are highlighted by the fact that Maybury's violent, armed defence of property passed completely unremarked by either the court or the newspaper, whilst the unfortunate Yates was sentenced to three months hard labour.<sup>112</sup>

The relationship between class and violent masculinity is also evident in the account of a physical altercation that arose between Charles Augustus Dawes and William Cordeaux in 1857. This case is remarkable in being one in which both protagonists were very clearly middle class. The dispute occurred when Dawes, who was the son of Henry Dawes, one of the partners in the firm of Dawes Brothers, entered the company offices whilst smoking. This behaviour was objected to by Cordeaux, the company bookkeeper and the son of the Hoyland vicar. Cordeaux remarked to Dawes 'you dare not have done this if your uncle had been at home'.<sup>113</sup> Cordeaux's choice of phrase is interesting. John Tosh, for example, has shown how, in the nineteenth century, middle-class ideals of masculinity gravitated to the idea of work as a 'calling' – an authentic expression of a man's individuality.<sup>114</sup> By calling to mind the fact that Dawes' status in the workplace was both dependent on, and subordinate to, his family connections, Cordeaux was in effect challenging Dawes' masculinity. As John Tosh asserts, 'For middle-class work to be dignified, it had to be free from any suggestion

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<sup>111</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 24th October 1857, p. 12.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 16th March 1866.

<sup>114</sup> Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, p. 37.

of servility or dependence on patronage'.<sup>115</sup> Dawes apparently understood the challenge as such, and retaliated with a physical attack on Cordeaux. In the subsequent court case, Dawes defended his action with reference to the inequality of status between himself and Cordeaux, his lawyer arguing that the conduct of Cordeaux was anything but 'that of a servant to the son of his employer'.<sup>116</sup> This recourse to the language of class inequality, as embodied in the workplace hierarchy, is an excellent reminder of the stratification and tensions inherent in middle-class society. It is also significant that neither the magistrates nor the newspaper report make any comment on the violent behaviour of Dawes. As in the Maybury case, Dawes' violence was tacitly accepted since his victim was of a lower social status. Indeed, for the court, the main issue was not Dawes' behaviour, but the manner in which the dispute had been resolved. The court chairman, whilst accepting that Cordeaux had 'acted quite right' in bringing the case to court, nevertheless regarded it 'a pity the matter could not have been settled by the heads of the firm, without bringing the subject before the public'.<sup>117</sup> This suggests that, for the middle classes, the issue of violence in masculine contestations of status was less important than the fact that such contestations should be conducted in private.

In the examples above, it is thus possible to glean something of plebian masculinities, both as they were lived in the village and as they were perceived by a middle-class press. In the first instance, the number of personal disputes that ended in violence would suggest that male status was based around a very physical contestation of power. Of course, the conception of the working class as brutish and violent is a

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<sup>115</sup> Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, p. 36.

<sup>116</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 16th March 1866.

<sup>117</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 16th March 1866.



recurring theme in nineteenth-century culture, so that the newspaper reporting of these events clearly foregrounds those disputes which ended in violence. Beyond these contemporary reports, there is no way to gauge exactly how prevalent violence was within the village, nor of course, the number of disputes and arguments which were resolved without recourse to violence. As the Hurst/Hague case demonstrates, there seems to have been a well-understood 'script' which might help to diffuse a tense situation, through the use of strategies such as apology, backing down, or the invocation of humour, either in the sense of slights being humorously-intended, or in the sense of good humour among comrades.

The second point to be made is that violence between adult males generally seems to take place in public areas – the public house, the beer-shop, the office, or in the streets en route to locations of this type. The public contestation of status and masculinity in this way is interesting. As John Tosh notes, a large component of men's self-worth in the nineteenth century derived from the idea of the male breadwinner as sole provider for the family.<sup>118</sup> There was thus a disjuncture between this idealised notion of masculinity and the realities of everyday existence in which, as I explored in Chapter Three, the collective labour of the household remained significant in ensuring economic survival. In this respect, the importance that plebian males placed upon masculine association and conviviality outside the home, and the inevitable physical disputes that arose from this, were an expression of an outwardly-focused form of masculine identity which augmented an individual's economic status. This process can be seen in the life of the Elsecar miner George Evans, for example. In 1841 Evans lived in a workers' cottage at Meadow Row. This faced the canal, on

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<sup>118</sup> Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, p. 36.

the opposite side of which was the mine in which he worked. Evans had a stable but unremarkable working career; his various census descriptions as coal-miner and labourer suggest that he worked above ground in a relatively low-status post in the mine hierarchy.<sup>119</sup> His life would thus seem to be defined by his career and by the close juxtaposition of his workplace and home. However, away from work, both he and his next door neighbour John Oxley were successful and prolific poachers. Together, they trespassed frequently on the property of his employer and landlord, the 5th Earl Fitzwilliam, usually managing to stay one step ahead of the Earls' pursuing gamekeepers.<sup>120</sup> Notwithstanding being married with five children, Evans was a well-established part of the masculine drinking culture within the village. He derived status both from running his own beer-shop and for his sporting prowess in nurr and spell and road-running. His alignment and participation in male networks and alliances is demonstrated not only by his poaching exploits, but also by his involvement, along with his workmates, neighbours and relatives Thomas Evans, Joseph Evans and George Oxley, in an attack upon Thomas Poles after all five men had been drinking in the same pub in 1849.<sup>121</sup> Although newspaper reports of both his sporting and poaching activities have made Evans historically visible, there is no reason to believe that his life history is atypical of Elsecar miners in general. His story thus reminds us that employment or class-derived status was only one (highly-visible) element in the formation of social identities that reflected the full expression of an individual's involvement, status and agency within the village community.

### **Women, Conflicts and Disputes**

<sup>119</sup> 1841 and 1851 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

<sup>120</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 2nd January 1847, p. 3.

<sup>121</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 16th June 1849, p. 2.

Whilst the above section argued that violence between men was an expression of masculine identities, it is clear from the newspaper reports that many disputes also occurred in which the protagonists were either female or of mixed gender. In the relatively densely-packed and spatially-constricted village environment, where family and workplace networks and associations gave important structure to the community, it is perhaps no surprise to find that the village could be a fertile ground for various disagreements and quarrels. In this section, I will explore some of these disputes and their significance in terms of social and gender relationships. I argue that the evidence indicates that women in Elsecar exhibited a degree of personal agency similar to that of men, enthusiastically and actively engaging in disputes with neighbours and others.

As Robert Shoemaker has observed, 'early modern streets were places for expressing and consolidating communal solidarity [...] by neighbourhood policing of individual behaviour'.<sup>122</sup> Similarly, Ellen Ross has noted that in nineteenth-century working-class communities 'Neighbours [...] were knowledgeable and eager spectators for displays of respectability, or lapses from it'.<sup>123</sup> Furthermore, respectability, the actual signifiers and parameters of which could vary from community to community, was maintained and policed largely by women.<sup>124</sup> It is thus in the context of shared neighbourhood culture and values, as expressed and maintained in the public spaces of the village, that the evidence of women and disputes in Elsecar should be placed.

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<sup>122</sup> Robert B. Shoemaker, 'Public Spaces, Private Disputes?: Fights and Insults on London's Streets 1660-1800', in Tim Hitchcock (ed.), *The Streets of London: From the Great Fire to the Great Stink* (London, 2003), p. 54.

<sup>123</sup> Ellen Ross, "'Not the Sort That Would Sit on the Doorstep": Respectability in Pre-World War I London Neighbourhoods', *International Labor and Working-Class History* 27 (1985), p. 42.

<sup>124</sup> Ross, "'Not the Sort'", p. 39.

As in the case of the evidence regarding men and disputes that has been examined above, the evidence of women's roles in disputes and conflicts only becomes historical visible when these quarrels come under the gaze of the magistrates and other authorities, and, through them, the newspapers. In consequence, it is likely that the following examples represent an ongoing process of social interaction, tension and resolution that mainly occurred below the level of official interest. In regard to this point, it is clear that there are very few newspaper accounts of disputes in Elsecar that occurred solely between women. One example, however is the altercation that occurred between Anne Mallinson and Hannah Cantrel in Stubbing, on the outskirts of Elsecar, in 1840. The dispute, which ended in Cantrel tearing Mallinson's 'cap and gown',<sup>125</sup> began when Mallinson accused Cantrel of taking water from her tub. Since the 1855 Ordnance Survey map shows the water supply to the hamlet of Stubbing to consist of just a well and a few stand-pumps, it is clear that Mallinson's defence of her tub actually represented the protection of an important household resource, the replenishment of which would take her or another family member a considerable amount of effort. Cantrel's physical retort to the accusation is also significant in that it appears to focus upon destroying the visible signs of Mallinson's respectability. In relation to Cantrel and Mallinson's use of physical violence, an 1873 magazine article account of colliery women is illuminating in that it emphasises the transitory nature of such encounters: 'most likely he [the bystander] would see the belligerent parties shake hands with each other, and go off for a drink of beer and a smoke'.<sup>126</sup> This sympathetic account, written for a middle-class female audience, is also remarkable

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<sup>125</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* Issue 1046, 8th February 1840, p. 2.

<sup>126</sup> Anonymous, 'The Collier Woman', *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* Issue 103 (1873), p. 19.

in its assessment of violent conduct between plebian women as a fundamental expression of female agency:

These women count a fair fight as a mere ordinary occurrence [...] no silken subjection [...] has shaken their clear, downright common sense into a muddled belief that man possesses a monopoly of certain virtues and vices [...] These women jump to and fro as they please, and stand on one day on the woman's ground, another on the man's.<sup>127</sup>

This near-contemporary reading of plebian female violence as an expression of gender role transcendence and agency is useful in reading other newspaper accounts of the involvement of Elsecar women in violent disputes. For example, a second incident which related to the defence of household space occurred in March 1841, when Charlotte Hawke of Meadow Row<sup>128</sup> accused her neighbour, William Senior, of assault, stating that he knocked her to the ground after throwing some hot tea leaves over her son two-year-old son, Joseph.<sup>129</sup> The attack on the child, which allegedly took place on Senior's doorstep, appears to have been triggered by the boy's incursion into Senior's domestic space. Laura Gowing has noted that doorsteps were the place where women reinforced both their household and community standing,<sup>130</sup> whilst Martin Hewitt has demonstrated that the nineteenth-century doorstep was a rigorously-policed threshold where 'the rituals of access to the working class house' were performed.<sup>131</sup> In this respect, it is interesting that Hawke was unable to say whether it was Senior or his wife who had actually thrown the tea leaves.

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<sup>127</sup> Anonymous, 'The Collier Woman', *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* Issue 103 (1873), p. 19.

<sup>128</sup> 1841 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

<sup>129</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 6th March 1841, p. 2.

<sup>130</sup> Cited in Shoemaker, 'Public Spaces', p. 57.

<sup>131</sup> Martin Hewitt, 'District Visiting and the Constitution of Domestic Space in the Mid-nineteenth Century', in Inga Bryden & Janet Floyd (eds), *Domestic Space: Reading the Nineteenth-Century Interior* (Manchester, 1999), p. 130.

Whilst the decision of the court seems to suggest that both parties were to blame (the case was dismissed, but Senior was ordered to pay costs), it is interesting to think about the social relationships revealed in the case. Charlotte Hawke (nee Naylor) was a single mother and widow. After the death of her miner husband, Joseph Hawke in October 1838, she and her son had gone to live with her father William Naylor, an elderly labourer, and her adult siblings Nancy, Matthew, Caroline and Mary.<sup>132</sup> Senior, a joiner, lived in somewhat less cramped conditions than Charlotte, with his wife, son and lodger Turner (all the houses of Meadow Row, a terrace, were built to the same plan, with four rooms). He clearly had no qualms in rough-handling Charlotte, and whilst his actions reveal underlying assumptions of physical and gender superiority, they also demonstrate that he did not expect a third party to intercede on her behalf.

It is also significant that Hawke allegedly struck first in defence of her child. In this respect, the case may be compared with that of an argument between Samuel Pepper and Jonathan Barrass, his wife and daughter. As with the Hawke case, this incident began with a child, in this case Barrass' nine-year-old daughter, who threw some coal at Pepper as he passed by the house. Pepper 'desired her to desist' and when she continued, he 'slapped her on the back and she went home crying'.<sup>133</sup> In due course, Barrass' wife returned with the girl to challenge Pepper, events swiftly escalating to the point where 'she squared her fists and struck him'. Pepper knocked Mrs Barrass to the ground and left her in the road, a sight which 'so exasperated the defendant

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<sup>132</sup> 1841 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

<sup>133</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 26th April 1845, p. 8.

[Jonathan Barrass] that he ran after the complainant, and gave him so severe a threshing [sic] that he has been unable to attend his work for a fortnight'.<sup>134</sup>

Whilst both Charlotte Hawke and Mrs. Barrass appear to have been willing to defend their children by use of force, the outbreaks of male violence that this occasioned left both women bleeding on the ground. This would appear to be the end point of such expressly gendered disputes, so that resolution and retribution in the Barrass case was achieved by a shift in the dispute, which became an essentially male contest, albeit undertaken by Jonathan Barrass in defence of his wife and family. This is reflected in both the court case and the subsequent newspaper reporting, in which the wife and child are of considerably less importance than the dispute between Pepper and Barrass. In this respect, the newspaper narrative, whilst ostensibly reporting a violent crime, nevertheless firmly frames the story in terms of a tacit approval of Barrass' perceived successful and effective defence of his family. This foregrounding of male agency and masculinity is significant in that it highlights contemporary attitudes to gender. Nether Mrs. Barrass nor her daughter are named in the report, and their anonymity reinforces the point that neither their experiences of assault nor their actions were, in the eyes of the newspaper and its readers, as significant or noteworthy as the subsequent male contest.

The Barrass case can be contrasted with the reporting of a second assault, in which Amelia Evans sprang to the defence of her husband, Benjamin 'Leather' Evans, during their wedding reception. At the reception, in which everyone is described as being 'gloriously drunk', Benjamin was attacked by a guest named William Watson. Amelia

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<sup>134</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 26th April 1845, p. 8.

intervened in the assault, but 'was paid with similar compliments' by Watson, with the result that she was 'removed to the bridal bed in a state of insensibility'.<sup>135</sup> It is interesting to note that the physicality of Amelia's actions was accommodated within a newspaper narrative entitled 'THE 'REMARKABLE' WEDDING AT ELSECAR', which, by focusing on the details of the wedding, such as the groom's arrival on a donkey and his nickname, created a humorous account of quaint and outlandish behaviour.<sup>136</sup> Again, the significance of this report lies in its insight into perceived gender roles, the 'remarkable' element of the incident being the role reversal implicit in Amelia's physical defence of her husband.

Whilst it is possible to see Amelia Evans, Charlotte Hawke and Mrs. Barrass as ultimately the victims of male violence, it is important to note that male-female disputes did not always end in this manner. This is seen, for example, in events surrounding a dispute in which Charlotte Hawke once again featured. By 1844, Charlotte Hawke had married her second husband, the miner Joseph Evans, and in that year was involved in a dispute with her neighbour, Joseph Oxley. In a court ruling, 'each party were deemed equally blameable'<sup>137</sup> and had been bound over to keep the peace. Matthew Naylor had testified against Charlotte Evans at the court hearing in which this judgement had been made, with the result that the following week he found himself accosted on the way home by a gang comprising Jane Evans, Sarah Lidster and Joseph Hepworth (also from Meadow Row).<sup>138</sup> Whilst Hepworth 'quavered [sic] his fists in his [Naylor's] face', the women shouted 'every description

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<sup>135</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 12th April 1860.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 3rd February 1844, p. 7.

<sup>138</sup> 1841 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Township.



of abusive language' and 'brobbed [sic] him [Naylor] in the ribs with their umbrellas repeatedly'.<sup>139</sup>

Although the cause of the original dispute between Charlotte Evans and Joseph Oxley is not known, by utilising census data it is possible to bring out the social and familial links between the protagonists in the case. As was made clear in the previous case, Charlotte was in fact Matthew Naylor's sister and her new husband was the brother of the miner George Evans. One of the assailants, Jane Evans, was thus her sister-in-law. To complicate matters further, Joseph Oxley, the protagonist in the original dispute with Charlotte, was Jane Evans' father. By giving evidence in court, Naylor had clearly positioned himself on one side of a dispute which had clearly activated and polarised a network of family and friendship associations. This, plus the wider involvement of neighbours in the dispute (Joseph Hepworth lived four doors down from Charlotte Evans; he was also a miner and was therefore probably a workmate of Joseph and George Evans) explains Naylor's reluctance to exacerbate the situation further by responding to the physical and verbal taunts from his assailants.

As these examples demonstrate, women in Elsecar exhibited a degree of personal agency that rivalled that of men, enthusiastically and actively engaging in disputes with neighbours and others. Despite the threat of male violence, some plebian women were not afraid to confront men and to forcibly state their case, to the point of resorting to the allegedly masculine 'language' of violence. However, whilst many of the accounts of male violence seem to revolve around insults or threats to masculine status, women seem to resort to violence in pursuit of particular aims such as the

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<sup>139</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 17th February 1844, p. 7.

defence of family members, the defence of household resources, or the defence of particular spatial territories. Clearly, such disputes must have involved the contesting of personal status, but these do not appear to have formed the primary focus of disputes in the same way as they did for men.

### **Conclusion**

This consideration of the world beyond work has examined the issues of family composition, extended families, drink and sociability, working-class masculinity, and the role of women in conflicts and disputes. As I have demonstrated in this chapter, these issues are crucial in widening and informing the perspective of the village community that emerged through the exploration of male and female work in Chapter Three. In particular, they allow an understanding of the way in which the structuring of work related to the household, to conviviality, and to networks of kinship and association within the wider community. These different elements can be seen at work in the various cases that have been discussed above and in a few rare cases it has been possible to follow specific historic actors from situation to situation. If we try and characterise these processes further, we can argue that community functions through networks of personal association that are formed through gender, class, workplace, recreational and family/kinship interactions and affiliations. Whilst there are clear differences, as I explored in Chapter Three, for example, in the economic roles and opportunities available to men and women, these networks of association and their capacity to support the individual during times of stress allowed both men and women to access support from family and friends in the resolution of disputes and economic crises. As the Elsecar evidence demonstrates, and as the anonymous

author of the 1873 article *The Collier Woman* intimates,<sup>140</sup> plebian women were able to employ a degree of public agency within the community, a fact which, as I have shown, emerges from the newspaper sources despite their preoccupation with male agency.

As well as their role in the formation of networks of personal association, categories such as gender, class, workplace, recreational and family/kinship interactions and affiliations are all important in the formation of individual identities and status. Identity, then, is not simply derived from occupation, but from the interplay of a range of different factors. Gradations of identity and status are thus constantly being read and negotiated according to situation and circumstance, and so community in this sense can be understood as the reading of the changing position of people within multiple interlocking structures of hierarchy and power. As I demonstrated, these structures may be supportive and beneficial in terms of generating mutual support, community identity and cohesion, but they can also be divisive, leading to the everyday tensions, disputes and arguments that I have explored in this chapter. As I have demonstrated in this chapter, identity and status are considerably more fluid than simple gender/class categorisations might imply. A man's status in the public house, for example, may well have been different to his workplace status, even though his colleagues and companions in both locations may actually have been the same men. Individual status and identity thus relies upon context as much as it does category, and it also changes over time according to life-cycle alternations of dependence and independence. In the following chapter, I will trace the impact of the physical

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<sup>140</sup> Anonymous, 'The Collier Woman', p. 19.

environment in shaping, enabling and constraining these fluid structures of community interaction.

## **Chapter Five: Space and Environment**

### **Introduction**

In Section One (Chapters One and Two) of this thesis I outlined the structures of authority and community help that were active in Elsecar, and in Section Two (Chapters Three and Four) I looked at the employment, demographic, social and cultural conditions that framed and gave shape to the village community. In this third section (Chapters Five and Six) I will examine the importance of the physical environment of the village. This is crucial, since a consideration of the village environment in all its diversity – its cottages, mines, schools, fields and beer-shops – is essential in successfully placing the various historical actors and their social interactions in correct relation to each other. However, this is not simply a matter of providing historical context. As I argue in this chapter, the physical environment in its widest sense, through its ability to constrain or enable human agency, mediates, shapes, and enables social relationships. As a result, the village environment, rather than being a passive backdrop, was an active arena in which the structures of power, hierarchies and social relationships that I have explored in the previous sections of this thesis were created and enacted. In this sense, the environment itself can be seen as a factor in the dynamic relationship between structure on one part and agency on the other, underpinning the development of community in Elsecar. In this and the following chapter (Chapter Six), I will therefore explore various aspects of this dynamic relationship between authority, environment and community.

In this chapter, I look at the production of space and its implications. As I argue, the village spaces act as the arena in which the personal and collective identities,

memory, social structures, hierarchy, imagination and power of the villagers coalesce and are continually negotiated and contested. A key research aim of this chapter is therefore to examine the development of the village and to characterise the specific types and uses of space that arise as a result of the process of industrialisation. Through an understanding of this development, it will be possible to chart the ways in which the physical village impacted upon and influenced the lives of the villagers themselves. In this sense, I will use space as an analytical tool to understand everyday experience. Particular issues I will address include the relationship between domestic and industrial space and the way that this privileges certain types of activity over others. I also examine the way in which the threats and hazards of the industrial landscape impact upon the daily lives of the villagers. Finally, since the use of space, through the formulation of the 'separate spheres' model, has been seen as a key element in the expression and maintenance of gender inequality,<sup>1</sup> I look at the differential experiences of men and women in negotiating and utilising village space. I argue that the environment of Elsecar in fact embodied hierarchical social relationships in a way which privileged and prioritised industrial production over the domestic lives of its inhabitants, and the lives of men over those of women.

### **The Spaces of The Changing Village**

Although considerable remains of the industrial village still exist at Elsecar, it can often be a difficult conceptual leap from considering the remaining built heritage as it exists today to the reality of life within and amongst these structures in their industrial heyday. With this in mind, this section explores the development of the village

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Fiona Williamson, 'Public and Private Worlds? Social History, Gender and Space', *History Compass* 10.9 (2012), p. 633.

through the technique of map regression, that is, the discussion and analysis of a sequence of historical maps. This is fundamentally a descriptive exercise, but it is undertaken here in order to give the reader a better overview of the development of the village, its particular features and layout, and the way in which these spaces shaped and influenced human activity. As I argue, such an overview is crucial in that it is neither possible nor useful to divorce the village community at Elsecar from the physical environment in which it developed.

It is important to note that maps have to be approached with caution; although they may be regarded (in varying degrees) as measured and accurate representations of reality, the actual information that a given map depicts, and the information that it omits, are directly related to the purpose for which it was created. Maps are thus both accurate, scientific tools and objects of material culture, created in a particular milieu and with a particular purpose. Nevertheless, if we accept the landscape itself is a form of material culture, shaped and influenced by human agency over time,<sup>2</sup> then the map, as a facsimile of that landscape, allows the historian to identify and consider the processes that have created the landscape, their significance and their implications.

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<sup>2</sup> M. Moskowitz, 'Back Yards and Beyond: Landscapes and History', in Harvey Karen (ed.), *History and Material Culture* (Abingdon, 2008), p. 69.

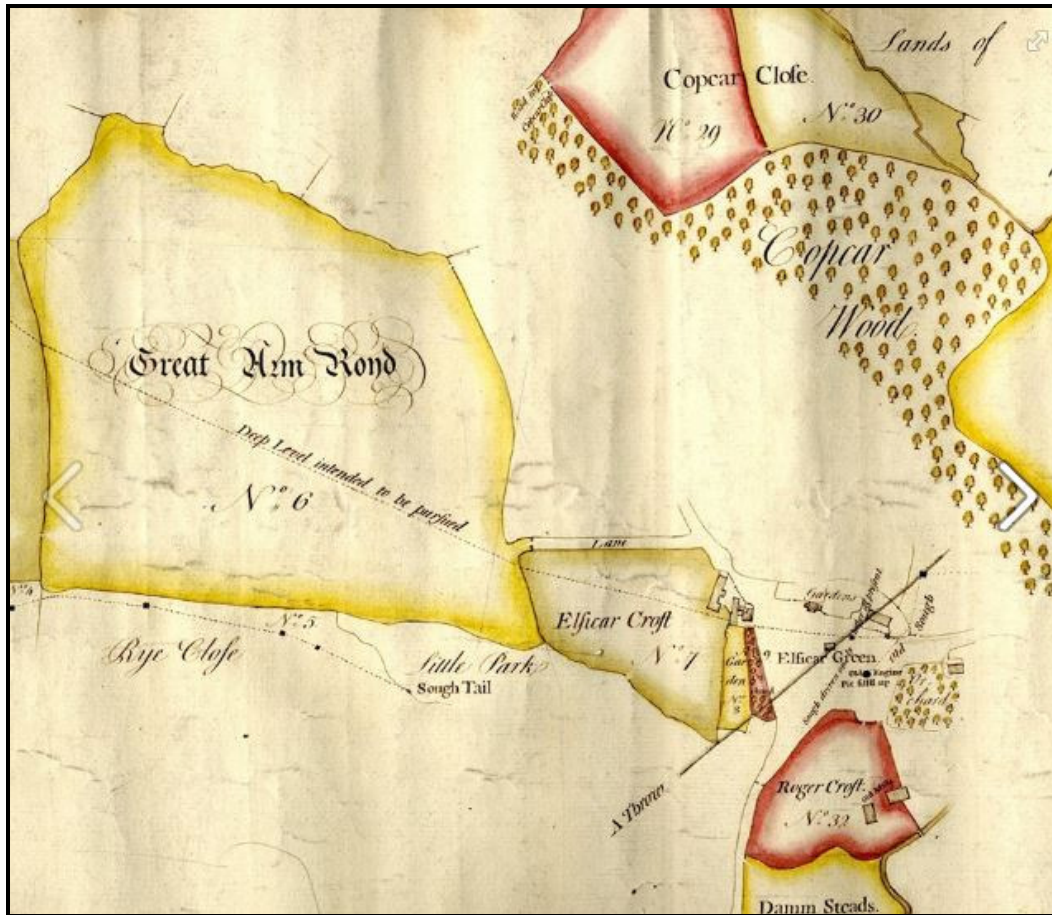


Figure 5.1: William Fairbanks Jnr, 'A Map of the Collieries at Elsecar [sic], West Wood and the Wharf at Kilnhurst, with the Lands demised therewith to J. Hall and Others for the accommodation of the Collieries and Wharf', 1757 (extract, not to scale). Source: Barnsley Archives, A/3491/Z/1.

The earliest extant map of Elsecar (**Figure 5.1** above) was created by the Sheffield surveyor William Fairbanks Jnr in 1757 for the 2nd Marquis of Rockingham, approximately five years after the latter had taken control of Elsecar Colliery. The map is catalogued as a 'Coal Mining Plan' and is a composite of above ground features (buildings, fields, woods etc.) and the line of underground features, the 'Deep Level' (coal seams), 'Soughs' (mine drainage channels) and 'Throw' (geological fault-line affecting the depth of the coal seam). This juxtaposition is significant in that it highlights the way in which the geological location of coal reserves impacts upon the above-ground layout of the village. Thus the 'gardens', buildings and 'orchard' of the



pre-industrial settlement around 'Elsicar [sic] Green' have already by this date formed the focus of mining exploration, as shown by the location of an 'Old Engine Pit filled up'. Immediately to the west of the green, a dotted line can be seen connecting five rectangles, the easternmost of which is marked 'Sough Tail'. The original 1757 Fairbanks field survey book, which was used to generate the plan (**Figure 5.2** below), shows these features as a series of 'air pits' (mine ventilation shafts). These lead to the 'Open Pit', 'Sinking Pit' and 'Working Pit' of Elsecar Old Colliery, which was situated a short distance to the east of the western boundary of the 'Great Arm Royd' field.

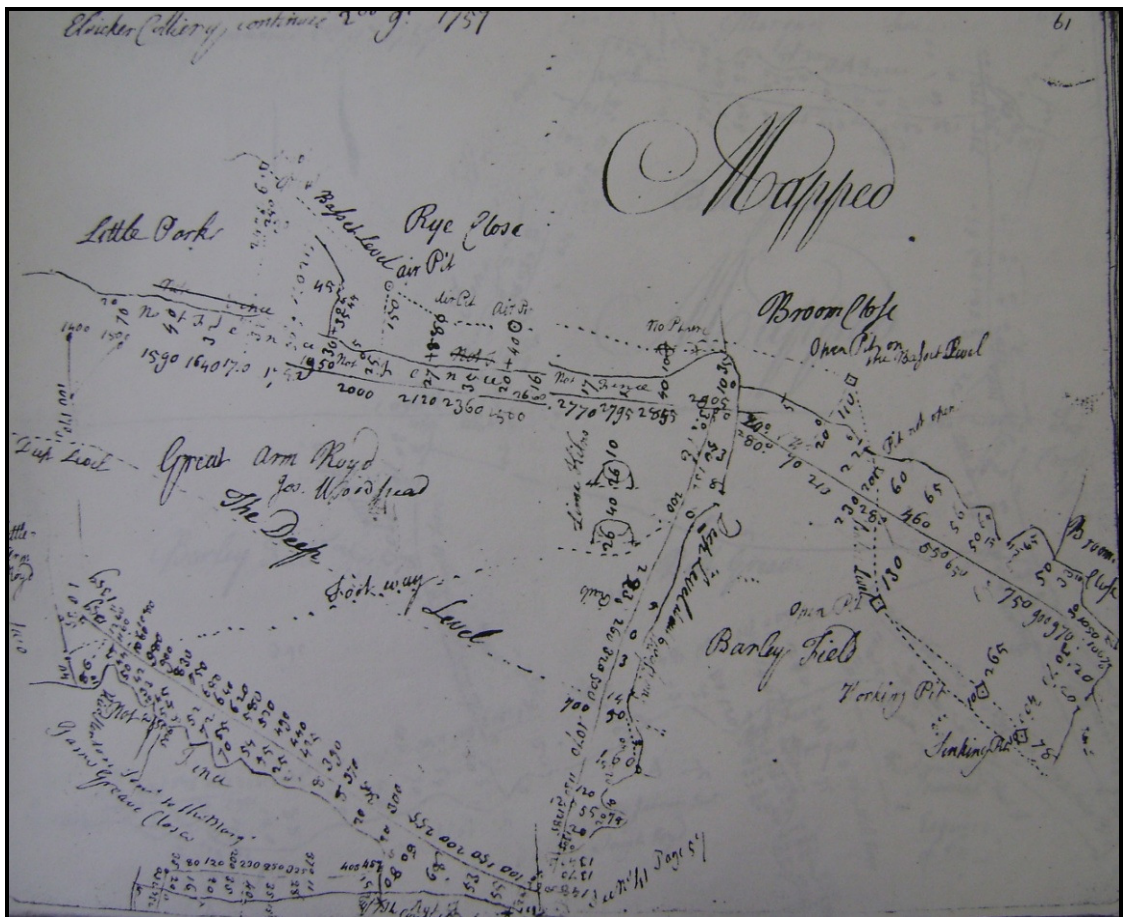


Figure 5.2: Fairbanks' survey book, 1757 (extract, not to scale). Source: Sheffield Archives, FB12, p. 61. North is orientated to the bottom of the map.

The 1757 map and its accompanying survey are thus a visual 'stock-taking' of the existing mining industry at Elsecar, and a statement of intent for further development. This is clearly seen in the annotation 'Deep Seam Intended to be Pursued'. As such, it is important evidence for the planned development of the village industries.

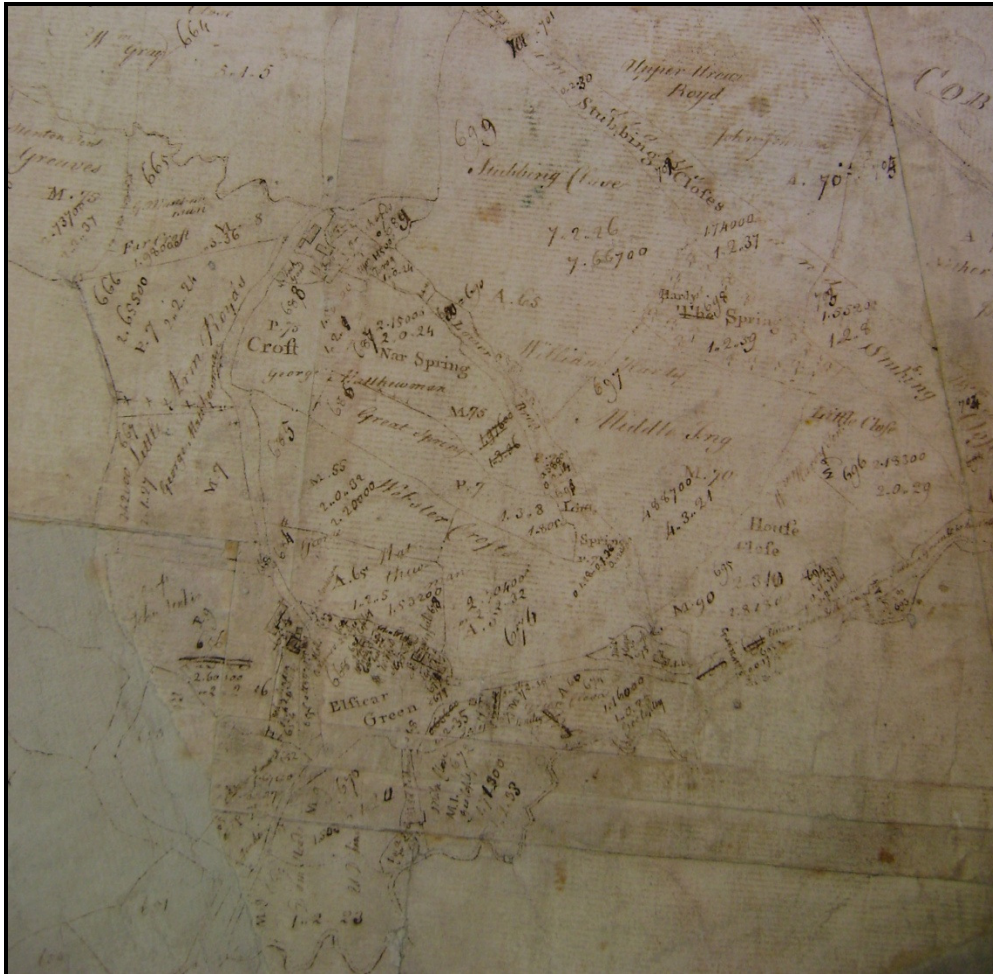


Figure 5.3: Fairbanks' map of Hoyland, 1771 (extract, not to scale). Source: Sheffield Archives FC/P/WATH/31L.

Fairbanks created a second map of Elsecar in 1771 (**Figure 5.3**), the purpose of which was to delineate property boundaries and to record patterns of land-holding. The map vividly emphasises the rural organisation of space, onto which the physical structures associated with coalmining were already in the process of being superimposed. It shows a dense pattern of fields, many of which are identified by local names, together

with the name of the tenant or land holder. George Matthewman, for example, is recorded as the tenant or owner of the field known as the 'Little Arm Royd', whilst George Copley was tenant or owner of 'Milk Close', a name which clearly reflects a connection with dairying. Edward Dickinson held the land known as 'Damm Stead' whilst George Wigfield held a small garden plot and a cottage on Elsecar Green. All four men appear on the Elsecar Colliery accounts, Edward Dickinson as a miner, George Copley as an above-ground mine labourer, and Wigfield, and Matthewman as field workers, cutting hay for the colliery horses.<sup>3</sup> The map is thus an important reminder of the co-relationship between farming and mining in the eighteenth century.



Figure 5.4: Map of Nether Hoyland Parish, 1818 (extract, not to scale). *Source:* Sheffield Archives, WWM/MP/123(R).

<sup>3</sup> Elsecar Colliery accounts, 26th May 1769 and 28th August 1769, SA, WWM/F/99-A; Elsecar Colliery accounts for 4th April 1778, SA, WWM/F-98.

Two further maps to consider are the 1818 Map of Nether Hoyland Parish and a map of 1814, which was prepared in advance of the proposed erection of a coal tar works. These two maps are complimentary in that they show the principal industrial developments in Elsecar that occurred in the 1790s.

The 1818 map (**Figure 5.4**) delineates the tenanted fields (shown in green) and remaining areas of common land (shown in pink) in the parish. The map indicates some significant changes, with the former open area of Elsecar Green now enclosed and laid out as two small fields (numbers 377 and 370). The most obvious features, however, are rows of terraced cottages known as Old Row (next to number 353) and New Row (next to number 351).<sup>4</sup> The significance of these features, however, is more clearly appreciated on the 1814 map (**Figure 5.5**), which shows the relationship between the terraces, Elsecar New Colliery, Elsecar Ironworks and the canal. All of these features were constructed in the period circa 1794-1810 and represent the deliberate creation of a new industrial settlement that was geographically distinct from the earlier settlement focus at Elsecar Green. Of particular interest is the position of the colliery manager's house, which is situated so as to overlook the single road from Elsecar Green to the new settlement. Such a position emphasises the role of the manager in the scrutiny and policing of the community.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> New Row was by 1861 known as 'Colliers' Row'. It is now called 'Station Row'.

<sup>5</sup> See for example, the position of the owner's house at Van Winkle's Mill, in Brandon & Davidson, 'The Landscape of Van Winkle's Mill', p. 118.

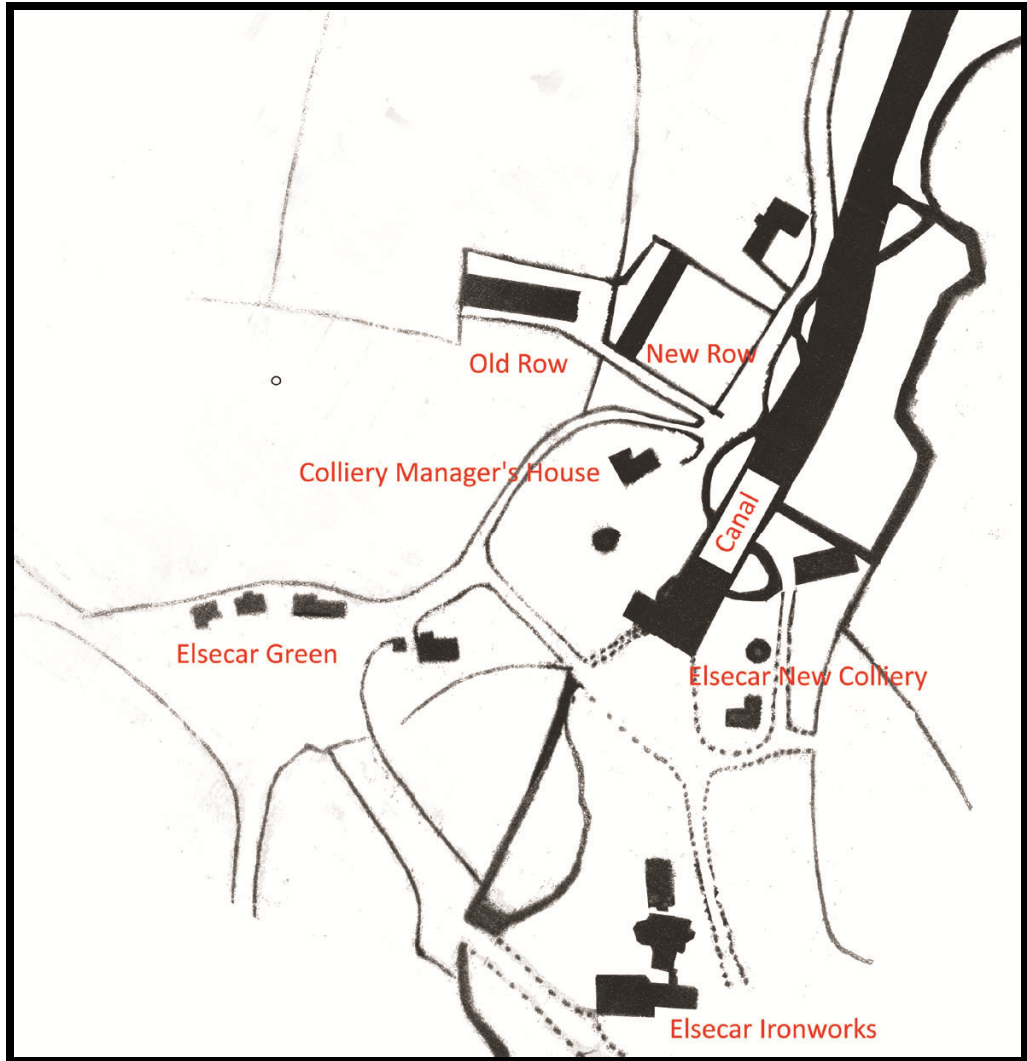


Figure 5.5: Map of Elsecar, 1814 (extract, not to scale). Reproduced from the original, with modern annotations by the author. *Source:* Sheffield Archives, WWM-F/70-14.



Figure 5.6: Ordnance Survey First Edition 6" County Series Map, Yorkshire Sheet 283, 1855 (extract, not to scale).

The 1855 (surveyed in 1849-50) Ordnance Survey First Edition map of Elsecar gives a very comprehensive snapshot of Elsecar and its state of development towards the end of my study period (**Figure 5.6**). As the visible product of the Ordnance Survey Act of 1841, the First Edition maps depict a diversity of information that is not commonly found on privately-commissioned maps. This wealth of information is readily apparent in the Elsecar map extract, which shows many of the important industrial features, such as Elsecar Ironworks, Milton Ironworks, the canal, the canal basin at Elsecar and the H-shaped canal basin, known as Jump Basin, that was situated on the canal to the east of Cobcar Wood. The newly-established railway is also shown running along the eastern canal bank, as are the inclined planes (gravity railways) running from Milton Ironworks and Jump Pit to the canal, and the various other railways and waggon ways running through the village itself. These include a

branch waggon way running from the inclined plane at Elsecar to a rectangular grid-like feature to the east of the Elsecar Ironworks buildings. This represents a pulley waggon way and a system of waggon way spurs that conveyed coal to a series of coke ovens situated on the hillside above the ironworks. Further coke kilns are marked in the vicinity of Jump Basin.

To the north-east of Elsecar Ironworks, the building marked as 'National School' is on the site of a former coal tar distillery. A building immediately to the north-west, adjacent to the railway, marks the site of Elsecar New Colliery. The site of Hemingfield Colliery (Elsecar Low Colliery) is depicted in the extreme north-eastern corner of the map extract, to the north of Mary Gray Wood. To the north-east of Old Row and New Row lie Trinity Church and the terraced cottages of Meadow Row and Reform Row. All the terraced rows, it will be noted, have extensive gardens or allotments associated with them, these being represented by a tight grid-like network of boundary fences.

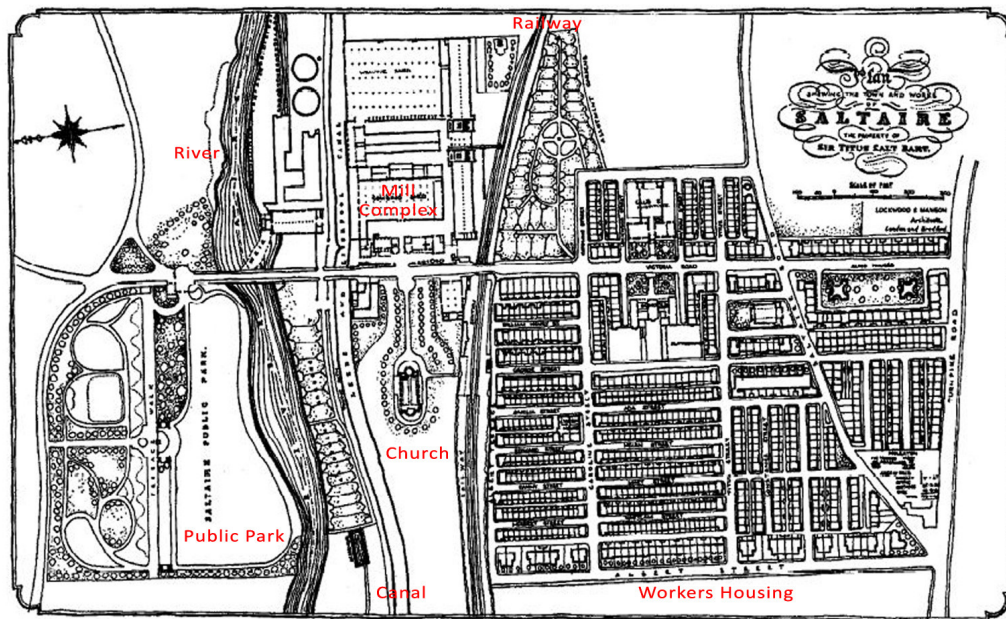


Figure 5.7: The planned industrial village: Plan of Saltaire, circa 1870 (not to scale). Modern annotations in red. The village was planned and constructed on a previously undeveloped site from 1850-1875. The village has been seen as the physical manifestation of 'a new social discipline- discipline in the use of space, in the relations of men as individuals with each other, and above all in the intercourse between master and man'.<sup>6</sup>

From the sequence of maps examined above, it is possible to draw out several distinct elements in the landscape as it had developed by circa 1855. Firstly, there was an existing rural agricultural landscape, which was dominated by woodland and small enclosed fields, and which was characterised by a settlement pattern of small, distinct hamlets, such as Elsecar Green, Stubbin and Jump. Superimposed upon this landscape, and following an entirely different logic that is based primarily on the underground geology, were the surface features associated with coal-mining. Whilst the development that occurred in the final years of the eighteenth century was clearly intended to create a planned and ordered industrial settlement, the subsequent development of the village in the nineteenth century demonstrates that this conception of the village as a planned entity nevertheless remained subordinate to the demands of

<sup>6</sup> Jack Reynolds, *The Great Paternalist: Titus Salt and the Growth of Nineteenth-Century Bradford* (London, 1983), p. 263.



the wider industrial landscape. This can be seen, for example, in the juxtaposition of domestic and industrial features evident in the plan of 1859 (**Figure 5.8** below). Thinking back to the constraining function of space, it is clear that the superimposition of these disparate elements on the landscape created competition for space that in turn had a direct impact upon the lived experiences of the village inhabitants. The juxtaposition of domestic and industrial space was clearly a major factor in the Sadler tragedy, for example.<sup>7</sup> The scale and impact of the industrial environment upon village life can also be seen in a report of an assault that occurred after midnight on a night in June 1849. The victim, Thomas Poles, was able to identify his attackers, 'as he had known them for many years and saw them distinctly from the reflection of the light from Elsecar Furnaces'.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> This event is discussed on page 190 of this thesis.

<sup>8</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 16th June 1849, p. 2.



Figure 5.8 Map of Elsecar, 1859 (not to scale). The map shows details of the juxtaposition of domestic and industrial space and depicts a palimpsest of structures that date from the period 1795-1858 (modern annotations by the author are in red). Compare with the zoned and ordered plan of Saltaire (Figure 5.7). The map is orientated with East to the top of the page. Source: Barnsley Archives NBC 460A.

### Domestic Space? Elsecar Workers' Housing

As I demonstrate above, the development of Elsecar was fundamentally dictated by industrial necessity, leading to a landscape in which domestic and industrial features were closely juxtaposed. This raises questions about how public and private, domestic and industrial space was experienced. One way of exploring these issues is through a consideration of Elsecar's workers' housing. A major aim of this section is thus to examine more closely the nature of Elsecar's housing, and to explore the ways in which it shaped and determined family and community life. However, it is important to note that housing is not neutral: it is ascribed particular meanings, both by the people who live in it, and by outsiders. Similarly, as Enid Gaudie has explored, the provision of plebian workers' housing by landowners, developers and entrepreneurs is

inextricably linked to issues of economics, profit and power.<sup>9</sup> As such, plebian houses are a physical manifestation of social and economic inequalities as much as they are cultural products of social discourse. With this in mind, a second aim of this research is to explore the ways in which the Elsecar terraces functioned as physical embodiments of the power of the Earls Fitzwilliam.

By the 1840s, there was a growing interest in the living conditions of the industrial poor and, as part of this, a growing appreciation of the links between working conditions, sanitation, health and housing. In 1842, for example, Edwin Chadwick, Secretary to the Poor Law Commission, published his report *The Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain*, in which he made these links specific.<sup>10</sup> Chadwick's report articulated the developing idea that planned housing could stimulate social and moral improvement and act as 'a positive agent of social control'.<sup>11</sup> As I will demonstrate in Chapter Six, these ideas coalesce vividly in Elsecar, where the wider significance and meaning of housing as a component of the Earls' paternalistic project has largely precluded any critical analysis of the Elsecar housing in its own right. A third aim of this section is thus to consider Elsecar within the wider context of industrial housing, and to examine the ways in which its cottages actually functioned as homes. In so doing, I will explore the differences between the intended and actual effects of the provision of housing in the village, and the ways that these impacted upon daily life.

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<sup>9</sup> Enid Gaudie, *Cruel Habitations: A History of Working Class Housing 1780-1918* (London, 1974), pp. 182-189.

<sup>10</sup> Edwin Chadwick, *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain, 1842*, ed. M. W. Flinn (Edinburgh, 1965); see, for example, pp. 422-423.

<sup>11</sup> S. Martin Gaskell, *Model Housing from the Great Exhibition to the Festival of Britain* (London, 1986), p. 8.

The key to understanding the housing at Elsecar lies primarily in a consideration of the significance and meaning of the provision of space. As Frank E. Brown states, if one accepts that 'some sort of relation exists between society and space',<sup>12</sup> then 'it seems reasonable to assume that the house, as a social artefact, [...] should yield information which can enrich our understanding of society, and perhaps of social process too'.<sup>13</sup> It follows that understanding how domestic space was utilised at Elsecar is important in helping us understand the wider role that housing played in framing and shaping social relationships, both within the household and within the wider community. Key issues in this regard are the interplay between public and private space, and the related issue of the gendering of spaces within the home. To a large extent, historical enquiry into these issues has been influenced by the work of W. G. Hoskins, who was the first to posit the idea of the widespread elaboration of housing in the early modern period. Hoskins' thesis, 'The Great Rebuilding', holds that a 'revolution in the housing of the generality of people'<sup>14</sup> occurred, spreading from the great country houses and landed elites to the urban and rural gentry and yeomanry. The key elements of this process were widespread rebuilding in stone, an elaboration in house plans and forms, and the creation of new spaces – bedchambers, parlours, upper floors – within the home.<sup>15</sup> Whilst these developments were related to both changing standards of physical comfort and to the display of status, they also represented a retreat from the form of communal household living embodied in the medieval hall to one in which 'the yeoman in his "best parlour" could develop a

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<sup>12</sup> Frank E. Brown, 'Continuity and Change in the Urban House: Developments in Domestic Space Organisation in Seventeenth Century London', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 28.3 (1986), p. 558.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> W. G. Hoskins, 'The Great Rebuilding', *History Today* 5.2 (1955), p. 104.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107-108.

private life'.<sup>16</sup> Later historians, such as Michael McKeon, have taken this growing emphasis on private space within the home to argue for a growing separation between the public and private spheres in the early modern period. This in turn greatly influenced gender roles, so that 'the economically productive unit of the household became a 'home', increasingly associated with a feminised culture of family and domesticity, separate from the masculine world'.<sup>17</sup> However, the embodiment of these ideals within the architecture of the house was, as Hoskins notes, generally dependent upon the accumulation of wealth by the homeowner and its subsequent investment in building.<sup>18</sup> As a consequence, there is a debate regarding the extent to which these ideals permeated into the world of the plebian home. As Fiona Williamson notes, the concept of a private, gendered, 'domestic sphere' was an ideal that was only ever realised by the elite, while 'most people continued to live in small houses, sharing rooms with family, servants and lodgers until well into the nineteenth century'.<sup>19</sup>

As I discussed above, Elsecar was a planned industrial settlement, in the sense that the workers' housing was erected by the industrial entrepreneur (the Earls Fitzwilliam) as part of an overall scheme of development. Whilst this has been obscured by the somewhat haphazard way in which the village subsequently developed, the strong impression of a distinct, industrial colony is clear in the 1814 map (**Figure 5.5** above). As such, Elsecar has clear affinities with a number of other broadly contemporary developments. At Ironbridge Gorge, a site which by circa 1800

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<sup>16</sup> Hoskins, 'The Great Rebuilding', p. 110.

<sup>17</sup> Williamson, 'Public and Private Worlds?', p. 633.

<sup>18</sup> Hoskins, 'The Great Rebuilding', p. 106.

<sup>19</sup> Williamson, 'Public and Private Worlds?', p. 635.

had become the pre-eminent iron-producing location in the country,<sup>20</sup> the industrial development was mirrored by the creation of a series of workers' terraces which were built from the 1730s to the 1780s.<sup>21</sup> At Blaenafon, the development of an extensive ironworking and coalmining complex in the last quarter of the eighteenth century was marked by the creation of several rows of workers' cottages.<sup>22</sup> At Belper, the mill owner Josiah Strutt erected a series of workers' cottages in the late-eighteenth century,<sup>23</sup> whilst at Linthwaite, the mill owner George Mallinson erected a terrace of workers' housing in the early-nineteenth century.<sup>24</sup> In common with sites such as these, the provision of workers' housing at Elsecar was seen as essential in attracting industrial workers to the village. In 1792, for example, the land agent Chas Bowns wrote on the subject to the steward Benjamin Hall. After noting that 'colliers are now scarce', and that 'we must put ourselves to some inconvenience to procure them', Bowns related that a miner, John Lindley, was prepared to engage at the colliery 'provided we will accommodate him with a house'.<sup>25</sup> At Elsecar, the provision of housing was thus conceived as part of the overall plan of industrial development and, as such, followed a practice that had already been established by other industrial entrepreneurs.

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<sup>20</sup> Barrie Trinder, 'Ironbridge: Industrial Archaeology in England', *Archaeology* 33.1 (1980), p. 46.

<sup>21</sup> Shane Kelleher, 'The Rows: Invisible Industrial Buildings in the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site', paper presented to the Housing the Industrious Workforce session, Theoretical Archaeological Group Conference 2015 at Bradford University (16th December 2015).

<sup>22</sup> Jeremy Lowe, 'Housing as a Source for Industrial History: A Case Study of Blaenafon, a Welsh Ironworks Settlement, from 1788 to circa 1845', *The Journal of the Society for Industrial Archaeology* 8.1 (1982), p. 19.

<sup>23</sup> Suzanne Lilley, 'The Looming Question of Housing the Workforce: Early Workers' Housing in the Derwent Valley', paper presented to the Housing the Industrious Workforce session, Theoretical Archaeological Group Conference 2015 at Bradford University (16th December 2015).

<sup>24</sup> Lucy Caffyn, 'Housing in an Industrial Landscape: A Study of Workers' Housing in West Yorkshire', *World Archaeology* 15.2 (1983), p. 176.

<sup>25</sup> Chas Bowns to Benjamin Hall, 25th May 1792, SA, WWM/Stw P/6/4-131.

In regard to the actual design of its housing, Elsecar is fortunate that the Government Inspector of Mines and Collieries, Seymour Tremenheere, visited the village in 1845 as part of his survey of conditions within mining communities. Whilst the historical context of Tremenheere's visit, and the moral and social implications that he drew from his observations, will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Six, it is important to note that his official report contained a detailed description of the Elsecar cottages, which allows them to be considered in the wider context of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century industrial workers' housing in general. He wrote that:

[The houses at] Elsecar consist of four rooms and a pantry, a small back court, ash-pit, a pigsty, and a garden; the small space before the front door is walled round, and kept neat with flowers or paving stones; a low gate preventing the children from straying into the road. Proper conveniences are attached to every six or seven houses and kept perfectly clean. The gardens, of 500 yards of ground each, are cultivated with much care.<sup>26</sup>

Tremenheere is describing cottages of a two-up, two down plan, in which the ground floor consists of a living room and kitchen (with pantry) and the upper floor of two bedrooms. The majority of the Elsecar terraced cottages – Old Row, New Row (also known as Station Row), Meadow Row and Reform Row – conform to this plan type, the only exceptions being the central and gable-end cottages of New Row, which have an additional room on a third floor.<sup>27</sup> Cobcar Terrace, built in the early 1850s, has a slightly more elaborate plan, with each cottage having a cellar that contained a stone slab for salting and preserving meat.<sup>28</sup> Several of the properties in Cobcar Terrace also have attic rooms, but it is not clear whether these are original features.

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<sup>26</sup> Seymour Tremenheere, *Report on the Mining Population in Parts of Scotland and Yorkshire* (1845), extract reproduced in Gordon Mingay, *Rural Life in Victorian England* (London, 1979), p. 136.

<sup>27</sup> English Heritage, 'The National Heritage List for England: Entry for Station Row, Elsecar No. 1191290', <http://list.english-heritage.org.uk/resultsingle.aspx?uid=1191290> [accessed 16/10/2012].

<sup>28</sup> I am very grateful to Mr and Mrs Robertson of Cobcar Terrace, Elsecar, who very kindly invited me into their home in December 2015 and who pointed out its original features to me.

The relevant English Heritage listing document, which was compiled in 1974 before the cottages were renovated, makes no reference to these rooms.<sup>29</sup>

Although Elsecar's oldest terrace, Old Row, was built in the 1790s, the two-up, two-down arrangement of rooms in the village cottages was not of itself innovative. At Coalbrookdale, for example, Tea Kettle Row, constructed in the 1740s, consisted of cottages with a living room, kitchen and pantry on the ground floor and either two or three bedrooms on the first floor.<sup>30</sup> However, Tea Kettle Row, the developers of which are unknown, is atypical of the later workers' housing that was erected by the Coalbrookdale Company. The standard workers' house erected by the company in the period 1780-1793 was a one-up, one-down design.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, one of the first acts of Robert Owen on taking charge of the mills at New Lanark in 1800, which were already regarded as 'one of the most humanely conducted factories in the Empire',<sup>32</sup> was to enlarge the existing one room, one storey workers' cottages into a two storey, one-up, one-down plan.<sup>33</sup> At Belper Mill in Derbyshire, the first industrial workers' housing built by the Strutt family in the 1780s, Mill Street, consisted of one-up, one-down properties.<sup>34</sup> So, whilst the Elsecar housing was not innovative in terms of design, it did represent a progressive approach in the context of the early nineteenth-century thinking about, and provision of, workers' housing. As Enid Gauldie states, 'at the beginning of the nineteenth century a "decent" house might very well be one that

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<sup>29</sup> English Heritage, 'The National Heritage List for England: Entry for Cobcar Terrace, Elsecar No. 1191318', <http://list.english-heritage.org.uk/resultsingle.aspx?uid=1191318> [accessed 16/10/2012].

<sup>30</sup> W. Grant Muter, *The Buildings of An Industrial Community: Coalbrookdale and Ironbridge* (London, 1979), p. 36.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>32</sup> Margaret Cole, *Robert Owen of New Lanark* (London, 1953), p. 44.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>34</sup> Lilley, 'The Looming Question of Housing the Workforce'. Paper presented at Bradford University (16th December 2015).



claimed no more than to be weatherproof, ceiled and floored'.<sup>35</sup> However, as Gauldie also states, ideas about what constituted decent and appropriate worker's housing were in flux in the first half of the nineteenth century,<sup>36</sup> so that the developments at Elsecar which appeared innovative and progressive in the 1790s, and to Seymour Tremenheere in the 1840s, were by mid-century becoming more common. By 1854, for example, the Prices' Patent Candle Company were erecting two bedroom and three bedroom cottages at their model industrial village of Bromborough Pool.<sup>37</sup> In the light of developments such as this, it is remarkable that the Earls, having developed a particular type of worker's housing, stuck with essentially the same design for the next sixty years.

The key to understanding the Earls' adoption and retention of the two-up, two-down design lies in the relationship between this design and the implications that it had in the contemporary mind regarding notions of privacy and morality. A crucial observation in this respect is that the two-up, two-down design contained two separate bedrooms on the first floor. This reflects the idea that there should be some form of segregation between the adult and juvenile members of the household. As Vicky Holmes notes, the 'segregation of sleeping spaces was an ideal of the Victorian middle classes, who believed that the mingling of classes, sexes, adults and children led to sexual deviancy and perversion'.<sup>38</sup> Peter Lowe, for example, the clerk of the Staffordshire Poor Law Union, wrote forcefully of the consequences of mixed

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<sup>35</sup> Gauldie, *Cruel Habitations*, p. 14.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> J. N. Tarn, 'The Model Village at Bromborough Pool', *Town Planning Review* 35.5 (1965), p. 332.

<sup>38</sup> Vicky Holmes, 'Accommodating the Lodger: The Domestic Arrangements of Lodgers in Working-Class Dwellings in a Victorian Provincial Town', *Journal of Victorian Culture* 19.3 (2014), p. 323.

sleeping arrangements in a letter which was published as part of Chadwick's 1842 report:

In the sleeping apartment, the parents and their children, boys and girls, are indiscriminately mixed, and frequently a lodger sleeping in the same and only room [...] The husband, enjoying but little comfort under his own roof, resorts to the beer-shop, neglects the cultivation of his garden, and impoverishes his family. The children are brought up without any regard to decency of behaviour, to habits of foresight, or self restraint; they make indifferent servants; the girls become the mothers of bastards [...] and fill the workhouse [...] the boys spend their years' wages in the beer-shop.<sup>39</sup>

The intended aim of the two-up, two-down plan was thus to guard against such an occurrence by creating the space necessary to facilitate an ordered and segregated home environment, in which correct moral and personal standards could be maintained.

Whilst the Elsecar cottages were thus designed in accordance with prevailing ideals of 'moral' family life, their ability to facilitate the ordering and gender segregation which underpinned these ideals remains in doubt, primarily due to the problem of overcrowding. The 1841 Census returns, for example, list 99 people as living in Old Row (**Table 5.1**, page 252). This terrace contains 10 cottages, so the mean density of occupation was 9.9 persons per house. Each property had two bedrooms, so each bedroom would need to accommodate a mean of 4.95 people. These population figures demonstrate overcrowding similar to the industrial slums of Dowlais and Merthyr Tydfil, where Kate Sullivan has noted an average household of between four and eight people in a four-room house.<sup>40</sup> In the remaining Elsecar terraces, population density was slightly lower than in Old Row, with the mean number of people per

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<sup>39</sup> Chadwick, *The Sanitary Condition*, p. 324.

<sup>40</sup> Kate Sullivan, "'The Biggest Room in Merthyr': Working-Class Housing in Dowlais 1850-1914', *Welsh History Review* 17.2 (1994), p. 161.

house in New Row, Meadow Row, and Reform Row in 1841 being 8.14, 6.6 and 6.53 respectively.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, conditions must have been cramped, to say the least. At Number One, Old Row, for example, John Hawke, a labourer, shared his four-room house with his wife Ann, their five adult children, Sarah, Annis, George, Mary and Martha, three younger children, William, Charles and John (aged eight to 14) and a lodger, 20-year-old iron-worker William Mitchel. At Number Five, Old Row, Thomas Robershaw and his wife Hannah lived with William, Sarah, Benjamin and John Fletcher (aged ten to 20) and with the Moises family – Thomas and Ann and their young children, John and Sarah. Similarly, at Number Seven, New Row, Mary Hurst lived with her adult children, Joseph and Thomas, a six-year-old boy named John Lister, a lodger named Isaac Tempest, and three members of the England family.<sup>42</sup> Clearly, cases like these must have involved the sharing of sleeping space between family members and lodgers. Although definite sleeping arrangements are only known in Elsecar from one case (the Sadler case, discussed in Chapter Four, page 190), Vicky Holmes' work on Ipswich indicates that it may have been common for various members of the family, relatives and, on occasion, lodgers to share the same bedroom.<sup>43</sup> Under such conditions, it is difficult to see how ideals of privacy could have any real meaning or enactment in the plebian home.

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<sup>41</sup> 1841 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Holmes, 'Accommodating the Lodger', p. 323.

Table 5.1. *Occupants of Old Row, Elsecar, 1841*

House number	Total number of rooms	Number of occupants over 16	Number of occupants under 16	Total number of occupants	Number of surnames recorded in the Census returns
1	4	8	2	10	2
2	4	6	7	13	2
3	4	2	6	8	1
4	4	6	3	9	4
5	4	5	5	10	3
6	4	9	5	14	5
7	4	6	3	9	3
8	4	2	2	4	2
9	4	5	5	10	2
10	4	6	4	11	3

Source: 1841 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Parish.

As I have shown, the Elsecar workers' housing was constructed in accordance with prevailing ideas of morality, privacy and domesticity. In their purpose of regulating and ordering the lives of their inhabitants, the houses were thus intended as instruments of social control. The provision of adequate functioning workers' housing at Elsecar and other similar industrial complexes can therefore be understood as the result of pragmatic economic and social decision-making, rather than as the result of the enlightened actions of benevolent and indulgent industrialists. With this in mind, the fact that the cottages remained (as I have shown) cramped and overcrowded shows a clear disjuncture between the way they were viewed by contemporary commentators such as Seymour Tremmenheere, and the way that they were actually experienced by their inhabitants.

### **The Landscape of Danger**

In this section, I want to move beyond the home to examine the ways in which people experienced the wider environment of the village. In order to do this, I will examine the nineteenth-century newspaper reports of 36 civilian (as opposed to industrial

worker) fatalities that occurred in and around the village in the period 1837-1869.<sup>44</sup> These deaths relate to individuals who, whilst not directly involved in the village industries, nevertheless lost their lives negotiating features of the industrial environment. The newspaper reports form the only source for these fatalities, as the relevant coroners' inquest reports do not survive. Nevertheless, the detail contained within them is sufficient to begin to draw out some of the common patterns underlying the various accidents. Thus, an analysis of these fatalities allows not only an appreciation of the dangers inherent in the landscape, but by highlighting the people most likely to be exposed to risk, it gives an insight into how village space was utilised and by whom. As I will demonstrate, the evidence shows clearly that the majority of fatal accident victims were male, a fact which emphasises the greater recreational freedom that men enjoyed in moving through and utilising the village landscape.

One of the most obvious landscape features within Elsecar is the canal, together with its associated canal basin and feeder reservoir. As one of the oldest industrial features within the village, the canal defines the linear axis of the village plan, forming a barrier which separates the terraces of worker's cottages from Elsecar New Colliery and the hamlets, farms and woodland to the east of the village. The canal thus bisected the village space, acting as a barrier to free movement. In order to cross the canal, pedestrians had to go round the southern end of the canal basin (an area crossed by waggon ways) or cross at the bridge to the north-east of Meadow Row. The 1855 map also shows a footbridge to the east of Colliers' Row, but it is not clear when this

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<sup>44</sup> This compares to reports of 55 fatalities occurring to workers in the village industries in the same period, the majority of these (44) being mining fatalities.

was constructed. The only other place to cross was by walking across the tops of canal lock gates which were located opposite Reform Row.

The archaeologist Ian Mellor, in his work on the spatial organisation of industrial textile mills, has drawn attention to the idea of building portals and entrances as nodal points that control access and movement within the industrial mill complex.<sup>45</sup> If we consider the industrial complex of the village of Elsecar in the same light, it is clear that the crossing points of the canal functioned in a similar manner. As nodal points controlling access and funnelling movement, the canal crossings were the locations for a number of fatal accidents. In 1841, for example, a worker from Milton Ironworks, 'an Irishman, whose name we have not learnt',<sup>46</sup> fell from the lock gates and drowned whilst attempting to take the most direct route home. Similarly, William Copley, a labourer from the hamlet of Royds, successfully crossed the wooden footbridge across the canal on his way home, only to 'stumble and fall into the water'<sup>47</sup> on reaching the other side.

Copley's fatal accident was unusual in that it was witnessed by a villager named Elizabeth Fletcher, who raised the alarm and prompted an unsuccessful rescue attempt.<sup>48</sup> This would suggest that the accident happened in daytime. More usually, fatal accidents occurred at dusk or at night, as in the cases of John Law (discussed on

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<sup>45</sup> Ian Mellor, 'Space, Society and the Textile Mill', *Industrial Archaeology Review* 27.1 (2005), p. 49-56.

<sup>46</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 20th March 1841; further details of the case are given in the *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 20th March 1841. See also the *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent (Supplement)*, 12th December 1863, p. 10; a report on the death of Thomas Hanson, a labourer who drowned at Tingle Bridge, near Elsecar Low Colliery, in 1863 after attempting to cross the lock gates whilst drunk.

<sup>47</sup> *Hull Packet and East Riding Times*, 6th May 1853.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* Elizabeth and her family were one of approximately twenty households that lived on the eastern side of the canal, probably in the cottages on modern-day Distillery Row. Source: 1851 Census returns for Brampton Bierlow Parish, Yorkshire Enumeration District 2a, viewed online at [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) [accessed 20/01/2014 to 31/01/2014].

page 197), the Elsecar labourer James Bamforth, and a timekeeper at Elsecar Works named Thomas Poole.<sup>49</sup> The preponderance of drownings that occurred in the evening highlights a second factor in these accidents, namely the role of alcohol. The inquest into the death of William Copley, for example, recorded a verdict of 'accidentally drowned whilst in a state of intoxication'.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, the coroner at the inquest into John Law's death was clear as to the role of alcohol in the tragedy.<sup>51</sup> Likewise, the unknown Irishman who fell from the lock gates had been drinking at William Senior's beer-shop in Meadow Row prior to the accident,<sup>52</sup> whilst Richard Wood, who was found in the canal after drinking on a Saturday evening at Richard Lambert's beer-shop in Elsecar market place, was described as 'a very drunken man'.<sup>53</sup> The recreational activities of men, and in particular the patterns of male conviviality and alcohol consumption, thus placed them at an enhanced risk in negotiation the hazard of the canal.

The canal reservoir, situated to the south-east of Elsecar Green, was also a major landscape feature in the village. Again, the pattern of fatalities that occurred at this location can also be directly linked to certain groups and activities. In August 1842, for example, Thomas Smith, 'a fine athletic youth' drowned in the reservoir after going there to bathe with his brother and another boy.<sup>54</sup> John Wilkinson, 17, drowned

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<sup>49</sup> *Sheffield Independent & Yorkshire & Derbyshire Advertiser*, 30th December 1837; *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 1st May 1852, p. 8; *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 30th May 1863, p. 11.

<sup>50</sup> *Hull Packet and East Riding Times*, 6th May 1853; Copley had been drinking at The Milton Arms, on the western side of Elsecar Green and at Houldsworth's beer-shop in Elsecar. The exact location of the latter establishment is not known.

<sup>51</sup> *Sheffield Independent and Yorkshire and Derbyshire Advertiser*, 30th December 1837.

<sup>52</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 20th March 1841.

<sup>53</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent (Supplement)*, 16th March 1861, p. 8.

<sup>54</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 20th August 1842, p. 8.

in the reservoir whilst bathing with a friend in July 1852<sup>55</sup> and in 1863 Thomas Kingston, a miner, who was 'bathing with a number of others' drowned in the reservoir when he became seized with cramp.<sup>56</sup> These fatalities are evidence that, in an era before the establishment of pit-head baths, the reservoir and canal were both widely utilised for bathing.<sup>57</sup> This was particularly true in the summer months, in which as the coroner in the Smith case noted 'so many fatal accidents occur'.<sup>58</sup> As the evidence demonstrates, there is thus a direct link between fatalities at the reservoir and patterns of male recreational behaviour.

The use of industrial features for recreation, and the dangers inherent in this, are also evident in accounts of fatalities that occurred on the various railways that were situated in and around the village. Of these, two of the most obvious are the two inclined planes, one of which ran from the Milton Ironworks to the Elsecar canal basin, and one that ran from Earl Fitzwilliam's colliery at Jump to meet the canal at the Elsecar and Hoyland basin, to the north-east of Reform Row. Both features had been constructed by circa 1838 and connected to the canal in such a way as to effectively enclose the village on three sides. The inclined planes thus formed formidable barriers to movement, especially to those who were unfamiliar with their operation. On two separate occasions, for example, itinerant hawkers were killed as they attempted to cross the inclined planes.<sup>59</sup> However, the striking element to emerge

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<sup>55</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 31st July 1852.

<sup>56</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 31st July 1869, p. 3.

<sup>57</sup> See, for example, *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 20th July 1850, p. 6; the account of the death of 18-year-old George Hunter from Reform Row, who drowned in the canal after going there to bathe on a Saturday evening with his father (a miner) and his two brothers

<sup>58</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 20th August 1842, p. 8.

<sup>59</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 3rd December 1842, p. 8; *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* Issue, 1st April 1854, p. 2.



from the accounts of railway fatalities in Elsecar is the relatively high number of children that were killed. In September 1852, for example, a nine-year-old boy, Joseph Nuttall, was killed whilst attempting to jump aboard an empty coal waggon that was being drawn up the inclined plane between Elsecar Ironworks and the Milton Ironworks.<sup>60</sup> In the following year, a ten-year-old boy called Walter Minship died in similar circumstances after boarding a waggon on the Jump inclined plane, despite having been previously 'warned off' by the train driver.<sup>61</sup> John Eyre, aged nine, was run down by railway waggons whilst playing at Milton Ironworks in 1865.<sup>62</sup> In the same year a six-year-old boy, named Welsh, was run down by a train whilst 'incautiously straying on the rails inside the Elsecar Ironworks'<sup>63</sup> and in 1868 John Evans, a boy from Hoyland, lost his life playing on the Jump railway.<sup>64</sup> Since none of these children were actually employed working on the railways where they died,<sup>65</sup> the accidents demonstrate the attraction that industrial sites held for village children as sites for exploration and play.<sup>66</sup> The same attraction can be seen at work in the death at Elsecar Ironworks in 1838 of 'a little boy named Shaw' who fell into one of the coke ovens whilst playing a game with his colleagues that involved jumping over the open oven mouths.<sup>67</sup> Similarly, Alan Cocking, aged ten, was crushed to death by the beam of the Elsecar Low Pit steam engine whilst playing in the engine house in

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<sup>60</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 6th September 1852, p. 8.

<sup>61</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 22nd October 1853, p. 8.

<sup>62</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 14th January 1865, p. 10.

<sup>63</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 4th March 1865, p. 11.

<sup>64</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 3rd October 1868, p. 10.

<sup>65</sup> As opposed, for example, to *Huddersfield Chronicle & West Yorkshire Advertiser*, 24th April 1858, p. 8; an account of the death of Joseph Stokes, crushed to death by waggons whilst working as a rail yard shunter at Elsecar, or the deaths of five children aged 11-14 who were killed at various times whilst working on underground railways in the Elsecar collieries in the period 1852-1862.

<sup>66</sup> See also *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent (Supplement)*, 22nd August 1857, p. 7; account of the injury and subsequent death of John Ward, a boy who lost a leg whilst attempting to board waggons on the Milton inclined plane.

<sup>67</sup> *Sheffield Independent & Yorkshire & Derbyshire Advertiser*, 12th May 1838.

1853.<sup>68</sup> Finally, in December 1840, the body of 13-year-old John Lockwood was discovered in the base of a disused mineshaft near the Milton Ironworks, the inquest into his death concluding that he had fallen into the shaft whilst gathering blackberries.<sup>69</sup>

Cases like these raise the issue of childcare, supervision and child employment. Cocking, whose father had been killed in the 1847 Ardsley Oaks mine explosion, was the grandson of the Elsecar mines steward James Uttley, a fact that might help to explain his presence in the colliery engine house. In the case of another child named Birkinshaw, the boy had accompanied his father to work at the Elsecar Ironworks, and was apparently helping him in his work as a railway waggon-shunter when he was accidentally crushed.<sup>70</sup> Similarly, Joseph Nuttall's accident was witnessed by at least two workers at the Elsecar Ironworks, neither of whom appear to have questioned the child's presence there. In her work on nineteenth-century industrial accidents, Elizabeth Cawthon has examined the way in which newspaper editors tended to accept without question employers' explanations that young children who were killed in textile mills must have wandered into the mill on their own accord, rather than, as was often the case, having been employed there illegally under the terms of the 1833 Factory Act.<sup>71</sup> Cawthon's work thus raises the possibility that at least some of the Elsecar victims may actually have been employed in some capacity in the places where they were killed. As the Birkinshaw case demonstrates, the line

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<sup>68</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 15th January 1853.

<sup>69</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 12th December 1840, p. 8.

<sup>70</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 9th February 1856.

<sup>71</sup> Elizabeth A. Cawthon, 'Apocrypha from the Victorian Workplace: Occupational Accidents and Employee Attitudes in England, 1830-1860', *Victorian Periodicals Review* 25.2 (1992), p. 57.

between the parental supervision of children and the active participation of children in the family economy appears to be very indistinct.

As these examples show, the newspaper accounts of fatalities give a vivid insight into the lives of children that is not readily available in other sources. In particular, they demonstrate the movement of children within the environment and some of the ways in which they experienced and negotiated its industrial features. Like the accounts of adult fatalities, they demonstrate the fact that peoples' ability to remain safe in such an environment was a function of their ability to read the various threats around them. Incapacity, disability, youth and unfamiliarity with the environment all appear as important factors in increasing risk. In the same way, risk can be seen to have been strongly related to activity, so that entering industrial spaces, the use of watercourses for bathing, and even standing or playing in the 'wrong' space all increased the risk of fatalities. Moreover, the newspaper reports indicate that exposure to this risk was considered to be a factor of class, so that, whilst they often include graphic details of injuries suffered by the victims, the accidents themselves are not reported with any degree of shock or surprise and the reactions of relatives are not usually recorded.<sup>72</sup> The only exception to this is the account of the death of Edward Carr, a 'young gentleman' who drowned in the reservoir after entering the water in late November in order to retrieve a duck he had shot.<sup>73</sup> In this instance, the paper recorded how the accident 'has caused great distress in a highly respectable circle of relatives and friends'.<sup>74</sup> Whilst this clearly reflects Carr's perceived social status, the report also

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<sup>72</sup> See, for example, *Huddersfield Chronicle & West Yorkshire Advertiser*, 24th April 1858, p. 8; report of the death of ten-year-old Joseph Stokes, who was so badly crushed by waggons that that 'his brains partly fell from his skull'.

<sup>73</sup> *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post or Plymouth & Cornwall Advertiser*, 24th November 1859.

<sup>74</sup> *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post or Plymouth & Cornwall Advertiser*, 24th November 1859.

helps to bring into focus the idea that sudden accidental death was considered to be an unavoidable, if unfortunate, part of everyday working-class experience in a way that it clearly was not for the middle classes.

From the accident reports it is thus possible to begin to understand how the village spaces were utilised and by whom. However, the most striking element to emerge from these cases is the fact that, with very few exceptions, such as Anna Maria Fowler, a young girl who fell into the canal from her father's barge in 1845,<sup>75</sup> all of the reported victims were male. Whilst it may well be that women were either too cautious or too sensible to be crushed whilst playing on the railway tracks, or to drown whilst bathing or walking home late at night, the more likely explanation for the dearth of female victims is that activities like these were gender specific. This in turn raises the idea that the actual locations where these accidents occurred were, at least at certain times, gendered spaces, so that the canal bank in the evening or the reservoir on an August afternoon might have been understood to be specifically male environs. In this sense, the accounts of fatal accidents actually reflect men's greater freedom to move through and utilise certain spaces within the village.

### **Gendered Space?**

As I demonstrated above, the accounts of fatalities at Elsecar show a very marked bias towards male victims, so that as well as being indices of spatial danger, they also

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<sup>75</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 17th May 1845, p. 8. The canal was home to a transient population of boatmen and their families, with the 1851 Census Returns for Nether Hoyland, for example, recording 20 individuals in six vessels moored at Elsecar Canal Basin. Despite the coming of the railway in 1850 and the infilling of much of the canal basin in circa 1870, the canal continued to be used for barge traffic until its eventual closure due to mining subsidence in 1926. Newspaper reports show that two other children, William Jarvis, and William Newby, also died at Elsecar by falling from their father's boats. Sources: *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 4th January 1867, p. 3; *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 5th June 1868, p. 3.

reflect gender differences in the way in which the space of the village was utilised by men and women. In this section, I explore the historical evidence which allows these differences to be more fully characterised. However, women as historical actors rarely appear centre stage in newspaper accounts of Elsecar and, as a result, there are very few sources that detail women's movements in and around the village in the same way that men's movements are recorded. Whilst this might appear to reflect a gendered division between public and domestic space, it is important to note that the daily lives of female field workers, female industrial workers, female servants and women who were primarily involved in the domestic economy of the household all involved moving through the spaces of the village to a lesser or greater degree. A historical understanding of women's experience is thus very much a matter of drawing inferences from a narrow set of sources.

In the first instance, this chapter demonstrated that accidents involving men and boys tended to occur in and around industrial space, whilst fatal accidents involving women and girls, as well as being far fewer in number, generally occurred in the home. In her work on domestic child deaths in nineteenth-century Ipswich, Vicky Holmes has shown conclusively that the main causes of fatal accidents in the home were unguarded fires, and that the majority of accidents occurred to young children who were temporarily unsupervised, their adult guardian (generally the mother) being engaged in a separate domestic task in a different room or outside the home.<sup>76</sup> Elsecar domestic accidents, such as the deaths of five-year-old Alice Addy in 1861 and

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<sup>76</sup> Vicky Holmes, 'Absent Fireguards and Burnt Children: Coroners and The Development Of Clause 15 of the Children Act 1908', *Law, Crime and History* 1.1 (2012), p. 35.

seven-year-old Maria Hough in 1864, mirror the pattern that Holmes has observed.<sup>77</sup> As such, they demonstrate that women were engaged in domestic tasks which necessarily involved moving both around and beyond the home into public space. This utilisation and negotiation of shared resources exposed women to the scrutiny of their neighbours, as well as placing a strain upon childcare and supervision.

As Judith Walkowitz asserts, 'entering public space placed women of all classes [...] in a vulnerable position'.<sup>78</sup> The Victorian city 'was interpreted as a negative environment for respectable women, one that threatened to erase the protective identity conferred on them by family, residence and social distinctions'.<sup>79</sup> As a result, entering public space exposed them to the gaze of men, inviting judgement of character on the one hand and the threat of sexual and physical danger on the other. For Walkowitz, the city streets were thus the arena where the tensions inherent in the gender roles and assumptions that underpinned Victorian society found expression. Whilst the colliery village was a social and physical environment that differed greatly from the Victorian city, it has nevertheless been characterised as a place where 'a unique set of patriarchal relations [were] based on the extreme separation of men's and women's lives' and where 'masculine supremacy [...] in many areas of economic and social life became an established, and almost unchallenged, fact'.<sup>80</sup> Accordingly, like the city, it can be seen as a locale where women also risked exposure to threatening and aggressive expressions of masculinity.

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<sup>77</sup> In both cases, Alice and Maria's dresses caught alight due to their proximity to an unguarded fire. In Maria's case, her mother is described as having 'only just left the house'. Sources: *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 14th December 1861, *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 23rd January 1864, p. 10.

<sup>78</sup> Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, p. 46.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 194.

One piece of evidence which is illuminating in this respect is the report of the sexual assault of a woman named Nancy Hargreaves. In July 1844, Nancy accompanied a female acquaintance, Elizabeth Wilkinson, part of the way on the latter's journey out of the village. As the women approached the hamlet of Blacker Hill, approximately 2.5 miles from Elsecar, they met three men 'lying by the side of the road',<sup>81</sup> one of whom, George Leech, accosted them, to which they 'made no answer'.<sup>82</sup> After leaving her friend at Blacker Hill, Nancy returned along the same road. She again met the three men and George Leech attempted to rape her, whilst his colleagues looked on. The attempt was foiled when another man approached along the road and Leech ran off across a field.<sup>83</sup> The fact that Nancy and Elizabeth stressed that they had made 'no answer' to Leech is significant and echoes advice given in the *Girl's Own Paper*, 'avoid strolls where you are annoyed, and always look straight before you when passing any man. Never look at them when near enough to be stared at in any impertinent and abrasive way'.<sup>84</sup> As Judith Walkowitz notes, the purpose of such behaviour for a woman was to 'in her gestures, movement and pace [...] demonstrate that she was not available prey'.<sup>85</sup> It is also clear from Nancy's testimony that she was aware of the threat that the men posed, the two women waiting for ten minutes before separating, presumably in the hope that the men would move on.

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<sup>81</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 3rd August 08 1844, p. 5.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 3rd August 08 1844, p. 5.

<sup>84</sup> Quoted in Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight*, p. 51.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

George Leech was convicted of the assault on Nancy Hargreaves and, in this, her experience can be contrasted with that of Margaret Hall. Margaret was the servant of a man named John Doyle and was apparently sent to meet him from the pub and convey him home safely after a drinking session. In the course of the journey home Doyle, who was 'the worse for liquor [...] commenced taking indecent liberties'<sup>86</sup> with her. In the subsequent court case John Doyle was acquitted, the main reason being that a witness described seeing Margaret supporting Doyle (in the sense of keeping him upright), rather than drawing attention to the assault by making an 'alarm'.<sup>87</sup> As was the case with Nancy Hargreaves, Hall's actions were read by the court in relation to a wider cultural context in which the timing, location of the assault and the victim's response to threat were all significant in apportioning culpability. By meeting Doyle at night, by being in physical contact with him (albeit in the course of her duties) and by not protesting to a third party, Margaret had placed herself in an ambiguous situation in which her own actions and morality were called into question.<sup>88</sup>

Margaret Hall's presence in what can be thought of as a space of danger, namely the night-time streets populated by drunken men, may also be seen in the case of Sarah Knock, whom the newspaper described as 'an interesting young girl, 13 years of age'.<sup>89</sup> Knock was the victim of an attempted 'criminal assault upon the person' at 11:30pm on a Saturday night. Her assailant, an iron puddler named Joseph Adams, pleaded guilty to the offence, but offered the mitigating statement that 'he was drunk

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<sup>86</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent (Supplement)*, 3rd October 1863, p. 11.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*; in his defence, Doyle offered the evidence that Margaret had 'on several occasions allowed him to take liberties with her'.

<sup>89</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 23rd February 1856, p. 6.



at the time and was sorry for what he had done'.<sup>90</sup> The report gives no indication what Sarah was doing out so late at night, but the account, particularly in its description of Sarah, does tend to suggest some ambiguities regarding the situation. In this respect, it is important to note that there are no sources for Elsecar that suggest prostitution within the village. Some Elsecar men do appear in newspaper reports in unambiguous association with prostitutes, but these encounters generally seem to have occurred in the larger settlements of Barnsley, York and Sheffield.<sup>91</sup> Whilst the actual circumstances surrounding the assault on Sarah thus remain somewhat unclear, it seems likely that she found herself in a particular location at a particular time, where her presence and intent could have been misread by Adams.

The cases of Sarah Knock, Margaret Hall and Nancy Hargreaves are three of only four accounts of sexual violence against women that appear in the newspaper reports of Elsecar.<sup>92</sup> In consequence, it is not possible to assess the scale or frequency of such attacks in the village. However, in regard to the use of space in the village, the reports show clearly that women's movement around the village was subordinate to, and affected by, men's greater freedom of movement and ability to claim space as their own. In a telling vignette of gender relations, for example, Thomas Thomson, a 16-year-old youth, struck a young girl who was engaged in the task of carrying water from a village pump, when the child inadvertently put down her buckets in the midst

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<sup>90</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 23rd February 1856, p. 6.

<sup>91</sup> See, for example, the case of William Watts, an Elsecar iron-worker, who alleged that he had been robbed by Sarah Brown, 'a tawdry [sic] dressed young woman' in 'a low lodging house or brothel' in Barnsley. Source: *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 20th December 1856, p. 10.

<sup>92</sup> In the fourth case, a rape charge against an Elsecar blacksmith, the reported witness testimony is so garbled and the reporting so obscure as to make an accurate interpretation of events difficult. Source: *Huddersfield Chronicle & West Yorkshire Advertiser*, 24th March 1855, p. 3.

of a game of marbles he was conducting with friends.<sup>93</sup> As work on fear and the perception of danger in contemporary society has made clear, the level of threat that an individual perceives is closely linked to their social, economic and political status.<sup>94</sup> In this context, it has been argued that 'women's unequal status'<sup>95</sup> means that 'experienced violence, threat of violence, sexual harassment and other events that increase women's sense of vulnerability are reinforcing masculine domination over space'.<sup>96</sup> Although other commentators have stressed women's agency in performing their own identities in space, the 'emancipatory possibilities' of which 're-imagine'<sup>97</sup> the meaning of social space, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that women's access to, and experience of, space at Elsecar mirrored and reinforced their subordinate social status.

## Conclusion

The analysis of the use of space is often predicated on binary oppositions – male/female, public/private, inside/outside, for example. Whilst these are useful constructs which may indeed reflect idealised social concerns about space, the evidence from Elsecar is important in demonstrating that the actual uses of space are considerably more complex than these basic categories might suggest. As Shirley Ardener argues 'individuals (and things) belong, then, to many pairs, groups or sets, each of which may be thought of as occupying its own "space", or as sharing a

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<sup>93</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 5th June 1847, p. 2.

<sup>94</sup> Rachel Pain, 'Gender, Race, Age and Fear in the City' *Urban Studies* Vol. 38 Nos. 5-6 (2001) pp. 899-913, p. 900.

<sup>95</sup> Hille Koskela, 'Gendered Exclusions': Women's Fear of Violence and Changing Relations to Space', *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography* 81.2 (1999), p. 121.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> Shilpa Ranade, 'The Way She Moves: Mapping the Everyday Production of Gender-Space', *Economic and Political Weekly* 42.17 (2007), p. 1524.

particular "universe".<sup>98</sup> In this chapter, I have looked at the physical development of Elsecar, the realities of life in its cottages, the tensions between the competing industrial and domestic uses of space and the wider movement of men and women through the environment of the village. From these studies, the landscape of the village emerges as being an interconnected and overlapping mosaic of rural, domestic and industrial spaces. If we accept that within these 'overlapping universes' structural relationships and ranking patterns are 'realised "on the ground" by the placing of individuals in space',<sup>99</sup> then it is possible to conceive of the village as a dynamic environment in which social relationships are formed, understood and modified by people's movement and interaction in space rather than by their relationship to binary categories of ascribed meaning. As the experiences of Nancy Hargreaves, Margaret Hall and Sarah Knock make clear, it is not the exclusivity of space as such that is important, but the power relationships inherent in its conflicting uses by different groups.

Daily life in Elsecar thus involved moving through a multiplicity of different spaces, each of which framed and emphasised different aspects of overlapping power relationships, such as class, kinship, gender, and workplace hierarchy. The landscape of industrialisation was thus in its widest sense a cultural artefact that reflected and embodied social relations,<sup>100</sup> where 'the spatial division of the conceptualized landscape [...] reinforced the hierarchical social and economic divisions within the

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<sup>98</sup> Shirley Ardener (ed.), *Women and Space: Ground Rules and Social Maps* (Oxford, 1993), p. 3.

<sup>99</sup> Shirley Ardener (ed.), *Women and Space: Ground Rules and Social Maps* (Oxford, 1993), p. 3.

<sup>100</sup> Mark S. Cassel & Myron O. Stachi, 'Perspectives on Landscapes of Industrial Labor', *Historical Archaeology* 39.3: *Landscapes of Industrial Labor* (2005), p. 3.

community'.<sup>101</sup> As I demonstrated, the villagers lived in small, overcrowded houses, in close proximity to the industrial features – the railways, mines, blast furnaces, canal and coke ovens – that dominated the landscape of the village. Subject to industrial hazards at work, the villagers were thus also required to negotiate these hazards during their leisure time. It is therefore fair to say that the village spaces emphasised the social and economic realities of industrialisation, in which economic production was prioritised over the domestic lives of the inhabitants. Similarly, the greater freedom available to men in moving through the landscape, as opposed to the scrutiny, judgement and threat of personal danger which women experienced in negotiating public space, demonstrates the spatial manifestation of gender inequality. This conclusion is significant in that it challenges previous interpretations of Elsecar, such as those of Graham Mee, who see the village as a mediated, fundamentally-benign environment in which social structures were positively influenced by the intervention of paternalist landlords, the Earls Fitzwilliam. In the following chapter, I will show that space and space-related behaviours were central to the formation of collective identities at Elsecar.

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<sup>101</sup> Sam R. Sweitz, 'The Production and Negotiation of Working-Class Space and Place at Central Aguirre, Puerto Rico', *The Journal of the Society for Industrial Archaeology* 36.1 (2010), p. 37.

## **Chapter Six: A Sense of Place?**

### **Respectability and Protest in Elsecar Circa 1830-1870**

#### **Introduction**

In Chapters Three and Four I examined various aspects of community in Elsecar, showing how structures associated with work, leisure, the family and gender influenced and framed social relationships. In Chapter Five I looked at space as an arena, or more properly as an interconnected and overlapping set of arenas, in which these social relationships were defined and enacted. In this final chapter I will look at the ways in which these two distinct elements, the complexity of social relationships within the community and the specific environments of the village in which they occurred, came together to create a specific sense of place. As I will demonstrate, this sense of place was constructed around the idea of Elsecar as a 'model' village, in which the concept of a physically and socially ordered community came to be seen as a reflection and embodiment of a perceived 'model' relationship between capital and labour.

As I will demonstrate in this chapter, the proliferation of new kinds of village space made possible new forms of social interaction, which in turn helped to define a particular village sense of place. In order to look at these themes, I am going to explore two particular phenomena which are closely bound up with meanings attributed to place. The first is the way in which specific communal events and activities within the village facilitated cross-class networks, in so doing creating and maintaining an image of Elsecar as a 'respectable' village. As Andy Croll has

explored, respectability can be understood as a performative, strategic social identity.<sup>1</sup> With this in mind, the second phenomena I examine acts as a counterpoint to the first and relates to the development of collective consciousness and agency amongst the Earls Fitzwilliam's Elsecar workers, as demonstrated during the industrial disputes that occurred within the village. These two phenomena, respectability and industrial militancy, might at first sight appear to be mutually contradictory, but I demonstrate how both, framed and acted out as they are within the spaces of the village, are intimately concerned with issues of legitimacy and identity, and helped to create a particular sense of place at Elsecar. As I argue, this sense of place, rooted within the environment and grounded in the vibrant community life of the village, was a central component of the emergence of a powerful and self-confident plebian identity. However, as I will also demonstrate, the South Yorkshire coal strike of 1858 in particular highlighted the tension between this inward-looking identity of the village as a special and distinct place on the one hand, and on the other wider notions of identity that revolved around collective agency and common cause with other colliers in the region. I also demonstrate how both sides in this dispute articulated their positions with reference to the physical environment, and to the contested notions of a particular sense of place that the landscape embodied. Finally, I conclude that, whilst Elsecar appeared to present a unique vision of modernity and progress underpinned by traditional authority, this bitter and prolonged industrial dispute exposed the limits and drawbacks of this traditional authority as it struggled to accommodate a newly-emergent sense of collective identity.

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<sup>1</sup> Andy Croll, 'Popular Leisure and Sport', in Chris Williams (ed.), *A Companion to Nineteenth Century Britain* (Oxford, 2007), p. 406.

### **The Respectable Village**

If the economic and industrial story of Elsecar is one in which a small hamlet grew into a thriving and extensive industrial complex, then the parallel social story concerns the way in which the village was transformed from an insignificant settlement into one which both the villagers and outsiders could regard as socially 'legitimate'. By this, I mean that the village became in some sense assimilated into a wider social and moral order in a way that was not necessarily the case with other working-class communities. As I will show, the process by which the village took on this identity was based on the interplay between two distinct elements – the actual behaviour of historical actors within the locale and the scrutiny and judgement of this behaviour by outsiders. With this in mind, the purpose of this section is to explore this process, using newspaper reportage of Elsecar as the primary source material. This source material is interesting in that (as I discussed in Chapter Four) it presents an account of the actions of villagers which is in accordance with the wider social and cultural preoccupations of the newspaper readership. As such, I argue that it gives a vivid insight into the interplay between community agency and external scrutiny in the creation of a sense of place.

Elsecar first appears as the object of wider public discourse through two key nineteenth-century events, the activities of the 1841 *Royal Commission for Inquiring into the Employment And Condition of Children and Young Persons in Mines and Manufactories* and the visit of the Inspector of Mines, Seymour Tremenheere, in 1845. In regard to the 1841 Royal Commission, Alan Heesom has outlined the way in which the Commission arose from Victorian concepts of humanitarianism, decency and morality. The widespread public shock at the working conditions of children,

particularly girls, that the Commission publicised, led to increasing popular support for reform.<sup>2</sup> Peter Kirby, in his analysis of the subsequent 1842 Royal Commission report, demonstrates the way in which concerns for morality and decency translated into a prurient interest in the sexuality of colliers and the perceived spread of immorality, which was seen as an inevitable consequence of the juxtaposition of scantily clad males and females within a closed, dark and foetid environment.<sup>3</sup> As Kirby notes, this resulted in the authors of the report collating, synthesising and redacting the collected evidence in such a way as to focus upon the sensational and the shocking. Of the two Fitzwilliam pits visited by the Commission, only the Deep Park Pit, near Rawmarsh, employed females (two adults) at the time, whilst only five children employed at either pit were aged below ten.<sup>4</sup> Within the investigative context, and when placed next to the evidence relating to other local collieries, such as Hopwood's Pit in Barnsley, the Fitzwilliam mines thus emerged in the 1842 report as being relatively well-managed and the Earl himself appeared to be an enlightened employer.

In the same way that the 1842 report appeared to vindicate the Earls' industrial management, Seymour Tremenheere's account of the Elsecar housing was instrumental in shaping attitudes to the wider social impact that the Earls were perceived to have had on the lives of the villagers. As I explored in Chapter Five, Tremenheere was careful to record the layout and type of housing at Elsecar.

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<sup>2</sup> Alan Heesom, 'The Coal Mines Act of 1842, Social Reform, and Social Control', *Historical Journal* 24.1 (1981), pp. 69-88.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Kirby, 'Naked in the Pit: Child Labour, Public Decency and the Iconography of the Children's Employment Commission of 1842', *Manchester Papers in Economic and Social History* 62 (2007), p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> *Children's Employment Commission 1842: Report by Jelinger C. Symonds Esq.*, p. 46; the Jump Pit, to the north of the village, was the only Elsecar pit visited by the Commission, despite the fact that at least two other pits, Elsecar Old Colliery and Elsecar New Colliery, were both active at this time.



However, he also accompanied these observations with his own assessment of the social significance of the housing provided by the Fitzwilliams. Tremenheere was passionately interested in improving the living conditions of the working classes, but he was clear in his own mind that such improvement could only be achieved by those in authority directing change as a Christian duty.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, with his interest in 'just, liberal management',<sup>6</sup> he wrote that housing at Elsecar was 'of a class superior in size and arrangement, and in the conveniences attached, to those belonging to the working classes [elsewhere] [...] a remarkable contrast with the degrading neglect in person, house and habits, exhibited in so many of the colliery villages of Scotland'.<sup>7</sup> For Tremenheere, the benefits of such housing were clear: 'It would be difficult to find any number of labouring men so favourably situated in every respect, as regards their comfort and means of improvement, as the colliers of these works'.<sup>8</sup>

It is fair to say that Tremenheere's report set the perspective in which Elsecar's housing has been viewed ever since. In particular, his connection between housing and social improvement reflected a growing Victorian view that had been articulated by the Society for Improving the Condition of the Labouring Classes, and which entered popular consciousness through events such as the Prince Consort's sponsorship of the erection of a block of model houses at Hyde Park as part of the 1851 Great Exhibition.<sup>9</sup> In keeping with these preoccupations, a series of press articles about Elsecar appeared in the 1850s which echoed and amplified

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<sup>5</sup> R. K. Webb, 'A Whig Inspector', *Journal of Modern History* 27.4 (1955), p. 363.

<sup>6</sup> O. P. Edmonds & Edmonds, E. L., 'An Account of the Founding of H. M. Inspectorate of Mines and the Work of the First Inspector, Hugh Seymour Tremenheere', *British Journal of Industrial Medicine* 20 (1963), p. 214.

<sup>7</sup> Seymour Tremenheere, *Report on the Mining Population in Parts of Scotland and Yorkshire* (1845), p. 25.

<sup>8</sup> Tremenheere, *Report on the Mining Population*, p. 25.

<sup>9</sup> S. Martin Gaskell, *Model Housing from the Great Exhibition to the Festival of Britain* (London, 1987), p. 19.

Tremenheere's sentiments. In 1855, for example, the *Manchester Times* printed an article entitled 'The South Yorkshire Coalfield' which drew attention to the expansion of mining in the area. The article announced that, 'The neighbourhood of Elsecar, about midway between Rotherham and Barnsley, presents the most striking proofs of the industrial movement which now characterises the region'. Referring to the recent expansion of the Elsecar Ironworks, the article went on to describe how 'the noble Earl', in anticipating a rise in the population of the village, had constructed a lodging house, a market square, a post office, a church, a public school and 'remarkably neat and comfortable dwellings', all of which demonstrated 'his [Lordships's] anxiety for the moral and social welfare of the increasing population of this thriving district'.<sup>10</sup>

The sentiments expressed in the *Manchester Times* were echoed by the *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* in a report on the opening of Elsecar market in 1857:

ELSECAR MARKET- There are few villages which have exhibited in so short a time such an expansion and progress as Elsecar. Within a few years a hamlet consisting of a few scattered houses has grown to a considerable village, and may almost be regarded as a market town.<sup>11</sup>

The article again listed some of the most notable elements of the village, including 'excellent stone houses for the workmen', the church and non-conformist chapels, a reading-room, a spacious cricket ground and the market.<sup>12</sup> Like the *Manchester Times*, the *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* article emphasised the relationship between paternalist control, the physical amenities of the village, order and prosperity.

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<sup>10</sup> *Manchester Times*, 7th March 1855.

<sup>11</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 15th June 1857, p. 10.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

Whilst in one sense these articles are very obvious apologia for, and justifications of, the paternalistic authority of the Earls Fitzwilliam, in another sense they are very significant contemporary appraisals of the importance of the village. Both focus heavily on a list of the built facilities of the village, but the significance of these various structures is not regarded as purely economic; it is also seen as being of social importance. Even the cricket ground, for instance, 'in which many an athletic and healthful contest has taken place', attests to 'his Lordship's concern for the recreation and improvement of his tenants and workpeople'.<sup>13</sup> As the newspaper articles recognise, the multiplication of new and novel spaces within the village created opportunities for new forms of social interaction and opened up possibilities for the improvement of moral and social welfare. In his work on class and identity in the nineteenth century, Simon Gunn has argued that 'as a new kind of physical and social space, the urban was [...] strongly identified with the middle class', becoming a place which embodied "civility" and "civilisation".<sup>14</sup> Similarly, M. J. Daunton has demonstrated how the redevelopment of the Victorian city was characterised by the creation of new forms of space – boulevards, enclosed parks, covered market halls – where behaviour became increasingly codified and regulated.<sup>15</sup> As a result, urban development 'may be interpreted as an attempt to change social behaviour via physical change'.<sup>16</sup> It is in relation to these contemporary understandings of the nature and potential of the urban environment that these newspaper reports of Elsecar, with

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<sup>13</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 15th June 1857, p. 10.

<sup>14</sup> Simon Gunn, 'Class, Identity and the Urban: The Middle Class in England c. 1790-1850', *Urban History* 31.1 (2004), p. 32.

<sup>15</sup> M. J. Daunton, 'Public Place and Private Space: The Victorian City and the Working-Class Household', in Derek Fraser & Anthony Sutcliffe, (eds), *The Pursuit of Urban History* (London, 1983), pp. 218.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 213.

their emphasis on the 'improving culture'<sup>17</sup> of the village, should be viewed. They portray a village which is clearly in line with contemporary social notions of respectability in that they represent a settlement that embodies social hierarchy, order, morality and industry.

From the newspaper reports thus emerges the idea of a particular sense of place surrounding Elsecar, one that is defined in the first instance by the village's relationship to a certain form of authority (the Earls Fitzwilliam) and in the second by its relationship to certain types of space. In the case of the former phenomenon, it is clear that the origin of the village as an aristocratically-founded industrial settlement had a significant and inescapable influence on the way in which it was viewed by outsiders. Of course, this reflects the elite status of the Earls Fitzwilliam, but it is also clear that the Earls publicised the village from the late eighteenth century onwards by inviting their aristocratic and royal acquaintances to visit the site. Indeed, the footrill (entrance tunnel) of the former Lawwood Colliery was kept open expressly for the purpose of allowing parties of 'ladies and gentlemen' to explore the Elsecar mines,<sup>18</sup> a practise that was remembered and recorded in the medium of late-Victorian popular print culture.<sup>19</sup> This echoes a trend of late-eighteenth and early nineteenth-century 'industrial tourism' that can be seen, for example, in Dorothy Wordsworth's account of her Scottish tours,<sup>20</sup> and which was most dramatically expressed in the thousands of visitors who came to marvel at Matthew Boulton's Soho Manufactory in

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<sup>17</sup> Gunn, 'Class, Identity and the Urban', p. 32.

<sup>18</sup> Joshua Biram to mine supervisor Thomas Cooper, 20th August 1827, SA, WWM/Stw P/7/6-266; Biram writes to Cooper to prepare 'lights and flannels' for a party of 'ladies and gentlemen' who are to tour the mine.

<sup>19</sup> Anonymous, 'Pits and Furnaces; or Life in the Black County', *Merry and Wise: An Illustrated Monthly Magazine for Young People* (1st March 1869), p. 132.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, her account of a visit to the mining village of Wanlockhead, in Dorothy Wordsworth, *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland in A.D. 1803* (New York, 1874), pp. 16-18.

Birmingham.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, Barrie Trinder has shown how in the latter part of the eighteenth century, Ironbridge and the industrial landscape of Coalbrookdale attracted numerous visitors, leading one ironmaster to create a tourist footpath, complete with 'rustic shelters and seats, which led to a bandstand-like rotunda at its summit'.<sup>22</sup> From there, visitors could marvel at the spectacle of mines and quarries.

Whilst such tourism reflected a fascination with the novelty of industry, it is also clear that involvement in industry conveyed status and power upon the entrepreneur. In this respect, recent research by John Tanner has suggested that the site of Elsecar Old Colliery, on a hillside clearly visible from Wentworth, may have been chosen in order to create a deliberate industrial vista, in much the same way as Henry Founes Luttrell erected a pottery works on his Dunster Castle estate in the mid-eighteenth century that was intended to be fully visible from the main house.<sup>23</sup> At Merthyr Tydfil, the owner of the Cyfarthfa Ironworks, William Crawshay, built his family home, known as Cyfarthfa Castle, on the hillside above the ironworks complex. The works were visible from the house, the deliberate physical juxtaposition of the entrepreneur's domestic and industrial seats of power being recorded in the 1825 painting of the castle and ironworks by Penry Williams.<sup>24</sup> At Elsecar, the Marquis of Rockingham similarly used art as a medium to express industry as a component of elite status by commissioning the artist George Stubbs to paint a portrait of his mine

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<sup>21</sup> P. M. Jones, 'Industrial Enlightenment in Practice. Visitors to the Soho Manufactory, 1765–1820', *Midland History* 33.1 (2008), p. 77.

<sup>22</sup> Trinder, 'Ironbridge: Industrial Archaeology', p. 48.

<sup>23</sup> Dr. John Tanner, Barnsley Museums, in conversation with the author, April 2015. For more on the Dunster Castle pottery, see D. Dawson & O. Kent, 'Animated Prospect: An 18th Century Kiln at "The Pottery House in the Old Park", Dunster, Somerset', in J. Finch & K. Giles, (eds), *Estate Landscapes* (London, 2007), pp. 95-106.

<sup>24</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyfarthfa\\_Ironworks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyfarthfa_Ironworks) [accessed 09/05/2015].

overlooker, William Smith, within a view of the Wentworth Estate landscape dominated by the headgear of Elsecar Old Colliery.<sup>25</sup>

The newspaper articles thus combine a fascination for the industrial in its own right with an appreciation of industry as an expression of elite authority and power. Allied to these concerns is the appreciation of the potential of the built environment as a medium for social change. As S. Martin Gaskell has noted, by 1850 the rapid growth and increasing overcrowding of towns and cities had prompted a widespread interest in the potentialities of planned 'model' housing in alleviating the living conditions of the poor.<sup>26</sup> The model cottages which were sponsored by the Prince Consort as part of the Great Exhibition of 1851 were, for example, specifically designed to contribute to the 'physical and moral improvement'<sup>27</sup> of their inhabitants. However, as Gaskell argues, mid-Victorian housing reform was also deeply concerned with 'eighteenth century notions of community' and 'a desire to restore traditional values'.<sup>28</sup> With this contemporary context in mind, it is not difficult to see how Elsecar, with its powerful mix of innovative paternal management and long-established hierarchical social structures, exerted a particular fascination for the press.

By the mid 1800s, the Earls' management style, at once both traditional and progressive, was thus beginning to be viewed by contemporaries as a model for mitigating the worst effects of nineteenth-century social and economic change. This idea of a mediated, ordered community became associated with the physicality of the

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<sup>25</sup> Stubbs' portrait of Smith is best considered in relation to his other, better-known commissions for the Marquis, which included the celebrated life-size portrait of the Marquis' favourite racehorse, 'Whistlejacket'.

<sup>26</sup> Gaskell, *Model Housing*, p. 11.

<sup>27</sup> Gaskell, *Model Housing*, p. 19.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

built environment, so that the cottages and buildings of the 'model' village of Elsecar came to be seen as a reflection and embodiment of a perceived 'model' relationship between capital and labour. As the *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* makes clear, the village was seen as 'an illustration of the immense power derived from the encouragement of manufacturing enterprise by the wealthy and noble'.<sup>29</sup>

### **Rational Receptions**

As I argue above, by the mid-nineteenth century Elsecar had become subject to external scrutiny, which saw in the fabric of the village, and in the relationship between the villagers and the Earls, an apparent model community worthy of note. Of course, this was an idealised view of progress, deference and harmonious social relationships which had little grounding in the actual day-to-day lived experience of the villagers. The questions thus remain, what effect, if any, did the new spaces that were so admired by the newspaper – the cottages, markets and reading rooms – have upon the social life of the village? Did they in fact help to facilitate new forms of social interaction and, in so doing, did they indeed structure class relationships within the village, as the newspaper reportage suggests? In this section, I will answer these questions through an examination of the various public recreational events and meetings that were held in the village during the mid-nineteenth century. These include music recitals, lectures, fetes, tea parties and the Elsecar horticultural show. I argue that, whilst of little apparent significance in themselves, these events were significant occasions which facilitated both cross-class and inter-gender social interactions. Further, these recreational activities, by foregrounding skill, expertise,

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<sup>29</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 15th June 1857, p. 10.

performance and competition, represented occasions in which the participants could forge identities and networks of association that transcended class differences.

One of the first events in which these processes can be examined is the formation in 1855 of the Elsecar Horticultural Society. In its account of the first Elsecar horticultural show, for example, the *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* emphasised the moral and improving intent of the Society:

Elsecar has become a populous neighbourhood in consequence of the rapid development of the coal and iron trades [...] who necessarily employ a great number of workmen: such men have more or less leisure time and it is of great importance to themselves and to society that that time should be profitably employed. With that view a Horticultural Society was formed a short time ago, to promote the improvement of cottage gardening [...] and also to counteract the bad tendency of spending spare time at beer-shops and similar places, which is so often practised to a great and lamentable extent.<sup>30</sup>

In his work on the social history of gardening, Stephen Constantine notes how, in the nineteenth century, gardening was enthusiastically adopted as a pastime by the middle classes, who were also keen to promote it amongst the working classes. The reason for this was that gardening, as the *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* article demonstrates, was seen as a form of 'rational' entertainment; that is, a leisure activity which was productive, improving, useful and moral, as opposed to the unstructured, morally-suspect pastimes (drinking, traditional games and gambling, for example) that were associated with traditional working-class leisure culture.<sup>31</sup> However, whilst Constantine stresses the role of middle classes and paternalist landlords in promoting recreational gardening, it is perhaps more illuminating to see the trend, and the popularity of other so-called rational pastimes, as being directly related to a growing

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<sup>30</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 23rd June 1855, p. 6.

<sup>31</sup> Stephen Constantine, 'Amateur Gardening and Popular Recreation in the 19th and 20th Centuries', *Journal of Social History* 14.3 (1981), p. 390.



concern within the working classes to project an image of respectability and moral behaviour as a means to claim social and political legitimacy.<sup>32</sup> With this in mind, it is important to identify which villagers instigated and participated in the society.

Although the impetus for the formation of the society appears to have originated within the village and not with the Earls Fitzwilliam, the newspaper does not indicate the founder members of the society.<sup>33</sup> However, an account of a retirement testimonial for the Elsecar schoolmaster, William Berridge, lists the foundation of the Horticultural Society as one of his 'valuable [...] labours'.<sup>34</sup> The society secretary was Frank Butterworth, a druggist who lived at Water Lane, near Elsecar Market.<sup>35</sup> Some idea of the social composition of the participants can also be gained from the published list of the prize-winners. These include five miners (Samuel Hough, John Maxfield, William West, John Crossley, Joseph Goodison), an iron puddler (William Palmer), three employees from the Earls' Elsecar workshops (Larrett Smith, Thomas Wilkinson, Job Bell) and a stone mason (James Stenton).<sup>36</sup> Of these individuals, Thomas Wilkinson was of a slightly higher status than his workmates, being paid more than Smith and Bell and being paid weekly rather than daily.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, the miner John Maxfield is notable in being something of an entrepreneur (he set up and ran Turkish baths for the Elsecar miners) and in composing letters that were read

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<sup>32</sup> For a discussion of this phenomenon see Keith McClelland, 'Rational and Respectable Men: Gender, the Working Class and Citizenship in Britain 1850-1867', in Laura L. Frader, & Sonya O. Rose, *Gender and Class in Modern Europe* (New York, 1996), pp. 280-293.

<sup>33</sup> It is unlikely that the Earl Fitzwilliam was directly involved in the society, since the newspaper would certainly have reported this. However, in keeping with his desire to retain a high profile in the village, the Earl did send a display of flowers from Wentworth to the show.

<sup>34</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 10th August 1861, p. 6.

<sup>35</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 28th August 1867, p. 3 and 1861 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

<sup>36</sup> 1851 and 1861 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

<sup>37</sup> Names of workmen employed at the Elsecar Works, 1849, SA, WWM G45/22.

aloud at public meetings on foreign policy.<sup>38</sup> Also of a higher status was John Cocking, the engine tender (steam engine operator) who worked at Elsecar Low Colliery.<sup>39</sup> The final individual who has been traced is John Burtoft, who appears on the electoral register for Nether Hoyland as a freeholder with house and land at Hoyland Common.<sup>40</sup> Within the group of participants there is thus clear evidence of a mix of social status. These gradations are somewhat clearer in the account of the second horticultural show, which as well as many of the participants listed above, also included Thomas Hague, a coal mine labourer from Elsecar, and Zebulon Norton, a substantial farmer, rate payer and former Overseer of the Poor from Hoyland.<sup>41</sup> The various published lists of Elsecar Horticultural Society prize-winners are therefore significant in that they are one of the few sources which actually record the names of working-class participants in village meetings. Because of this, they are a good example of the way in which societies, events and public meetings were occasions in which different classes could meet and interact in pursuit of a common interest.

Cross-class participation is also seen in the account of a charity concert that was held in 1858 in aid of Sheffield General Infirmary. The concert was, 'got up and supported by the men in Messrs. Dawes' employ at the Milton and Elsecar Ironworks'.<sup>42</sup> The event is a significant example of working-class agency; not only was the concert

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<sup>38</sup> *Huddersfield Chronicle & West Yorkshire Advertiser*, 6th February 1858, p. 2; account of baths set up by 'an intelligent working miner, named Maxfield'; *Daily News*, 12th May 1858; a letter on the 'Oude Crisis' from 'John Maxfield, a collier, living at Elsecar' is read out loud at a public meeting at Sheffield Town Hall.

<sup>39</sup> 1851 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

<sup>40</sup> *Electoral Register for Nether Hoyland Parish* (1855).

<sup>41</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent (Supplement)*, 13th September 1856, p. 11. Zebulon Norton appears in the Records of the Hoyland Poor Law Committee, BA, LD1994/38.

<sup>42</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 17th April 1858, p. 6.

venue 'crammed to overflowing with the workmen, their wives and children', but the concert itself also featured performances from 'the brass band, composed entirely of men in Messrs. Dawes' service'.<sup>43</sup> Trevor Herbert has characterised a huge growth in the foundation and popularity of brass bands in the 1840s and 1850s as being a working-class phenomenon; like gardening, it was widely perceived to be a morally uplifting and rational activity, 'a panacea for the many ills to which the working class were believed to be susceptible'.<sup>44</sup> As Herbert asserts, a significant element in brass bands and the associated concerts were the opportunities for cross-class interaction: 'The higher classes, witnessing the growth of a self-conscious working-class identity [...] sought to engage working-class people on a cultural middle ground where certain activities, pass-times and pursuits were commonly shared across class boundaries'.<sup>45</sup> Again, this phenomenon is clearly seen in the Elsecar charity concert, which 'several gentlemen from Sheffield and neighbourhood honoured [...] with their presence'.<sup>46</sup> Accounts of other concerts show a similar mixing of classes and the participation of working-class performers from the village.<sup>47</sup> Activities like music and gardening, with their emphasis upon skill, learning, performance and competition, thus represented occasions when individuals could indulge in social interactions, forge identities and create networks of association that were not wholly dependent upon the rigid operation of class differences.

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<sup>43</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 17th April 1858, p. 6.

<sup>44</sup> Trevor Herbert, 'Nineteenth Century Bands: Making a Movement', in Trevor Herbert (ed.), *The British Brass Band: A Musical and Social History* (Oxford, 1998), p. 32.

<sup>45</sup> Herbert, 'Nineteenth Century Bands', p. 33.

<sup>46</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 17th May 1858, p. 6.

<sup>47</sup> See, for example *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 27th March 1858, p. 6; account of the first concert of the Elsecar and Hoyland Sacred Harmonic [music] Society.

As well as giving an indication of the scale and nature of working-class participation in village events, the newspaper reports are a useful source in unpicking the social and class hierarchy within the village, as well as highlighting the ways in which the pursuit of common interests could create networks of association which cut across these occupational groupings. A good example of this is the account of the inaugural meeting of the Elsecar Reading Room, which was set up 'in compliance of the wishes of several inhabitants',<sup>48</sup> with the desire that the 'working classes will avail themselves of the boon'.<sup>49</sup> The list of committee members included the Reverend Scaife (vicar of Elsecar), the Reverend Cummings (vicar of Hoyland), John Hartop (manager of the 5th Earl's newly-created Elsecar workshops), George Dawes (manager of the Elsecar Ironworks) and the village schoolmaster, William Berridge, as secretary.<sup>50</sup> The committee membership thus gives an excellent indication of collaboration between the religious, educational and commercial elite of the village in pursuit of a common goal. In other sources, it is possible to discern some of the points of contact between these individuals and the wider village population. The main speaker at William Berridge's retirement testimonial, for example, was Samuel Thornsby, a working miner with many years experience, who lived at Reform Row.<sup>51</sup> Thornsby was also spokesman at the presentation of a testimonial cup (funded by a workers' subscription) for the steward Benjamin Biram in 1856.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, in 1868 a proposal was made by the colliery steward Jabez Jackson to John Hartop (then colliery

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<sup>48</sup> Reverend George Scaife to Benjamin Biram, 31st December 1855, SA, WWM Stwp 15/36/S-65; Scaife writes to notify Biram of a meeting to set up the reading room, and offers him the chair.

<sup>49</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 19th February 1856.

<sup>50</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 19th February 1856.

<sup>51</sup> 1851 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

<sup>52</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent (Supplement)*, 1st November 1856, p. 12.

manager) to include 'wives and sweethearts'<sup>53</sup> at the annual collier's festival. In 1865, Jackson had presided over the inaugural meeting of the Elsecar Building Society in the Elsecar Reading Room,<sup>54</sup> and by the 1871 Census he had risen to become a colliery manager, living in Cobcar House, a detached or semi-detached property immediately to the north of the terraced workers' cottages at Cobcar Row.<sup>55</sup> In the same way as participation in music, horticulture, sport and public events created opportunities for social interaction that transcended class boundaries, so men like Thornsby and Jackson utilised their personal status as respected and experienced workmen as a position from which to engage and interact with the middle-class element within the village, thus creating new networks of association and common interest.

A further aspect which also emerges from accounts of village events concerns the role of women in the public life of the village. As I examined in Chapters Three and Five, the increasing gendered division of labour within the village during the nineteenth century, and the apparent gendering of aspects of public space within the village, means that evidence which highlights the public role of women is of great significance. In the account of the first Horticultural Society meeting, for example, the reporter bemoaned the lack of the 'fair sex, whose presence always grace shows'.<sup>56</sup> At the Sheffield Infirmary benefit concert, the reporter noted how the music 'set the eyes sparkling and feet twinkling [...] of the younger and fairer portion of the

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<sup>53</sup> *Huddersfield Chronicle & West Yorkshire Advertiser*, 25th January 1868, p. 5.

<sup>54</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 31st August 1865, p. 3.

<sup>55</sup> 1871 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

<sup>56</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 17th March 1858, p. 6.

listeners'.<sup>57</sup> Although these asides suggest that the role of women was perceived as being marginal and decorative, they nevertheless highlight the fact that the inclusion of women in public events in the mid-nineteenth century was regarded as socially desirable, in that they were seen as a civilising and moderating influence upon masculine association and conviviality. These attitudes are expressed fully in the account of the 'Colliers' Festival' that was held in 1868. Noting how previous male-only events 'were liable to degenerate into mere seasons of excess', the paper recalled how a suggestion was made to include 'their wives and sweethearts, at an entertainment far more rational, and more calculated to promote their moral and intellectual improvement'. In its account of the prayers, tea meeting, speeches and the musical recital of Handel that took place at the festival, the paper noted that 'evidences of civilisation and manners were not less displayed than at more fashionable reunions' and expressed a hope that 'other large colliery proprietors might imitate [the event] with advantage to their workmen'.<sup>58</sup>

The 1868 Colliers' Festival was one of a number of events that occurred in and around the village which were specifically mentioned as 'tea meetings' or meetings at which tea was served.<sup>59</sup> Erika Rappaport's work on the temperance tea party in the nineteenth century is a useful starting point in which to consider the significance of these Elsecar events. Although there is no evidence to suggest that any of the Elsecar events were sponsored by a temperance society or were conceived of as being specifically temperance events, it is clear that the focus upon the consumption of tea

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<sup>57</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 19th February 1856.

<sup>58</sup> *Huddersfield Chronicle & West Yorkshire Advertiser*, 25th January 1868, p. 5.

<sup>59</sup> See, for example, *Manchester Times*, 29th March 1853; account of a 'colliers' social tea' and *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 17th February 1866; account of a 'Tea Meeting at Hemingfield'.

rather than alcohol aligned them within a wider cultural preoccupation with sobriety and sober social interaction. As Rappaport notes, tea parties were 'gustatory spectacles, in which hundreds [...] of working- and middle-class men and women gathered [...] to drink tea and coffee, feast on sugary foods, sing hymns'.<sup>60</sup> Noting the perceived civilising influence that feminine company was held to have upon masculine behaviour, Rappaport argues that 'tea's presence on the menu advertised an event as heterosocial, and in turn implied that men and women would be expected to comport themselves in a respectable and "civilised" manner'.<sup>61</sup> As a result, 'The tea party disciplined consumers [...] encouraging pleasurable cross-class and cross-gender interactions'.<sup>62</sup> In their work on middle-class women, Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall see tea meetings and similar polite social events as some of the few opportunities for nineteenth-century women to participate, albeit in a very restricted and proscribed way, in the male-dominated sphere of public life: 'respectability prevented middle-class women from being seen except in a few narrowly specified places: the church, certain shops, select concerts, garden parties, exhibits'.<sup>63</sup> Since Davidoff and Hall acknowledge that these spatial restrictions only really affected those 'with pretensions to gentility',<sup>64</sup> the novel inclusion of working-class women in public social events in the village in the 1850s and 1860s would seem to be a

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<sup>60</sup> Erika Rappaport, 'Sacred and Useful Pleasures: The Temperance Tea Party and the Creation of a Sober Consumer Culture in Early Industrial Britain', *Journal of British Studies* 52.4 (2013), p. 991.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 992.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 993.

<sup>63</sup> Leonore Davidoff & Catherine Hall, 'The Architecture of Public and Private Life: English Middle-Class Society in a Provincial Town 1780 to 1850', in Derek Fraser & Anthony Sutcliffe, (eds), *The Pursuit of Urban History* (London, 1983), p. 343.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 344.

significant departure from the traditional male-orientated mining culture, which has been seen as rigidly gender-segregated in terms of public and private spheres.<sup>65</sup>

As these examples have demonstrated, the various events that occurred at Elsecar in the middle of the nineteenth century form important novel forms of cross-class and gender-inclusive interactions that are not evident in the historical sources before this date. If we consider the similarities between the various events, then it is clear that they represent a growth of a distinctive culture based on social gatherings, music, shared pastimes, improvement and education that can be read as being in opposition to the more established village culture, outlined in Chapters Four and Five, of rugged masculinity, work, convivial drinking and gender exclusion. These two elements might be taken to represent the dichotomy of rough/respectable society, but it is important to consider that the boundaries between these two elements of the social and cultural life of the village may be more fluid than such a polarised reading might indicate. As Andy Croll has explored, respectability can be understood as a social role that was performed in a 'strategic and instrumental fashion' by the working class, rather than as a fixed category of identity.<sup>66</sup> John Cocking, for example, the respectable horticulturalist and engine tender, whose 'miniature mansion, with a model flower garden in front of it'<sup>67</sup> was much admired, eventually became an inn-keeper.<sup>68</sup> Similarly, in an event that encapsulates many of these new social trends, a fundraising gala was held on the Elsecar cricket pitch in 1855 to provide instruments for 'a juvenile fife and drum band'. The newspaper account notes that 'about 500 persons

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<sup>65</sup> Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, p. 194.

<sup>66</sup> Croll, 'Popular Leisure and Sport', p. 406.

<sup>67</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent (Supplement)*, 13th September 1856, p. 11.

<sup>68</sup> 1871 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Township.



partook of tea, and during the evening a great many more persons of both sexes assembled'. However, whilst the occasion would appear to be an excellent example of rational and civilised entertainment, the paper reported that 'some persons, contrary to rule, introduced rum into the tent at tea, and that some disturbance was caused in the village by a number of young men'.<sup>69</sup>

As these examples demonstrate, the key to these new forms of social interaction lies in their performative nature and in the relationship between these social performances and their spatial contexts. In essence, a plurality of discrete spaces allowed a plurality of different forms of social interaction, each of which occurred according to sets of space-specific 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' behaviours.

### **A Village United? Benjamin Biram's Farewell Presentation**

By the mid-nineteenth century there were thus emerging within the village significantly new forms of class and gender interaction, in which the trappings of a 'rational' and 'respectable' cultural sensibility (music, literacy, temperance, personal endeavour and genteel competition) were becoming prominent. Participation in these new forms of interaction created a particular sense of place and identity within the village, which was projected through the medium of the press to a wider regional audience. This identity was based on the notion of the village as an ordered, regulated and controlled place in which the labouring poor, guided and encouraged by middle-class example, could play their part in the wider cultural and social life of the community. However, whilst both working-class men and women participated in these village activities, a question remains regarding the extent to which these actors

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<sup>69</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 18th August 1855, p. 6.

in the various tea meetings, sporting contests and gardening shows understood their participation to be components in the creation of a particular communal identity, or whether this identity was in essence a middle-class fiction that was imposed upon the village. In examining this issue, I will focus on one key event in the history of the village, namely the presentation of a commemorative cup by the Elsecar workforce to the steward Benjamin Biram in October 1856. As I explored in Chapter Two, Benjamin Biram's role as steward made him the most visible and powerful agent of the 5th Earl's authority in the village, and for this reason the contemporary accounts of the presentation are worthy of some scrutiny. Two accounts of the event were published, one in the *Leeds Mercury* and the other in the *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*. Both articles were published on the same day and are unlikely to have been written by the same correspondent; each offers a slightly different perspective on the event, emphasising, for example, different elements of the principal speakers' addresses.

Before looking at the published accounts in detail, it is important to sketch out something of the historical background to the presentation. By October 1856, Biram, then 53 years old, had been in his post as steward for over twenty years and was suffering from diabetes, an illness that would kill him in January 1857. The presentation is thus likely to have been made in full knowledge of his poor state of health and its likely outcome. Although it is not clear who originated the idea of the presentation, both accounts make it clear that the two silver testimonial cups, one for Biram and a smaller less expensive one for his deputy, the mine steward James Uttley, were purchased by 'the voluntary subscriptions of workmen under your [i.e.

Biram's] control'.<sup>70</sup> Leaving aside the possibility of the use of moral coercion in order to induce workmen to subscribe, it seems that the presentation was a genuine expression on the part of at least some of the Elsecar workmen of their regard for Biram and for Uttley. Genuine as the workers regard for Biram and Uttley might have been, the newspaper reports make it clear that the actual presentation ceremony was itself far from spontaneous, taking place in the 'carpenters' shop, at Elsecar works'.<sup>71</sup> This choice of venue is highly significant; the building (now a children's activity centre and cafe) still exists, and the main entrance is surmounted by a carved plaque which reads 'A place for everything and everything in its place'.<sup>72</sup> Inside, the building was decorated with 'flowers and evergreens', with a wall-mounted 'pretty device in flowers' in red, white and blue, incorporating the word 'unity', above the dais.<sup>73</sup> The event was thus conceived as an act of theatre, in which the celebration of Biram's career acted as the focus for a wider exploration and rehearsal of the themes and duties of community.

In his essay 'Deference, Paternalism and Popular Memory', Andy Wood has unpicked the mechanisms of paternal relationships in a way which gives us a vantage point from which to view and understand the Biram testimonial. Wood's work demonstrates the point that hierarchical social relationships were maintained in large part through the 'face to face'<sup>74</sup> interaction of historical actors in rituals of social interaction in

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<sup>70</sup> Presentation speech to Benjamin Biram, reported verbatim in *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent (Supplement)*, 1st November 1856, p. 12; *Leeds Mercury*, 1st November 1856.

<sup>71</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent (Supplement)*, 1st November 1856, p. 12.

<sup>72</sup> Personal observation by the author, Elsecar site visit, May 2013.

<sup>73</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent (Supplement)*, 1st November 1856, p. 12.

<sup>74</sup> Wood, 'Deference, Paternalism and Popular Memory', p. 240.

which 'authority and deference were written into gesture, speech and silence'.<sup>75</sup> I argue that Benjamin Biram's testimonial was one such event in that, although it was ostensibly a celebration of Biram's life, it presented an occasion when different elements of the village community could demonstrate, explore and reinforce their relationship with the Earls and with each other. As I will show, the participants and principal speakers at the event fully understood this wider purpose, the speakers in particular using the event to affirm, and indeed on occasion to subvert, a dominant discourse of community cohesion, order and identity.

Reinforcing this idea of the event as an act of social theatre, the evening progressed according to a particular running order of events and speakers, interspersed with music and prayer. The programme began at around three o'clock with a 'tea meeting', a ticketed event attended by approximately 500 people, amongst whom the 'fair sex were well represented'.<sup>76</sup> There is no indication in the newspaper report whether the tea event involved entrance by fee or by invitation, but the exclusivity of the event does seem to indicate some form of social striation amongst the attendees. After this gender-inclusive, rational and respectable gathering, many more people, presumably those of a lesser social standing, were admitted. Following this, Samuel Thornsby, a collier who had been 'employed under Earl Fitzwilliam for 55 years', was elected chairman of the event.<sup>77</sup> Thornsby then gave an address in which he highlighted the link between the physical development of the village (specifically, the schools and other facilities provided by the Earls) and the moral improvement of the workforce:

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<sup>75</sup> Wood, 'Deference, Paternalism and Popular Memory', p. 242.

<sup>76</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent (Supplement)*, 1st November 1856, p. 12

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

He said that he felt proud and thankful to see them all assembled [...] and was rejoiced to see so much moral improvement in the conduct of the colliers, who many years ago were in a neglected and degraded condition; but considering the facilities now offered, in being blessed with good schools and other noble institutions, he trusted to see a greater improvement still.<sup>78</sup>

Thornsby's address is interesting in that it echoes the sentiments expressed by both Seymour Tremmenheere and in the newspaper depictions of the village discussed above, which also drew the links between the physical village and the moral health of its inhabitants. For Thornsby, the village and its perceived benefits were a manifestation of the social relationship between the villagers and the Earl. With this in mind, he exhorted the assembled workmen to 'do their duty like good and honest servants'.<sup>79</sup>

Thornsby's sentiments were echoed by the second speaker, the miner James Green. In particular, Green emphasised the social bond between the Earls and their workforce:

No one could fully appreciate the many comforts and advantages at Elsecar, but those that had worked under tyrannical masters as he had done before he came to work amongst them. He very much deprecated strikes, they always ended in poverty and disappointment, and referred to the benefit, he had no doubt, that [...] Elsecar had derived from the prompt, firm and efficient manner in which Earl Fitzwilliam acted, when a strike was made there some years ago (cheers).<sup>80</sup>

Like Thornsby, Green portrayed Elsecar as a place of progress. Within this formulation, he also sought to minimise the role of industrial conflict in favour of a stress on unity, creating an evidently popular narrative of the 1844 strike which was a deliberate attempt to play down an event which, as I will demonstrate in the next section of this chapter, was a significant and bitter dispute.

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<sup>78</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 1st November 1856.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent (Supplement)*, 1st November 1856, p. 12.

After Green's speech and the presentation of the cup, Biram himself rose to speak.

Declaring himself to be 'overpowered by my feelings',<sup>81</sup> he continued:

I have endeavoured to do my duty to you, and at the same time to Earl Fitzwilliam, by holding evenly the balance and doing justice to both [...] I am employed by a man who is kindness itself (cheers) a man who has your interests both for time and eternity at heart (hear, hear). Such are the kind feelings of my employer, which are amply testified by the building of schools, a church, etc. in this place.<sup>82</sup>

These three extracts encapsulate something of the essential relationship between the Earls and the villagers as it was perceived by both sides. In the first instance, a sense emerges from the workers' speeches that Elsecar was perceived by them as somewhere quite distinct from the 'neglected and degraded' colliers and 'tyrannical masters' of other mining communities. As is implicit in Green and Thornsby's speeches, the key to this difference lies in the special relationship the village enjoyed with the Earls, a relationship which, as Biram eloquently makes clear, the Earl and his managers considered to encompass both the physical and spiritual care, 'both time and eternity' of the villagers. Of course, Thornsby, Green, and indeed Biram himself, were reiterating the dominant, or hegemonic view, of this relationship, but there is no reason to suppose that they were doing so in a cynical way; as Andy Wood notes, for many people 'paternalism and deference defined the lived environment. Carving out a place within which life could be sustained in this profoundly unequal social order was, for many poorer people, an achievement in itself'.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent (Supplement)*, 1st November 1856, p. 12.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> Wood, 'Deference, Paternalism and Popular Memory', p. 238.

Following the presentation to James Uttley, the Reverend George Scaife addressed the assembly. He expressed his satisfaction at 'this very gratifying meeting and [for the opportunity] to witness such a kind feeling between masters and men'.<sup>84</sup> Once again, Scaife drew attention to the special relationship between the villagers and the Earl and, like Biram, drew the link between the physical environment and this relationship, the benefits of which 'were abundantly manifested in the erection of schools, waterworks, and comfortable cottages recently completed in the village'.<sup>85</sup>

These are the key to understanding the intent of the event. Being given in the midst of the work buildings, in front of an audience of working-class men, their 'wives and sweethearts'<sup>86</sup> and the assembled village hierarchy of Biram and his family, the Reverend Scaife and his wife, the Reverend Cummings and the ironmaster George Dawes, they can be read as a negotiation and reiteration of the significance of Elsecar in the world, the respectability of its citizens, and its relationship to the structures of power and capital, as it was understood by the village community itself. Within this dominant discourse, the 'good common-sense speeches delivered by the [...] uneducated colliers',<sup>87</sup> with their emphasis upon duty, order and deference, appear to accord well with Biram's conception of his own role and duty. Similarly, the Reverend Scaife's reading of the event as an expression of social harmony between classes is significant. For Scaife and the other speakers, the links between harmony, duty, the moral and social order and authority are repeatedly expressed with reference to the physical environment of the village, so that the 'good order' of the physical

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<sup>84</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent (Supplement)*, 1st November 1856, p. 12.

<sup>85</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 1st November 1856.

<sup>86</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent (Supplement)*, 1st November 1856, p. 12.

<sup>87</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent (Supplement)*, 1st November 1856, p. 12.

village both mirrors and facilitates the 'good order' of its citizens. That these ideals were publicly espoused by miners, the vicar and the manager in public is highly significant in that the testimonial presentation became in effect a self-conscious attempt by the community to define its own identity. As Andy Wood notes, collective memories of past social harmony distil the past into a simplified essence 'without contradictions'.<sup>88</sup> These mythic pasts act as yardsticks with which to measure the present and so, as Wood argues, 'economic and social change in the nineteenth century not only produced new forms of exploitation but also [...] a profound sense of historical rupture'.<sup>89</sup> As J. F. C. Harrison explores, this was the result of industrial change, economic problems and political unrest, all of which led to 'a process of social disintegration',<sup>90</sup> which was characterised by the erosion of traditional social relationships of negotiation and deference. Against this background of change in the wider world, Elsecar, in its seemingly enthusiastic endorsement of its traditional relationship with its ancestral lord, defined itself, and was defined by others, as a place of 'difference'.

### **Place, Identity and the 1858 Coal Strike**

If, as I argue, Benjamin Biram's testimonial represented an occasion in which the village community could come together to promote a hegemonic identity of deference, order and unity, then is it possible to detect any alternatives to this dominant discourse? Looking at accounts of the event more closely, it is possible to discern some evidence of dissent to the dominant discourse. James Green's reference to a strike in the recent past, for example, was accompanied by the plea that his

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<sup>88</sup> Wood, 'Deference, Paternalism and Popular Memory', p. 251.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 252.

<sup>90</sup> Harrison, *The Early Victorians*, p. 162.



workmates would not 'be led away by wicked and designing men'<sup>91</sup> into striking in the future. Green was clearly aware of potential divisions amongst the workforce and, in this respect, a speech that was given towards the end of the evening by a miner called John Fish struck a somewhat equivocal tone. Whilst he reaffirmed the respect that the colliers had for Biram and Uttley, his reference to the two men as 'their stewards, agents or overmen, or what else they pleased to call them[selves]'<sup>92</sup> jarred sharply with the deferential tone of the other speakers. Similarly, his recollection that before coming to Elsecar, he and other colliers 'had been obliged, when they met the viewer, to make him a bow, and at the same time many cursed him in their hearts' struck a deliberately discordant note.<sup>93</sup> The language of Green and Fish, the one speaking out against industrial activism and the other, a seemingly less than enthusiastic endorsement of the status quo, point to an undercurrent of tension within the village. In this section I will show how the action of the village colliers during the South Yorkshire coal strike of 1858 highlighted this tension between the existing inward-looking identity of the village as a special and distinct place on the one hand, and on the other wider notions of identity that revolved around collective agency and common cause with other colliers in the region. In so doing, I will show how differing ideas of place informed and were utilised by both sides in the dispute. With reference to earlier industrial disputes at Elsecar, I will also show how this dispute, in which the meaning of the village was debated and contested for the first time, was a significant watershed in the evolving and changing relationship between the Earls and their workforce.

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<sup>91</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 1st November 1856.

<sup>92</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent (Supplement)*, 1st November 1856, p. 12.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

Despite the Earls' insistence upon obedience and deference to authority, it is important to realise that a series of industrial disputes occurred at Elsecar in the first half of the nineteenth century. The 1858 strike was thus not an isolated event, but part of a longer process of negotiations, resistance and conflicts between the Earls and their workforce. Documentary evidence survives, for example, for particular crises in 1831, 1836, 1844 and 1849. Of these, the 1831 dispute was triggered by a large underground coal fire at one of the Elsecar collieries in December 1830, an event which led the colliers to express a lack of confidence in the colliery management.<sup>94</sup> As I examined in Chapter Two, this dispute was resolved by the personal intervention of the 4th Earl. Similarly, in 1836 the 5th Earl also intervened personally in response to a demand for higher wages from his colliers:

There may be some ground for the complaint of the colliers, but they must not be allowed on any account to enforce it by refusing to work. Those that are under agreement [i.e. under contract] must have notice to quit, but I think they can be made to quit without regular notice; I thought they held their houses more as lodgings [original emphasis].<sup>95</sup>

This document is significant in outlining the Earls' intention to dismiss and evict any striking miners. Interestingly, the precedent for such a sanction can be found in the aftermath of the 1807 parliamentary election and the defeat of the Fitzwilliam's Yorkshire candidate. On that occasion, the 4th Earl moved to evict those of his Malton estate tenants who had voted against his interest,<sup>96</sup> an action which prompted desperate protestations of loyalty and pleas for mercy.<sup>97</sup> So, in the same way that the 1807 election emphasises the relationship between power, patronage and property in a

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<sup>94</sup> *Morning Chronicle*, 1st January 1831; despite the efforts of the paper to link the event to an outbreak of arson attacks by 'some ferocious incendiary', there is no evidence to suggest the fire was anything other than accidental.

<sup>95</sup> 5th Earl Fitzwilliam to Benjamin Biram, 14th April 1836, SA, WWM/Stw P/14/2-98.

<sup>96</sup> Names and numbers of persons to be turned out of their houses in Malton in consequence of their bad conduct in 1807 and 1808, undated document, 1808, SA, WWM/F/72/19.

<sup>97</sup> See, for example, John Cleaver of Malton to 4th Earl Fitzwilliam, 6th April 1808, SA, WWM/F/32/71.

political context, the events of 1836 demonstrate the actual operation of hard, paternalist power, and the context of social obligation and control which lay behind the provision of the 'remarkably neat and comfortable dwellings' of the village.<sup>98</sup> The dual sanction of unemployment and eviction proved successful; by July 1836, Benjamin Biram was able to write to the Earl: 'I have had the Elsecar Colliers this evening applying for an advance of wages, but I told them very shortly I could not listen to them for a moment'.<sup>99</sup>

In contrast with the 1831 and 1836 disputes, the 1844 dispute was notable in being the first in which the Elsecar colliers appear to have looked beyond the immediate horizons of their insular relationship with the Earls. The catalyst for the confrontation was the formation of the Miners' Association of Great Britain and Ireland in 1842-43. This organisation, the leaders of which were closely affiliated to the Chartist movement, had at its peak around 30,000-40,000 members and in 1844 it instigated a major strike in the Durham and Northumberland coalfields.<sup>100</sup> At Elsecar, the Earl Fitzwilliam let it be known that 'all who joined the union were to leave their work',<sup>101</sup> closing his collieries and dismissing his workforce on the 17th March 1844. A meeting of approximately 1000 striking miners from Sheffield, Barnsley and Rotherham took place on the 22nd March, but 'few, if any, of Earl Fitzwilliam's colliers were present, although much pains had been taken to induce them to come'.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> *Manchester Times*, 7th March 1855

<sup>99</sup> Benjamin Biram to 5th Earl Fitzwilliam, 20th July 1836, SA, WWM/G/40/104.

<sup>100</sup> Malcom Chase, *Chartism: A New History* (Manchester, 2007), p. 243.

<sup>101</sup> *Bradford Observer & Huddersfield, Halifax & Keighley Reporter*, 2nd May 1844, p. 5.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

Whilst the Earl's threats of dismissal thus seems to have been effective, a letter that was sent to the Earl in 1849 from a delegation of Elsecar colliers indicates that some degree of negotiation had taken place between the Earl and his colliers:

We, the Workmen employed at Elsecar Colliery, humbly beg to call your serious attention to our present distressed, and with some of us actually starving condition. In doing so we wish to remind you of the promise made to us in the year 1844 when a Union was formed of the Miners generally and when a letter was written by your Lordship forbidding us to join that Union and if any of us were already joined we were immediately to withdraw on pain of being discharged, [this threat being] accompanied with a promise that we should be placed in as good a position or rather better than the workmen at other Collieries.<sup>103</sup>

As D. James has noted, paternalism emphasised loyalty and deference in relation to local ties of community, hierarchy and authority 'rather than to a larger grouping such as class'.<sup>104</sup> Similarly, Patrick Joyce has emphasised the fundamental 'inwardness' of the Victorian textile-producing communities of the West Riding and Lancashire, emphasising the fact that deferential, paternal relationships were forged at the local level.<sup>105</sup> For Joyce, industrial paternalism 'took place in community terms'.<sup>106</sup> In the light of work by James and Joyce, the apparent undertaking of the Earl to guarantee the Elsecar colliers' position *vis-a-vis* other colliers in the region, is very significant. If we take the authors of the 1849 letter at face value, their rejection of the union in favour of continuing the traditional *status quo* indicates that they considered themselves, Elsecar and their relationship with the Earl as something special and distinct from conditions prevailing in other local colliery villages.

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<sup>103</sup> Elsecar colliers to 5th Earl Fitzwilliam, 2nd August 1849, SA, WWM/G/40-168.

<sup>104</sup> D. James, 'Paternalism in Keithley', in Jowitt, *Model Industrial Communities in Mid-Nineteenth Century Yorkshire* (Bradford, 1986), p. 109.

<sup>105</sup> Joyce, *Work Society and Politics*, p. 95.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

It is not known whether the Earl acted to alleviate the hardships expressed in the 1849 letter, but what is clear is that the issues regarding participation of Elsecar colliers in union activities, their relationship with other colliers in the district and their relationship to the authority of the Earls remained unresolved, leading to the kind of underlying tensions that can be discerned in the accounts of Benjamin Biram's testimonial. This is particularly obvious when one considers that two of the signatories to the 1849 letter were Samuel Thornsby and John Fish, both of whom participated in the testimonial in 1856 with different degrees of apparent enthusiasm. It is these developing tensions, unresolved issues and the particular history of industrial disputes at Elsecar, which characterise the events of 1858.

### **The 1858 Strike**

As this brief survey of industrial disputes has made clear, industrial relations at Elsecar were characterised by an absolute insistence on the part of the Earls that their authority and decisions could not be challenged. As the 1849 letter demonstrates, this authority was in some degree mitigated in the minds of the Earls' workmen by their understanding that they enjoyed a particular relationship with the Earls, in which their grievances could be addressed through the process of petition outlined in Chapter Two. In 1844, this understanding of a 'special relationship', together with the threat of sanctions, was enough to discourage the Elsecar men from participating in the wider regional community of colliers.

Before looking at the events of 1858 in detail, it is important to recall that, in many ways, Elsecar in 1858 was not the same as it was in 1849. As was explored in Chapter Five, the village had expanded rapidly in the 1850s with the construction of the

workshop complex, the development of the ironworks into one of the most advanced iron-rolling mills in the country, and the growth of village facilities. It is also true to say that the architectures of power within the village had also changed significantly with the death of Benjamin Biram in January 1857. Following Biram's death, his responsibilities had been divided into a number of discrete posts. As a result, no single estate official exercised the same level of authority and power that Biram had enjoyed or, it may be argued, his sense of purpose and depth of vision. Similarly, the death of the 5th Earl in October 1857, the person who had personally directed much of the industrial transformation of the village, had left in charge a new Earl who remained something of an unknown quantity. Whether or not the 6th Earl and his subordinates actually differed widely from their predecessors in terms of their management practices and abilities is not clear, but it is likely that the passing of the old order was perceived by some as an opportunity to renegotiate the relationship between the Earl and his employees.

1858 began with a strike by the puddlers at both the Milton and Elsecar Ironworks in response to a move by Dawes and Co. to reduce the price paid to the men for puddled iron (i.e. refined wrought iron) by 6d per ton.<sup>107</sup> As a consequence of the strike, the colliers at Elsecar were put on part-time work. The puddlers stayed on strike for seven weeks before accepting the proposed reduction and returning to work.<sup>108</sup> In February, shortly after the Elsecar colliers had returned to full-time working, the *Leeds Mercury* reported that a 15% reduction of colliers' wages had been agreed at a

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<sup>107</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent (Supplement)*, 6th February 1858.

<sup>108</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 13th February 1858.

meeting of the Yorkshire Coal Masters' Association.<sup>109</sup> In the event, no attempt was actually made to impose a wage cut at Elsecar until October, when the 6th Earl pressed the men to accept a 5% reduction. When a meeting between a delegation of Elsecar colliers and the Earl failed to resolve the situation, the colliers went on strike.<sup>110</sup>

On the first day of the strike the colliers met at Elsecar market place and, after singing a 'colliers' song',<sup>111</sup> processed out of the village to a prominent and well-known landmark on the Wentworth estate, the ceremonial arch known as the *Needle's Eye*. This pyramidal structure was situated on a ceremonial carriageway through the estate and local tradition holds that it was built by the Marquis of Rockingham in order to win a bet that a rich man could indeed ride through the eye of a needle. This story, and the biblical proverb regarding wealth to which it alludes, were both well-known. The strike thus began with an act of theatre which linked the village to a physical symbol of the Earls' wealth and power, emphasising the inequality between the Earls and their workforce.

The sense that this dispute represented something radically different from previous strikes was expressed in a report in the *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*:

We believe that his Lordship's collieries have long been noted [...] for the good understanding that has constantly prevailed between employer, managers and employed. Having been liberally treated themselves, the miners have on several important occasions resisted the solicitations of other workmen, and kept aloof from the strikes and disagreements which have prevailed elsewhere.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, 20th March 1858; the YCMA was a regional trade cartel that regulated coal quotas, coal prices and wage rates.

<sup>110</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 16th October 1858, p. 8.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 16th October 1858, p. 8.

Once again, the newspaper reporting highlighted the contemporary perception of Elsecar as a place where relationships between employer and employed were somehow different from those elsewhere. For their part, the striking miners also highlighted this difference, self-consciously articulating, through an occupation of the elite landscape, their view of a relationship based on power and inequality, rather than deference and mutuality. Steve Poole's work on urban space in Bristol highlights how certain spaces acquire an identity as places associated with freedom and radicalism.<sup>113</sup> Poole's study is a good example of the process identified by Kevin Fox Gotham, whereby 'human agents invest places [...] with social meaning, and how [...] that meaning is then used to guide action, challenge inequalities and build community'.<sup>114</sup> With Poole and Fox Gotham's work in mind, it is clear that, from the very start, the 1858 strike was one in which the debates and interpretations surrounding the dispute were articulated with reference to the physical environment, and to the contested notions of a particular sense of place that the landscape embodied.

Much of the historical information regarding the course of the strike is preserved in reports published in the *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, a newspaper that had shown a considerable interest in the progress and development of Elsecar. From the outset, the newspaper took an even-handed approach to the strike, publishing a series of lengthy weekly reports in which it endeavoured to present the viewpoints of both sides in the dispute. In its report of the 23rd October, the paper thus noted that the colliers at J. & J. Charlesworth Ltd. (a firm with a number of mines in the area) were

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<sup>113</sup> Poole, 'Till our Liberties be Secure', p. 45.

<sup>114</sup> Fox Gotham, 'Toward an Understanding of the Spatiality of Urban Poverty', p. 728.



also now on strike.<sup>115</sup> The paper also made the point that, for Earl Fitzwilliam, the main issue was no longer the reduction of wages: 'We understand however, that his Lordship is largely influenced by a determination to resist the control endeavoured to be exercised by the workmen's unions'.<sup>116</sup> For the Earl, the issue at stake was clearly the threat the union posed to the traditional relationship of hierarchy, authority and deference which he enjoyed with his workmen. The paper also reported that around 1500 Elsecar, Park Gate and Charlesworth colliers, 'accompanied by a band of music', had processed through Wentworth park on the 21st October. At the meeting after the procession, the Elsecar miners' position was articulated by John Fish, who spoke of the 'mutual confidence' that had 'long existed' between the Earl and the Elsecar colliers, and of 'the kindness of the late Mr. Biram', but who nevertheless asserted that he had joined the strike 'as the only means of sustaining the cause of working men'.<sup>117</sup>

As these extracts make clear, at the heart of the strike lay the tensions between the conflicting identities of the Elsecar colliers: on the one hand an identity based upon the traditional, special and regionally unique relationship between the men and their Earl, and on the other, a powerful emergent sense of collective identity based on the experiences, aims and goals that they shared with other mining communities. These issues come into sharper relief in the newspaper report for the 30th October, which notes that, whilst Earl Fitzwilliam was still pressing for a wage cut at Elsecar, Charlesworths had offered to re-employ their men at their old rate of pay, providing that they would 'not support other turn-outs'.<sup>118</sup> In a gesture of support for the Elsecar

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<sup>115</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 23rd October 1858, p. 5.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent (supplement)*, 30th October 1858, p. 3.

strikers, the Charlesworth men refused these terms. The paper also noted that the Elsecar miners were being supported by a levy which the Miners' Association had organised among other collieries in the Barnsley region, and that efforts by Elsecar Ironworks and Park Gate Ironworks to obtain coal from other sources had been thwarted by a refusal of the regional collieries to supply them.<sup>119</sup> For the first time, then, the Elsecar colliers were being actively supported by networks of class association and common interests that extended beyond the village and its closed relationship with the Earl.

In the village itself, the issues at stake were highlighted in the newspaper report of 13th November, which noted that the Earl had threatened to permanently close the Elsecar collieries, that the Reverend Scaife had pleaded with the men to return to work, and that some of the strike leaders had been sacked and were under notice of eviction.<sup>120</sup> The newspaper published an open letter from the Elsecar miners to the Earl:

We are informed that we cannot [re]commence our labour unless we discontinue our connexion [sic] with the Miner's Friendly Society. Now, we wish to inform you that the above society is not such a thing of abhorrence as may have been represented to you, as its rules only imply industry, humanity and charitableness, and to conduct ourselves with propriety both at our labour and before the public.<sup>121</sup>

As this letter demonstrates, the dispute had by now coalesced around the issues of authority and control. These issues are also implicit in a lengthy letter which the paper also published, outlining the Earl's case. After lengthy discussion of wage rates, this letter went on to say that:

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<sup>119</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent (supplement)*, 30th October 1858, p. 3.

<sup>120</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 13th November 1858, p. 8.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

His Lordship's colliers have peculiar privileges – they have constant employment, they have comfortable cottages and gardens, with plots of land [...] at nominal rates [...] And whilst all these things have been done for them, their noble masters have not been unmindful of their social benefits, their religious instruction, or of the education of their children.<sup>122</sup>

In the same way that the colliers demonstrated their defiance and their awareness of social inequality by meetings and processions in the Earl's park, so the Earl sought to remind them of their social position and the advantages of their 'peculiar position' by referring to the physical environment of the village. Again, the idea of Elsecar as a special and privileged place was emphasised in the conclusion to the Earl's letter, which stated that the miners' union compelled the Elsecar colliers 'to sacrifice all their own peculiar comforts and benefits, in order to carry out the selfish and intolerant views of Chartist leaders and mob orators'.<sup>123</sup>

The Earl's letter prompted a response from a spokesperson for the colliers, George McRobey. McRobey's reply framed all of the perceived benefits of Elsecar – the built components and the social provisions of the 'model' village – as no more than the conditions that all workers should expect and be entitled to as a matter of course, 'with regard for the care which has been taken by the "noble master" to promote their "social comfort" [...] Does his Lordship not believe or recognise the universally received idea, that property has its duties as well as its privileges?'.<sup>124</sup>

At a colliers' meeting in Stubbing, near Elsecar, on the 17th November, another collier prominent in the strike, Samuel Woffenden, went even further. In a sarcastic

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<sup>122</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 13th November 1858, p. 8.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 13th November 1858, p. 8.

rebuttal of the assertion that provisions made by the Earl 'were superior to the provisions made for the like class of men employed at other collieries',<sup>125</sup> Woffenden drew attention to the fact that rents for colliers' gardens at Elsecar were higher than land prices paid by local farmers and that rents in the Elsecar lodging house were higher than could be obtained privately; amidst applause and laughter from the assembly, he held up these facts as evidence of the 'kindness of the Earl Fitzwilliam, which surpassed all the kindness in the country'.<sup>126</sup>

As these extracts demonstrate, the tensions regarding identity which were manifest within the strike were increasingly becoming focussed around ideas of place. In the same way that the idea of Elsecar as a distinct and unique place underpinned its identity as a polite village of deference and class co-operation, so both sides in the dispute put forward their own particular understandings of the built environment and its social meanings. For the Earl, the village and its cottages were a physical symbol of the hierarchical, paternalistic bond between employer and employee. For the colliers, breaking free from the strictures of the Earl's management into the wider networks of class association that was represented by the union necessarily involved a refutation of the social relationships embodied in the physical environment of the village.

In the event, the Earl's viewpoint, that union membership was incompatible with his own authority, prevailed. By December, the cumulative effect of the lock-outs, dismissals and threats of eviction had taken their toll and despite calls to stand firm

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<sup>125</sup> *Barnsley Chronicle*, 20th November 1858, p. 8.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

from strike leaders such as Samuel Woffenden, John Fish and John Maxfield,<sup>127</sup> men began to drift back to work. Faced by a new threat from the Earl to sack everyone who did not return to work on his terms, the remaining 500 striking Elsecar colliers announced that they would leave the union, accept the 5% wage reduction, and return to work on the 20th December.<sup>128</sup> In a development which once again emphasised the singularity of the Elsecar colliers' situation, J. & J. Charlesworth's men also returned to work, but without having to accept a pay cut and with 'permission to continue in the union'.<sup>129</sup>

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have explored some of the ways in which the development of the village in the first half of the nineteenth century created new uses of space in which various forms of sociability – 'respectable' gatherings, sporting contests, competitions and ceremonial occasions – could occur. These gatherings represented new forms of social interaction within the village, in which elements of the elite, the middle classes and workers could meet and interact, rehearsing and enforcing existing social hierarchies to be sure, but nevertheless engaging in common activities that engendered a coherent sense of place and, ultimately, of community. Reflecting a growing mid-Victorian interest in the potentialities of the built environment for promoting and guiding social change, this communal sense of identity was based on a reading of the village as being ordered, both physically and socially, in accordance with a mid-Victorian hegemonic vision of morality, hierarchy and progress. This reading was one which both the village inhabitants and outsiders shared, the latter

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<sup>127</sup> *Manchester Times*, 11th December 1858.

<sup>128</sup> *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent (supplement)*, 24th December 1858, p. 8.

<sup>129</sup> *Bradford Observer & Huddersfield, Halifax & Keighley Reporter*, 23rd December 1858, p. 8.

largely through the proliferation of newspaper articles about the village that appeared in the regional press. Central to this interpretation was cross-class and gender-inclusive participation in the Victorian ideal of a 'rational' and 'improving' culture of village social life, in accordance with both middle-class and emerging working-class notions of respectability.

As the newspaper reportage makes clear, by 1857 Elsecar presented a unique vision of modernity and progress that was reassuringly underpinned by traditional authority. It is therefore somewhat ironic that in the following year the limits and drawbacks of this traditional authority should be exposed in a bitter and prolonged industrial dispute. As I have demonstrated, this dispute was fuelled by a newly-emergent sense of collective identity that the model of Elsecar as a traditional aristocratically-controlled enclave struggled to contain. However, many of the actors involved in this dispute were the same actors who participated enthusiastically in the meetings and events of the polite village. As Keith McClelland has demonstrated, a key element in the working-class embracement of respectability was the realisation that the attainment of respectability legitimised claims for political and social emancipation.<sup>130</sup> In this respect, both of the foci of this chapter, the polite village and the development of collective consciousness, can be seen as different aspects of the same emergent identity. However, the development of this collective, respectable working-class identity also made possible the ideal of moral and social improvement by class association and collective action, rather than by direction from above. As the 1858 strike demonstrates, the exercise of collective agency at Elsecar thus inevitably involved testing the constraining boundaries of the Earls' authority.

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<sup>130</sup> McClelland, 'Rational and Respectable Men', p. 291.

In the event, the crushing of the 1858 strike by the 6th Earl and the subsequent banning of union membership in the village until 1874, highlights the fact that, progressive as the Earls' paternalistic management may have been in the early part of the nineteenth century, in the latter part of the century it was becoming increasingly anachronistic, the insistence on deference increasingly at odds with the emergence of an increasingly confident working-class voice. In 1863, for example, Elsecar delegates at a miners' meeting in Leeds complained that they were 'nailed as fast to his Lordship's pits [...] as are the trees to his Lordship's park'.<sup>131</sup> As I have demonstrated in this thesis, the story of Elsecar is thus not solely about industrial and economic development. It is also the story of the parallel development of a dense and vibrant community life, with its own distinct identity, rooted within its environment through a particular sense of place. The emergence of this powerful and self-confident identity formed a powerful challenge to the autocratic management of the Earls. These historic tensions between deference and opposition, authority and agency, tradition and modernity, were never satisfactorily resolved in 1858 and continued to resonate as powerful components in the identity of Elsecar up to the present day.

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<sup>131</sup> Quoted in Goodchild, 'The Earl Fitzwilliam's Elsecar Colliery', p. 9. Goodchild does not give an original source reference for this quote.

## Conclusion

### **Introduction**

In this thesis I explored numerous aspects of the development of the village of Elsecar during the period 1750-1870. In doing so, my aim has been to examine the process of industrialisation as a catalyst for social change and, in particular, to explore how industrialisation influenced the formation of a village community. In relation to this idea of 'community', it is fair to say that studies of historical communities have tended to focus upon issues of how community starts and how it can be defined, measured, scoped and assessed. Numerous authors have tackled these issues, working from a number of different starting points. Tony Richardson, for example, has explored the dynamic economic migration and the subsequent formation of new mining settlements in Cleveland in terms of the accumulation of 'community capital',<sup>1</sup> that is, 'the skills and experience which they [the ironstone workers] had gained, together with the social contacts and networks which they had developed'.<sup>2</sup> Jan Ensum explores community through kinship networks,<sup>3</sup> whilst for Rhiannon Thompson, community is formulated through class and occupation.<sup>4</sup> For Jean Lindsay, however, community is forged by design, through paternalistic management, planning and social engineering.<sup>5</sup> Most of these studies have at their heart a statistical analysis of quantitative data that is derived in the main from census returns, and which is used to further an exploration of issues such as family structure and migration. Although

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholson, 'Community and Class', p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Ensum, 'A Coal-Mining Community', pp. 164-214.

<sup>4</sup> Rhiannon Thompson, 'A Breed Apart? Class and Community in a Somerset Coal-Mining Parish, c.1750-1850', *Rural History* 16.2 (2005), p. 138.

<sup>5</sup> Jean Lindsay, 'An Early Industrial Community - The Evans' Cotton Mill at Darley Abbey, Derbyshire, 1783-1810', *The Business History Review* 34.3 (1960), pp. 277-301.



many case studies stress the significance of factors such as masculinity and gender in framing social interactions and community formation, the limited scope of the historical data sets upon which they are based tends to preclude any detailed examination of these issues.

At Elsecar, the rich diversity of the Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments, the considerable volume of historical newspaper reportage and the presence of additional resources such as census returns have allowed me to examine a wide variety of issues in the thesis, including class antagonism, pragmatism, authority, scrutiny, control, gender, work patterns, lifecycles, masculinity, ideas of the self, ideas of 'the other', family, support networks, poverty, respectability, social space, contested space and danger. Rather than studying a single normative cause or indice, I have been able to use these issues to illuminate the central themes of this thesis, which are the relationship between structures of authority, the agency of the villagers and the physical environment in creating the idea of community. As I demonstrated, a community, in the sense of a group of individuals living and interacting with one another, inevitably involves both negative and positive aspects, co-operation and conflict, tensions and hierarchy.

Yet, community is not simply the heat generated by a given group of individuals interacting in a particular way; it is a form of identity. As such, it is partly self-generated (how the community views itself) and partly ascribed (how it is viewed by outsiders). Since identity is based on the delineation of boundaries (between the 'self' and 'not self' or between the 'group' and 'the other', for example), community identity necessarily involves a spatial component, whether this is an imagined locus (an

internet 'chat room' for example) or a fixed point in space such as a village. Community, then, is a site-specific construct. As I have demonstrated in this thesis, the development of the industrial community of Elsecar in the period 1750-1870 is the story of the emergence of a powerful sense of place and identity, rooted in the particular collective histories and experiences of the villagers.

In **Section One** of this thesis (Chapters One and Two), I explored the administrative structure of the Wentworth estate, and the goals and motivations of its owners, the Earls Fitzwilliam. I showed how the Earls were concerned with the maintenance of a rigid and traditional hierarchical social order, and how they promoted this through their paternalist agenda. However, I also proved that Elsecar inhabitants could negotiate these structures, utilising their own agency to engage with the Earls and their stewards in acquiring benefits and concessions. I demonstrated how these estate structures acted as a viable alternative or adjunct to the parish authorities, in so doing, widening the survival options for the Elsecar poor. I also showed how, within a village that has always been viewed as an exemplar of paternalist social support, the poor nevertheless needed and constructed their own informal networks of support which bypassed the estate and the parish authorities, and which by 1860 had become formalised by the establishment of the Simon Wood Colliery Accident Fund.

In **Section Two** (Chapters Three and Four), I characterised and charted the development of community at Elsecar through an examination of the organisation of employment and of the structuring of social relationships outside the work environment. I demonstrated the disparity between the stability, availability and longevity of the employment opportunities that were available to men and those that

were available to women. However, despite the narrowing of opportunities for women in the first half of the nineteenth century, I showed how women continued to play an important economic role both within and outside the home. In this sense, the separation of workplace and home, in a consideration of economic activity, is a false division; as the Elsecar evidence shows, work does not fit into a tidy category and so is perhaps better considered as a key element in the structuring and reflecting of wider gender and class relationships, rather than as a *de facto* indicator of class identity and affiliation in its own right.

For men in Elsecar, the common experience of the workplace, its affiliation and intrigues, and the proliferation of these workplace associations into the wider world of male sociability, clearly formed an important element of masculine identity. This masculine identity continued to be defined largely through the body and through the demonstration of physical strength in work, in sporting contests and social drinking, and in disputes with others. Women were also ready to engage in physical disputes, both with men and other women, although, as I have shown, these disputes tended to centre around the family and the defence of family resources, rather than around petty disputes fuelled by alcohol. As I have demonstrated, social life in Elsecar involved both men and women acting within a dense weave of family, workplace and friendship associations, in which personal circumstances, combined with the particular economic, demographic and social structures of the village, shaped individual lived experience.

In **Section Three** (Chapters Five and Six), I looked at how this lived experience was shaped by the diverse spaces of the changing village. Daily life involved moving

through a multiplicity of different spaces, each of which framed and emphasised different aspects of overlapping power relationships, such as class, kinship, gender and workplace hierarchy. Since people constantly moved between different spheres of activity – private, public, domestic, industrial – these village environments, rather than being fixed and separate, were constantly in a state of interaction and flux. However, despite the fact that the planned village and its housing had pretensions towards framing and encouraging 'model' social relationships, both within the family and between employer and employee, the clear evidence I have presented for overcrowded living conditions and the prevalence of industrial hazards in the landscape both demonstrate that Elsecar nonetheless privileged and prioritised industrial production over the domestic lives of its inhabitants.

By the mid-nineteenth century, new elements were beginning to emerge within the vibrant culture and environment of the village. As the village expanded and diversified, so a new nascent class of milliners, dressmakers, shopkeepers and trades people of various types all began to make their appearance. In accordance with middle-class notions of respectability, the village increasingly became the site of various forms of polite sociability, such as village feasts and tea meetings, social gatherings, sporting contests, competitions and ceremonies. These rational gatherings represented new forms of social interaction within the village, in which elements of the elite, the middle classes and workers could meet and interact, engaging in common activities that engendered a coherent sense of place and, ultimately, of community. Whilst these gender and class-inclusive social gatherings did not supplant the established culture of plebian, masculine, drink-based conviviality, they did play a significant part in promoting a reading of the village as being ordered, both

physically and socially, in accordance with mid-Victorian sensibilities of morality, hierarchy and progress.

By 1870, Elsecar had thus emerged as a distinct community; a particular product of the economic motors of industrialisation, of its changing physical environment, of its structural relationships with power and authority, and of the shared, lived experience of generations of its inhabitants. From a small hamlet within an aristocratic estate, it developed into a place with its own powerful sense of identity as a perceived exemplar of industrial and social modernity. However, it is important to remember that, despite the creation of this celebratory hegemonic identity, Elsecar was a real, as opposed to a 'model', community and as such continued to experience poverty, social inequality and conflict. The events of the 1858 coal strike, for example, in coming so soon after the village celebration of Benjamin Biram's retirement, emphasise these tensions between the real and the imagined community.

As well as highlighting competing village identities, the 1858 strike also throws into sharp relief the activities of the Earls Fitzwilliam in shaping the village. Rather than thinking of this in terms of the promotion and direction of industrial activity by an entrepreneurial elite, I demonstrated in this thesis how the Earls attempted to navigate the transition from a rural to an industrial economy at Elsecar by framing this development within existing, traditional structures of elite governance. In the 1760s this style of management, with its concern for workers' well-being and centralised decision-making, appeared to be forward-looking and there is no doubt that it helped to foster the idea of Elsecar as a regionally distinct settlement. By 1870, however, this benevolent but fossilised form of social hierarchy had become increasingly

anachronistic. In the same way that the Earls struggled to administer their ever-widening industrial concerns within the village, so they failed to address the pressures of social change and, in particular, the growing confidence and widening perspectives of their workforce.

This latter point leads into a final important theme that pervades the development of Elsecar, which is the constant demonstration of agency on the part of the villagers. As I demonstrated in this thesis, the inhabitants of Elsecar were neither the passive recipients of paternal benevolence, nor passive industrial pawns. Rather, they constantly tested and negotiated the boundaries of the Earls' authority, whether this be in the pursuit of individual benefits and concessions, in the pursuit of collective industrial negotiations, or within their everyday lives, associations and recreations. Whilst this agency was of course limited by the realities of the inequality of power between themselves and the Earls, it nevertheless formed an important motor for social change.

The question remains, why do the lives of a handful of miners, iron-workers, labourers, shopkeepers and their families, in a small regional village, have a wider historical significance? In the first instance, small-scale studies, as Rhiannon Thompson argues, allow a 'holistic approach to be taken to the key concept of social relationships'.<sup>6</sup> By focussing upon the 'goldfish bowl' of a relatively circumscribed community, it is possible, as at Elsecar, to examine different aspects of social interaction and to discern the structures and themes that influence, proscribe and condition these interactions. Within a small community, it also becomes possible to

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<sup>6</sup> Thompson, 'A Breed Apart?' p. 138.

explore instances of difference and deviation from apparent social norms, allowing the consideration of individual circumstance, agency, pragmatism, contest and negotiation as historical forces. As I have shown at Elsecar, the daily interactions of individuals at the local level involve negotiating physical and social boundaries. Lived experience then, can be expected to deviate in detail from social structures and ideologies as they are perceived and formulated by historians. For this reason, the local can become an arena in which to test out wider themes, such as community, identity and their relationship to masculinity, gender and class, as well as being the place where the apparently hard edges of such analytical structures appear most diffuse. In certain respects, such as the widespread adoption of codes of physical masculinity, the prevalence of inter-generational family structures, and the structuring of gender inequality through access to employment opportunities and through the privileging of men's access to space, Elsecar is broadly in accord with the prevailing nineteenth-century social trends as they have been identified by other historians. In others, such as the villagers' relationship to the Earls and their authority, the security and longevity of male employment, the continued stifling of trade union activity, and the village's pretensions to respectability and social order, Elsecar emerges as regionally and nationally distinct. Studies such as Elsecar, then, remind us of the important diversity that emerges from a focus upon the local, in that individual case studies will not conform in all respects to nationally-observed patterns and trends.

The second reason for the significance of Elsecar is again related to the idea of the village as a relatively clearly-defined place, with an equally clearly-defined set of inhabitants. It is, in essence, a rural industrial settlement, and the significance of this lies in the fact that much work on the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century industrial

poor has tended to focus upon urban communities and, in particular, communities in London. This is primarily a factor of the nature of historical evidence, in that the proliferation and preservation of governmental and institutional records leads to the urban poor being much more historically visible than their rural counterparts. A good example of the historical richness of these records, and the uses to which they can be put, is the work of Peter Linebaugh, who uses the official records relating to individuals who were executed at Tyburn as a starting point for a powerful consideration of the relationship between capital, property, the state, crime and the urban dispossessed poor in the eighteenth century.<sup>7</sup> In contrast to the depths and extent of urban records of this type, the rural poor tend to appear as historical agents only in times of crisis and unrest, where protest and reactions to protest generate significant volumes of historical records. As a result of this, rural studies have been dominated by labour history and by attempts to define, scope and assess the significance of popular protest, and it has been only in recent years that other themes have begun to emerge. This is significant when one considers that the pattern of industrial development in Britain in circa 1750-1850 was essentially a rural phenomenon which revolved around the exploitation of natural resources – coal, metal ores and water – in previously undeveloped or underdeveloped locations. Notwithstanding the growth of cities, in industries such as the textile mills of West Yorkshire, the lead mines of Derbyshire and Weardale, the Durham coal mines and the Cornish tin mines, the predominant experience of the new industrial worker was that of an individual within an isolated or at least geographically distinct location, that was dominated by a particular industry and set within a rural environment that remained relatively unchanged. Rather than being the backwaters that their isolation

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<sup>7</sup> Peter Linebaugh, *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1991).



and modern post-industrial appearances might suggest, rural-industrial communities like Elsecar were thus at the heart of the processes of social and economic change during the long nineteenth century.

If we try and characterise these processes in terms of traditional labour history, the period has been explored in relation to the development of the industrial working class as a distinct entity, characterised by collective consciousness and agency in response and opposition to new economic and social structures. These structures arose from the development of an imperial capitalist market economy, fuelled by scientific innovation, the control of which lay with political and social elites. However, it is abundantly clear that all levels of society struggled to apprehend, understand and accommodate these processes of change. John Tosh, for example, has demonstrated the evolution of a middle-class ideal of masculine identity, based on duty, service and vocation, that was ideally suited to the newly emergent economic roles for middle-class men as faceless and interchangeable bureaucratic cogs within the capitalist industrial machine.<sup>8</sup> Anne McClintock has eloquently explored the middle-class fear of the labouring masses, who appeared so alien in outlook and behaviour, and yet whose labour so clearly underpinned national prosperity.<sup>9</sup> Even the elite faced new challenges, confronted on the one hand by the developing economic and political power of the emergent mercantile classes, and on the other by the necessity of engaging on some level with the demands of labour. As I have shown, it is in the local study, within communities such as Elsecar, where one can

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<sup>8</sup> Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*.

<sup>9</sup> McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, pp. 114-119.

expect to find evidence of the ways in which aspects of social and economic change like these were contested and negotiated.

### **The Past in the Present? Elsecar, Heritage, Public History and Collaboration**

In this thesis, I explored the industrial development of Elsecar in relation to the creation of community, identity and sense of place, showing how, by the middle nineteenth century, the contemporary significance of the village as a distinct product of industrialisation became the subject of conflicting, contested interpretations. The question remains, however, whether these conflicting identities and meanings were ephemeral, or whether they continue to have any relevance or persistence in the modern world. In this concluding section, I intend to answer this question through examining two examples that illustrate the contemporary resonance of Elsecar's industrial history. The first example is a relatively short account of an on-going debate within the community, whilst the second is a more detailed case study of the structured public history and heritage project which has been at the centre of my Collaborative Doctoral Award Studentship. With references to these examples, I argue that, for certain sections of the Elsecar community at least, the past and its interpretation in the present continues to form an important element of contemporary village identity.

The first example relates to the post-World War 2 fate of the Wentworth Estate. In 1946, the gardens and parkland of the Earls Fitzwilliam's house at Wentworth Woodhouse were requisitioned by the government for open-cast mining. This was a highly controversial move at the time, with Yorkshire Miners' Association president Joseph Hall threatening a strike in opposition to the plan to destroy what he referred

to as 'an oasis in an industrial desert'.<sup>10</sup> Despite pledges from Yorkshire miners to work extra hours to produce the extra coal needed to render the proposed open-casting unnecessary, the scheme nevertheless went ahead.<sup>11</sup> Although the park was reinstated after the open-casting, the present owners of Wentworth Woodhouse have been in a long-standing legal dispute with the government, seeking compensation for subsistence damage allegedly caused to the house by the open-cast mining. In relation to this dispute, the *Rotherham Business News* reported on a minor legal ruling in the favour of the house owners in 2012. This article prompted a lively on-line debate. Some commentators, echoing the sentiments of Joseph Hall in 1946, viewed the ruling as positive, arguing that the government should pay for the 'criminal act of vandalism to this wonderful estate'.<sup>12</sup> Other commentators, however, saw things very differently:

Sorry but much as I love the building and the beautiful countryside surrounding it, the Fitzwilliams lived lives of luxury paid for in blood, sweat and tears by my late grandad and his contemporaries. There is absolutely no way on earth that the taxpayer should be made to pay for the costly refurb [sic] that is needed. Why not ask the Queen and the other Royal parasites?<sup>13</sup>

This particular remark prompted the reply:

I am an Aussie. My grandfather spent his entire life in Fitzwilliam mines; either iron or coal. The Fitzwilliams provided coal miners with worker houses "superior in size and arrangement, and in convenience attached" (Commissioner Seymour Tremenheere); access to a bank and worker loans; medical benefits and sponsored schools.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Anon, 'Miners Fight for Peer's Home', *Daily Mail*, 8th April 1946, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Anon, 'Miners ask Attlee "Save Beauty Spot"', *Daily Mail*, 9th April 1946, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> Tom Austen, 'News: Judge Backs Wentworth Woodhouse Owners in Coal Authority Dispute', *Rotherham Business News Online*, February 27th 2012. <http://www.rothbiz.co.uk/2012/02/news-2549-wentworth-woodhouse-coal.html> [accessed 27th January 2016].

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.rothbiz.co.uk/2012/02/news-2549-wentworth-woodhouse-coal.html> [accessed 27th January 2016].

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

In widening the debate beyond the house itself, this exchange neatly encapsulates the themes within Elsecar's history that I have examined in the thesis, namely identity (both correspondents stressed their ancestral links to the village), community, inequality, power and authority. It is also interesting to note how, in a similar way to the 1858 miners strike, these particular readings of social relationships and inequality continue to be expressed though the landscape and, in particular, through the built environment. As David Atkinson notes, the correlations between landscape and memory have meant that 'public articulations of heritage, memory and identity [...] [are] likely to remain constant presences in our contemporary landscapes'.<sup>15</sup>

As the preceding short example demonstrates, Elsecar remains a place where the meanings of the industrial past, its relationship to inequality and the life experiences of the community, continue to be debated, despite the fact that both the Earls and their industrial workforce have long since disappeared. With this in mind, the question remains, how does my thesis and accompanying research illuminate and add to this debate? The question is a relevant one in that my Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded Collaborative Doctoral Award, *Industrialising Communities: a Case Study of Elsecar 1750-1870*, has been expressly designed with a substantial public history component, namely, my collaboration with my External Collaborative Doctoral Award partner, Barnsley Museums and Heritage Trust. Accordingly, I will consider below my role in the Elsecar collaborative project in the context of the wider debate regarding the nature and purpose of public history. Notwithstanding doubts expressed by historians in regard to heritage and the portrayal of the past, I argue that the Elsecar project has led to an increased

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<sup>15</sup> Atkinson, 'Mundane Landscapes', p. 381.

community engagement with the past and a willingness to critically evaluate and challenge its assumptions.

Many of the buildings and structures associated with Elsecar's industrial past still exist. These include the former Fitzwilliam workshops, the remains of the Elsecar Ironworks, the Elsecar branch of the Dearne and Dove canal with its canal basin, feeder reservoir, and ancillary features, the remains of the Elsecar to Milton inclined plane waggon way, and the 1850 coal railway (now run as a heritage steam railway). There are also substantial surface remains of at least four early Georgian to mid-Victorian collieries, as well as the key workers' housing of Old Row, New Row, Meadow Row, Reform Row and the Model Lodging House. Together, these remains form a significant historic landscape and it is the promotion and conservation of this historic landscape that is at the heart of the CDA partnership. Following the collapse of the coal industry in the late 1980s, the Fitzwilliam workshops, the site of Elsecar New Colliery and many other historic parts of the village were acquired by Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council (BMBC). BMBC renovated and restored the former workshops, and its subsidiary, Barnsley Museums Service, (now Barnsley Museums and Heritage Trust) was tasked with providing a public interpretation of the site and the village. To this end, part of the workshops complex was developed into a science-based interactive museum, known as the 'Power House', in which the story of the village was told primarily in terms of industrial and technological innovation. A key element in this scheme was the most well-known surviving piece of industrial heritage at Elsecar, its Newcomen-type atmospheric engine. This mine pumping engine, a Scheduled Ancient Monument, was erected at Elsecar New Colliery in 1795 and worked continuously from 1795 to 1923. It is the oldest machine of its type still

in its original location anywhere and its significance in the context of industrial technology had been recognised since the 1920s. Sadly, the 'Power House' museum did not prove viable and closed in the late 1990s, with BMBC opting to run the workshops as commercial retail units and Barnsley Museums Service retaining one unit as a small visitor centre. Whilst this decision ensured the future of the workshops complex, it left the village without a clear focus for its heritage and with an interpretive scheme that was increasingly recognised as inadequate in scope and depth.

The key to a reinterpretation of Elsecar's heritage has been the Elsecar Newcomen Engine. The engine had been derelict since the 1950s and in 2012 Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council won a £500,000 Lottery-funded grant to renovate and open it to the public. As part of this project, Barnsley Museums Service committed to researching and providing a new public interpretation of the historic remains at Elsecar. The aim was to focus upon the wider story of the village as a means of placing the restored engine and the other industrial remains firmly within their historical context. As part of this project, I worked closely with Dr. John Tanner, Project Officer for Barnsley Museums, over an eighteen-month period. Together with a panel of historical research and interpretation volunteers, we worked to provide content and analysis for a series of 28 new information panels, each of which told a different aspect of Elsecar's history. The panels were erected in 2014 at various points around the village, and were designed to complement a newly-revamped museum gallery, the content for which the team also researched and designed. The new museum gallery includes information panels, children's interactive displays and a small video presentation area, offering a choice of films of about five minutes

duration. These include a film documenting the engine restoration, two historical re-enactments based on Benjamin Biram's retirement presentation in 1856, a film made by children at Elsecar primary school and archive footage of the Newcomen engine in steam in the 1950s.

The information panels are targeted towards a number of distinct audiences, such as children, families, day-trippers, culture seekers and historical enthusiasts. The interpretation had to be broad enough to engage with all of these diverse groups, and so the challenge for us was to avoid focusing too deeply on one topic, at the expense of others which we were less interested in. Similarly, Barnsley Museums work towards a specific set of Learning Outcomes for the site, so the project involved finding and choosing historical anecdotes and events that supported this interpretive agenda. The result was a very specific and concise form of written history (the main text panel on each board is only 120 words long), which was nevertheless historically truthful and which did not shy away from difficult areas such as inequality and poverty.

As Laura King and Gary Rivett note, the process of public engagement and collaboration is often seen by historians as something of a one-way process, in which the academic, as an 'expert', disseminates knowledge to a passive public.<sup>16</sup> Implicit in this relationship is the idea that peoples' perception of their own lived experience and heritage is somehow deficient; that it somehow lacks the verisimilitude, academic rigour or interpretative depth that can only be provided by an academic mentor. This

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<sup>16</sup> Laura King & Gary Rivett, 'Engaging People in Making History: Impact, Public Engagement and the World Beyond the Campus', *History Workshop Journal* 80.1 (2015), p. 212.

second point is implicit, for example, in David Lowenthal's critique of heritage, which he argues is fundamentally opposed to history through its falsification of the past. For Lowenthal, 'just as heritage practitioners take pride in creating artifice, the public enjoys consuming it'.<sup>17</sup> Whereas for Lowenthal, History (in the sense of academic History) stands aloof from the market place, heritage is thus the selling to the public of a cheap and tacky, bowdlerised past, whose 'heritage consumers are readily duped; producers happily connive to gull them'.<sup>18</sup>

Lowenthal's pessimistic assessment of heritage is thus characterised by a fundamental denial of any sort of public agency; in his analysis, the public exists only as dupes and consumers, unable to question or challenge the portrayal of the past which they have been sold. However, other work flatly contradicts his assessment. David Atkinson, for example, recounts how the omission of references to Bristol's role in the Atlantic slave trade in its 1996 *Festival of the Sea* was vigorously contested by the local community.<sup>19</sup> As Atkinson notes 'increasing numbers of Britons are identifying, consuming and producing articulations of history and heritage themselves', a process of 'the democratization of memory' which he sees as being in opposition to 'the policing of memory [...] by learned academics' and to 'official state-sanctioned memory'.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, for Ian J. M. Robertson, the significance of this movement, which he terms 'heritage from below', lies in its potential to challenge hegemonic

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<sup>17</sup> David Lowenthal, 'Fabricating Heritage', *History and Memory* 10.1 (1998), p. 13.

<sup>18</sup> David Lowenthal, 'Fabricating Heritage', *History and Memory* 10.1 (1998), p. 13.

<sup>19</sup> David Atkinson, 'The Heritage of Mundane Places', in Brian Graham & Peter Howard (eds), *Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* (Aldershot, 2008), p. 385.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*



discourses of history and heritage.<sup>21</sup> He argues that this counter-hegemonic discourse 'can offer an alternative construction of the past to the hegemonic and, thereby, both galvanise and cohere local communities around alternative constructions of identity and narratives of place'.<sup>22</sup> For Atkinson and Robertson, public history is thus a vibrant arena for contestation and debate, rather than being the venue for a passive consumption of the past, as envisioned by Lowenthal.

Within these varying assessments of the uses and potentialities of public history, a question necessarily arises regarding the role of the academic in collaboration. Are they there to act as guides and sources of knowledge, in order to ensure the public is "empowered", has its "attitudes broadened", is "inspired"?<sup>23</sup> Are they there to exercise a degree of quality-control? Are they there to work collaboratively and equally in a participatory culture of 'shared authority',<sup>24</sup> or might they, on occasion, simply be there, as Laura King and Gary Rivett suggest, to engage in a tick-box exercise in order to secure funding?<sup>25</sup>

In relation to my own experience, the Elsecar project has felt truly collaborative. In particular, I have found working with highly-motivated, knowledgeable and committed volunteers to be especially rewarding, since they brought a wealth of historical and local detail to the project. This local knowledge is precisely the kind of history which does not tend to find its way into the archives, and so working with the

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<sup>21</sup> Ian J. M. Robinson, 'Heritage From Below: Class Social Protest and Resistance', in Graham & Howard (eds). *Ashgate Research Companion*, p. 147.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> King & Rivett, 'Engaging People in Making History', p. 24.

<sup>24</sup> John Tosh, 'Public History, Civic Engagement and the Historical Profession in Britain', *History* 99.335 (2014), p. 195.

<sup>25</sup> King & Rivett, 'Engaging People in Making History', p. 21.

community in the field has given my own research a perspective and dimension that it otherwise would not have had. Although I have been successful in introducing some novel aspects into the collaboration through my own research, I feel that I have gained a much wider appreciation of the village through my involvement in the collaborative process, and that my PhD thesis is richer as a result. In particular, I feel I have gained a better feeling for the physical environment of the village and the way that its components sit in relation to each other. In turn, this has helped to frame and set the various historical sources and actors that I have examined in my thesis in their original context. Finally, the many stories and anecdotes about Elsecar that I have heard from the villagers has helped to give me an awareness of their contemporary perceptions of the village and how these relate to the themes of identity and community that I have explored in my thesis. Collaboration is thus not only an opportunity for the university researcher to inform, it is also an important way in which to learn. This is particularly true since, although the language of the academic historian certainly differs from that of a non-academic, and the epistemology of a PhD thesis is different from that of an interpretive museum panel, the issues and themes underlying these differences are in many cases the same. In this thesis, for example, I have looked at such issues as gender relationships, power and inequality as they are manifested in the historical record. For the villagers, these issues are readily perceived and understood both through their own everyday lived experience and through the lived histories of relatives and ancestors. These congruences are particularly important since both my PhD thesis and the museum interpretation are fundamentally concerned with exploring these same themes and the way in which they underpin the idea of community. The Elsecar collaboration project thus demonstrates how, despite their different methodologies, approaches and audiences,

academic and public history share a similar wider remit to explain and understand aspects of the human experience. As the archaeologist John Barrett has noted, this aim is surely to 'study [...] human diversity [...] in a way which is essential in our coping with a world polarised by wealth and poverty and divided by ideology'.<sup>26</sup> This potential for the past to inform the present is important. Rather than being a matter of 'credulous allegiance'<sup>27</sup> to a mythic heritage, the Elsecar project has demonstrated the willingness of the villagers to engage critically with a past which is problematic, embodying as it does inequality, controversy and tragedy.

My knowledge of this comes from my own experience in giving public guided tours around the village and its Newcomen engine on behalf of Barnsley Museums. The guided tours, which last for approximately one and a half hours each, take in a number of locations around the village as well as the Newcomen engine. Whilst the tours are designed in accord with the Barnsley Museums' Learning Outcomes and are intended to cover a set number of themes, they are unscripted and so in effect become a dialogue between myself and the visitors. This has led, for example, to some very interesting discussions on issues such as the responsibility and duties of authority, mine safety, overcrowding, poverty, welfare provision, ecology and the ways in which these issues, as they were manifested in historic Elsecar, still have relevance to modern life.

If Elsecar's history remains relevant to the village, a second question arises regarding its built heritage of industrial remains, and the role that this might have in acting as a

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<sup>26</sup> John C. Barratt, *Some Challenges in Contemporary Archaeology* (Oxford, 1995, Oxford), p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> Lowenthal, 'Fabricating Heritage', p. 8.

focus for remembering and for historical debate. The question is an important one in that, as the industrial archaeologist Marilyn Palmer argues, heritage sites cannot be divorced from their wider social and historical context.<sup>28</sup> For Elsecar, as elsewhere, the challenge is thus to make industrial remains and their context relevant in a post-industrial age of rapid social and economic change.

The most obvious symbol of the continuing relevance of Elsecar's built heritage is the renovation of its Newcomen Engine, which was completed in November 2014. This was greeted with enthusiasm by the local population, several thousand of whom attended the official opening of the engine, waiting in the pouring rain to see the machine lumber into action for the first time in 60 years. The renovation of the engine in a sense symbolises the renaissance of the village which, like many others, has been badly affected by post-war mine closures and economic decline. However, as well as being a totemic symbol of the village, the engine is also an interesting metaphor for industrial heritage in general; it is in one sense an authentic 200-year-old artefact, but in another, it is a modern facsimile of itself. It no longer runs on steam, and whilst it gives the appearance of operating in a (mostly) authentic way, it does not actually pump any water. Similarly, the mine which it once served closed in 1869 and the mine workings directly beneath the engine are now flooded to a depth of approximately 30 metres. These facts highlight the point that the Newcomen engine, like the workshop buildings, the cottages and other industrial structures at Elsecar, actually exists in the twenty-first century. Similarly, the landscape at Elsecar, with its post-industrial woodland, reclaimed spoil-heaps, clean, smoke-free air and cleaned,

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<sup>28</sup> Marilyn Palmer, 'Industrial Archaeology and the Archaeological Community: Fifty Years On', *Industrial Archaeology Review* 34.1 (2010), p. 17.

soot-free buildings, is radically different from the ways it would have looked, and the ways in which it would have been experienced, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Is Elsecar's heritage then, as Lowenthal would argue, fabricated?

In her analysis of the Henry Ford Museum, Kerstin Barndt notes how that museum in effect domesticates the past:

Rather than concentrating, for example, on the hardships of mass industrial production, the exhibitions in the Henry Ford Museum focus on domestic products of consumption [...] In the artificial outdoor landscape of Greenfield Village, the rupture of industrialization is transmuted into peaceful neighborly [sic] relations between pre-industrial and industrial America. Farmland borders on Edison's and Ford's laboratories, and the odor [sic] and excrement of horses mingle with the sounds and exhaust of Vintage Model T cars.<sup>29</sup>

Barndt paints a picture of the museum as an artificial construct; a synthetic and sanitised version of history. Her criticism of Ford's idealised view of the past is an interesting viewpoint from which to examine the Elsecar project, not least because Henry Ford himself attempted to purchase the Elsecar Newcomen engine for his museum in 1929. Happily, he was unsuccessful in this aim and so, in contrast to the exhibits in the Ford museum, Elsecar's industrial remains and buildings, although in some cases much altered, nevertheless still exist in their original geographical and historical relationship to each other. The remains, dissonances and conflicts of Elsecar's past thus remain rooted in their local context and are not so readily amenable to nostalgic re-interpretation as the displaced exhibits in the Ford museum. For example, celebrating the achievements of the six colliers who excavated the 130-foot Newcomen engine pumping-shaft by hand in 1794-95 necessarily involves acknowledging the fact that at least one of the six, Richard Jessop, subsequently died

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<sup>29</sup> Kerstin Barndt, 'Fordist Nostalgia: History and Experience at The Henry Ford', *Rethinking History* 11.3 (2007), p. 384.

in a mining accident.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, over their working lives, the various Elsecar mines claimed a steady list of casualties, whilst Britain's worst mining disaster, the Oaks Colliery explosion of 1866, took place two miles to the east of Elsecar. More recently, the 1984 coal strike began at Cortonwood Colliery, three miles to the east of Elsecar. Elsecar miners took a leading role in this dispute (many having been transferred to Cortonwood after the closure of Elsecar Main Colliery in 1983), the consequences and significance of which remain bitterly contested to this day.<sup>31</sup> Strong memories of local events such as these inform contemporary interpretations of the Engine and its surroundings, so that engagement with the heritage and history of Elsecar and its region thus necessarily involves engaging with issues of conflict, power, hierarchy and inequality. It is this approach to heritage that the new information panels at Elsecar have attempted to pursue, by promoting lesser-known aspects of village history, by facing issues of inequality and power, and by demonstrating the historic importance of community agency in facilitating the processes of change. This engagement with the past involves a dynamic discussion and contestation of its meanings. It is surely this debate and contestation of meaning, its relevance to local communities and society in general, that is the primary goal of public history.

In conclusion, it is fair to say that Elsecar, like many similar industrialising communities, was both literally and figuratively at the coal face of social and economic change during the long nineteenth century. Unlike many such villages,

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<sup>30</sup> List of charitable donations, circa 1803-1839, SA, WWM/A/1411; the entry for 1st December 1807 records Jessop's death and the award of a weekly pension of 2s 6d to his widow, Elizabeth.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, the website of the Orgreave Truth and Justice campaign. <http://otjc.org.uk/> [accessed 12/08/2016].

however, Elsecar is fortunate in that rich and diverse historical sources survive for this period (to say nothing of the surviving built heritage), which allow an exploration in microcosm of the wider social tensions and themes that were manifest on a national level during this period. What emerges from this case study of an industrialising community is thus the development of a village with a clear and distinct identity which, despite the loss of its industries, remains powerful to this day. Whilst the environment and circumstances of its development, in particular, the well-documented involvement of the Earls Fitzwilliam, exerted powerful influences, this sense of place, identity and community was ultimately forged by the shared experiences of generations of villagers.

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## Appendix 1: Tables Relating to the Hoyland Poor Law Committee

Table 2.1: *List of Hoyland Parish Officials and Committee Members, 1818-1848*

<b>Surname</b>	<b>Fore-name</b>	<b>Position/Role</b>	<b>Earliest Date</b>	<b>Latest Date</b>	<b>Additional Information</b>
Allen	John	Constable, assessor, committee member, churchwarden	19/03/1840	05/10/1842	Voter 1848
Armitage	George	Constable, committee member	05/10/1842	05/01/1844	Schoolmaster
Barber	Alfred	Collector, assessor	29/03/1839	19/03/1840	Not known
Baslow	John	Committee member (signs off accounts), churchwarden	06/01/1820	n/a	Not known
Beardshall	George	Overseer of the poor, committee member, collector	28/04/1815	01/04/1819	Not known
Beardshall	Richard	Committee member, signs off accounts (x 2)	28/03/1828	29/03/1839	Farmer, voter 1841
Beardshall	Robert	Overseer of the poor, committee member, collector	27/03/1840	26/03/1841	Farmer
Cooper	Thomas	Committee member (signs off accounts)	05/04/1821	n/a	Not known
Dickinson	Luke	Constable	05/10/1842	n/a	Nailmaker
Firth	George	Committee member (x2), constable, collector of Queen's taxes (x2), churchwarden, signs off accounts	01/11/1838	05/10/1842	Farmer, voter 1841 and 1848
Firth	William	Churchwarden	29/03/1839	n/a	Not known
Goodison	William	Committee member (x 2), collector of Queen's taxes	26/03/1841	31/03/1842	Colliery agent (Jump Colliery)
Graham	William	Committee member	02/12/1842	n/a	Leaseholder Milton Ironworks, voter 1848
Gray	William	Overseer of the poor (x 2), committee member (x3)	29/03/1839	26/03/1841	Not known
Grey	William	Committee member (signs off accounts x 3)	06/01/1820	25/03/1829	Voter 1841
Grey	William Jnr.	Committee member (signs off accounts x 5 )	28/03/1828	07/04/1836	Voter 1841
Guest	Martin Jnr	Constable	05/10/1842	n/a	Mason, voter 1848
Hague	Thomas	Committee member (signs off accounts)	31/03/1824	n/a	Farmer, voter 1848
Hall	Charles	Committee member (x 5), collector of Queen's taxes (x2)	03/10/1839	31/03/1842	Voter 1841
Hartop	Henry	Committee member (signs off accounts)	07/04/1836	n/a	Ironmaster Elsecar Ironworks
Hobson	Samuel	Committee member (x 6), constable, signs off accounts (x 2)	05/04/1827	02/12/1842	Voter 1848, Elsecar
Hobson	Thomas	Overseer of poor (1819), churchwarden	01/04/1819	29/03/1839	Not known
Hoyland	Thomas	Constable	05/10/1842	n/a	Coal-miner, farmer 1868
Hurst	George	Committee member (signs off accounts x 3)	05/04/1821	07/04/1836	Not known
Knowles	William	Constable, committee member	05/10/1842	05/01/1844	Voter 1848

Surname	Fore-name	Position/Role	Earliest Date	Latest Date	Additional Information
Lorimer	G	Committee member, overseer of the poor	05/01/1844	08/03/1844	Not known
Matthewman	George	Committee member (x 5), overseer of the highways, surveyor of the highways	01/11/1838	31/03/1842	Farmer, voter 1848
Maude	Francis	Committee member	05/01/1844	n/a	Clergyman, Voter 1848
Methley	George	Committee member (x4), overseer of the highways (x 2), surveyor of the highways (x 2)	01/11/1838	05/01/1844	Voter 1848
Nettley	George	Committee member (signs off accounts)	01/01/1838	n/a	Not known
Newman	William	Committee member	02/12/1842	n/a	Not known
Norton	Zebulon	Committee member, overseer of the poor (x 4), signs off accounts	05/04/1821	02/12/1842	Farmer, voter 1841
Oates	George	Committee member (signs off accounts x 8 )	05/04/1821	01/01/1834	Voter 1841
Parker	Joseph	Committee member	02/12/1842	n/a	Not known
Pepper	Robert	Constable	05/10/1842	n/a	Voter in 1841 and 1848
Russell	John	Overseer of the highways	29/03/1839	n/a	Not known
Russell	George	Constable, committee member (x 3), signs off accounts (x 2), surveyor of the highways, collector of the Queen's taxes	06/01/1820	02/12/1842	Farmer, voter 1848
Russell	James	Committee member (x 3), signs off accounts (x 2)	06/01/1820	05/01/1844	Farmer, voter 1848
Russell	John	Committee member (x 2)	02/04/1840	10/04/1840	Not known
Smith	Timothy	Constable, committee member	05/10/1842	02/12/1842	Not known
Smith	William	Committee member	30/09/1841	n/a	Not known
Vaines	William	Committee member (x 5), overseer of the poor (x 5), collector of the Queen's taxes	01/04/1823	31/03/1842	Nailmaker
Wainwright	Benjamin	Committee member	26/03/1841	n/a	Nailmaker
Wigfield	Robert	Committee member (x 8), signs off accounts (x 5), overseer of the poor (x 2)	30/03/1825	05/01/1844	Maltster & nailmaker 1822, voter 1841, gentleman 1868
Wigfield	William	Committee member (signs off accounts)	05/04/1827	n/a	Maltster and nailmaker 1822, voter 1848, gentleman 1868
Wood	William	Committee member (x 3), constable	26/03/1841	05/01/1844	Voter in 1841 and 1848
Wood	John	Committee member (signs off accounts x 3)	31/03/1824	28/03/1828	Voter in 1841 and 1848
Woodhead	Thomas	Committee member (signs off accounts)	05/04/1821	n/a	Not known
Wordsworth	George	Committee member (x 5), signs off accounts (x 2), collector	05/04/1821	05/01/1844	Farmer, voter 1848

Source: Hoyland Poor Law Committee minute book, 1838-1848, Hoyland Poor Law Committee account book, 1815-1838. BA, LD/1994/38.

Table 2.2: *List of Decisions Recorded in the Hoyland Poor Law Committee Minute Book, 1838-1848*

Surname	Forename	Date	Committee Ruling
Althorne	Un-named wife of John	08/12/1843	'That John Althorne's wife have a pair of shoes and stockings and some other necessary clothing for Watsons' child, but that she be told at the same time that if she makes any more applications the child must be put out to place by the township'
Bailey	Hannah	02/02/1844	'That Mr. Allott's bill of 7s6d for attending Hannah Bailey be paid'
Barwick	Francis	08/12/1843	'That Francis Barwick's application for rent due from Joseph Hall be not granted, but that he may get quit of him as he can; the township will not interfere'
Beaumont	'Widow'	08/12/1843	'Ordered that Widow Beaumont's pay of [from] Elsecar be taken off'
		05/01/1844	'That Widow Beaumont's pay be a shilling a week'
Bishop	Samuel	03/11/1843	'That Samuel Bishop have 2s6d and that a shovel be lent to him that he may work on the railway'
Bishop	Un-named wife of Samuel	08/12/1843	'That Samuel Bishop's wife have a load of coals'
Bishop	Samuel	05/01/1844	'That Samuel Bishop have a week's work found by George Methley, and two corves of middle slack'
Bishop	Un-named wife of Samuel	01/03/1844	'That Samuel Bishop's wife have a load of coals'
Bishop	Samuel	08/03/1844	'Ordered that the warrant taken out against Samuel Bishop be put into execution as soon as possible'
Bishop	Un-named wife of Samuel	02/08/1844	'That Samuel Bishop's wife have a load of coals'
Burgon	Jonathan	02/02/1844	'That a summons be got for Jonathan Burgon forthwith to compel him to pay his assessments'
Burtoft	Un-named child	03/11/1843	'That something be done for John Burtoft's children and that he be made to work'
Burtoft	John	03/11/1843	'That some cinder breaking be found for [...] John Burtoft'
Burtoft	William	08/12/1843	'William Burtoft applies for a shirt for his son (granted)'
Burtoft	William	05/01/1844	'That William Burtoft have 6s a week until his son John is able to work or until such time as Mr. Lorimer may think proper'
Crossley	Un-named widow	03/10/1845	'That widow Crossley's pay of three shillings a week be continued and that she have a load of coals'
Dickinson	Un-named child	03/11/1843	'Ordered that Joseph Dickinson's wife's application for relief for her infirm son be passed over until the meeting hears the statement of her husband'
Dickinson	Joseph	08/12/1843	'Joseph Dickinson's application-not granted'
Dickinson	Un-named child	05/01/1844	'Ordered that the application of Joseph Dickinson's wife for the son who has got lamed be inquired into by Mr. Lorimer and relieved if he thinks it right'
Dickinson	William	02/02/1844	'That William Dickinson have two shillings a week until such time as he is able to begin work again'
Duke	Henry	11/11/1842	'Henry Duke wants some work or relief'
Earnshaw	William	01/03/1844	'William Earnshaw's application for a weekly allowance for his child refused'
Fisher	Jonathan	02/08/1844	'That an allowance of two shillings a week be paid to Jonathan Fisher'
Foulstone	George	02/02/1844	'That George Foulstone be allowed 5s a week until he is able to work'
Gillott	George	08/12/1843	'That application be made to George Gillott for his assessments due since Mr. Lorimer was appointed overseer and if not immediately paid that he be summoned forthwith'

Surname	Forename	Date	Committee Ruling
Goddard	'Nanny'	08/12/1843	'That Nanny Goddard have a pair of shoes and some other clothing'
Goddard	Ann	06/05/1839	Ann Goddard to be reprimanded for misconduct
Goddard	Ann	08/12/1843	'That Mr. Lorimer take Ann Goddard's daughter to Rotherham that she may affiliate her bastard child'
Goldsborough	Not given	01/05/1843	'That Mr Darwin's bill amounting to £4s6d for medicines for Goldsborough[and others] [...] be paid'
Goldsborough	George	03/11/1843	'That some cinder breaking be found for Jarvis Mason, George Goldsborough and John Burtoft'
Golding	John	01/05/1843	'Also 2s6d to John Golding of Harley'
Guest	Thomas	01/05/1843	'That 2s be given to Thomas Guest of Chapeltown'
Guest	Thomas	07/09/1843	'Thomas Guest shall have [a] pair of secondhand shoes'
Guest	Thomas	03/11/1843	'That Thomas Guest have 2s6d and that some cinder breaking be soon after [found] for him'
Hobson	Mr	11/07/1843	'That Mr Lorimer wait upon Mr Hobson stating the determination of this meeting not to allow any let off (respecting his rent) with William Vaines, but that it be paid forthwith to Mr Lorimer'
Hodgson	John	07/02/1839	'Wants a pair of shoes- a pair of shoes granted'
Hodgson	John	11/07/1843	'That John Hodgson have some necessary clothing'
Hodgson	William	05/10/1843	'William Hodgson has applied for some relief for a young child to be put out to nurse- granted 2s0d per week'
Hougsham	William	06/06/1845	'Agreed that William Hougsham shall have a house taken for him, by the township at 1s1d per week'
Howland	Not given	01/05/1843	'That Mr Darwin's bill amounting to £4s6d for medicines for [...] Howland [and others] [...] be paid'
Howland	John	01/03/1844	'John Howland to have 2s6d'
Mason	Jarvis	03/11/1843	'That some cinder breaking be found for Jarvis Mason'
Mirfield	John	31/03/1843	'John Mirfield of Attercliffe applied for clothing for his children- ordered that his wife [illeg] [illeg] and that Mr Lorimer provide materials for a frock for each of her children'
Mirfield	Un-named child	31/03/1843	'John Mirfield's wife of the [illeg] [illeg] applied for relief for her daughter's child, the father having enlisted'
Norton	Amos	01/03/1844	'Amos Norton to have 2s6d but no regular pay'
Oxley	Un-named widow of John	02/02/1844	'That John Oxley's widow (of Greasborough) have two shillings a week'
Parkin	Hannah	08/08/1845	'Ordered that Hannah Parkin have a load of coals from Mr Smith's colliery'
Parkin	[illeg]	01/05/1843	'That Mr Darwin's bill amounting to £4s6d for medicines for [...] Parkin [and others] be paid'
Pashley	John	05/01/1844	'That John Pashley have two pounds'
Pashley	Un-named wife of John	01/03/1844	'John Pashley's wife who applied for relief for her husband who is lying in the gaol was refused on account that he had two pounds given to him only a few weeks ago'
Pickering	Mary	03/11/1843	'That Mary Pickering be exonerated from her rates on account of poverty'
Scoggins	Un-named wife of William	05/01/1844	'That the application of William Scoggins' wife respecting Daniel Allen be enquired into by Mr Lorimer'
Simpson	Michael	02/12/1842	'Agreed [...] that Michael Simpson of Leadworth, Taylor [sic] shall have 40s allowed towards his rent'
Smith	Betty	03/10/1845	'That Betty Smith's weekly pay be increased from 1s6d to 2s per week and also be allowed two corves of coals'
Stancey	Elizabeth	01/03/1844	'That Elizabeth Stancey widow of John Stancey have some relief if Mr Lorimer after inquiring into her circumstances thinks right'
Stenton	William	02/08/1844	'That William Stenton have a load of coals'

Surname	Forename	Date	Committee Ruling
Tiplady	John	06/05/1839	'Willam Vaines to consult the magistrates about John Tiplady'
Uttley	Un-named child	03/11/1843	'That Jane Uttley's girl have a pair of shoes'
Walker	Un-named child	05/10/1843	'Mr Lorimer wants an assessment for the relief of the poor Walker [child] ordered to be brought up'
Walker	Mr	08/03/1844	'That Mr Lorimer make inquiry of the magistrates and get a summons against Mr Walker if such summons will be of any avail'
Watson	Eliza	02/12/1842	'It is also allowed that the orphan child of late Samuel Watson shall have some clothing provided'
Watson	Eliza	31/03/1843	'That William Lorimer buy necessary clothing for an orphan girl of the name of Eliza Watson'
Watson	Eliza	11/07/1843	'Ordered that Eliza Watson have a pair of good serviceable shoes and that Mr Lorimer make inquiry and get her a situation if possible'
Wigfield	Elizabeth	11/07/1843	'That Elizabeth Wigfield's shoes be repaired'
Wigfield	Isaac	11/11/1842	'Isaac Wigfield wants something towards his rent'
Wigfield	Jack	07/09/1843	'That the town agrees to allow 50s towards clothing Jack Wigfield and family if Lord Fitzwilliam will give the same to fit him out to go to America'
Wigfield	Jane	03/11/1843	'That Jane Wigfield have a pair of shoes'
Wigfield	Jane	05/01/1844	'That Jane Wigfield have some bed clothing'
Wigfield	Jane	02/08/1844	'That Mr Lorimer employ Martin Guest to repair the fire place in Jane Wigfield's house and also the floor if necessary and as to a petticoat that it be left to Mr. Lorimer'
Wigfield	Jane	06/06/1845	'Jane Wigfield requests cotton for 2 shirts, for her husband'
Wigfield	Jonathan?	03/10/1845	'That Jno. Wigfield's application for assistance from the township to get back to America be refused, but that Mr. Lorimer give him 3s for present relief, and get an order for his admittance into the workhouse at Rotherham.
Willoughby	Charles	05/01/1844	'That Charles Willoughby have £3 allowed to convey himself and his family to London'
Wood	George	08/03/1844	'Ordered that the warrant taken out against Samuel Bishop be put into execution as soon as possible- as well as that against Geo. Wood'
Woodhead	Christiana	05/10/1843	'Christiana Woodhead made application to have William Walker compelled to pay something towards keeping her child'
Woodhead	Henry	10/04/1840	'That Henry Woodhead do kill the moles for the township of Hoyland at the rate of six pounds per year'
Woodhouse	Sarah	02/12/1842	'That Sarah Woodhouse have a pair of shoes provided'

Source: Hoyland Poor Law Committee minute book, 1838-1848, BA, LD/1994/38.



**Appendix 2: Tables Relating to Employment in Elsecar, 1841-1861**

Table 3.1 *Female Employment in Elsecar, 1841*

<b>Profession</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage of adult working-age women (total 183)</b>
No information given	131	71.58
Independent means	36	19.67
Female servant	9	4.91
Dressmaker	1	0.55
Grocer	1	0.55
Housekeeper	1	0.55
Milliner	1	0.55
Publican	1	0.55
Schoolmistress	1	0.55
Coal-miner	1	0.55
<b>Total</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source:* 1841 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

Table 3.2 *Female Employment in Elsecar, 1851*

<b>Profession</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage of adult working age women (Total 170)</b>
No information given	145	85.30
House servant	11	6.47
Dressmaker	5	2.94
Servant (unspecified)	3	1.76
Housekeeper	3	1.76
Charwoman	1	0.59
Innkeeper	1	0.59
Seamstress	1	0.59
<b>Total</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source:* 1851 Census returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

Table 3.3 *Female Employment in Elsecar, 1861*

<b>Profession</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage of working female population (Total = 237)</b>
No information given	176	74.2616
Collier's widow	9	3.7975
Deserted wife	2	0.8438
Dressmaker	6	2.5316
House servant	12	5.0632
Housekeeper	8	3.3755
Servant	3	1.2658
Charwoman	2	0.8438
House servant ['bar maid' crossed out], housemaid, servant bar maid, maid of all work, receiving parochial relief, assistant beerhouse keeper, brick maker's daughter, charwoman (husband in penal servitude), cook, farmer of 10 acres, greengrocer, grocer, idiot, ironworks puddler's wife, milliner and dressmaker, nursemaid, seamstress, smallware dealer, teacher ladies' school	1 of each	8.0168
<b>Total</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source:* 1861 Census Returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

Table 3.4 *Male Employment in Elsecar, 1841*

<b>Profession</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage of working male population (Total = 172)</b>
Coal miner	75	43.61
Labourer	36	20.97
Blacksmith	6	3.5
Engineer	6	3.5
Ironworks moulder	5	2.90
Independent means	5	2.90
Stonemason	4	2.32
Apprentice blacksmith	3	1.74
Coke Burner	3	1.74
Engine Fitter	2	1.16
Carpenter	2	1.16
Ironworks puddler, Ironworks rowler, iron weigher, block printer, boiler maker, book keeper, calico printer, engine fireman, engine tenter, farmer, goldsmith, male servant (farm worker), pot maker, potter, publican, shoemaker, slater, steel manufacturer, steel melter, tailor, wharfinger, shopkeeper, apprentice moulder	1 of each (23)	13.34
Recorded as 'no job',	1	0.58
No occupation listed	1	0.58
<b>Total</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source:* 1841 Census Returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

Table 3.5 *Male Employment in Elsecar, 1851*

<b>Profession</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage of working male population (Total = 193)</b>
Coal miner	91	47.15
Coal mine labourer	18	9.32
Labourer	14	7.25
Boatman	12	6.22
Ironworks labourer	8	4.15
Engine driver	4	2.07
Ironworks moulder	3	1.55
Ironworks puddler	3	1.55
Gardener	3	1.55
Boat captain	2	1.04
Coal shipper	2	1.04
Coke burner	2	1.04
Cordwainer	2	1.04
Engineer	2	1.04
Errand boy	2	1.04
Iron turner	2	1.04
Labourer stonemason	2	1.04
Boat owner, book keeper, butcher, carpenter, cereal miller, coal agent, curate , designer and engineer, engine fitter, engine tenter, farm servant, farmer, farm labourer, [head] farm worker, fitter, grocer, house servant, labourer railway, miller, mining agent, school master, shop keeper, stone mason, tailor (unemployed man)	1 of each (23)	11.96
<b>Total</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source:* 1851 Census Returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

Table 3.6 *Male Employment in Elsecar, 1861*

<b>Profession</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage of working male population (Total = 225)</b>
Coal miner	129	57.33
Coal mine labourer	30	13.33
Coal mine engine driver	5	2.22
Coal mine trammer	4	1.77
Coal mine horse driver	3	1.33
Coal Mine engine worker (Elsecar Colliery)	2	0.88
Coal mine trapper	2	0.88
Coal mine horse keeper, coal mine banksman, coal mine book-keeper, coal mine deputy, coal mine deputy manager, coal mine driver (Elsecar Colliery), coal works blacksmith, coal miner and grocer, engine driver coal railway	1 of each (9)	3.96
Ironworks labourer	8	3.55
Ironworks puddler	7	3.11
Ironworks moulder	5	2.22
Ironworks forge man	5	2.22
Ironworks forge labourer	3	1.33
Ironworks iron roller	2	0.88
Iron roller	2	0.88
Iron plate roller, ironworks book-keeper, ironworks engine driver, ironworks labourer [furnace], ironworks manager, ironworks pattern maker, ironworks plate shearer, ironworks puddler (employs one boy), forge man	1 of each (9)	3.96
Boot and shoe maker	4	1.77
Engine fitter	4	1.77
Joiner	4	1.77
Apprentice [grocer]	3	1.33
Beer house keeper	2	0.88
Blacksmith	2	0.88
Coke burner	2	0.88
Hair dresser	2	0.88
Mineral office clerk	2	0.88
Slater	2	0.88
Apprentice [boot and shoe maker], apprentice [wheelwright], assistant [beer house keeper], assistant [dealer in earthenware], assistant [inn keeper], boiler maker, book-keeper, canal and lock manager, canal	1 of each (40)	17.6

Profession	Number	Percentage of working male population (Total = 225)
wharf labourer, candidate for pupil teacher, coal agent and farmer of 7 acres, confectioner, corn miller, dealer in earthenware, druggist, engine smith, flour mill labourer, garden labourer, gardener, gas works labourer, grocer, grocer and provision dealer, wesleyan local preacher, grocer's assistant, grocer's porter, inn keeper (farms 14 acres), groom, inn keeper ('Ship Inn'), inspector of coal in the Great Northern Railway, iron stone miner, ironmonger and smith, ironstone mine engine driver, manager Wigfield and sons grocers, mason, mason's labourer, millwright, mineral depot labourer, mineral office cashier, mineral yard smith, model maker, pauper (late coal miner), perpetual curate, plumber and glazier, police sergeant (West Riding constabulary), post master, scripture reader, shoe maker, stoker of gas, stone mason, store keeper at mineral depot, tailor, tailor and draper, tailor (employs 3 men and 1 boy), wheelwright		
<b>Total</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: 1861 Census Returns for Nether Hoyland Township.

Table 3.7 Birthplace of Miners Living in Elsecar, 1851

Birthplace	Number	Percentage of Miners (total=91)
Elsecar	25	27.45
Hoyland	22	24.20
Greasborough	6	6.59
Scholes	6	6.59
Brampton Bierlow	6	6.59
Wentworth	2	2.20
Rawmarsh	2	2.20
Worsborough	2	2.20
Kimberworth	2	2.20
Ardesley, Attercliffe, Bolton (Yorkshire), Chapelton, Darfield, Ecclesfield, Melton, Nottingham, Sackistonbridge, Sheffield, Silkstone, Staincrop, Thorpe, Thorp Hesley, Wath, West Hutton, West Melton, Wortley	1 of each (18)	19.78
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: 1851 Census Returns for Nether Hoyland Township.