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THE  
DERELICT VILLAGES  
OF  
DURHAM COUNTY.

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Submitted by

A D A T E M P L E, B. A.

for the Degree of

MASTER OF LETTERS.

---

FEBRUARY, 1940.

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P R E F A C E.

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In presenting the following study of the Derelict Villages of County Durham, the writer considers the following explanations necessary. Detailed research into the economic and social conditions of certain particularly distressed areas in Durham County was begun in 1937 at a period when trade was pursuing an apparently normal course. The district had had almost twenty years in which to recover from the effects of the Great War of 1914 to 1918 and preparations for the present War were not sufficiently noticeable to cause abnormal expansion or depression in the economic life of the area. The period from 1936 to the early months of 1938 could therefore be taken as a time when average conditions prevailed. Since the purpose of this study was to examine as far as possible the normal

2

state of the area and not the conditions prevailing in a particularly good or bad year, the period chosen for intensive research has, in light of more recent events, proved particularly suitable. Consequently no apology is deemed necessary for the fact that information and figures dealing with the year 1939 have not been included since they could not be considered truly indicative of the real condition of the distressed areas of Durham County.

In the second place, as the possibilities as to the scope of the subject unfolded themselves, it became obvious that a thoroughly exhaustive survey of every aspect of the problem could not be undertaken by one person in a limited period. The writer, was, therefore, compelled to limit her attentions to the districts which were considered most deserving of treatment. As far as possible, information has been verified and the text criticised by well-informed

inhabitants in each locality in order to decrease any possibility of mis-interpretation.

The subject has proved particularly interesting and it cannot be emphasised sufficiently that the condition of the Derelict Villages of County Durham presents a serious problem which will not reach a happy solution if the district is merely left to work out its own salvation.

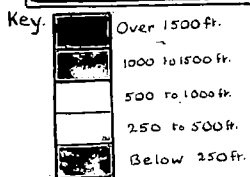
December, 1939.

A.T.

## INTRODUCTION.

Geographers at least have come to realise that Durham County is something more than the short, smoky, dismal interlude between Darlington and Newcastle on the Great North Road or main eastern railway to the North. Therefore only a brief geographical survey of the county is required to provide the back cloth, against which some of the results of the economic development of the area will be portrayed.

It is mainly with the somewhat dismal smoke-ridden section of Durham that the following treatise deals, but it must be remembered that the coalfield does not extend to the western or southern boundaries of the County. Lying like a wedge between the better known counties of Northumberland and Yorkshire, Durham shares with them the beauties of the eastern slopes of



**MAP 1A. THE POSITION OF COUNTY DURHAM**  
IN RELATION TO THE REST OF THE NORTH OF ENGLAND  
 N.B. Its position in relation to the Northumberland  
 and Durham Coalfield.  
 Scale 1:1,700,000



the Pennines. In reality it comprises the catchment area of the River Wear, together with the land drained to the Tyne by the southern tributaries east of the Derwent and the drainage area of the south flowing tributaries of the River Tees<sup>1</sup>.

Reference to the Geology Map of Durham County (Map 1) shows that the limestone moors with their flattened caps of millstone grit (except in the extreme west) separate the youthful valleys of the Upper Tees, Wear and Derwent. East of a line joining Consett, Tow Law and Woodland, the rocks of the carboniferous limestone series dip beneath outcropping strata of the lower Coal Measures and the moors, which slope towards the subsequent valley of the middle Wear, bear evidences of widespread exploitation for both coal and iron stone.

Unlike either the Tyne or Tees, which find their separate ways eastward to the North Sea in roughly parallel lines and for the most part consequent courses,

<sup>1</sup>

See Map 1A

the river Wear in its middle course flows north-east in a transverse valley, which divides the Pennine slopes of west Durham from the East Durham Plateau. Beyond Chester-le-Street, where the Wear turns east to cut its way to the sea through the narrowing, Permian escarpment, the line of this interior valley is continued northward towards the Tyne by the course of the Team valley. Throughout its length from Bishop Auckland to Chester-le-Street, the natural beauties of the Wear valley are overshadowed by insistent reminders of the utilitarian qualities of the coalfield. Only at a few points, such as Brancepeth, Whitworth, Butterby and Finchale can one forget the gaunt pit chimneys and towering heapsteads and enjoy the unspoilt rural peace and loveliness which are relics of the pre-industrial era.

The scarp edge of the Permian limestone plateau of East Durham rears itself sharply to the east of the Wear valley and is marked by a line of hills averaging



six hundred feet in height from Westerton in the south to beyond Warden Law in the neighbourhood of Houghton-le-Spring. The gradual slope eastward is a region of moorland tracts, neglected agricultural possibilities and indeterminate drainage, except towards the coast where deep wooded denes form a picturesque variation in the monotonous landscape. The neglect of farming is explained by the widespread signs of large scale coal mining activity.

South Durham is strikingly different from the rest of the county. The southern boundary of the coalfield follows approximately the watershed between the Wear and Tees river systems. From the top of Keverstone Bank, from the summit of Bildershaw, or from Bishop Middleham, one can look southward over essentially rural country, where white or colour-washed farm houses and quiet hamlets present a soothing contrast to the teeming villages only a few miles further north. Here

mixed farming is the mainstay of the people and there is no longer any sign of the household weaving of flax and wool, which formed an additional source of income in the early 19th Century. Only the ancient market towns of Darlington and Stockton have become noted as centres of industry, with the exception of Billingham, whose phenomenal growth as a centre of the Imperial Chemical Industries has brought it international repute in recent years.

In spite of its hilly nature, road and railway communications both within the county and with the rest of the country are good and shipping from the Tyne, Wear and Tees carries the products of Durham's heavy industries to all parts of the world.

This brief survey of Durham County could be expanded to some length, but since the industrial and social development of the coalfield at least are to be dealt with in subsequent chapters, it is not

considered necessary to enter into a more detailed discourse here. Further information of a general nature is readily available in numerous geographical text books.

## CHAPTER ONE.

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### CHOICE OF SUBJECT

### SOURCES OF INFORMATION.

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It is an accepted fact both locally and nationally that Durham County is very largely a Distressed Area. Parts of the County are so distressed as to be termed "derelict". In the Report on Durham and Tyneside presented to the Minister of Labour in 1934, Captain Euan Wallace states that "the fact that it has been necessary to report upon the areas as a whole must inevitably result in obscuring the gravity of the situation in places, which are really derelict, of which the following are examples :- Leasingthorne, Butterknowle, Witton Park and Woodside". Each of these places was judged, according to the report (p.76) on the number of its inhabitants in receipt of some form

of Unemployment Benefit or Assistance. In February, 1937 a secret report on South-West Durham, made by a firm of engineers at the request of Sir Malcolm Stewart, was discussed in the House of Commons. It refers to Byers Green, Page Bank, Newfield, Sunnybrow, Witton Park, Morley and Hedley Hope as "derelict and backwater villages which have been left, as it were, by the receding tide in deserted, stagnant waters!" (The simile is apt in view of the fact that the flooding of the pits has been a prime factor in the deterioration of most of these villages.)

In 1935 a private observer, Thomas Shapp, in his pamphlet "A Derelict Area" wrote

"While the industrial North-East may be regarded as merely distressed (though that to an extreme degree) at least one town (Bishop Auckland) and a whole sub-region there (South-West Durham) are as

near derelict as makes little difference!"

These three reports are all agreed upon one point, namely that certain villages or sub-regions in County Durham are sufficiently distressed as to be termed derelict, and this view has been endorsed in numerous articles, speeches and discussions. Now derelict is a strong term meaning "abandoned, anything left, forsaken or cast away intentionally," and there are actually hamlets in this county to which the word may be applied. <sup>1</sup> For instance, in the valley of the Rookhope Burn, north of St. John's Chapel in Weardale, there are two small hamlets, by name Risbey and Groove Rake, which have been abandoned. They housed lead miners who worked in the adjoining mines. But when the large lead mine at Rookhope was extended to include the smaller mines, the shafts at Risbey and Groove Rake were closed and the miners went to live in Rookhope, leaving their isolated houses, which were never re-occupied.

<sup>1</sup> See accompanying photographs

LEAD MINING SETTLEMENT IN THE  
ROOKHOPE VALLEY.

---

Risbey

---

A derelict  
lead miner's  
hamlet



Groove Rake

---

Abandoned  
hamlet at  
a disused  
lead mine



Rookhope.

---

The present  
lead mining  
village.



That was the logical conclusion to a mining community until about thirty years ago.

It was not however to hamlets such as these that the reports referred. Leasingthorne has a population of 585, Butterknowle of 1625 and Witton Park and Woodside of 2608. Nor are Byers Green, Page Bank, Newfield or the others mentioned in the Gibb report abandoned. Yet the term derelict has been applied as a result of three independent investigations.

The second report referred to, - the Secret Report of February 1937, aroused intense criticism in the local press, especially from residents in the villages specified. This was largely aimed at counteracting the stigma which the title "derelict" conveyed, for villagers are at heart extremely loyal in their opinion of the house or village in which they live. The



criticism was not, however, entirely in the form of indignation. Some residents in South-West Durham were of the opinion that undue attention had been paid to external appearances and that the villages listed as derelict were not necessarily those where the depression was most acute. Outsiders, or even local officials with a few years' residence within the district are inclined to be impressed by the outward appearance of a village rather than by its real economic condition. To observers coming from the pleasant, tidy, clean-looking villages of the south with their gardens and backgrounds of smiling countryside, the rows of small, drab colliery houses with kitchen gardens and blackened pigeon ducats and the whole overshadowed by mountainous pit heaps, come as a shock. Even to a native, who has lived all his life within sight of colliery villages, the

contrast is appalling, so that a sympathetic investigator from outside the area would probably be influenced subconsciously by the appearance of a place even though due consideration were given to more material findings, and therefore allowances must be made when any of the published reports are under discussion. (This is less likely to occur when the investigation is carried out by one who is used to the appearance of colliery villages).

Having read with interest, extracts taken from the Secret Report, I began to wonder why, if Sunnybrow were derelict, Thistleflat or Greenhead, near Crook were not mentioned. Certainly Sunnybrow looks as derelict as it is possible to imagine, shut in as it is, on two sides by pit heaps and the crumbling remains of its fifteen rows of beehive coke ovens and

on the third side by a valley littered with untidy  
 hen crees and pigeon ducats and with the grass  
 grown, old Hartlepool Railway (Byers Green Branch)  
 traversing it as a memory of its one time prosperity.  
 On closer investigation, however, I found that,  
 while Sunnybrow has lost its position as the chief  
 village of the Willington group of collieries, 190  
 of its men are employed at the Brancepeth Colliery  
 about two miles away.<sup>1</sup> In January 1938 (Labour  
 Exchange) out of an insured population of 400 men  
 and 15 women only 29 men and 1 woman were unemployed.  
 This is a <sup>0</sup>percentage of only 7.2 as compared with an  
 unemployment figure averaging 80 per cent. over the  
 last three years at Thistleflat, near Crook (Social  
 Service Report). Possibly Thistleflat was included  
 in Crook, where the average unemployment figure is  
 not high, due to the Roddymoor Colliery and Bank  
 Foot By-Products Works as well as to employment in

<sup>1</sup> Colliery Managers' figure.

distributive trades and public works. Nevertheless, Thistleflat is as dismal as Sunnybrow in appearance and much more derelict than Sunnybrow on a basis of unemployment and only a somewhat superficial survey could have omitted it from a list of the most distressed villages in South-West Durham. In the case of Sunnybrow, only its external appearance can have caused it to be included as a derelict village.

Obviously an investigation which relies largely upon appearances and statistical averages and ignores local conditions cannot be regarded as exhaustive. More accurate information can be gained by observing people and conditions over a period of years and by questioning inhabitants without necessarily disclosing the fact that the answers may form part of an investigation. In small colliery villages there is often one man or

woman who is well acquainted with every aspect of the village and its problems and it is not difficult to one who is connected with the district to find out such a person.

Information is usually very willingly and intelligently given. Any bias in the direction of exaggeration or underestimation can be rectified by discussions with other villagers and particularly with children, who naively and usually unconsciously echo the real feelings of their elders in respect to their surroundings. Business travellers can usually illustrate another aspect of village life and their opinions on the removal of villages is interesting, if prejudiced. Doctors, nurses and teachers are sometimes willing to add their opinions on local conditions based on close contacts.

Information from sources such as these must be gained slowly over a long period from

conversations at which a notebook and pencil are not in evidence. Personal acquaintance with those to be questioned allows a more friendly approach and causes very little resentment. In addition such information may be checked by personal observation, and by official statistics. But reliable though the results of such an investigation may be, this informal method of seeking information is by no means sufficient in itself. Individuals have difficulty in remembering dates, unless they have some personal application and their estimation of numbers is usually in terms of "a few", "not many" or "a lot". For this reason statistical information must be sought from official sources. Officials at the Ministry of Labour Headquarters in Newcastle and the managers of local Labour Exchanges have proved particularly obliging in their readiness to supply information as to the number and condition

of the unemployed in distressed villages together with their opinions on industrial prospects for the future. Some Colliery managers and other officials have willingly supplied details as to the number of employees and the villages from which they come and officials of the Durham Miners' Association have been equally ready to furnish documents and statistics. In fact, it would be difficult to attempt to give due credit to the very willing readiness with which all kinds of people have supplied information.

The sources of information set out in the previous paragraphs are of two types, and in my opinion each type is incomplete without the other. To depend entirely upon internal observation and the information to be gained from purely intra-regional sources would be to portray a badly proportioned picture in which

vivid and accurate details bear little or no relation to outside realities. But on the other hand to place complete faith in external observation and statistical knowledge and to ignore the setting of the problem is to build up a hazy picture showing the region as a small and insignificant part of a whole, but lacking in individuality. Nor is the picture improved by the testimony of a few local inhabitants who may desire to create either a good or a bad impression.

This type of external investigation has been attempted by well meaning Commissions, who were appalled by the appearance of Durham County and genuinely desired an improvement. But their investigations have not reached the roots of the problem. A great deal of their information has come from local Labour Exchanges and while officials there are certainly in



contact with unemployment and usually sympathetic they do not necessarily understand the people. One official confessed that though he had been in the district for three years and had really tried to get into closer touch with the local inhabitants, he was conscious of a barrier between himself and the villagers and was only now beginning to understand some of the problems of the locality. Some villages, for example Witton Park, are picked out repeatedly as black spots, while other villages where conditions may be equally bad prefer to avoid both the unpleasant publicity and the charitable efforts which often result. Thus it is difficult for a sound investigation of conditions in County Durham to be made by outsiders who rely almost entirely on official sources of information.

## CHAPTER TWO.

---

### STAGES BY WHICH A MINING VILLAGE MAY BECOME DERELICT.

---

Mining is a destructive industry based on the wholesale extraction of the earth's mineral resources. Mining communities, therefore, cannot be expected to remain attached to one locality for a long period, since the time must eventually come when the mineral supply will be exhausted. As a result miners have a reputation for moving about and mining settlements in the past have been considered as temporary encampments, constructed for the sole purpose of housing the miners who worked nearby.

In County Durham for the past 150 years economic development has been based largely upon extractive or robber industries. In the west of the county lead mining and ironstone working were important until 1900 and now the quarrying of limestone and whinstone is taking its

toll of the natural wealth of the Pennine valleys. Industrial activity in the coalfield is practically limited to coal mining except in the Tyneside, Wearside and Consett districts. Everywhere both grass grown and still smouldering pit heaps are evidence of the extent to which the coalfield has already been exploited.

Records of coal mining in the neighbourhood of Cockfield and Escombe date from the thirteenth century and mines were worked in the Parish of Lanchester in 1333.<sup>1</sup> In more modern times the earliest coal mining activities were scattered over the western fringe of the coalfield, where streams had cut down and exposed the top seams. Mining for local land-sale was combined with farming and neither the drifts and shallow pits nor the small scattered hamlets, which housed the farmer-miners changed the appearance of the countryside to any great extent.

<sup>1</sup>

The Coal Trade - Dunn published 1944.

Already, before the end of the eighteenth Century, mining hamlets such as Tantobie and Dipton had appeared and North-West Durham was becoming a prosperous coal mining district.

After the technical difficulties of deeper mining were overcome, larger pits were sunk in the region behind Sunderland and Newcastle to supply the increasing demand for household coal for export. From Coxhoe to Sunderland a narrow strip of country between the Wear and the edge of the Magnesian limestone escarpment came in for its share of exploitation after 1810. The Stockton and Darlington Railway system opened up possibilities for the export of coal from the Bishop Auckland area after 1825 and brought with it the demand for coke for the expanding railway system and for the rapidly developing iron industry at Witton Park and later on Teeside. After 1850 the Deerness and Browney valleys west of Durham suddenly became hives of industrial activity, based on the

demand for coke. About the same time the East Durham Plateau changed its whole aspect. Where previously the solitude of wide stretched of grazing land had been unbroken save by occasional shepherds, now swarming drab-built villages and whole towns, dominated by smoking pit chimneys, sprang into existence almost overnight. They housed miners, who worked the soft, friable coal of the Hutton Seam, which is excellent for the production of gas.<sup>1</sup>

The exploitation of the Durham coalfield proceeded so rapidly that whole new villages had to be built to accommodate the tremendous influx of population. In 1839, for instance, 24 new pits were sunk. Each year more new pits offered remunerative employment for thousands of miners and other workmen from other parts of the British Isles, as well as for those already in

1

For further details on the exploitation of the Durham Coalfield see Arthur Smailes - Population changes in Colliery Districts of Northumberland and Durham.

the coalfield.<sup>1</sup> Villages were usually built as near to the pit head as possible; always within walking distance, and were generally owned or leased by the colliery company. In the western part of the coalfield, where the coal was easily accessible, numerous shafts were sunk and everywhere groups of houses, often about forty in number, with no real claim to the title of villages, clustered near the pit head.<sup>2</sup> The pits were so close together that the workings could not extend great distances under the surface. When difficulties presented themselves in one pit or when the best seams were exhausted, the pit was likely to be abandoned. The village or hamlet attached to it, therefore, lost its reason for existence and entered on the first stage towards dereliction. When one pit failed, however, it was always possible for the miners concerned to find employment in another nearby colliery. Houses were

<sup>1</sup> For origins of population see pages 118 to 128

<sup>2</sup> See Map 10

scarce and if the new centre of employment offered no housing accommodation for the new miners, they were likely to stay in their own hamlet, if it was not too far away. Thus when the old Coppy Crooks Colliery, near Shildon was exhausted in 1852, after working only 17 years, the miners living in the few houses at the pit head and in the colliery houses at Fylands, found work either at the Shildon Lodge, St. Helen's Auckland, or Woodhouse Close Collieries which were developing then, but continued to occupy the Coppy Crook Colliery cottages. In this way certain villages and groups of houses ceased to serve the purpose for which they were intended even before 1900, but in most cases they continued to serve some useful purpose, in that they still housed miners within walking distance of their employment.

With the depression in the heavy industries in the North East after the Great War, the pits which

were less economical to work stood idle and it became increasingly difficult for miners to find employment within easy travelling distance of the villages where collieries had closed down. In South-West Durham in particular the flooding of pits and the high cost of pumping, together with the distance from the coast, led to the closing down of one colliery after another, until the Shildon-Eldon district which in 1919 offered employment in seven collieries for 4,863 men, in 1936 had only one pit working in which the number of men was reduced from 1200 to 210. This meant a displacement of 4,653 miners in 17 years.<sup>1</sup>

Under circumstances like this, in which the depression affected large areas, it was impossible for miners to stay in the villages, in which some of them had spent their lives,

<sup>1</sup>

For further details see Section on Auckland Park and Eldon. Page 401



and find employment nearby. Nor was there any marked expansion in any other mining district in the county. Some collieries, for example, Fishburn, Mainsforth, Bowburn and the Dean and Chapter Colliery at Ferryhill, have extended but their expansion has only absorbed a small fraction of the displaced miner's from villages where the pits have closed. It is true that some miners have left the depressed district, but their departure has only tended to deprive the unfortunate villages of their most enterprising individuals. Consequently in areas, where the wholesale closing down of collieries has taken place, the villages have reached the second stage of the way to total depression; not only are they derelict in the sense that they have been abandoned by industry, but they have been deserted, in addition, by the best element among the inhabitants.

The next step soon follows. After the hasty scramble for fresh employment in the few expanding collieries in the county - and the search for new jobs is usually hopeless after three months - the rest of the community is compelled to settle down to a period of unemployment, relieved now and again by a few weeks' temporary work on the roads. As the years of unemployment succeed one another, a sense of hopelessness takes possession of the whole village population and the standard of living is definitely lowered. This is difficult to assess, but evidence of it can easily be seen in the drab clothing of the middle aged and the tawdry cheapness of the clothes of the younger people. In the matter of foodstuffs (though no figures can be collected on such a question, and reliance must be placed in widespread observation and the testimony of school children) the increasing consumption of

ready cooked tinned and prepared foods, which are relatively expensive, must leave little margin for an adequate supply of nutritious food. This type of diet is frequently condemned as unwise and unwholesome, but it is easy to realise that both mental and physical effort are required to prepare a variety of wholesome but cheap meals, and after years of unemployment, with no prospect of improvement in the future, this mental and physical energy seems to be reduced to a minimum. The frequent cups of sweet tea, which act as a stimulant, and the tasty morsels of tinned meat or fruit, which tempt the appetite, need little preparation and in addition they may be evidence of an attempt to relieve the monotony of an existence which can find no useful purpose.

In a number of villages widespread unemployment has persisted for a period of ten or even fifteen years and children have grown

up into men and women surrounded by this atmosphere of hopelessness. Not knowing the advantages of employment, some of them become content to idle away their time, with the result that officials of the Ministry of Labour are seriously concerned with the increased number of unemployables in villages of long standing depression.

As a result of long periods of unemployment with its accompanying under nourishment, whether this is due to unwise diet or to insufficient means, the general health and energy of the community suffers. Physical deterioration would be most evident in some survey of the health of the mothers, since they frequently go without sufficient food themselves in order to give a little more to their children, but no uniform statistical information can be obtained on this point. Instead figures are available which show the proportion of under nourished children in

each school. These are important because they indicate not only the condition of general health, but point out those villages, whose future is to be based on physically unfit communities. Villages where there is a high percentage of under nourished children are surely another step down the ladder of deterioration.

When a colliery is closed down and dismantled the colliery houses where the employees lived are frequently sold. This is not always the case. For instance, the firm of Dorman, Long and Company has retained its colliery houses at Binchester Blocks, Newfield and Browney, where the collieries have closed, in order to provide accommodation for miners at the Dean and Chapter Colliery, Bowburn and Mainsforth, where there is a shortage of houses. In this way employed miners are brought into some depressed villages, but since they have to travel to work, the amount of time left

in which they can take an active part in village life is limited. This policy of retaining colliery houses is, however, the exception rather than the rule. When colliery houses are in need of repair or threatened with demolition, they are sometimes sold before the colliery is closed. For example, at Sunnybrow, which is still worked in conjunction with Brancepeth Colliery, 255 houses were sold to a private individual in 1936.

Usually, however, the colliery property passes into private hands, when the pit is dismantled, because then the mineral lease expires and the colliery company gives up all interest in the district.

In a number of villages, e.g., Eldon, Sunnybrow, Stanley Pit, Fylands, Page Bank, White Leas and Roddymoor (near Crook), Witton Park and Escombe, blocks of old insanitary houses were bought up cheaply by one person and relet by agents to any possible tenants. In many cases, especially in

villages which have not been abandoned by industry for long, for instance, Eldon, Sunnybrow and Roddymoor, the tenants, who already occupied the houses at the time of the transfer of ownership, have remained in residence. But in villages, where employment ceased ten years or more ago, houses have been vacated by miners, who have found work elsewhere, and have become tenanted by householders, who are classed among the unemployables. These seem to be of two types. In South West Durham there is, as has been stated, an increasing number of young men, who have never known employment and who are beginning to consider work in the light of an unnecessary evil. These men, many of whom have passed the age of twenty-five, are in many cases married and have families to support. They form rather an inferior and stagnant element in the community, since they have little desire to move away from the village, where they have spent their lives and where they

are in a position to receive some assistance, if necessary, from older relatives and friends.

On the other hand, there is another type of tenant in the ex-colliery villages. This is a less desirable element, distinct from either the young unemployables or the clean, hard-working, respectable mining community. These families rarely stay long in one house or even in one village and their progress is, for example, often brought to the attention of the Inspector for Cruelty to Children. Altogether the presence of this drifting element in the population marks an advanced stage of deterioration and is often a danger to the present and future development of the village. In some cases the number of these newcomers seems to be definitely exaggerated, but there is no doubt that in several villages of long standing depression, the type of inhabitant is



deteriorating. Witton Park, which has been practically derelict ever since its Iron Works closed down in 1882 has acquired the evil reputation of being the most striking example in Durham County of a village, which has been ruined by its drifting population. Actually it is possible that it has suffered more as a result of its reputation, than because of its type of population, but that point will be considered in more detail later. At any rate, its reputation is well illustrated in a Report on the Work of the Community Service Council (14.1.38), given to me by Mr. Longland. This states that Witton Park "is a village, composed of all sorts and conditions who have been attracted there by moderately <sup>1</sup> low rents, from not only all over the county, but various parts of England". Witton Park has become such a by-word for general degradation that the respectable

<sup>1</sup>

For further information on the rents see p.233 on Witton Park.

part of the community is beginning to leave the village rather than share its unsavoury reputation.

Witton Park's evil reputation is a result of an undesirable immigration during more than fifty years of continuous depression. But symptoms of the same disease are becoming evident in other villages, such as Byers Green and Coundon Grange and it seems an inevitable result of long years of unemployment and may be expected to spread as advanced stages of deterioration are reached.

Another sign of depression in a village is the condition of its houses. In previous reports, made as a result of somewhat rapid surveys by outside observers, this factor has received undue attention, probably because the appearance of a place is the first and most obvious impression one receives. While the state of houses is important, it is, in my opinion, unfair to judge on those grounds, since a typical colliery village

in a prosperous part of the county, e.g., Shotton, looks as untidy and badly laid out as any in the more depressed districts. Its rows of low, two or three-roomed houses, blackened with soot from the pit chimney, are jumbled together round the colliery, with only the merest suggestion of paved streets between them. Replanning and rehousing are urgently needed throughout the coalfield, but the need would probably have been as urgent, had the county retained its prosperity.

The circumstances under which colliery villages of the last two centuries were built, provided little inducement to good housing at the outset and it is, therefore, not surprising, that the coalfield presents an untidy appearance now. Mining villages were usually built to serve a temporary purpose and there was a possibility in the days of rapid expansion in the coalfield, that the population would move when the pit was

worked out and that the houses would be left derelict.

The colliery company itself, as a rule, provided houses for its workmen, Different conditions affected the building of these houses. In some districts the colliery company in addition to acquiring the mineral rights by lease, also purchased the surface and was therefore able to build its own houses. For an example of this we have the firm of Straker and Love at Willington Colliery where, following the acquisition of the mineral rights, they also purchased the land above some of the minerals and upon this land they built the village of Sunnybrow for the housing of their workmen.

In other districts the colliery company has been confined to leasing the surface land instead of purchasing.

When this is the case, usually the leases are restricted to a period to coincide with the mineral lease. When the lease expires, any houses which have been built by the colliery company during the period of the lease, automatically revert to the surface owner at the end of the lease. When, therefore, a pit was opened under a short term lease of, say,<sup>1</sup> 50 years, which was in all probability a forecast of the period over which coal was likely to be worked there, the colliery company erected houses which would last as long as the surface lease, i.e. for fifty years. Towards the end of the lease, unless the amount of coal remaining justified a renewal of the lease, it was not good business on the part of the colliery company to expend fresh capital on repairs or improvement of houses, which would soon become the property of the landowner. In South West Durham, where leases have expired and have

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See Report of the Coal Commission on the Coal Industry (1925) Vol. 1. page 199.

not been renewed, houses built on these terms have, from the point of view of the colliery companies, fulfilled their purpose. It is not surprising therefore to find bad housing conditions in villages where employment has ceased. On the other hand, the problem of housing in the Durham coalfield is so complicated that this cannot be taken as a general rule.

Apart from the conditions of purchase or lease, other factors influenced building in colliery villages. In the period of feverish expansion of the coal mining in South West Durham and West Durham in the thirty years following the construction of the first railway, small colliery companies or private individuals with little financial backing entered the field. In some cases all the available capital was absorbed in mining operations and no money was forthcoming for the provision of houses. In the case of Byers Green the absence of any appreciable number of colliery houses in the village is almost certainly

due to the fact that the second pit was sunk in 1873 at a time when the coal trade was entering on a period of depression. Difficulties of working, due to water, and clouded prospects of future development doubtless prevented the expenditure of fresh capital on housing. As a result the village of Byers Green, which depended entirely upon Byers Green Colliery, was built largely by private individuals. This happened in the case of a few colliery villages, and it is often possible to decide merely by looking at a large scale map, which villages were colliery property and which grew in rather a haphazard manner as private enterprise met the needs of a growing community.

A comparison of Maps 21 and 17 will illustrate this point. Map 21 is a 25 inch tracing of Byers Green and shows clearly the irregular arrangement of the houses, which has just been discussed. Map 17 on the other hand is a tracing of Sunnybrow,

# TYPES OF OLD COLLIERY HOUSES

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Whiteleas, near Crook.

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Low stone built houses  
with sloping ridges.

[A negative of this  
is held by the keeper  
of the museum. 10/1/74]



Wood Row, Crook.

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Colliery Rows at  
Rainton Gate.

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Common type of  
two-storey house.





just across the river from Byers Green, where the colliery rows were laid out in orderly Barracks formation.

The period at which houses were built has left its mark on both colliery and private houses. Older houses, built in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, are often of local stone. They are low pitched, of one storey or with the loft converted into a bedroom at the front. They have no damp courses and some of the roofs have sloping instead of horizontal ridges. This is particularly well marked in the case of Whiteleas near Crook, but examples may also be found at Rainton Gate and Sherburn Hill. Illustrations of the construction of this type of house are given opposite. Many of these old houses form villages, where coal supplies are now exhausted, but this cannot be taken as a general rule. A notable exception is the colliery village of Kelloe, which is being demolished because the houses,

built a hundred years ago, do not satisfy modern requirements. The colliery, for which the houses were built, still employs about 2000 men and another fifty years exploitation is anticipated. On the other hand, there are in the older districts, which are suffering from intense depression, mining villages which compare favourably with any in the county. Leeholme, built in 1900, at a time when Leasingthorne Colliery was expanding, consists of well built three and four-roomed brick houses; and yet now the colliery is suffering from depression, Leeholme ranks among the distressed villages of South-West Durham. Consequently it cannot be said that all colliery villages in the older mining districts suffer from bad housing or that all colliery villages, where housing is bad, are necessarily distressed.

Subsidence has affected the condition of villages in areas where the seams of coal near the surface have been worked.

Leasingthorne, where the first shaft in 1842 was only sunk to a depth of 10 feet, shows traces of damage due to pit falls; and Kelloe and South Moor, where in each case top seams were worked first, have suffered in the same way. The most marked evidence of subsidence are towards the west and south west of the coalfield, where the coal measures run out to the surface.

Stanley Pit, near Crook, suffered severely from pit falls in January, 1938 and families had to be removed as speedily as possible to new housing estates in CROOK.

Subsidence is not experienced in every locality where the top seams have been worked near to the surface. In certain cases, clauses in the 1733 Inclosure Acts expressly forbid lessees of mineral rights to let down the surface even if this means leaving over 50 per cent of the coal intact. The judgement given in a legal action brought by the Consett Industrial and Provident Society Limited against the Consett Iron Company Limited in 1921 in respect of land subsidence on Lanchester Common bears out this statement. The decision of the court led, incidentally,

to a revision of the housing policy described on page 43 in connection with Sunnybrow. The Colliery Companies operating in the West Stanley district have made it their business to become possessed of any property, which is in danger of subsidence in order to avoid legal costs and heavy damages. Consequently a great deal of the colliery property in and around West Stanley is in a very bad state of repair due to land subsidence.

This result of the mining industry can, in itself, render villages derelict, for instance the village of Stanley Pit is almost abandoned now and will be completely demolished when accommodation is found elsewhere for its inhabitants. Since damage due to subsidence occurs after the coal has been removed, it is reasonable to associate it with an advanced stage in the life of the colliery.

In so far as bad housing conditions are a result of the end of coal mining activities,

(i.e. the expiration of a lease), or evidence of the early development of the district or an illustration of the neglect of alienated colliery property, they may be taken as signs that the village is declining. Beyond that, though the condition of housing may be deplored, it cannot be considered in itself as proof that a village is derelict or even distressed.

### CHAPTER THREE.

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#### EVIDENCES OF DISTRESS IN DURHAM COUNTY.

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An attempt has been made in the last few pages to show the stages by which a mining village community can become derelict. The disappearance of employment, first in the village itself, and then in the surrounding district, marks the initial stage. The removal of the best workmen to more prosperous villages, leaving a population with a high proportion of old people and of poorer physical types, marks the next stage. This is followed, after years of continuous unemployment, by the physical and mental deterioration of the remaining inhabitants, as a result of malnutrition and the atmosphere of

hopelessness. The increasing number of young unemployables is a direct result of long standing unemployment and the high proportion of this stagnant element in the community shows that the village has reached an advanced stage of deterioration. Finally, the presence of a drifting element in the community indicates that the purpose of the village is practically forgotten and its utility is finished.

Side by side with this, the housing conditions of a mining village throw some light on its economic and physical decline, but judgment cannot be based on this evidence alone.

In order to apply these criteria in more detail to Durham County, with a view to deducing, from as many angles as possible, which are really the most distressed villages in the County, a number of maps has been prepared.

The first and most important consideration is the question of employment. With very few exceptions, the villages in Durham County, which have been affected by the rise and decline of industry, are mining villages. Throughout most of the county there is no other large scale industrial development. Certain villages owe their one time importance to Iron Works, but these were always maintained in connection with the coal industry. Apart from these, the coke ovens or by-products works and brick works attached to the collieries are only subsidiary to the actual mining of coal. Consequently a survey of employment in the mining industry covers the majority of the work people in the coalfield, with the exception of transport workers and people employed in public services. Villages where local industries, apart from those connected with coal mining, have grown up can almost be



counted on the fingers of one hand, and one at least represents the result of recent encouragement of light industry.<sup>1</sup>

Depression in the coal trade was most acutely felt in the years following the Great War, although a number of old pits had already closed even before 1900. It was not until 1923, however, that a Colliery Year Book was compiled giving details of employment figures in the coal mining industry. Map 2, which illustrates employment figures taken from the 1923 Colliery Year Book, shows a fairly even distribution of employment over the coalfield (the extent of which is shown on Geology Map 1). The number of small pits and drifts is greater in the west than in the east, but this is largely due to the lie of the coal measures, which outcrop towards the Pennines. In the West Stanley district a large number of Collieries each employed over 1,000 men. In

<sup>1</sup> St. Helen's Trading Estate.

South-West Durham the number is not so great, but it must be remembered that these first figures available, were issued too late to do full justice to the peak development of the chief collieries in this region which showed a definite decline in the number of employees before 1921. For instance, Auckland Park, Black Boy, Hunwick and Westerton Collieries were all standing idle in 1923, and the Pease and Partners group, including the Adelaide and Eldon collieries must have been working so intermittently in that year, that it was not considered advisable to include them in the Year Book.

Out of the years of depression since the Great War, 1929 stands out as a year of comparative prosperity. An examination of employment figures in that year, therefore, should give an impression of the maximum rather than the average number of colliery employees. Yet Map 3, which illustrates the employment figures taken from the 1929 Colliery

Year Book, shows a distinct falling off in numbers west of the River Wear and Team Valley line, which is not wholly balanced by increased employment in the coast collieries and the Fishburn, Dean and Chapter and Bowburn group.

In the West Stanley district employment seems to have decreased to the extent of at least 5,000 men, but closer investigation in that district shows that this was not really the case. For some reason, either due to a temporary stoppage or to a change over of ownership, no figures for the South Moor group of collieries were included in the 1929 Colliery Year Book. Information which corrects the false impression given by the Colliery Year Book, has been obtained from the Durham Miners' Association, as follows:-

	<u>1929.</u>		<u>1936.</u>
	<u>Men on Books.</u>		<u>Men on Books.</u>
Louisa Old Pit.....	554	...	250
Louisa New Pit.....	494	...	342
Hedley Pit.....	891	...	261
Morrison North Pit...	1042	...	514
Morrison South Pit...	378	...	261
William Pit.....	556	...	207
Morrison East Pit....	395	...	865
Morrison West Pit....	33	...	178
Bank Hands.....	555	...	384
	<hr/>		<hr/>
	4898	...	3262

This table indicates that 4,898 men were employed by the Holmside and South Moor Collieries Limited in 1929, which implies that the number of miners employed in this district was practically the same as in 1923. Therefore, though employment in North West Durham, as everywhere else, has declined as a result of the introduction of machinery into the pits, the extent of operations, except in a very few cases, has not suffered.

In South-West Durham, on the other hand, a steady shrinkage in employment is recorded. In

the Gaunless Valley, except for small drifts, many of which occupy under ten men each, only Gordon House (Cockfield) with 507 men, the Randolph Pit (Evenwood) with 909 men and the West Tees Colliery (Ramshaw) with 320 men, have any considerable number of employees. In the Crook district only Roddymoor is of any size, though the large Brancepeth Colliery (Willington), employing about 2315 men and boys, is not far away. In the immediate neighbourhood of Bishop Auckland only Eldon, with 1181 employees, and Leasingthorne with 1596 men, offer employment on a large scale. The decline in employment figures in this district cannot be explained by increased mechanisation in the pits, but rather by the closing down - and in many cases the dismantling - of the collieries.

The year 1936, not being a "boom" year, shows the general trend of employment in the coal trade in recent years (since 1929) This is

LEASINGTHORNE AND DEAN & CHAPTER COLLIERIES.

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Leasingthorne Colliery.

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A depressed Colliery.



Dean and Chapter Colliery.

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An expanding Colliery.

illustrated on Map 4. The number of collieries operating, has declined enormously since 1923 and those which are maintaining their quota of employees or are expanding are practically confined to the East Durham Plateau. The decreased number of collieries appearing on the 1936 map is partly accounted for by centralisation of working. For instance, Bowden Close may appear to have closed down, but in reality Brancepeth Colliery has absorbed it and the coal, which is hewn there, is drawn to the surface at the Brancepeth shaft. This has happened in the case of Randolph Pit (Evenwood), which includes Gordon House (Cockfield), and Leasingthorne which is now linked up with the Dean and Chapter Colliery.

Considered together, these three maps show a progressive moving away of industry from the western part of the coalfield. This is

# HAMSTEELS

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Colliery rows adjoining  
the dismantled colliery  
and coke ovens.



beginning in North-West Durham where several pits have closed within the last ten years, but the decline is rather over-estimated on the maps, since a number of large expanding collieries in the immediate vicinity of West Stanley receive no mention in either the 1929 or 1936 Colliery Year Books.<sup>1</sup>

A decline in employment is also noticeable in the upper Deerness valley, west of Durham. Esh Winning, Hamsteels and Quebec are practically abandoned by industry and Cornsay and Waterhouses Collieries are but shadows of their former selves. However, employment may still be found in the district at Langley Park, Bearpark and Ushaw Moor so that, though employment is shrinking, the area which is directly affected is comparatively small.

In South-West Durham the decline is very real, but the period covered by the maps begins too

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See Table on page 59 for 1936 employment figures of the Holmside and South Moor Collieries.

late to show the full story of the closing down of collieries. After at least thirty years of decreasing employment the stage has been reached in this district, when there is practically no work at all throughout a large area. The entire Gaunless valley, which is littered everywhere with pit heaps and disused coke ovens, has now only two collieries of any size working, namely at Evenwood and Ramshaw, and neither has more than 909 employees. Further, the West Tees Colliery at Ramshaw is likely to close down during the present year<sup>1</sup>. The Crook valley, which is disfigured throughout its length by a continuous chain of dismantled colliery buildings, has only one colliery (Roddymoor), which ranks larger than a drift<sup>2</sup>, though the Brancepeth Colliery group is within easy travelling distance. East of Bishop Auckland there is no employment nearer than the Ferryhill district, except for Leasingthorne Colliery, which is fast diminishing in size.

<sup>1</sup> Due to the expiration of the mining lease. (Aug.1939).

<sup>2</sup> See page 106 (Physical Factors).

In other parts of the coalfield there are smaller localities, where mining activities have almost ceased to exist. North of Durham City there has been a decided decline in the employment offered by collieries. West of the River Wear, Framwellgate Moor has lost its pits, and between the river and the edge of the East Durham Plateau only one colliery - the Adventure Pit near Leamside Station - remains to remind the Rainton villages of the burst of mining activity about 1820, to which they owe their<sup>1</sup> development. The Pittington and Sherburn district shows a marked decrease in the number of colliery employees, but the Lambton, Hetton and Joicey Collieries at Elemore and Eppleton, the South Hetton and Murton Collieries and Bowburn Colliery are within easy reach of this region north-east of Durham, and the situation does not seem quite so desperate as that in the larger area of South-West Durham.

Map 5 illustrates this decline in employment in another way. From a number of sources (including

<sup>1</sup> See Map 9 and Page 110

the Ministry of Labour, the Durham Miners' Association and the evidence of old miners) the dates when collieries closed have been ascertained and the duration of unemployment (that is in relation to the community) has been calculated.

In addition, unemployment arising from the closing down of Iron Works has been included, since Witton Park, Tow Law and Stillington were the direct results of the iron industry rather than purely mining activities. In this map, only the centres which were responsible for the bulk of employment in a village have been included, and the industrial concerns which have ceased to exist within the last five years have been omitted, in order that the villages, which are suffering from long standing neglect by industry, may stand out more clearly<sup>1</sup>. It must be pointed out, however, that unemployment is used in the sense of absence of employment in proportion to the size of the

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C/f. Men without Work - Pilgrim Trust Enquiry. Long standing personal unemployment is reckoned as exceeding one year.

village, rather than as implying individual unemployment. Both minor centres of employment and work found in other districts will be discussed later.

South-West Durham is conspicuous as the largest area, where unemployment is of long duration. It will be noticed that the Gaunless and Crook valleys, which have practically no mining employment except for drifts now, are suffering from unemployment of over ten years' standing. Crake Scar near Woodland and several of the Gaunless pits, which occupied the people of Copley, Butterknowle and Lands have been closed down for over thirty years. They do not seem to have long survived the 1880 to 1890 depression in the coal trade, which ended the period, when the production of coke from beehive ovens was the mainstay of the industry in South-West Durham. Eden Pit, near Shildon, closed thirty five years ago and Hargill (West Bitchburn) near Howden-le-Wear and Escombe have

had no industry since the trade depression which followed the Great War. The George Pit, Escombe was in fact exhausted and closed down in 1916. Throughout the remainder of South-West Durham, the closing down of collieries dates from the period just after the 1926 Coal Strike. The exceptions are Eldon, Byers Green, Binchester and Page Bank which persisted until 1931.

In the rest of the county, villages affected by absence of employment of over 15 years are not so close together. Haswell and Castle Eden are both surrounded by developing collieries, and Grange Villa has three collieries - Handen Hold, Twizell and Newfield - within a mile radius. At Broompark a serious fire in the pit in 1912 caused so much damage, that work had to cease and the pit was never reopened but employment was found first at Littleburn and later at Bearpark

and Ushaw Moor, all within easy reach of it.

Pittington and Broomside in the same way, are sufficiently near to Littleton and the Sherburn Collieries for displaced miners to find employment; and the Raintons are not far from the Houghton-le-Spring Collieries. This district however in spite of its nearness to more prosperous localities, does form a compact, though small area of long standing unemployment and it presents a more serious problem than the single villages mentioned above.

Elsewhere the longest period of unemployment dates from the 1926 unrest in the mining industry and, as might be expected, the villages, which were affected then, are those which are near the edge of the coal-field or connected with collieries which have been in operation for a long time. Hamsteels, Quebec and East Hedley Hope are comparable to villages in the Crook or Gaunless valleys and together with Esh Winning, which retained its industry until 1930, they

form another small group of distressed villages with no outlet except in the direction of Langley Park. Framwellgate Moor and Walldridge ceased to have centres of employment over ten years ago and the Grange Iron Works near Carrville, which if they were not the first cause of the village's existence, certainly lengthened the industrial lifetime of both Carrville and the Raintons, closed down in 1925.

On Map 6 have been indicated the villages, where industry capable of employing the majority of the working population no longer exists. This does not necessarily imply that there is not employment at all and therefore symbols have been introduced into the map to show villages, where some employment is available in small coal drifts, in brick or tile works or in some other small scale industrial concern such as the Slag Works at Witton Park.



Drifts are usually small affairs, working thin coal or top seams, which were neglected during large scale mining operations and they rarely provide employment for more than fifty men. Near Page Bank is a drift, which is an exception, as it was employing about 300 men in January 1939, but on the other hand a large number of drifts towards the edge of the coalfield employ an average of only 5 men per drift. Brick and tile works are usually survivals of the brick works, which were connected with all the pits of any size, but few of them employ more than 40 men each. Newfield has developed a particularly flourishing industry, based on valuable beds of seggar clay found locally and yet only 110 men are employed there (February 1939).<sup>1</sup> Again Eldon Brick Works, which has quite a flourishing trade, has only employment for 60 men. Consequently it is evident that industry based on drifts or brick works of the

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See photograph p 343.

M I D D R I D G E.

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A rural village which has almost  
forgotten its mining phase.

highly paid, the distance away from the town is limited to walking distance, unless cheap railway or 'bus fares are available. Five shillings per week is a fairly common wage in many shops in towns such as Durham, Spennymoor and Bishop Auckland. Further, domestic service in these towns, particularly the latter two, is generally of the "daily help" variety, partly on account of the limited incomes of the employers, but frequently because accommodation is not always available for a maid, who "lives in"

Indication is given on the map of mining villages, where agriculture is now the chief occupation. This does not mean that farming has developed to such an extent that it can absorb the majority of the men and boys who were miners, but rather that the mining element in the population has left the village. In many cases, e.g. Middridge, the village was agricultural in pre-industrial days and mining was superimposed, so that the village

is still serving the purpose for which it was intended. The Butterknowle region too has always been semi-agricultural, in that many farmers combined mining with small scale farming. Further, the composition of the immigrant~~s~~ mining population shows a large proportion of farm-labourers from Norfolk as well as farmer-miners from Teesdale and Swaledale, so that it is not surprising to find agriculture becoming once again~~s~~ the dominant occupation <sup>1</sup>.

None of the villages marked on Map 6 has much to offer by way of employment, but it will be noticed that some have nothing at all. Byers Green is away from the main road, too far from a town to derive employment from it and with neither drifts nor brick works to remind it of the period which ceased eight years ago, when its colliery and brickworks employed

<sup>1</sup>

See Section on the Gaunless Valley. Page 139

nearly 250 men. Eden Pit, with not even a second class road to connect it directly with Shildon, its nearest neighbour, is equally devoid of any form of employment.

Map 7 must be considered in conjunction with the previous maps, since it gives some indication of the extent to which miners in distressed villages are travelling daily to employment outside their immediate locality. For many years it has been customary, when one pit closed, for miners to find employment in nearby collieries. For example, Broompark men, who became unemployed after the fire in Broompark pit in 1912, went to work at Littleburn and more recently at Bearpark, both within easy travelling distance. Similarly Escombe miners, after the George Pit closed in 1916, were transferred to Newton Cap Colliery, about half a mile away. With the development of road transport in the past twenty years, it is no longer essential for a miner or any other workman to live within walking distance

of his work, and travelling from one village to employment in another is now a common practice throughout the coalfield. For instance four 'bus loads of men (about 120 in all) travel every day from Brandon Colliery village, where the pit employs over 1,000 men, to Bowburn Colliery, while several Bowburn men travel in the opposite direction to work at Brandon.

Cross travelling in this manner seems to be a waste of effort, but it is so general throughout the coalfield that there must be some reason for it. The well-filled bicycle sheds at and near Bowburn Colliery are a striking indication that the majority of the miners at that colliery are under 45 years of age. It is equally true that at other up to date mechanised collieries in the County young men form the bulk of the employees. Men, who, though past the prime of life were skilled miners

in the older pits, are not readily engaged in the large modern collieries, because they are unable to stand the strain of mechanised mining. Therefore they find employment, when they can, at older pits e.g. Brandon Colliery or in drifts working seams too thin to admit coal cutters. The younger miners, however, have little difficulty in finding work at the modern pits and prefer that type of employment to work in older pits, because wages are higher and future prospects brighter.

Cross travelling is not very noticeable in South-West Durham. Instead there is a wholesale exodus from the distressed villages to the developing collieries within travelling distance. In the migration from these villages, which followed the closing down of the pits, many of the best miners moved away to other parts of the county and to other mining districts in England.<sup>1</sup> As a general

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 1. Migration from Browney Colliery following closing down in August, 1938.

rule, the families which included grown up sons went first, because employment was available for the young men, but skilled miners under 35 or 40 years of age were usually able to find employment at Easington, Horden or Seaham Harbour or in the Doncaster or Kent coalfields. Among the young miners, however, there were some, who had reasons for not wanting to move away from their home village. Some occupied their own houses and in a distressed area, houses are not easily disposed of. Others held positions in local society. With the expansion of the Dorman, Long & Co., Ltd. collieries at Ferryhill (Dean and Chapter and Mainsforth) and at Bowburn and Stobart's Collieries at Fishburn and Thrislington, employment within travelling distance was available and the young, experienced miners had preference over the older men. From the distressed villages of South-West Durham, therefore, the miners who travel to



work are mainly young men, who can stand the strain of mechanised mining. The older men remain in the village and are either unemployed or work in small local drifts. Now that houses have been provided at Dean Bank and Fishburn and other centres of developing industry, several families have left the distressed villages but a large number of the miners from South-West Durham still continue to travel on account of the higher rents on the new housing estates.

It has not been possible to obtain exact figures in respect to all the collieries, which are affected by this daily movement of miners, but Map 7 serves to give some indication of the general trend of this practice. It should be added, that miners, displaced at one of Stobart's old collieries, had preference of re-employment at Fishburn or Thrislington. This occurred also in connection with some of Dorman, Long & Co., Ltd. collieries,

e.g. miners from Auckland Park and Leasingthorne (declining collieries) have been taken on at Bowburn and Dean and Chapter Collieries. Very often, however, displaced miners sought work at any likely centre of employment.

From this discussion of employment in County Durham it will be seen that certain areas are conspicuous as offering very little in the way of either major or subsidiary employment. Except for those engaged in small concerns, the men who find work are compelled to travel outside the district. These are the younger men, who ought to be the mainstay of the village community. Their numbers are continually diminishing as they find it more convenient to live in the neighbourhood of their work and consequently the villages with no centre of employment are being deprived of the most energetic and virile section of their

populations. The areas which are suffering most severely from the absence of any centre of employment and the resulting effect on the communities have already been listed as comprising the Rainton district, the Upper Deerness Valley and the South-West Durham Coalfield. The information given on Map 8 on the subject of general health indicates that the population of these areas is suffering physical deterioration as a result of economic depression.

It has already been suggested that malnutrition follows in the wake of long continued unemployment (p. 35 ). This statement is borne out by evidence obtained in Durham County. Since it was necessary to find some common basis on which a comparison of conditions of malnutrition could be made, it was decided to obtain from the District

Clerks to the Education Authority, statistics as to the number of children recommended by the School Medical Officers to receive free milk. These figures, taken as a percentage of the total number of children in the schools, have been mapped.

(Map 8)... The choice of material as an indication of under-nourishment, seems fully justified in view of Sir Percy Alden's statement in "Changing Social Structure" to the effect that "Under the Education Act school children cannot obtain free milk unless the family income is extremely small and unless their physical state is such that they cannot otherwise benefit from education." In November, 1938 the clause referring to the family income was not in operation in Durham County and therefore the figures are based on the total elementary school population. On this account the figures

indicated even more clearly how close is the connection between malnutrition among children and the economic condition of the locality.

It will be noticed that the main concentration of villages, where more than half the children are sufficiently undernourished to be in receipt of free milk, is within the South-West Durham coalfield. There is also a trail of malnutrition across the East Durham plateau in almost a straight line from Leasingthorne to Murton, but apart from that, only occasional villages show a high percentage of juvenile under-nourishment. On the other hand the schools in the South-East Durham area show very little malnutrition (an average of 15.3%) with the exception of Stillington (Carlton Iron Works) where the percentage is 45.3.

On examining the villages, where over

fifty per cent of the children are under-nourished, it will be seen that most of them are centres of declining industry. Those situated East of Durham are Haswell, Ludworth, Sherburn Hill, Leamside and East Rainton. Of these only Sherburn Hill has a colliery still in operation and it has declined in recent years. Haswell has had no employment within the village for over forty years and the general appearance and conditions of houses convey an impression of neglect, which seems to be justified by the investigation into general health. This suggests that even though employment is obtained fairly readily at Easington, Horden, Murton and Eppleton, there is some physical deterioration in the families of those who have not found employment outside the village. Bad housing conditions may also have affected general health to some degree.

Leamside and East Rainton schools serve the children of the four Rainbon villages as well as Leamside, and this has already been mentioned as a district where there is now practically no employment. Map 9, which is a 6" tracing of this area, shows that employment must have been plentiful in the numerous pits now marked as disused and, except that there is employment in the Houghton-le-Spring district, this has left a residue of unemployment, especially noticeable in isolated colliery rows. Cocken Terrace, Leamside, for instance is a single street of about 50 houses, with a reputation among Health visitors for both malnutrition and mental deficiency among its inhabitants. Isolation, resulting in in-breeding of poor stock, may have caused this unfortunate feature, but there is no doubt that the conditions in this and other similar colliery rows

are responsible for the abnormally high percentage (86.5) of under-nourished children attending Leamside school.

South of Durham the villages, where juvenile under-nourishment is outstanding, are Eoxhoe, Bowburn, East Howle and Tursdale.

The chief centre of employment for all these villages is now Bowburn Colliery, which at present employs 2,200 men, so it cannot be said that the absence of employment is the cause of malnutrition among the children. On the other hand, Bowburn Colliery has only developed during the past nine years and the village of Bowburn itself, with the exception of two farmhouses and six cottages, is less than twenty years old. Its expansion between 1931 and 1933 coincided with the closing of a number of older collieries in the



district. For instance Westerton, Byers Green, Turndale and Sherburn House Collieries all closed in 1931 and the South Brancepeth Colliery at Page Bank ceased operations in 1932. None of these is far from Bowburn and there has been a large scale of immigration to the new colliery village, particularly from Page Bank. It is considered by residents in the district that the malnutrition among the children may be due to one or more of the following factors. In the first place, the parents of many of the under-nourished children worked intermittently and for low wages in the period when the old colliery (at Page Bank or elsewhere) was going back fast, prior to closing down altogether and this would in cases of children of over nine years of age coincide with the early childhood. This in itself, would account for the present evidence of undermined health.

Further many of the children in Bowburn are members of large families and even if their parents are employed, the result may still be insufficient food of the right kind. Finally there is an important factor, which has been noticed repeatedly by doctors in connection with new housing estates provided in slum clearance schemes. The new colliery houses, "Scheme" <sup>1</sup> houses and Council houses are well planned and well built but rents are high (14/0) and families frequently find it cheaper to return to their home village, e.g., Page Bank, which is within travelling distance of Bowburn.

The existence of undernourishment in the ~~prosperous~~ Bowburn district is an indication that, wherever in the County it exists, malnutrition is not a result of recent economic depression. On the other hand, the causes of

1.

See Section on Page Bank. Page 394.

"Scheme" houses are so called because of a scheme to enable miners to purchase their houses on an instalment system.

the evil are of five or often of ten years standing. Further, the fact that nine years of prosperity at Bowburn have not sufficed to eradicate the effects of previous years of depression suggests that, even if a similar revival of industry took place throughout the distressed districts of the county, evidence of malnutrition would not immediately disappear.

The Education districts which comprise South-West Durham are those of Crook, Bishop Auckland and Spennymoor. These three head the list with the highest average percentage of undernourished children in the whole of the county. In the Crook district the average percentage of children receiving free supplies of milk is as high as 52.5 and in individual schools in this area with the exception of three small rural schools at Hamsterley, Satley and Witton-le-Wear, the percentage does not fall

below 45.5. Tow Law, Helmington Row (Crook), Stanley (Crook) and Sunnyside all have over 60 per cent of their children receiving free milk and even in Willington, which is not distressed from the standpoint of employment, 47.8 per cent of the children are considered to be undernourished.

In the Bishop Auckland district the situation is not much better, the average percentage being 47.1. There is more variety, when individual villages are considered, but the fact that Bishop Auckland, Shildon, West Auckland, Etherley and South Church all have only a third of their children suffering from malnutrition, only indicates that some of the other villages must be extremely distressed in this respect. This is a fact in that in Witton Park 86.3 per cent of the children are under-

nourished; in Escomb 80 per cent and at Fylands Bridge 77.1 per cent. Besides these villages, Coundon and Eldon both have an average of over 60 per cent. It is noticeable in this district that Morley and Lynesack which are reverting to their original role of agricultural villages, have less than one third of their children in an under nourished state, though Butterknowle, Woodlands and Cockfield (the two latter in the Teesdale district) all have a percentage of over 50.

The average percentage in the Spennymoor district is not quite so high, partly because it includes Ferryhill, which is relatively prosperous. Stillit is 41.5 percent, and included in the area is Leasingthorne, where 54 out of 64 children (84.3%) are in receipt of free milk and Middlestone Moor, where 128 out of 179 children (71.5%) are under nourished.

Page Bank and Byers Green, both isolated villages, where industry and therefore employment is practically non-existent, have a high proportion of under-nourished children. These form a striking contrast to Dean Bank, Ferryhill, where only 10.8 per cent. of the children are under nourished.

Further detailed figures on the subject of under-nourishment among school children as indicated by the number of children, who are supplied with free milk, may be found in Appendix 2. In a review of criteria, which indicate derelictness among village communities, general health is most important. Moreover, the stamina of the children of the community is the foundation on which the village, both economic and social, depends. To quote again from Sir Percy Alden's book, "Changing Social Structure," "Mal-nourished children mean weakly and defective citizens and the rejection for medical unfitness of so large a

percentage of the adults coming forward as army recruits seems to show that this unfitness pursues them through life!" With this in mind, it is reasonable to pick out as the most distressed villages those, where long continued unemployment has given rise to serious malnutrition.

The evidence set out in Maps 2 to 8 coincides in emphasising the distressed condition of the areas which have already been mentioned on Page 64. Of these, the South-West Durham coal-field is by far the largest region, extending from Woodland in the South-west to Spennymoor and Page Bank in the north-east, and embracing the Crook district as far as Fir Tree and Tow Law. The smaller regions of the Upper Deerness Valley and the Rainton district together with scattered villages present a less serious problem, but are still worthy of note.

Before proceeding to a more detailed consideration of the most distressed villages, it is necessary to analyse the causes of depression in these particular districts.



CHAPTER FOUR.  
-----PHYSICAL FACTORS IN RELATION  
TO SUBSEQUENT UNEMPLOYMENT  
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It has been noticed that, while there has been a general tendency towards restriction in the coal-mining industry throughout the County Durham over the past twenty years, some areas are feeling the depression much more severely than others. Reasons for this may be found in the methods of exploitation used in different localities.

Coal mining is, of course, the basis on which the economic development of the county has been built, but the manufacture of iron and, since 1875, of steel has been closely bound up with it. Consequently in a review of the physical factors, which have led to depression in some areas, the inter-relationship of the Iron and Steel

Industry with coal-mining must be considered, as well as the methods used in the extraction of coal.

Ironstone has been mined in the hills of Weardale and Teesdale since the 12th Century<sup>1</sup> and in the Derwent valley, it attracted<sup>2</sup> German sword makers to Shotley Bridge as a fitting forecast of the growth of Consett's Iron and Steel Works. When the evolution of the idea of trucks (before 1825) which ran on rails created a demand for wrought iron, several companies, including the forerunners of the Weardale Steel, Coke and Coal Company concentrated on extracting ironstone from the Pennine valleys. The Cleveland ores had not then been discovered and the nearest rival supply was found to be the nodules of iron ore, which were picked up on the beach near Whitby.

For the smelting of the ironstone, coal was needed. No longer was it profitable to pile the ironstone and coal together in an enormous

<sup>1</sup> Victoria County History Vol.11, p.353, also County of Durham by G.A.Cooke. p.51.

<sup>2</sup> Surtees. Also Victoria County History Vol. 11:

heap and burn it, until the iron ran out at the bottom, although this was done in Teesdale until 70 years ago.<sup>1</sup> Instead, furnaces were built and coke came to be used instead of raw coal. After the opening of the first railway in 1825, the demand for iron rails as well as for girders, ships' plates and all kinds of wrought iron, became so great that the processes by which iron was produced, underwent great improvement. The raw material required in the manufacture were ironstone, coke and limestone. These were all readily available in or near S.W. Durham. Consequently ironworks were set up at Tow Law, for centuries associated with iron working, and at Witton Park.

It must be realised that, although coal had been worked in South West Durham for a considerable time prior to 1825, the tremendous expansion after 1825 was closely linked up with

<sup>1</sup> Within the memory of old farmers.

DISUSED BEEHIVE COKE OVENS

AT THISTLEFLAT CROOK

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the production of coke for the blast furnaces at Witton Park and Tow Law.<sup>1</sup> This fact is the underlying cause of the present depression in South-West Durham at least.

In the first place, coke was produced in beehive ovens. It was of good quality, largely because the coke was produced for its own value and not as the less important residue from which valuable by-products had been taken. Later - towards the end of the 19th Century - a variation of the beehive oven was introduced into some collieries. This consisted of a bricked, tunnel-like oven<sup>2</sup>, instead of the round, dome shaped type which is more common in the district. Well preserved specimens of the newer variety may be seen at New Copley Colliery, near Cockfield Station, side by side with the rounded beehive ovens. It was not until 1913 and 1914 that by-product ovens were introduced

<sup>1</sup> At Tow Law five blast furnaces were built in 1845.

<sup>2</sup> Locally known as the "bull dog" oven.

into South-West Durham on any large scale and they were constructed by German engineers.

It was found that coal of the Brockwell seam was excellent for the production of coke in beehive ovens and consequently the Brockwell seam was worked to the neglect of the others. Now this Seam (according to Kelly's Directory of Durham and Northumberland) is the lowest of any importance and has an average thickness of three feet. Dr. Hopkins in his paper on "Impoverished Areas in the Maudlin and Busty Seams in the Durham Coalfield" shows however, that there are great variations in the thickness. In South-West Durham the Brockwell seam is often much thicker than three feet. For instance, at Oakenshaw, Wooley (Stanley), near Crook, and Cornsay Collieries the seam is by far the thickest of those worked, varying in thickness from three to eight feet and at the Adelaide Pit, near

Shildon the thickness is five feet. Consequently throughout South-West Durham, shafts were put down to the Brockwell Seam. Working the bottom seam first could have two results. Either, sufficient coal was left in to hold up the roof (and by the bord and pillar system and again after 1809 by the panel system over 20 per cent of the coal had to remain), or the roof was let down and damage was caused to the Busty and Harvey Seams above. So ruthless was the feverish exploitation of the Brockwell seam, that it was highly probable that in many pits the upper seams did suffer as a result of subsidence.

During the Franco-Prussian War, the Iron industry and consequently the Coke industry enjoyed outstanding prosperity, but it was like the last mighty flare before the fires were quenched. By 1878 Witton Park was suffering from a falling off in the demand for wrought iron products and in 1882 the Iron Works were finally closed down.

Throughout the County a depression in the coal industry was also being experienced . In 1876, 24 pits were standing idle and by 1879 the number had exceeded 70 and, owing to the slackening in the demand for coke, many of these were in South-West and West Durham.

This depression in the heavy industries was largely due to the fact that manufacturers of France and Germany were now free to compete in the field of production and the demand for iron from County Durham was thereby restricted. Locally, however, the stoppage at Witton Park was largely due to the change over from iron to steel for rails, locomotive parts and ships' plates. Bolckow, Vaughan and Company were early engaged in the production of steel by the Bessemer process, but instead of introducing new plant into their existing irons works at Witton Park



they set up new works on Teeside at Eston, near to the valuable deposits of Cleveland ore discovered in 1850.<sup>1</sup> Witton Park, therefore, rose to fame through the iron industry, but fell back into obscurity through the introduction of steel.

Though the coking industry did revive after 1890, it was considerably limited. In the rapid working of the Brockwell seam, especially in the Gaunless valley, where the seam outcrops, little attention had been paid to keeping the pits free from water, except where work was in progress. The entry of streams was not prevented by systematic sealing and Mr. Arthur M. Hedley's Report on the subject, made at the request of the South-West Durham Development Board in February, 1938, suggests that in time of flood, water from the Gaunless percolates into the pits. During the periods of idleness

<sup>1</sup> Report on Bolckow, Vaughan & Co., Ltd. - Representative British Iron and Steel Makers (Iron and Coal Trade Review, January 1891).

after 1880, water accumulated in some South-West Durham collieries to such an extent that they could not be reopened. For instance, Lands Colliery was drowned during the 1892 coal strike, and has never been worked since. The accumulation of water in the Brockwell seam in the south western part of the coalfield had three results. As the water rose in the shafts, it became increasingly evident that the upper seams could not be worked unless new shafts were sunk or drifts were made, nor could coal remaining in the Brockwell seam be worked. Incidentally, subsequent coal mining in this area has been based on the drift method of working, whereby a level is excavated along the coal seam for the outcrop. Finally, owing to the dip of the coal measures towards the east, the water in the pits ran eastward in an attempt to find its

own level. As fresh supplies were being added by the streams in the Gaunless district, it soon became apparent that only co-operation in the matter of pumping could prevent the water from drowning the larger pits in the neighbourhood of Bishop Auckland. The colliery companies interested, for various reasons did not co-operate and in July 1924 the Adelaide Colliery, Shildon filled up and work had to stop. When pumping stopped there, the flow reached St. Helen's Colliery, and stopped activities there before the end of the year. In 1925 the flood water reached West Auckland Townend Colliery and almost immediately afterwards Shildon Lodge Pit was flooded.

Now only the pumping at Auckland Park and Eldon is keeping Leasingthorne and the newly developed collieries, such as Dean and Chapter, free from a share of the accumulation. An

illustration of how serious is the problem is provided by the fact that Eldon Colliery had to close down in 1931 on account of the high cost of pumping. It was estimated that, for every ton of coal drawn, it was costing 4/0 for pumping water. The position is much more serious now. Pumping has to be maintained by a neighbouring Colliery Company even though no coal is being drawn at Eldon.

Whereas most of the coal in the Brockwell seam at least, may have been extracted in the Gaunless valley pits, it is generally accepted (even after the exaggeration of miners anxious for their old pit to restart is discounted) that large supplies of coal still remain in the Bishop Auckland locality. For instance, it is estimated that there is fifty years supply of coal left in the Brockwell seam in the Townend Pit, West Auckland.

Dr. Hopkins in his "Comments on the Northumberland and Durham coalfield" published in June 1938, remarks that a recent survey of the South West Durham Development Board has shown that 13 million tons of coal have been lost in that area owing to flooding of mines... The fact that between 1,400 and 1,500 men were employed at Eldon Colliery right up to the date of closing, suggests that supplies were by no means exhausted. Yet now, after at least 8 years of idleness, it is doubtful if it will ever be profitable to work coal in South West Durham again, when the extent of pumping operations which would make this possible, is considered.

From this it will be seen that the more important physical factors, which have led to the decline of employment in South West Durham are found in the inter-relation of the coal and the iron industries. In the first place, the concentration on the production of coke led to

the working of the Brockwell seam in particular, though later, other seams of good household coal e.g. Busty and Harvey seams, were exploited to some extent. Then after 1880, the depression in the iron industry, which resulted in pit stoppages, gave the opportunity for water to accumulate in the lower seams and, since no co-operative effort was made to prevent its spread, the excessive water in the South West Durham collieries is now the chief factor in preventing the reopening of the pits.

In the Rainton district, coal was not used for coking to the same extent as in South West Durham. Here the chief factor, which led to the decline of the mining industry seems to have been the method of working. In 1816 and 1817 five shafts were sunk in the Rainton district and three more were added by 1823. These were so close

together that they must have been worked on the bell system, by which the coal was worked round the base of the shaft within a small circumference, the shaft forming the handle and the workings the <sup>1</sup> bell. Similar small workings are scattered throughout the strip of land between the edge of the Magnesian Limestone Escarpment and the Wear from the neighbourhood of Ferryhill to Sunderland and in each case they seem to have been very limited in extent, reaching the top seams only. In this district, it seems possible that large pits may be opened at some future date, when the demand for coal exceeds the output from pits already established. Bowburn Colliery, which has developed so phenomenally in the last nine years, is a comparatively new pit worked on modern lines in a district which bears evidence of early exploitation. There seems to be no physical reason why other collieries should not

<sup>1</sup> Judgement on the legal action brought by the Consett Industrial and Provident Society Ltd. against the Consett Iron Co. Ltd. in respect to Land Subsidence on Lanchester Common in 1921.

develop along similar lines in this district, provided that the state of the coal trade was sufficiently prosperous.

A comparison may be made between the methods of exploitation which have led to a shrinkage of colliery employment in South West Durham and the Wearside district and those adopted in other more prosperous areas. Coal mining has been carried on in North West Durham for as long a period as in South West Durham. In fact intense exploitation began there in the middle 18th Century, whereas in South West Durham the real expansion of the industry did not commence until 1825. Yet North West Durham still has large pits employing over 1,000 men<sup>1</sup> each and the Holmeside and South Moor Colliery Company is extending operations at the Morrison Pits by tapping new seams. In this district, the upper seams were worked first and as they

<sup>1</sup> See Table on page 59



became exhausted, the shafts were lowered. Recently the Victoria seam, hitherto neglected, has been reached, and it is proving of considerable value. Still after at least 150 years of continuous mining in the West Stanley and South Moor district, it is estimated that there is sufficient coal remaining for activity at the present rate to go on for another 150 years.

The East Hetton Colliery at Kelloe has been worked continuously for 100 years, (the first shaft was sunk in 1837), yet there is a possibility that virgin seams may still be reached and at least 50 years; exploitation is anticipated. In this case, as in North West Durham the top seams were worked first and, though this has led to surface subsidence, it has proved a less wasteful method than that employed in South West Durham, whereby the lowest seam was worked to the detriment of the other seams.

CHAPTER FIVE.  
-----THE DISTRESSED AREAS.  
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Certain districts in County Durham, have up to this point, been picked out as being much more distressed than the rest of the coalfield, largely on the grounds of the absence of employment from the area over a period of years, which has led, directly or indirectly, to serious malnutrition among the people living there. While it is fully realised that the smaller areas, which have been mentioned, are certainly suffering as a result of the closing down of collieries, it is felt that, for several reasons, they are not so severely depressed as the large district of South-West Durham. Consequently, emphasis has been laid on the problems of this area centred at Bishop Auckland. This does not imply that the difficulties of the smaller distressed areas

are to be ignored, but rather that in an investigation of this nature, so many channels of enquiry were opened up, that it has been found extremely difficult to do full justice to each of the smaller areas.

Detailed discussion on South-West Durham will, it is hoped, suggest the importance of realising the problem of derelict village communities in County Durham, as a whole, and may, in addition, give an indication of the lines on which a fuller investigation into the smaller districts may be conducted.

CHAPTER SIX.  
-----SOUTH-WEST DURHAM  
-----ORIGINS AND MOVEMENT OF THE POPULATION.  
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In considering the subject of the Derelict Villages or Village Communities of South-West Durham, two facts must be appreciated. In the first place, the term village must be used in its broadest sense as meaning a small collection of houses, not necessarily possessed of some communal centre. Bearing in mind the nature of the early exploitation of the coal seams, it will be remembered that in the west and south west of the County, pits were sunk close together. As most of these had some accommodation for miners within a short distance, the number of isolated colliery rows, comprising about forty houses is not surprising. These groups have separate names and some feature of individuality which keeps them distinct from the nearest large village. Consequently they cannot be ignored and, as they are often larger than the "hamlets" of rural England (of under twenty houses) their inclusion under the heading of villages may

be justified. Map 10 shows how numerous are these isolated colliery rows, as distinct from villages with a church, chapel, village hall or school.

The second point to be taken into account is the fact that the whole area is not uniformly distressed. It cannot be said that every village is derelict, in the sense that its usefulness is finished. Investigations into the traditions and social life of the communities bring out striking differences in villages, which are almost adjoining. These are well worth considering in that they help to indicate which communities are suffering most severely from the effects of depression. Such details as the composition and movement of the population, the amount of initiative and organising ability, the proportion of old people and the number of young unemployables, throw important light on the present condition and future life of individual villages.

These aspects tend to be neglected in somewhat hasty surveys, but in any thorough investigation they must receive some consideration. Information on these points is, of course, much more readily obtained and assessed by one who is in personal contact with the district.

In South-West Durham the composition of the population has undergone frequent changes. It is justly said that a mining population is prone to move about, being much more ready to change its surroundings than its occupation; and this tendency was responsible for the increase in population a hundred years ago, and again about seventy years ago, as well as for the depletion experienced during the last twenty years. Particularly in the decades which followed the development of the railway system in this district, there was a steady drift of population into South-West

Durham from the Pennine Dales, especially Weardale, Teesdale and Swaledale. These early settlers, coming first to the upland localities around Butterknowle and Evenwood, and then drifting down to the Bishop Auckland district, formed the solid basis of an industrious population. Many dalespeople became associated with the developing railways, rather than the collieries, but the families of Bell, Raine, Lowes and Allinson from Teesdale and the Lonsdales, Emmersons and Waltons from Weardale still living in the mining villages around Bishop Auckland indicate that some became miners.

After the West Durham (Hartlepool) Railway opened up the rural districts north of Bishop Auckland for coal production, miners were drawn to Crook, Tow Law, Willington, Hunwick, Newfield, Binchester and Byers Green. Some came from the Tyne and Derwent valleys, when coal mining was reaching a mature stage,

but many were newcomers of farming stock from South Durham and North Yorkshire. After the Iron Works were set up at Tow Law and Witton Park in 1846, Welsh and Irish iron workers and coke drawers flocked to these attractive centres of employment. At Witton Park, two streets were occupied entirely by Welshmen, who were brought to the works by the Welsh management.

About 1850, there was a movement of people away from the Gaunless valley. This had the result of strengthening the already well-marked dales element in the mining villages in the Wear valley. When industry revived in the Gaunless district, the population of dales origin which had weathered the years of depression was augmented by other strains such as Welsh miners and Norfolk and Essex farmers.

In the boom years preceeding 1880, a veritable tidal wave of newcomers invaded this busy corner of the coalfield. The mixture of people in the district was



complicated by miners from Cornwall, Lancashire, Staffordshire, Derbyshire, North Yorkshire and even Norfolk and Essex, as well as fresh streams from North Wales and Ireland. It has already been stated that Witton Park Iron Works were of international repute, supplying wrought iron rails; girders and ships' plates among other things, to every developing country in the world and the collieries in the neighbourhood. basked in its reflected glory.

Labourers in the Iron Works earned £1 per day and good wages (for those days) could also be had in the coal mining industry, so that it is not surprising that there was a tremendous influx of workmen from all parts of the country. The Cornish miners who came via North Yorkshire to Bishop Auckland 69 years ago, introduced new methods into some of the collieries, e.g. Eldon and Crook and their presence in the locality

can still be traced in family names such as Curtis, Cohart, Sangster and Broadbury.

All of the incomers were not originally miners. About 1870 a Mr. Davies, who was a sawyer by trade came from Wrexham in North Wales to Trimdon Colliery, in reply to an advertisement for more men. Quarrymen, as well as lead miners, from North Wales were attracted to County Durham, particularly Trimdon, Kelloe and Chilton by the unusually high wages; and so numerous did the Welsh element become, that it is said by old miners that there were ten Welshmen to every Englishman working at the Dene Bridge Colliery (Chilton). In fact Welsh was the spoken language at this and other pits. The number of Welsh miners was partly due to the interest of Welsh officials and financiers in the South-West Durham coalfield, and their movement about the coalfield from one colliery to another

is, to some extent, due to the same association. There are still numerous families called Jones, Davies, Griffiths, Lewis, Evans and Bellis, which serve as a further reminder of the cosmopolitan nature of the Durham mining communities.

From Ireland came a steady stream of would-be miners and iron workers. It was a common practice for Irishmen to come to Durham County as harvesters for a season. In fact, Irish harvesters were employed each year at Grange Hill Farm, near Bishop Auckland until as recently as twenty years ago. In the days when even labourers could earn £1 per day at Witton Park, a change of occupation must have offered great possibilities to the poor farm labourers whose weekly wage averaged 7/6. Therefore it is not surprising to find that Irish harvesters sent for their families and other relations and settled in this Eldorado. To quote a case in point, a man named Sullivan came harvesting and was drafted into Witton Park Iron Works. He sent for his

family and prospered to such an extent that when he died, he bequeathed to them a good deal of property, in which he had invested his earnings. In the prosperous 1870's a large number of Irish came from the Wicklow district, where employment was declining, as a result of the closing of the sulphur mines. The miserable state of Irish farming, even after the Potato Famine of 1845-6, hurried on the migration, and boat loads of Irish crossed to Liverpool and thence to South-West Durham to find profitable employment in the pits. A Mr. Lee, aged 79, remembers crossing from Wicklow at the age of ten and starting work on arrival at Leasingthorne Colliery. Tottenham Rows (Coundon) were occupied in the seventies by a few of the Burns, Whalens, Kirkbrides, MrCricketts and Farrells, who came to that colliery. These Irish were mainly well-built, fair people, with organising ability and strongly developed family ties and they and their descendants have

left their mark on the social life of the villages in which they settled. Of course, some of them were quarrelsome and disputes, which were not always confined to words, with their Welsh and English rivals were a regular feature, especially in South Church, Witton Park and Kelloe. On the whole however, the Irish who settled in South-West Durham were energetic and industrious, unlike some of their dark haired cousins, who came at a later date into other parts of County Durham. In most cases, the Irish have clung to their Catholic doctrines and in this they form a distinct group in the communities among which they live. Many of them, too, preferred to work as coke drawers or furnacemen, rather than miners and this tended to preserve the differences suggested by nationality and religion.

In these boom years, men came from Lancashire, Cheshire, Staffordshire and Scotland in order to stake their claim on the profits of the mining industry. Some

Irishmen stayed for a while in Lancashire and then came on to Durham just as some Cornish immigrants stopped on the way to work in the Reeth lead mines (Swaledale) or in the Grosmont ironstone mines. Some were unfortunate, in that they stayed too long and found on their arrival in Durham about 1880 to 1885, that many of the pits had been laid in and even Witton Park - the lodestone of the whole coalfield - was dropping out of the picture.

The most amazing influx of would-be miners was from Norfolk. The wages of agricultural labourers were so low (6/0 to 7/0 per week) that about 1870, numbers of Norfolk farm hands came to try their fortunes at colliery work. Many of them found actual mining unsuitable after being accustomed to a life in the open, and a large number drifted to work at the coke ovens in the Butterknowle district. This is noticeable, and recalls the semi-agricultural origin of the earlier

immigrants to this district, where small holdings were commonly worked in conjunction with mining.

Later augmenting of population about 1900 was not so popular with the "older standards" (who had been in the district about thirty years), since it often resulted in strike breaking. For this reason the Welsh and Irish, who were brought or sent for by Colliery officials for the purpose of breaking strikes, were not popular and did not settle for long. The real basis of the mining population of South-West Durham was laid only about seventy years ago and it is very difficult now to trace many descendants of the indigenous population.

Each addition to the mining community brought its own traditions and mode of life and, though all worked together in the development of the coalfield, each group preserved its individuality for a considerable

length of time. The Welsh miners were largely responsible for the intense gardening and small holding cult which produced Kelloe's Flower and Vegetable Shows, as well as for the Musical Festivals held in many villages. The immigrants from Swaledale, Weardale and Teesdale have behind them a farming tradition which has made it easy for some of them to turn for a livelihood to small holdings. These different traditions cannot be enumerated fully here, but will be considered in connection with individual villages. It will be seen, however, that a community, consisting largely of Welsh stock may have reacted towards unemployment in quite a different way to one with a predominant Irish element. It is noticeable that, whereas, the Irish accept unemployment with resignation and form a somewhat stagnant element in distressed villages, the Welsh miners are often among the first to move away to seek employment. Consequently this investigation into the origin of the mining population justifies its ends.



Of recent years the movement of population has been away from South-West Durham. Migration has been of two kinds. In the first place movement has taken place within the coalfield and secondly there has been a movement away from Durham to the Midlands and the South.

The migration of miners from the Bytterknowle area to Leasingthorne and other developing collieries, at the beginning of the present century, was an early example of movement within the coalfield itself. With the general contraction of industry in South-West Durham as a whole, movement was less free. As a general rule, the first miners to move away from a derelict colliery are those in the prime of life, with sufficient strength as well as enterprise to adapt themselves to new and arduous conditions of work. Since 1926, numerous miners of the 30 to 45 age group have found work at Horden, Blackhall, Easington and Seaham Harbour and have gone with their families to live in the east of the County.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 1.

Another feature influencing local movement must be stressed, however. It frequently happens that displaced miners find new employment with the same Colliery Company. For instance, some of the miners who worked at Auckland Park and Leasingthorne Collieries before their decline, have found work at Dean and Chapter, Mainsforth, Chilton and Bowburn Collieries, all of which are owned by Dorman, Long and Co., Ltd. Miners, who were employed at the West Tees Colliery and St. Helens by the firm of Stobart and Co. or Messrs. Pease and Partners, have been taken on at Thrislington and Fishburn Collieries, both of which belong to Stobarts. This does not imply that the Colliery Company takes a beneficent interest in its displaced employees, but rather that the officials, who are transferred by the management, engage men, whom they know from previous experience to be good workmen when vacancies occur in their departments. This practice accounts for much of the daily travelling to employment which has already been noticed, as well as for the removal of numerous families to Dean Bank, Fishburn and Bowburn.

Migration resulting from Juvenile Transference, as well as the assisted movement of adults, has established colonies of South-West Durham families in Leicester, Coventry, Birmingham and other Midland Towns. For example, in January, 1938 it was reported that twelve families from Eden Pit Village had settled in the outskirts of Bedford. As regards the transference of juveniles, the boys and girls who have gone away are not necessarily the most intelligent. They must have been enterprising to be willing to leave the security, however poverty stricken, of home and plunge into factory work, which has been practically unknown in County Durham until recent years.

This draining of population is widespread and has left in many distressed villages, communities consisting of old people on the one hand and the less enterprising young people on the other. But even so, differences are noticeable within South-West Durham. West Auckland, situated as it is on a main road, is within travelling

distance of Evenwood and the Ferryhill district.

Consequently it still retains some of its more active miners of middle age. Coundon, being even nearer to the prosperous Ferryhill collieries, is likewise retaining some of its vigorous population. Being between Bishop Auckland and Ferryhill, but still within three miles of the market town, which is the centre of intercourse for all the villages round about, it has offered suitable accommodation for miners, who previously travelled from West Auckland or Eldon. Eldon in the same way still retains a fairly energetic community, several of whom travel to employment at Mainsforth, Fishburn, Chilton and the Dean and Chapter Colliery, Ferryhill. South Church, Byers Green, Fylands and Escomb, on the other hand, are villages of old people and very young married couples

Certain villages, for instance Binchester and Etherley, have always enjoyed a reputation for respectability.

South Church, Witton Park, Byers Green and Fylands are only a few, however, of the villages, where the population in prosperous days at least, deserved the title "a rough lot!" Other villages, for example, Coundon Grange and Thistleflat, have for some reason always had a reputation for inferiority and have, perhaps due to that reputation, become the homes of an inferior type of population.

These are but suggestions of local variations, which are to be found within the distressed area of South-West Durham and they will be dealt with more fully in relation to specific villages.

CHAPTER SEVEN.  
-----THE SUB-DIVISION OF  
SOUTH-WEST DURHAM  
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The division of South-West Durham into smaller units such as are indicated on Map has been based on the topography of the district and, to a certain extent, on the grouping of collieries. The Gaunless basin can be sub-divided into its upper and lower reaches but it forms an entity, distinct in methods of mining, composition of people and type of settlement from the rest of the district. The Etherley division is based upon the one time ownership of the collieries. Stobarts worked all the coal from the neighbourhood of Woodhouses across to Toronto, north of Bishop Auckland, and as the villages on the surface were largely constructed and used for the accommodation of their workmen, this group forms a distinct sub-region. The Crook valley up to Tow Law is comparable, in some measure, with the Gaunless Valley, as a separate unit and between it and the Wear (though crossing the river to include Newfield), is the group of villages, whose activities are now centred at Brancepeth Colliery, Willington. East of Bishop Auckland the

Auckland Park-Eldon collection of villages fills a small valley tributary to the Gaunless, and just north of it another group comprising Coundon, Leeholme and Leasingthorne owes its individuality to its dependence on Leasingthorne Colliery. North of Bishop Auckland in the direction of Spennymoor, are several isolated villages, namely, Binchester, Byers Green and Page Bank, which have little in common beyond the fact that they are all colliery villages and therefore, require separate treatment. Elsewhere the scattered villages are not sufficiently distressed to require consideration, except for Eden Pit village. This belongs to the Shildon group, and though Shildon which is an urban area, has not itself been included, the hamlet of Eden Pit must be dealt with, since it is from many viewpoints, a typical derelict mining village.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

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### THE GAUNLESS VALLEY.

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The Gaunless Valley lies in the extreme south-western sector of the Northumberland and Durham coalfield. From its moorland sources down to Fieldon's Bridge, it has been the scene of intensive mining for a hundred and fifty years. In fact, coal mining is recorded at Cockfield and Evenwood in the 14th Century.<sup>1</sup>

Several features distinguish it from the rest of South-West Durham. The most striking difference is to be found in the type of settlement. In the upper part of the valley, houses are scattered or loosely grouped in straggling villages. From Cockfield Fell, settlement on the north bank appears to be surprisingly dense, in view of the poor prospects of agriculture, yet there is no centre which could be picked out as a

<sup>1</sup>

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colliery village. Small groups of six or eight houses are frequent and single farms and houses in pairs are scattered by the roadside or in the fields.

The type of settlement suggests a different industrial development from the rest of the coalfield. The small groups of houses at frequent intervals are in many cases associated with the small landsale pits, which are numerous in the district. Larger groups such as Woodland, Butterknowle and Cockfield are found wherever coal mining has been undertaken on a large enough scale to employ two to five hundred miners. Elsewhere the widely scattered settlement is a result of agriculture.

The small scale of mining operations is due to the fact that the coal seams run out to the surface on the moors, west of Woodland and Cockfield,

and coal is therefore accessible at a very slight depth. It can be reached by shallow pits or drifts, which cost very little to construct, in comparison with the deep shafts in East Durham. It is, therefore, easier and less costly to work out the coal round the shaft or drift and then tap the coal at another point, than to develop extensive underground workings from one centre. Since this type of pit was most common in the district, except where the dip of the strata towards the south made deeper and therefore larger pits necessary, there was no incentive to build colliery villages near to any but the largest collieries.

Another noticeable feature in the Upper Gaunless valley is the close connection between mining and farming. This is most marked in the outlying villages and decreases towards the lower valley.

Partly on account of the somewhat bleak situation and poor condition of the land, there are no very large farms in the district. Some farms are sufficiently productive to support a family, but the majority of the holdings are small and consist of a few acres of meadow land and about the same amount of pasture. It has always been necessary to supplement the income from the small farms by earnings from quarrying or mining, and in the days when the mining industry was prosperous, it was difficult to decide whether the mining or the farming was the spare time occupation. The close connection between the two interests was strengthened by the inclination of many of the settlers in the valley. Coming from Teesdale, Weardale, Swaledale, Norfolk and Essex, the miners, who were attracted to the district last century, were mainly of farming

stock and felt more at home with a cow or two, a pig and a few hens to occupy their leisure time.

This does not imply that all the miners in the upper Gaunless valley were interested in farming and occupied small holdings. This was probably the case in the 17th Century, when farmers worked small drifts as a profitable side line, but it could not have applied after 1800, for already in 1801, there was a population of 517 in the parish of Lynesack and Softley (i.e. Butterknowle), which was heavy in comparison with Shildon, where there were only 101 persons, or Crook and Billy Row, with a population of 193 in the same year. There were not enough small farms for every family and some residents in the district were purely miners, even before the Haggerleases Railway opened up the valley about 1828 and led to rapid increase

in the mining population.

Until 1850, coal mining was carried on on a small scale and the district did not become overburdened with new miners. Small drifts and pits employing under a hundred men were scattered throughout the valley. It was not until after 1860 that the real expansion of the industry began. The valley was ablaze with beehive coke ovens, from which coke was sent to the Iron Works on the West coast. By 1890 the peak had been passed, but even then there was employment for several hundreds of miners in the district. Francis Whellan, writing in 1894, records some of the collieries which were producing coal and coke. In the Evenwood district, Evenwood<sup>colliery</sup> consisted of two pits, which gave employment to 300 men. Fifty coke ovens, attached to it, were disused at that time. Railey Fell (recently worked as West Tees Colliery) was standing idle, but coal for

its seventy coke ovens was obtained from Lands Colliery, where 100 men were employed. Two seams were worked at Norwood Colliery and another 200 men were engaged there. <sup>1</sup> At the same period, the Woodland group of collieries, consisting of Woodland, Crake Scar and New Copley Pits employed over 500 men, and all the coal produced was made into coke. The Diamond and Quarry Pits at Butterknowle gave work to another 500 miners.

Since 1900, mining on this scale has been abandoned, except at Evenwood, and conditions are very similar to those prevailing before 1850. The only important difference is that the population was increased during the forty years of prosperity (after 1860) beyond the normal capacity of the district, and small holdings and small drifts together are not sufficiently numerous to provide

employment for all. The miner-farmers are more fortunate than those, who were merely miners, because their farms at least provide some of the necessities of life, as well as an interest, which unemployed men so often lack. In view of the present extent of industrial development - and there appears to be no prospect of revival - the upper Gaunless valley is overpopulated. Attempts have been made to extend the small holding system and they have been so successful at Lands, that they could be introduced into other localities. Apart from this, there seems to be no possibility of absorbing the surplus population into industry within the district and only the ease of transport and the willingness to spend two or three hours each day in travelling to work will prevent a rapid decrease in the population. There is a certain amount of distress in the district

and a consideration of the villages in more detail, is necessary in order to find out where this is most seriously felt.

It should be noted that below ~~Evenwood~~ the Gaunless valley widens and settlement is more closely defined. The West Auckland district, while it has much in common with the upper Gaunless valley, is comparable to the coalmining district around Bishop Auckland and must be treated as a sub-region of the whole.



### WOODLAND.

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Until 1867, Woodland was an agricultural village of the type described. Situated over 1,000 feet above sea level on the ridge between the headwaters of the Bedburn and Gaunless, it looks down on the whole Gaunless valley. It stands on the edge of the moors and marks the farthest outpost of cultivation. Only the south-facing slopes dropping to the Cowley and Hindon Becks are of much agricultural value and even the best of the meadow land is marred by poor drainage resulting from subsidence. The majority of the small holdings are insufficient to support a family, without additional income from work in quarries or coal drifts.

In 1867, Woodlands Colliery was sunk by Messrs. Whitwell, Fryer, Grieveson and Dale, who subsequently formed

the Woodlands Coal Company. In the following years, the coal was tapped by drifts at Arngill and Hindon, which were worked in connection with the main colliery. The Woodland Coal Company also opened up Crake Scar Colliery in 1872 and developed New Copley or Wigglesworth Colliery, which was of earlier origin than Woodland Pit.

Almost all the coal produced by the Woodland Coal Co. at its numerous pits and drifts was used for coking. At Crake Scar, Woodland<sup>1</sup> and New Copley there were beehive and bull dog coke ovens and the coke was sent to Tudhoe Iron Works by way of the Woodland Branch of the Haggerleases Railway. At a later date, it was transported via Kendal to Iron Works at Barrow-in-Furness. Trade was steady and Woodland Colliery was the only one in the Gaunless valley, where work continued throughout the years of strikes and depression between 1878 and 1883. Before 1900, over 500 miners and coke oven men were employed

<sup>1</sup> There were 99 coke ovens at Woodland alone.

by the Company at its collieries.

It will be realised that coal mining on this scale was beyond the limits of earlier operations. It became the primary concern of the population and agriculture dropped back into second place. In spite of that, two-thirds of the families in the district had small holdings of five to twenty acres. Miners, as distinct from farmer-miners, were attracted to Woodland and the hamlets of Crake Scar, Copley and Burnt Houses, which were largely built in connection with the Woodland group of collieries. The new-comers were from a variety of districts. Some came from Crook and Howden-le-Wear, because one of the directors of the Coal Company had lived in that district. Others were from farther afield. Several families, e.g. Fields and Bowes, left work in the hat factories at Luton and took to coal mining at Woodland. A number of Essex farmers came seeking better

wages and took up work as coke-drawers. A few migrated north from Birmingham. In common with most of the mining villages in South-West Durham, Woodland Colliery attracted some Irish coke drawers, but the majority of these settled at Crake Scar, which was entirely an Irish colony. In addition to the miners, who came to live in the district, a large number travelled each day or each week-end from Egglestone, Mickleton and Middleton-in-Teesdale.

The influx of colliery workers into Woodland necessitated additional houses. Those built by the Colliery owners are recognisable by their names. Whitwell Terrace, Dale Terrace and Grieveson Place are all ex-colliery houses. Grieveson Place, commonly known as The Flats, stands apart from the main village and consists of twenty two, three and four-roomed houses arranged in streets. Whitwell Terrace and Dale Terrace, on the other hand, have blended into the general pattern

of the village and are not noticeable as colliery houses. A number of substantial stone houses have been built in the last forty years along the roadside in the frequent gaps between farm cottages, but they, too, are in keeping with the general appearance of the village.

After 1900, the collieries began to decline. New Copley Colliery was almost exhausted in 1901. In 1910, the Woodland Collieries were taken over by the Cargo Fleet Iron Co. All the coal was sent to Middlesbrough and the coke ovens were dismantled. This was the beginning of the end. The coke oven workers, who numbered almost half of the total employees, were no longer required and a large proportion of them went to Middlesbrough. In 1921, the collieries were discarded by the Cargo Fleet Iron Co. and in the next five years the remaining coal was worked by small local companies. Activity has now dropped back to the level of the pre-industrial period.

In the last fifteen years the population has decreased almost as quickly as it increased after 1867. An illustration of this is found in the attendance at the village school. Built to accommodate 260 children, it was almost full sixteen years ago. Now it is attended by only 78 children. Miners with families went to the coal mines in the Consett district, where boys were needed. Some went to work in Newcastle and Darlington and when Wooley Pit reopened in 1937, there was another emigration from Woodland. Now the village is by no means full and more than half of the houses in Grieveson Place, which have been privately owned since 1921, are standing empty at the present time.

Because of a steady movement away from the village, unemployment is not outstanding. In October 1937, out of a population of 600, only 44<sup>1</sup> were unemployed. In recent months the figure has dropped considerably.

<sup>1</sup>  
Ministry of Labour figure.

The people are enterprising and energetic and are engaged in a variety of occupations, mainly outside the district. Apart from numerous lorry drivers, 'bus drivers and conductors and those engaged in local drifts, some travel daily to a Winston quarry or to Egglestone and in recent months two 'bus loads of men have travelled each day to work on the construction of army huts at Catterick. Distance seems to be no object in their search for work and an unusual feature in view of the reputed distress in the village, is the number of people who own motor cycles and small cars.

Woodland, as a village, is not derelict. It is isolated, but this is not felt by its inhabitants to be a serious drawback. After sixty years of prosperity as a centre of coal mining, the village is fast slipping back into its rural life. Coal mining on a wide scale is finished, but the local farmers will undoubtedly continue for many years yet to scratch beneath the surface and augment their income by selling their limited supply in the neighbourhood.

### CRAKE SCAR.

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Unlike Woodland, Crake Scar was a colliery village. So little remains of it now, that it is scarcely worthy of description, except that it illustrates some of the worst features in the establishment of colliery villages last century. Two rows of one-storey houses of wood and brick and numbering eighteen in all, were situated in a particularly marshy piece of open moor and housed about 100 people. The nearest shop, post office or inn is at Woodland, a mile and a half away. The only excuse for a village in such a wild and lonely spot was the colliery with its eighty coke ovens. Now that these are dismantled, there is no reason for the continued existence of the village. At present only one Irish family carries on the memory of the once prosperous Irish settlement. Apart from them, Crake Scar is abandoned.



CRAKE SCAR.  
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The only house occupied now.

### COPLEY.

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Copley is a small village, lying in the valley south of Woodland. In common with the majority of the villages in the valley, settlement is semi-agricultural, but like Woodland, Copley grew after 1867, on account of its connection with Woodland Colliery.

It is not a colliery village, though it was the home of miners. The houses, of a variety of types, are privately owned and the majority of them were built during the prosperous period forty or fifty years ago, for the miners, who could not find houses at Woodland. Many of the inhabitants came from Arkengarthdale e.g. Hinds, Aldersons and Stubbs, and others, such as Wallaces and Stephenson were Teesdale families.

Now Copley, like Woodland, is reverting to a rural village. Its extra mining population is decreasing

through removals, and agriculture, supplemented by work at  
Arngill<sup>1</sup> or Hindon<sup>2</sup> Drifts, is the supreme interest in the  
village.

<sup>1</sup> Arngill drift employs 40-50 men.

<sup>2</sup> Hindon drift employed 4-5 men.

### BURNT HOUSES.

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Burnt Houses, near Cockfield, is described here, because it was a colliery village owned by the Woodland Coal Company and connected with New Copley Colliery (near Cockfield Station).

It ranks as a derelict village for several reasons. The Colliery, for which the village was built seventy years ago, is exhausted, and the present drift at Wigglesworth is incapable of employing more than twenty men.<sup>1</sup> Apart from local drifts of this nature, the only employment to be found in the district is at Gordon House Colliery and very few men from Burnt Houses are engaged there. Unlike Woodland and Copley, or the neighbouring village of Cockfield, settlement has no connection with the land and, as a

<sup>1</sup> Only 12 men were employed in 1936 (Colliery Year Book).

result, the unemployed section of the community is dependent entirely upon unemployment benefit or in many cases on Public Assistance.

In population, Burnt Houses has a different standing to the rest of the villages in the Gaunless Valley. Although it usually considered as part of Cockfield, except by residents in the district, there is little in common between the two villages. Since mining employment in the immediate neighbourhood declined, the miners, who were employed at New Copley or Gordon House Collieries, have moved away and now only a few families living in the Front Street can remember the prosperous days in the early part of the century, when Burnt Houses was a respectable little mining village. The poorer houses in the side streets are occupied by strangers to the district, who have come in since the colliery houses were bought up by a dealer in slum property. Families do not

stay long and there is a constant movement in and out of the village, especially to and from Tow Law and Witton Park. Many of the children are under-nourished and of a poor physical type and they account for a large proportion of the malnutrition found at the two Cockfield Schools. There is no doubt that the standard of the people of Burnt Houses has deteriorated since 1924 and now, except for a few of the old natives, the houses are occupied by families, who drift from one village to another and help neither to develop nor maintain the communal spirit, which was until recent years such an admirable feature of North country mining villages.

Nor are housing conditions good enough to justify the continued existence of the village. Built of brick and similar in arrangement and type

to those at Grieveson Place, Woodlands, the colliery houses were sold by the Woodland Coal Company in 1921. They are in poor repair but the lowest rents are 6/0 per week for a three-roomed house. Of the 46 houses in the village, thirty are now condemned as unfit for human habitation and are to be demolished. At least eighteen of the tenants will be glad to leave the isolation and poor housing conditions at Burnt Houses, where they have no ties, and move into better houses elsewhere. When even the inhabitants consider that the village is derelict, it must be agreed that it is in a truly distressed condition.

### BUTTERKNOWLE.

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The name Butterknowle covers a large area and numerous small groups of houses, such as South Side, The Howle and High Wham are included in it, but these are too scattered and of too little consequence to be considered individually.

The main village of Butterknowle is situated between the Grewburn and South Side Becks, before they join the Gaunless. The lower end of the village is known as the Slack, meaning "the hollow".

Like Woodland, Butterknowle is of pre-industrial origin, but coalmining at Norwood, Copley Bent and Butterknowle was of sufficient importance before 1828 to account for the large proportion of miners in the community, as well as the construction of the Haggerleases branch of the Stockton and



Darlington Railway up the Gaunless Valley.

The period of greatest prosperity was, however, the forty years at the end of the last century. Between 1851 and 1871 the population figure of Lynesack and Softley parish almost doubled and in the next ten years another 1,000 inhabitants settled in the district, bringing the population figure up to 2,347. The attraction was found in the collieries and coke ovens. The Diamond and Quarry Pits employed 500 men and Gordon Pit and Marsfield Colliery apart from Lands and Norwood Pits were responsible for several hundred more. The coal was coked and sent to Iron Works on the West Coast.

The influx of miners, in greater numbers than at Woodland, necessitated the building of new houses. Diamond Row, consisting of fourteen to twenty four-roomed houses was named after the old

pit. Cross Row were houses of the three-roomed type and The Mansions, commonly called Essex Row, because of the Essex immigrants who lived there, were two-roomed, wood-faced houses over-looking the coke ovens.

Butterknowle was unfortunate in that the owners of the colliery became involved in legal proceedings over subsidence and closed the colliery as a result. Lands Colliery ceased operations owing to the fact that it had become flooded during a strike in 1892. Norwood and some of the smaller collieries were exhausted. Consequently before 1900, depression had set in at Butterknowle. Now only drifts and small pits, of which Lowson's Colliery employing 100 men,<sup>1</sup> is the largest, serve as a link with the coal mining days.

The result has been a steady depletion of the population. In 1901, the population figure was 2,989. In 1937, it had dropped to 1,625. Many of

<sup>1</sup> This has now closed down.

the old colliery houses are deserted and the district is fast returning to its pre-industrial function. It cannot be considered as derelict, even though coal mining is in a distressed condition.

### LANDS.

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Between Butterknowle and Evenwood lies the village of Lands, specified as High Lands in distinction from the tiny hamlet of Low Lands in the valley alongside the Haggerleases Railway.

It consists of 64 houses, built in 1873 and 1874 in connection with Lands Colliery. Twelve four-roomed stone houses in Cross Row were leased to the Colliery Company, and the two-roomed, wood-faced houses in Lands Bank were owned directly by them, so that practically the whole village was looked upon as Colliery property. Not more than ten privately-owned houses have been added to the village to bring it to its present size. Until about 1900 there was no water in the village and in summer, queues began to form soon after daybreak at the trickling spring

half a mile away, from which supplies were obtained.

The village was one of the earliest in the district to lose its reason for existence. Lands Colliery, with its three shafts, employed miners from Butterknowle, Toft Hill, Ramshaw and Cockfield as well as those living in the village itself. In 1890, 100 men were employed there, but in 1892 there was a strike and the pumping arrangements were neglected, with the disastrous result that the colliery was drowned. Since that time no effort has been made to de-water the pit, in spite of the fact that local miners are convinced that sufficient coal remains, to justify the expense of installing modern pumps. In recent years a local firm has been engaged in winning coal from the top seams, which outcrop towards Morley, but operations have now ceased and the hundred men working in the drift are unemployed.

This mining just below the surface has resulted in the subsidence of acres of good farming land. The farms affected by pit falls were bought by the Colliery Company, so that no liability would be incurred for the damage, and now they are untenanted, because the land requires levelling and extensive reconditioning.

Mining is now virtually a thing of the past at Lands. Some miners are employed at drifts in the Butterknowle district and at Gordon House Colliery, and a few worked at West Tees Colliery, Ramshaw, before it closed down. Employed miners form only a minority of the population, but the rest are not all unemployed. On the contrary, the people of Lands have shown that they can adapt themselves to changed conditions. Although they were born and bred miners and the possibility of ever needing to find other employment did not occur to them, the miners in the Gaunless

valley have always had some connection with the land. In many cases, it was confined to keeping a pig or a few hens, and when the pit was working, it was of secondary consideration and importance. Many of the miners were of farming stock, however, having connections with Weardale, Teesdale and Swaledale as well as Essex and Norfolk and when depression in the coal trade brought unemployment, some of them turned to the land for a livelihood. This is particularly true of Lands. Twenty-three years ago a large field was rented by the local Council and divided up into small holdings. About a dozen miners took advantage of the scheme and have made a success of poultry farming. The holdings average more than seven acres and support two or three cows and pigs, as well as poultry. The latter are by far the most important, however, and some holdings carry over 1,000 head of stock. The eggs are

collected by dealers and marketed in the big towns of the North-East.

The success of this small holding scheme speaks well of the initiative and resource of the Lands miners. It does not, however, supply employment to the whole community. Some miners continue to work intermittently as miners and accept the frequent periods of unemployment as inevitable. Many families have already left the village, which is undoubtedly isolated and has neither electric lighting nor other social amenities to commend it, and have found work in other districts. In 1929, several younger miners went to Doncaster and Newbiggen-by-the-Sea. Constant removals have resulted in the decay in village life, which is becoming so evident throughout the coalfield. Strangers, including a family of gypsies, have settled in the village but have not, for instance, taken the places of those who have left, in the village chapel, which for sixty



years has been the centre of the communal life of Lands. The new families reside in the village, rather than live in it as members of the community. This is one of the results most common in the expropriation of colliery property and will lead eventually to the complete disintegration of old colliery villages. At present Lands has not reached an advanced stage of deterioration, mainly on account of the virile enterprise of some of its people. If the small holding system can be expanded, it may yet save the village from the decay, which is already in evidence at Burnt Houses, for instance. Against this must be balanced the isolation and lack of social amenities and the important fact that the houses, while satisfactory now, have lasted for over 60 years and will undoubtedly need modernising in the not far distant future.

### COCKFIELD.

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Cockfield is a large village of over 2,000 inhabitants situated over 700 feet above sea level on the highest part of Cockfield Fell. Already in 1857, it was a well established village of the wide street type, and each house had a croft or narrow strip of land running out as far as the boundary wall.<sup>1</sup> The small holdings are carved out of the fell itself and are not fertile enough to maintain a farming community, without some additional support. Evidences of subsidiary industry are widespread. In the mile-wide strip between the Gaunless and the village, are the disused shafts and small heapsteads of numerous pits and drifts, 22 of which were marked on the 1897 map of the district.

<sup>1</sup> See Map 12.

The population figures for the village show that there were two periods of industrial expansion during the last century. The first of these, ending before 1851, was connected with the development of small collieries such as Storey Lodge, along the line of the Haggerleases Railway. They were not large collieries and only resulted in increasing the population from 475 in 1811 to 944 persons in 1841. This period of prosperity was followed by lean times about 1851. This was marked throughout the Upper Gaunless valley by a noticeable drop in population. At Cockfield, a third of the inhabitants left the village. The reason for this is not clear, and as it relates to a period almost ninety years ago, it is difficult to investigate. Old residents in the district vaguely remember hearing their parents speak of the Black Bread Days during the Crimean War, but cannot give

reasons for the depression. It was fortunate for the unwanted population, that numerous pits were being sunk at that time in the Wear valley e.g. at Newfield, Hunwick, Crook, Willington and Page Bank, to name only a few. There was therefore, a drift of population from the Gaunless valley for a period of ten years and agriculture came into its own again.

After 1860, there was a revival in coal mining in the Gaunless valley. At Cockfield industrial prosperity was closely linked with Gordon House Pit, which was still employing 507 men and boys in 1929, although it was said in the early years of the present century that coal was nearing exhaustion. The greatest increase in population was connected with the expansion of the Colliery in 1893 and by 1901 the number of inhabitants had reached 1,857, which was roughly three times the number resident in the village fifty years earlier.

After the Great War came depression and work at Gordon House Colliery became less regular. In 1926, the pit closed down and numerous families moved away from Cockfield, in particular to Doncaster and Newbiggin-by-the-Sea. The number of children attending the two village schools dropped considerably and there were many empty houses. After several months, the colliery was reopened and some of the miners, who had left the village, returned to work at Gordon House. In August 1930, the colliery again closed down and, when work was restarted, it was in connection with Randolph Colliery at Evenwood. Though no coals are drawn at Cockfield, a considerable number of men from that village are still employed at the pit. In addition, several men still find work in local drifts such as Wigglesworth and Raby

Moor and 23 men from Cockfield were employed at West Tees Colliery, Ramshaw, until it closed down in August, 1939. The Whin Sill crosses Cockfield Fell and quarries at Esperley used to employ a few men, though they are closed at present.

In spite of the presence of a centre of employment, though of reduced capacity, there is some evidence of distress in the village. For instance, of the 341 children attending school at Cockfield, 172 are in receipt of free milk. In addition, the village has been chosen as one of the places in County Durham, where school meals seem necessary. Actually these two facts overestimate the distress found in Cockfield itself, since it must be remembered that the nearby hamlet of Burnt Houses<sup>1</sup>, has no school, but provides the Cockfield schools with the greater part of their undernourished children. The distress

<sup>1</sup> See page 158

which calls for the provision of school meals must be associated with Burnt Houses rather than Cockfield. In October 1937, only 185 adults out of a total population of 2,232 were unemployed and, though this figure has risen with the closing down of West Tees Colliery and Lowson's pit at Lands in 1939, the position still compares favourably with the almost complete lack of employment at Escombe and Witton Park.

Cockfield is in a similar position to Evenwood in that, while there is yet employment, there is little probability of expansion. Like the other villages of South-West Durham, it is declining, but it has not yet reached dereliction. The village cannot hold the interests of its young people, but the community retains some of the energy and adaptability, which helped the Essex farmers to turn to coal mining. The population is decreasing

by removals and it seems likely that it will adjust itself to the limitations of present day coal mining of its own volition. There seems no danger of Cockfield becoming an attractive collecting point for a residual ~~un~~employed or unemployable population.



### EVENWOOD.

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Evenwood at the present time is less distressed than any other village in the Gaunless valley. Since 1897, it has expanded to embrace the three small hamlets, by name Stones End, Swan's Row and The Oaks, which lie between the village green and the Gaunless, half a mile to the north. The growth of the village in the last forty years has been closely connected with the development of Randolph Pit, which was sunk in 1892 and has given steady employment up to the present time to between 500 and 1,000 miners and coke oven men.

Coal mining at Evenwood is not a recent feature. It was here that coal together with ironstone<sup>1</sup> was worked in the 14th and 15th Centuries. Between 1821 and 1845, this locality was the scene of great activity and coal was worked at Thrushwood, Storey Lodge,

Gordon Gill and at Evenwood itself. It was the most populous part of the valley and the colliery hamlets at The Oaks and Gordon Gill were among the first colliery houses to be built in South-West Durham. The district underwent depression in 1851 and again in the unsettled years between 1878 and 1882, but apart from those short periods, when miners left the village, employment has been steady up to the present time.

Unlike the villages of Woodland, Butterknowle and Cockfield already described, Evenwood cannot, by small holdings, support more than a fraction of its present population. From a small rural village, it has grown into a prosperous mining village and except by drastic and wholesale depopulation, there is not possibility of a reversion to its primary purpose. Mining, since the beginning of last century has been on a larger scale than that found higher up the valley and, while it does not approach the size of those in the Wear Valley, the mining community is

large and distinct from the farming element.

At present the majority of the miners are working but prospects of continued employment are not bright.

Their future depends almost wholly upon Randolph Colliery and operations are not expanding. In fact, the number of miners engaged at the pit was reduced from 909 in 1929 to 575 in 1936<sup>1</sup> and further dismissals have followed. This has been connected with reorganisation in management and with the introduction of machine mining. Further, about thirty miners were engaged at the West Tees Colliery at Ramshaw until the summer of 1939, but owing to the closing of this colliery, they are now out of employment.

There is, therefore, a certain amount of unemployment in the village. It is not of long duration, when compared with that at Escomb, for instance, and it is relieved by periods of temporary work on the roads. The partial depression has resulted in the removal of several

<sup>1</sup> Colliery Year Book. The 1936 figure includes those employed at Gordon House.

young miners and their wives to Bishop Auckland, Fishburn and Thrislington. Widespread evidences of distress are not found in the village and the community is vigorous and progressive - a feature which is shown in its management of the Social Service Centre.

Housing conditions are varied. Several streets of substantial houses with four or five rooms have been built privately in the last forty years. The Oaks, on the other hand, should be demolished. The colliery houses have two or three low rooms and very primitive earth closets stand across the rough, unsurfaced roadway opposite to the front doors.

In spite of its somewhat restricted industry and the unsuitable houses to be found in some parts of the village, Evenwood cannot be classed as derelict, though the first effects of depression are beginning to make themselves felt.

### RAMSHAW.

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Ramshaw is a scattered hamlet of about eighty houses, linked with Evenwood by the Gaunless bridge. It consists chiefly of old colliery property. The main centre of the village lies between Evenwood Railway Station and the Gaunless, but isolated colliery rows, hidden in hollows in the valley of the Gaunless Beck are also included in it.

In 1937 and 1938 Ramshaw was a relatively prosperous village. Over seventy per cent. of its employable inhabitants were occupied in mining either at the Randolph Pit at Evenwood less than a mile away or at the West Tees Colliery in the village itself or in one of the small local drifts. Its prosperity depended largely upon West Tees Colliery, which after

WEST TEES COLLIERY, RAMSHAW.

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Closed Summer, 1939.

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its opening in 1936, absorbed the unwanted miners, who had been displaced as a result of the restriction of operations at the Randolph Colliery.<sup>1</sup> This newly opened colliery, which was worked by the firm of Stobart and Co., consisted of a series of drifts, driven into the hillside as near as possible to the outcrop edge of the various seams and in all 231 men and boys were employed there in September 1937.<sup>2</sup> Of these only 68 were drawn from Evenwood and Ramshaw while the majority of the remainder cycled or walked in from Toft Hill, Etherley and Witton Park. This feature is explained by the fact that there was not a large surplus of unemployed miners in Evenwood and Ramshaw at the time when the new colliery was opened and the main supply was drawn from villages, which for almost a century had been connected with Stobart's collieries.

<sup>1</sup> Number of employees 1923 931; 1929 909; 1936 575.

<sup>2</sup> Colliery Manager's figure.

In the summer of 1939, the West Tees Colliery closed down, in spite of the local forecast, that it would develop into a larger concern than even Randolph Colliery. Actually this cycle of events had taken place in the past, for the West Tees Colliery was only a new name for a series of older pits in the locality known variously as Railey Fell, Gordon Gill and Bowes Close. Its closing down qualified Ramshaw for a place among the distressed villages of South-West Durham. In previous periods of depression, displaced miners found employment at the Gordon House Colliery (Cockfield), at the Randolph Colliery (Evenwood) or at one of the West Auckland-St. Helen's pits, but, in the present instance, restriction in local industry has made re-employment in the locality difficult. Consequently the unemployment figure has risen. This may only be a temporary phase, since there is a



possibility that the colliery will be reopened when another lease is arranged.

A comparison of the circumstances prevailing in 1937 and 1939 shows how slight is the margin between prosperity and depression in the small colliery villages, where mining on a small scale is the only means of livelihood. Though Ramshaw cannot be considered as a derelict village, either in view of its unemployment percentage or employment facilities (work is still available within a mile), its outlook is not hopeful.

Housing conditions in Ramshaw are very typical of those found in many of the more scattered colliery villages. The two streets, which face each other across the road from Evenwood to Toft Hill, consist of two, three and four-roomed stone cottages. They show a drab, but trim front to the roadway, but travellers on the Bishop Auckland to Barnard Castle Railway may look down on to the low sloping roofs of the

back premises, which are reminiscent of Phoenix Row, Witton Park or the colliery rows at Rainton Gate, to mention but two examples.

The remainder of Ramshaw is scattered in short streets of five or seven houses, the only exception being a street of eighteen houses, which is situated a short distance east of West Tees Colliery. These houses are the best to be found in the scattered rows. They have four rooms and a garden at the front. There is no yard or privacy at the back, in spite of the fact that the narrow lane on to which the back door opens and in which their out buildings are situated, is the main approach to the street.

Taken as a whole, Ramshaw cannot be regarded as a derelict village. It is, however, in a rather worse position than its near neighbour,

Evenwood. Housing conditions are worse, in that there are fewer good houses in Ramshaw than Evenwood, and employment is rather more precarious. The figures relating to malnutrition among children are illustrative of the position in the two villages. In Evenwood a percentage of 30.6 out of a total number of 170 were in receipt of free milk in November 1938, while in Ramshaw out of a total of 144 children, 50% were considered undernourished.

### THE WEST AUCKLAND DISTRICT.

Below Evenwood the Gaunless meanders through a widening, flat-bottomed marshy valley towards its junction with the River Wear near to Bishop Auckland. In this region settlement is more nucleated than in the upper Gaunless Valley. The chief centre is the double village of West Auckland-St. Helens, both of which were already well established villages in the pre-industrial era. Two smaller villages, which are products of the 19th Century, are Fieldon's Bridge (or Fylands) and Tindale Crescent. South Church, on the banks of the Gaunless, a mile and a half nearer to its confluence with the Wear, will be included in the Auckland Park-Eldon group of villages. The only remaining village in this lower Gaunless district is the small agricultural hamlet of Woodhouses. Actually it has no industrial

significance now and need not be described in detail, but reference must be made to the numerous abandoned pits nearby, which were closely connected with St. Helen's Colliery.

The district forms a separate unit not only on account of its geographical compactness, but because it was mainly exploited for coal by the firm of Pease and Partners. The Townend Pit at West Auckland, worked by Bolckow, Vaughan & Co., Limited, was the chief exception. On the north side of the Gaunless, St. Helen's Colliery and the Woodhouses group form a network of underground workings stretching from the Gaunless north and west to the boundaries of Stobart's one-time interests.

Coal mining on a small scale has a long history in the neighbourhood of West Auckland, particularly on the slopes of Brusselton, where

several old shafts date from a period before 1800. Real industrial development, however, awaited the arrival of the Stockton and Darlington Railway in 1825. With transport difficulties solved, for the railway passed between the small town of West Auckland and the neighbouring village of St. Helen's, several pits were opened almost immediately. In 1826, borings were made near to the existing West Auckland Pit and two years later the firm of Pease and Partners began operations near to Broken Back Cottages. In four years three pits were sunk, namely the Emily, Emma and Engine Pits, all situated on the rising ground towards Woodhouses. In 1835, the Catherine Pit was sunk near to the present village of Tindale Crescent, and by 1847 Broken Back Pit near the St. Helen's road from Tindale Crescent had become the main pit of the group. Meanwhile pits had also

been started in 1835 at Woodhouse Close and Coppy Crooks. The latter had a short life of only eighteen years and Woodhouse Close Colliery worked only intermittently until 1850. St. Helen's or Broken Back Colliery became the most important in the district and its extensive waste heaps, covering the triangle from the present Trading Estate to Tindale Crescent and Fylands, are some indication of the scale of operations.

As a result of the expansion of coal mining, the population increased and the settlements in the district grew. The small town of West Auckland, situated round a pleasant and spacious village green, spread particularly in the direction of St. Helen's by the addition of numerous colliery rows. The street village of St. Helen's increased in size, until it became united in everything but name with its larger neighbour. A dismal colliery

row in the pit yard at St. Helen's Colliery and, after 1868, the village of Tindale Crescent were built in connection with the expanding network of Pease's collieries, and the colliery rows of Fylands, together with nine cottages in the pit yard, resulted from the opening of Coppy Crooks pit. Woodhouse Close Colliery gave birth to no colliery hamlet, but drew numerous miners from South Church, Fylands and Bishop Auckland.



### WEST AUCKLAND.

West Auckland was a small town of almost a thousand inhabitants at the beginning of last century and rivalled Bishop Auckland as an agricultural market, its horse fair being especially noted.

Without its 19th Century disfigurements, it must have been very similar in appearance to Staindrop. Now its Tudor Manor House is a brewery, and the extensive village green, denuded of any greenness during the coal mining period, is just beginning to show signs of the careful gardening efforts of unemployed miners during the last five years.

The growth of West Auckland to its present proportions was well on its way by 1859, since the population had more than doubled in the twenty years after the opening of the Stockton and Darlington

Railway. Much of this early colliery property was of poor quality at the outset and it is no great asset to the village now. A further increase in population in the boom years preceeding 1871 made new houses necessary and again, after 1900, several streets of red brick houses were added on the Evenwood and Darlington roads out of the village and between the village green and the Station. In a village of over 3,000 inhabitants it is impossible to describe housing conditions in detail, particularly when these show such great variations as are found in West Auckland. It is sufficient to say that the village needs tidying up and some of the oldest ex-colliery property should be demolished, but apart from this, the village is by no means derelict as far as housing conditions are concerned. Particularly poor houses are to be found around the eastern end of the green and south of the main village in back streets, which

lie between the Evenwood and Darlington roads. Some of the worst houses have already been demolished and their occupants have removed to other parts of the village or to the new estate of Council houses in Copeland Road.

Although West Auckland was originally an agricultural village of some note, it has been essentially a mining village for more than a hundred years. Of the numerous small pits in the vicinity, which engaged the attention of West Auckland miners, the Townend Colliery north of the green on the banks of the Gaunless was by far the most important. When it was closed down in 1925, as a result of excessive water, the village lost its chief centre of employment. About 600 miners were displaced, which meant that at least half of the 3,783 inhabitants were affected. Since 1925, small drifts employing under 50 men and

boys, often working thin seams under bad conditions, have kept alive the tradition of mining, but have by no means occupied the majority of the mining population.

Many of the displaced miners did find work, however. Officials were transferred to Fishburn and Thrislington and miners, whose reputation as efficient workmen recommended them for employment at these expanding pits, began to travel daily to work. Special buses collect miners for each shift and bring them back again at the end, adding one and a half to two hours to each man's working day. In spite of this drawback, together with the cost of daily transport, numerous miners continue to travel even after fifteen years. Several West Auckland men are also employed at Evenwood, both at the colliery and the coke ovens, but this is within

cycling or even walking distance. Others, employed at the Dean and Chapter and Chilton Collieries have removed to Ferryhill, since Ferryhill is considered a more desirable place of residence than Fishburn. Some have left West Auckland and found houses nearer to their employment, though not in the immediate neighbourhood, at Coundon or Leeholme, since these villages are still within reach of their friends and relatives. A few have succumbed to the advantages of living near to their employment and have reluctantly settled in Fishburn, but the isolation of this growing colliery village does not recommend itself to the majority of West Auckland miners or their wives. About six years ago a number of families left the village and found work in the mines of the Doncaster district.

When the miners who travel to work are considered, together with those, who are employed

at the Throstle Gill and Sparrowcock drifts on Brusselton, at the Spring Gardens drift and other small and often short-lived, concerns, it will be seen that a fair proportion of the mining population are in employment. West Auckland, being a small town in comparison with the purely mining villages, has shops, mostly of the house type and in addition, there are builders, plumbers, joiners, bus drivers and conductors, lorry drivers and railwaymen living in the village. There is also a brewery.

Unemployment is not therefore, so widespread as in many of the smaller villages in South-West Durham. It cannot be suggested, however, that West Auckland is in a prosperous condition, for, in spite of all the miners in scattered employment and the workmen engaged in other trades, 377 adults (almost entirely men) were unemployed in October, 1937.

The inhabitants of West Auckland are of mixed origin. In common with the rest of the coalfield, miners came to the village in its days of prosperity from Ireland, North Wales, Norfolk and Suffolk as well as from the West Durham and Yorkshire dales. The proportion of Irish families is large and the quarrelsome nature of this section of the community is said to have been responsible for a reputation of roughness, which attached itself to West Auckland in its more prosperous days. After fourteen years of unemployment in the village, the tendency to boisterousness has been subdued almost to the level of apathy. Many of the young people have found work in the South and Midlands and the majority of the remaining population are middle-aged or elderly. Out of a total of 3,783 inhabitants, only 403 are children of school age and in one street there is

not a single child.

West Auckland shows similar tendencies to other South-West Durham mining villages, where the colliery has closed down. Because it was not so entirely dependent upon mining, however, evidences of derelictness are not so apparent as in many smaller villages, such as Fylands or Burnt Houses.



### ST. HELEN'S.

St. Helen's, situated on the north bank of the Gaunless opposite to West Auckland, has grown from a small street village into a settlement of over 1,000 inhabitants during the last century. Its beautiful Church and Tudor manor house at the east end of the street are almost midway between St. Helen's Colliery (Broken Back) and West Auckland Colliery (Townend). As a result, the attention of the population has been divided between two rival centres of employment.

The village proper consists of about 150 houses. Half of them were already in existence in 1859. Except for the pre-industrial cottages, they were built to cope with the influx of population

between 1825 and 1849. By 1897 Peases had added a street of sixteen houses, named after themselves, to the village. The majority of their colliery houses connected with St. Helen's Colliery were built at Tindale Crescent, so that St. Helen's itself was not disfigured to any great extent by colliery rows. Since 1900, sixty houses have been added to the village and a new suburb has sprung up between St. Helen's and Tindale Crescent. On the whole, the village is clean and tidy with trees shading one side of the street. It has a well-kept appearance and housing conditions are fairly good, except for some poorer houses in and behind Front Street.

Before the post War depression, St. Helen's was in a favourable position to enjoy the prosperity of the district. Townend and Broken Back collieries each employed over 300 men and boys and St. Helen's

men were within easy reach of either. St. Helen's Colliery had beehive coke ovens and supplied coke via the Stockton and Darlington Railway to the Iron Works at Witton Park and later to the Iron and Steel Works on Tees-side. In 1924, however, St. Helen's Colliery closed down on account of the rapid accumulation of water, and, in the following year, Bolckow, Vaughan & Company's colliery at West Auckland was also flooded and compelled to close. Neither colliery has been reopened, though a local firm has been engaged in extracting household coal from the top seams on the Eden Royalty (West Auckland). Mining on a large scale is finished and there seems no hope of revival, unless a comprehensive scheme for dewatering the flooded pits of South-West Durham is undertaken.

Since the collieries closed, there has been no major centre of employment in the village,

but displaced miners have found work at Ferryhill, Fishburn and Chilton in a similar way to the West Auckland miners. In the village itself there is a poultry scheme run on similar lines to those at Etherley and Toronto, and small shops and garages provide work for a small number. Shaw, Knight & Company's Enamelstone Works at Tindale Crescent employ a few men and there are a number of railwaymen in the village.

St. Helen's has been chosen by the South-West Durham Development Board as the site of a modern Trading Estate. The waste heaps of St. Helen's Colliery have been levelled and four factories have been erected on the site. Actually the Trading Estate has not decreased adult unemployment in St. Helen's village. The factories have introduced an entirely new feature

into this part of the coalfield. Industry has always been based on coal mining, which has been a man's job, at least since child labour in the mines was abolished. The men and boys of the family were the wage earners, and employment among women and girls was rare and confined to domestic service. In the new factories, however, work is mainly in the hands of young girls of fifteen to twenty years and men are only employed in a few key positions. These have been brought into the district, because local men have had no experience of factory work. Scarcely any of the unemployed miners have been affected by factory employment, not necessarily because they cannot adapt themselves to this type of work, but because there is no place for them in the modern factory system. Some have derived benefit, in that their young daughters have obtained work there and add their scanty earnings to the family

income, but the miners cannot be convinced that the unemployment problem in South-West Durham can be remedied by the introduction of a system, which depends entirely upon juvenile labour. The unemployed miner finds it humiliating and contrary to a deeply ingrained tradition to allow his daughters to support him. Actually the St. Helen's Trading Estate absorbs some of the juvenile labour of Bishop Auckland and is a benefit to the locality, in that it lessens the need for young people to leave the district in search of factory employment and therefore it reduces the drain of population away from South-West Durham. New industries are certainly needed, but these must make some demand on adult labour, in order to reach the root of the problem and alleviate distress in the district.

### TINDALE CRESCENT.

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Tindale Crescent is a village of 149 houses situated midway between West Auckland and Bishop Auckland. About half of the houses are privately owned but Dent Street, consisting of 33 houses, belongs to the London and North Eastern Railway Company. The Crescent, or Tindale Row, comprising 40 houses, was built by Messrs. Pease and Partners for their workmen.

Tindale Crescent is not an old village, and its functions were varied. Until 1868, the only habitations in the locality were Broken Back Cottages, which have stood at the junction of the West Auckland and Shildon roads for over four hundred years. Colliery houses were not built here, as might have been expected, as an immediate result of the development of coal mining in the immediate neighbourhood. The colliery

houses, which were, incidentally, the first houses to be built in the village, were not erected until 1868, after the firm of Pease and Partners had been engaged for forty years in the production of coal in the St. Helen's and Woodhouses district. They were built at a period of prosperity and are an example of some of the best houses, which Pease and Partners constructed. Until 1883 they comprised the village of Tindale Crescent. Built of yellowish fire bricks from the firm's own brickyards and gabled in the style peculiar to Pease's houses, they have a neat, finished appearance. They have four rooms and self-contained yards and are still in a good state of repair.

It is worth while comparing this colliery row of forty houses, with the colliery row of similar length at Fylands, less than a quarter of a mile away. Fylands houses were built twenty-seven years earlier than Tindale



Row and were at the outset of a very inferior type. They are situated on low-lying, marshy ground, beside an evil-smelling river and a clay pit, whereas the site chosen for Tindale Row is high above the Gaunless on open rising ground. The difference in situation was reflected in the type of occupant. Whereas Fylands was always associated with coal hewers of a rough type, Tindale became the home of self-respecting skilled miners from Cornwall and Yorkshire. These differences, dating from the period when Tindale Crescent was purely a mining village, account to some extent for the present class distinctions between the two villages.

In 1883, Dent Street was built for the railwaymen, who were employed at the Fylands Engine Sheds. The addition of these 33 railway houses brought into the village a large number of dalespeople, many of whom considered themselves superior to the "pitters," as

they called the miners. The social standing of the village was, therefore, raised. More recent additions of four and five-roomed houses brought the village up to its present total of 149 houses and attracted a variety of workmen of a good type.

At present Tindale Crescent is situated near the most prosperous area in the immediate district. The Gas Works for the Bishop Auckland district are situated on the outskirts of the village and give employment for forty men, of whom, perhaps a dozen live in Tindale. Shaw, Knight's Brick and Sanitary Products Works give employment to 170 to 180 men, many of whom live in Tindale Crescent. The Fylands Engine Sheds and the Railway Engineering Shops at Shildon provide work for many of the railwaymen living in the village. The rest are employed as engine drivers, porters, signalmen, etc. in the

operating department. The town of Bishop Auckland is less than two miles away and girls and young women can find work in shops and in domestic service almost within walking distance of their homes. Boys and young men find employment in the town as artizans, 'bus conductors and drivers, lorry drivers and shop asistants. Finally, the St. Helen's Trading Estate is less than half a mile away and employment for juveniles may be obtained there.

Altogether, Tindale Crescent is one of the most fortunate villages in South-West Durham. In situation and housing conditions, it compares favourably with any 19th Century village in the district, and by reason of the variety of employment available to the community, it cannot be considered as derelict.

FYLANDS (OR FIELDON'S BRIDGE).

The two rows of low colliery houses, 41 in all, which are strung along the road from Tindale Crescent to Shildon, were built in 1838 by Luke Simpson for workmen at Coppy Crooks Colliery, which he had opened three years earlier. The site of the original Coppy Crooks Pit is marked by grass grown pit heaps and nine old cottages situated on the hill, 100 feet above the drift, which bears the same name.

The colliery village of Fylands, a village in no other respect than the individuality which marks it off from either Tindale Crescent or Shildon, has had varying fortunes. Its connection with Coppy Crooks Colliery was broken when the pit closed in 1852 and with the coal left in the colliery, it was transferred to Woodhouse Close Colliery, which had

restarted in 1850. Before long the village became associated with the developing Adelaide Pit and at a later period it housed coal hewers working at St. Helen's Colliery. In the process, it acquired a bad reputation as the home of a rough community. Since St. Helen's Colliery closed in 1928 the village has ceased to be a colliery village. The houses were sold in 1928 and are now privately owned. A few are owned by the occupiers, but the majority were purchased by a Butterknowle family. Old tenants pay 4/6 per week in rent, but to newcomers the rent is 6/0 per week.

The houses were originally four-roomed, stone dwellings with ladders to the upper storey. The end house, complete with cellars, was intended for a public house, but the licence was never granted. The houses have been converted into two-

roomed houses and staircases have been added. Since 1900, the ash pits and earth closets, situated across the road opposite to the front doors, have been removed and similar buildings - not enclosed in yards - have been erected on the narrow strip of mud bank between the River Gaunless and the back of the houses. Until these were made the houses had no back doors. None of the property has been scheduled for demolition yet, but even in their improved condition, these old houses are among the worst to be found anywhere in South-West Durham. Their situation is miserable in the extreme. Half of the houses face south towards Brusselton and the prospect is pleasant enough. At the west end of the row, however, an evil smelling clay pit is being filled in with refuse from Bishop Auckland and behind the houses flow the blackened waters of the Gaunless, between equally black banks littered with tarred hen

crees. The other half of the village looks northward towards the river.

The total population is 225, which for 41 two-roomed houses, suggests overcrowding. In a few cases two families live in the same house. There have not been many changes in the village in the last ten years, except that the one time miners are becoming older and young married couples have taken the houses of those who have died. That 125 out of the total population of 225 are children suggests a predominantly young community. The fact that 27 of the 35 children attending Fylands Bridge Infants School are on the Milk List suggests that the proportion of malnutrition is alarmingly high.

In spite of the fact that Fylands is situated on the edge of the most flourishing industrial district in the whole Bishop Auckland area, it has very little

connection with it.<sup>1</sup> Less than five men are employed at Shaw, Knight's Enamelstoneware Works and only two or three work at the Coppy Crooks and Sparrow Cock drifts, both less than half a mile away. Except for these there is almost total unemployment in the village.

In situation, housing conditions and from the standpoint of employment the village is derelict. It has no amenities of any description and many of the young people claim that they are slighted because the village is antiquated and isolated. It seems that ~~the~~ Fylands village has completely outgrown its usefulness and that the community would be happier and more healthy in more congenial surroundings elsewhere.

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The triangle between Fylands, Tindale Crescent and Green Lane has in it Shaw, Knight's Tile Works, Gas Works and Railway Engine Sheds.



CHAPTER NINE.  
-----ETHERLEY - WITTON PARK DISTRICT.  
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This name has been given to the district lying to the west of Bishop Auckland, which was mainly exploited for coal by the firm of Stobart and Company. Its boundaries are not clearly defined, but it almost covers the spur of fertile upland which separates the Gaunless and Wear valleys. In the west the region borders on the Butterknowle district and small landsale pits are numerous, but Morley has been included in the Etherley group because it was associated to some extent with Carterthorne Colliery. Near the southern boundary, Woodhouses, together with the Woodhouse Close Collieries, has been omitted, because the attraction, though variable, was chiefly towards St. Helen's Auckland. North of the Wear, Newton

Cap Colliery and Toronto are included in the district on account of their prominent position in Stobart's sphere of influence. The chief villages in the district not already mentioned are Toft Hill and High Etherley, which are situated on the highest part of the ridge; Low Etherley and Etherley Dene, which are strung out along the main road to Bishop Auckland, and Escomb and Witton Park, which lie between the main road and the river.

On account of faulting due to the Whin Sill, the coal measures lie very near to the surface in this district and coal mining has always been easy. In spite of mention in Boldon Book, of colliers at Escomb as early as the 12th Century, and a record of a derelict coal pit in 1243, few traces of coal mining activity were evident in the serene and pleasant countryside before 1800.

Small agricultural hamlets at Toft Hill, Escomb, Woodside and Morley and scattered farm houses were characteristic of the predominant occupation in the district.

Early in the 19th Century, three small pits were being worked by the firm of Stobart & Co., namely the Mary Ann, Jane and George Pits. The Mary Ann Pit which was connected with the Rush Pit and situated in the valley between High Etherley and Woodhouses, is said to be the oldest of the three, though there are records<sup>1</sup> that a pit was sunk near to Witton Park in 1756. This, most likely, refers to the Jane Pit, which became the terminus of the Stockton and Darlington Railway in 1825. Attempts to sink a shaft at Newton Cap as early as 1782 are also recorded.

The expansion of coal mining was due directly to the transport facilities which became available in 1825. In the pre-railway days, coals had to be trans-

<sup>1</sup> Victoria County History, Vol.11.

ported from the colliery either on the backs of asses or in carts. The railway, which ran through the district, offered cheaper and quicker transport and new collieries were sunk at Etherley, Witton Park and Etherley Dene. There was a change over from agriculture to mining, but as yet the population was not much increased<sup>1</sup> by immigrant miners and very few additions were made to the existing villages.

In 1846, however, a decision was made which changed the history not only of this district but of the whole of South-West Durham. The firm of Bolckow, Vaughan & Co., Limited chose a site a mile upstream from the George Pit at Escomb for the erection of four blast furnaces. They had experienced some difficulty in obtaining adequate quantities of pig iron from Tow Law and Consett, which were the nearest sources of supply to Teesside and they decided to

<sup>1</sup> In Escomb Parish the population increased from 162 to 282 between 1801 and 1831.

WITTON PARK IRON WORKS

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Engine House of Disused  
Iron Works.

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The Slag Works in the  
background employ thirty  
men.

Site of First Puddling  
Floor.

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Shell of Fitting Shop  
behind.

Extensive Slag Heaps  
in background



Iron and Slag core  
of blast furnace.



produce their own. At that time pig iron manufacturers were dependent for their supplies of ore on the coal measures strata and Bolckow, Vaughan & Co., Ltd. expected to obtain iron ore from the Bishop Auckland district. They were disappointed however, and had to supplement the supply of ore from Weardale by iron nodules picked up on the Whitby beach. This could be transported without difficulty on the Stockton and Darlington Railway and coking coal was plentiful in the immediate vicinity, so that the situation for the Iron Works was ideal.

The opening of blast furnaces at Witton Park had two immediate results. In the first place there was a veritable invasion of the district by Welsh and Irish iron workers. At first, 300 men were employed, but within a few years the number had increased to over 1,000. In the period of greatest prosperity, i.e. for twelve years before the Iron Works closed,

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE POPULATION OF ESCOMBE

1801 to 1901



Scale - Vertical. 1 inch = 500 persons. Horizontal.  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch = 10 years.

3,000 men and boys were engaged. An illustration of the effect on the locality is supplied by the population figure. Between 1841 and 1851 the number of inhabitants in the Escomb parish increased from 510 to 1293. Houses were urgently needed and street after street was rapidly built, until Witton Park became an accomplished fact. Over six hundred new houses of two, three and four rooms were built on the slope above the Iron Works and 100 more were constructed at Woodside, but they were not enough and as many as three families were crowded into some of the houses.

The second result of the erection of the blast furnaces was a boom in the coal trade. Phoenix Pit was sunk at Low Etherley in 1847 and Phoenix Row, dated 1854, remains as a memory of a pit, which was a failure. More successful operations were carried on at Woodhouse Close by Vaughan and the coal was coked for use in the



PHOENIX ROW, ETHERLEY.  
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Back of Phoenix Row.  
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Colliery houses built in 1854, being raised into  
two-storey dwellings to comply with modern requirements.

Iron Works either in the colliery beehive ovens or in those at the Iron Works. Within ten years of the establishment of the Iron Works, three borings were made at Etherley Dene, and operations were begun at various points around Etherley including Carterthorne. The George Pit at Escomb with its six rows of beehive coke ovens was enjoying phenomenal prosperity, since the coke produced there was of particularly good quality.

The expansion of coal mining led to an influx of miners into the district. Quite apart from the iron-workers of Witton Park, these newcomers required houses. These were built in some cases by private enterprise, but more often by or for the colliery company. About 100 three-roomed colliery houses were erected in Escomb for additional employees at the George Pit and an equal number of privately

built houses provided accommodation for the coke oven workers. The small village of Etherley Dene and the colliery rows known as Primrose Hill were constructed almost entirely by the firm of Stobarts for the miners engaged in the three Etherley Dene pits. After the Barrington Pit at Newton Cap was sunk in 1859, the colliery village of Toronto was built by the same colliery company.

The villages of Toft Hill, High and Low Etherley were attaining their present proportions about this time, too. Here, however, was a difference. These pleasant villages are well laid out and the varied and superior style in which they are built does not suggest association with mining. Yet they were colliery villages, inasmuch as they were closely connected with Stobart's collieries. The difference is explained by the fact that Henry

Stobart, the head of the firm, made his home in the village of Etherley, which was reserved for officials, clerical staff and others, engaged at the residence of Mr. Stobart. Toft Hill, an older farming village of small holdings, became dependent on High Etherley which encroached upon its domains, when Mr. Stobart became the Squire of the neighbourhood. Only in the lower part of Low Etherley were miners' rows in evidence and care was taken to preserve the immediate vicinity from the untidy signs of industry.

Already, therefore, there were distinctions between the villages of this district. Toronto and Etherley Dene were purely colliery villages. Witton Park was essentially an iron workers' village and from the beginning earned a reputation for roughness. Escomb developed into a colliery village, but remembered with a degree of pride its Saxon foundation

and preserved its good name. Toft Hill became a satellite to Etherley, which was the administrative capital of the district. It is illustrative of the different standing of Witton Park and Etherley, that the railway station, which is situated in Witton Park still bears the name of Etherley. It is said that the Etherley industrialists were afraid, that the notorious reputation of Witton Park would affect business adversely and sought to have the station named Etherley instead.

In spite of its bad name, however, Witton Park was by far the most important village in the district. In 1867 there were 76 puddling furnaces and two finishing mills there. The men employed at the Iron Works worked twelve hours per day and earned from £2 to £3 per week. This was regarded<sup>1</sup> as good pay for those days. In the period of

<sup>1</sup> Norfolk agricultural workers were earning 6/0 to 8/0 per week at the same period.

greatest prosperity during the Franco Prussian War iron workers could earn £1 per day. In fact, a 76 year old, life long resident of Escomb affirms that some men were earning £20 per week.<sup>1</sup> Such wealth had its consequences. Tradespeople visited Witton Park in preference to Bishop Auckland, and the town itself owes its commercial expansion to the spending capacity of the iron workers. Of course, excessive drunkenness and consequent fights between the Welsh, English and Irish elements were a regular result of the fortnightly pay days and this feature, rather than the benefits to trade, undoubtedly forms the basis of the unpleasant reputation now associated with the very name of Witton Park.

The downfall of Witton Park was almost as sudden and unexpected as its inception. The discovery of Cleveland ore in 1850 had only altered the source of raw materials for the well established Iron Works.

<sup>1</sup> Boys were not so well paid. One miner recalls working at Witton Park Iron Works in 1880 for 1/0 per 12 hour day.

After 1875, however, there was a distinct slackening in the demand for Witton Park wrought iron for two reasons. France and Germany were producing iron on their own account and in this country steel, made by the Bessemer process, was receiving preference. In 1879 the basic process of steel production was perfected, whereby Cleveland ores, in spite of their high phosphorus content, could be used instead of Spanish haematite. The far-seeing firm of Bōlckow, Vaughan & Co., realising that steel would be used instead of iron in future, had already in 1876 established a new plant for the production of steel at Eston on Teesside and when, after 1879, they found it possible to utilise Cleveland ores for the production of steel, they allowed the manufacture of wrought iron, for which the demand was lessening, to lapse. There was no point in adding to the cost of transport by laying

down new plant at Witton Park. Consequently the site and incidentally the village and community were abandoned in 1882.

The closing of the Iron Works spelt disaster for Witton Park, since the majority of the inhabitants were thrown out of work. Very little had been saved out of the earnings of prosperous years and almost immediately starvation threatened. Soup kitchens were opened and three-quarters of the total money paid out in poor relief in the Bishop Auckland Rural District found its way to the village. Work was to be found in other districts, however, and the iron workers did not remain long in idleness. Large numbers migrated to the iron and steel works on Teesside; many Welshmen returned to Wales and some went to America. Between 1881 and 1891 the population of Escomb parish dropped from 3982 to 3449. Of those who remained, the majority



became miners and found employment at the George Pit at Escomb. The wholesale departure of families from Witton Park resulted in the village being deserted. Whole streets of houses were boarded up and landlords were so anxious to get tenants for their houses, if only to prevent their property from falling into decay, that they offered them at a purely nominal rent of threepence per week. Some houses could even be had<sup>1</sup> rent free. The cheapness of the houses attracted a somewhat undesirable class of people and did not improve the reputation which the village already had.

In spite of this, a large part of the village was not reoccupied until after the War and Witton Park, the one time Ironopolis of South-West Durham, sank into obscurity as a poor neighbour of Escomb. In the years following the closing of the Iron Works, Witton Park was a perfect example of a derelict village, and had it

<sup>1</sup> C/f pages 40 and 243

not been for the miners engaged at the George Pit, Escomb, it might well have been completely abandoned.

It should be mentioned here that, towards the end of the 19th Century, the site of the Iron Works was "cleaned up" by the Darlington firm of Wake and Hollis. Between 1900 and 1904 they set up concrete works, brick flats and locomotive repair shops and made use of as much valuable scrap as possible. Puddler's tap, which had a high iron content, was collected and used as a flux in the manufacture of steel by the basic process. In short, everything of value was removed and when the site was again abandoned in 1910, the interrupted drainage, gaping holes and litter of rubbish tips gave it the completely derelict appearance it has to this day. This "cleaning up" process brought work to a few men in Witton Park, but, though the

exact numbers engaged there cannot be ascertained, the scale of employment was very small compared with that of the Iron Works.

The closing down of the Witton Park Iron Works affected the whole district, but after a short period of readjustment it was found that the only real effect on the mining industry was one of direction. Coke produced at Stobart's collieries was now sent to Teesside instead of to Witton Park. Production became more centralised, however, and several of the older collieries declined and closed down. The Jane Pit, situated across the railway from the Iron Works, closed in 1892, but drifts have been worked into it ever since. Even now a group of men are prospecting for coal there. Woodhouse Close Colliery had already closed in 1879 and the small Etherley Dene pits closed early in the 20th Century. The chief centres of employment after 1900

were the two Carterthorne Collieries (one belonging to Stobarts and West Carterthorne to Bradfords) the George Pit at Escomb and the more recently developed Newton Cap Colliery. Toft Hill and Morley supplied the majority of the miners working at the Carterthorne pits, Escomb and Witton Park housed the George Pit employees and Toronto those engaged at Newton Cap. Exploitation of the accessible coal seams in this district had, however, been so thorough and of such long duration that the coal was rapidly nearing exhaustion. Not even the boom in the coal trade caused by the Great War, could enable the George Pit to carry on production after 1916. Difficulty was being experienced in the Rush Pit, which was connected with the George Pit, owing to the Whin dyke and this closed down soon after the War. At full capacity 900 men had been employed at the George Pit.

As the available employment narrowed, the displaced miners were compelled to look outside the district for work. After the George Pit closed, Witton Park and Escomb miners were transferred to Newton Cap and the disused swing bridge across the Wear below Escomb is a reminder of this connection. Newton Cap could not absorb all the unemployed miners and a number found work at St. Helen's, West Auckland and Railey Fell.

Unsatisfactory conditions and consequent labour disputes after the War led to the closing of the two remaining centres of employment. Newton Cap Colliery closed in 1924 and 1400 men were displaced and the two Carterthorne pits, worked together since 1919, ceased operations in the following year, bringing unemployment to another 400 men.

Since 1925 there has been no centre of

employment of any size within the district. At first employment for some was found at collieries outside the immediate vicinity, particularly at Railey Fell (West Tees Colliery)<sup>1</sup> and Fishburn, both of which belong to the firm of Stobart and Company. In 1937, 95 of the 231 men employed at Railey Fell were from Toft Hill and Etherley and 42 more came from Witton Park. The closing down of the majority of the collieries in South-West Durham about the same time as in this locality made the competition for work keen and large numbers left the district altogether, many from Escomb finding work in the Nottingham district. Small landsale drifts, such as that already mentioned at Jane Pit and a similar concern operated by a Mr. Howe near the Rush Pit, offer periodic employment to a handful of men. Thirty men on an average are engaged at the Slag Works at Witton Park. The district is near

<sup>1</sup> Railey Fell has now been closed following the expiration of the lease.

enough to Bishop Auckland for some employment to be found there. A number of men from Etherley and Etherley Dene have obtained work at Wilson's Forge, the chief proprietor of which used to live at Etherley, and was an engineer with the firm of Stobart's. A few men from Witton Park are engaged at North Bitchburn Colliery, at drifts in the Crook district and at South Church. A number of young people from Escomb and Toronto work in shops or in domestic service in Bishop Auckland and a few are 'bus or lorry drivers. Poultry schemes have been started at Toronto, Escomb and Etherley. This variety of occupations, however, contributes very little towards solving the unemployment problem of the district, since in both Escomb and Witton Park about eighty per cent. of the population is said to be out of work.

Enough has been written on the development

<sup>1</sup>  
The figure cannot be based entirely on the number in receipt of Unemployment Benefit, since an equally large number no longer qualify for this and receive Unemployment Assistance or Public Assistance.

and decline of the district. It now remains to give some indication of local differences to be found in the condition of the affected villages at the present time:



### WITTON PARK.

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The rise and fall of Witton Park has already been sufficiently dealt with and it only remains to describe the village as it is to-day. Five parallel double streets of two, three and four-roomed houses are arranged in close formation on the slope behind the site of the Iron Works and the long row of Black Road at right angles to them stretches away towards Low Etherley<sup>1</sup>. The oldest houses, built hurriedly for the pioneer iron workers, were Stable Row and Garden Street. They were of rough stone and very solidly constructed, but Stable Row was pulled down some time ago and Garden Street is to be demolished, because the houses were damp. The other houses are mainly of brick and all have self-contained yards. Actually the houses in Witton Park are not in bad condition, but the regular

<sup>1</sup> See Map 15.

crowded arrangement and dirty, unmade streets together with the blackened appearance, resulting from close proximity to the Iron Works, give an exaggerated impression of squalid dreariness. Amenities in the village include a Y.M.C.A. Hut opened in 1920. Since 1935 the Community Service Council has introduced amenity schemes, which have resulted in the laying out of a children's playground and gardens and the construction of an occupational centre. Numerous public houses are a reminder of the fortnightly carousals prior to 1882. A picture house, several chapels and a Church complete the list of communal buildings.

Until 1914 a large part of Witton Park was still unoccupied, but in October that year Belgian refugees were brought into the village and the houses were occupied until the end of the War. Ten years

before this, the majority of the houses were offered for sale. Prospects of industrial revival in the district were so slight that there was no great demand and the firm of Bolckow, Vaughan & Co. sold sixty of their houses for £10 each. Some of the larger houses realised £30, but not a few of the older ones were sold at £5 each. Very few of the occupants bought houses - many because they had not the necessary £5 or £10 - and blocks of property passed into the hands of agents, whose chief object was to get back the initial cost of the houses in rents before the property was condemned. Houses were, therefore, let at 4/0 and 5/0 per week to any tenants. There is no doubt that this has led to an undesirable immigration of families of the lowest type. This has, however, been over-estimated, for residents in the district affirm that sixty per cent of the population of Witton Park

consists of old established families, who deplore the notoriety which has made the village a by-word. In the 1934 Ministry of Labour Report on the Distressed Areas, it is stated that since 1928, 75 families have moved out of Witton Park and Woodside and 102 families have moved in.

Some of the so-called newcomers are in reality young married people who have lived all their lives in the village. The widespread impression that Witton Park is occupied entirely by a drifting population of the lowest type is exaggerated and as much the result of the bad name which the village had, as its present condition.

Unemployment is widespread, both among old residents and newcomers and 518 out of the 600 children attending the two schools in the village are in receipt of free milk. The majority of the young people in the

village have never been employed or else have worked in summer seasons in domestic service at holiday resorts. For several seasons Witton Park boys have been engaged at certain of the Y.M.C.A. Holiday Camps, but it was found that though they were willing enough, lack of training for any kind of work made them tend to shirk tedious tasks and altogether they did not prove very satisfactory employees.

The common results of long standing unemployment are particularly noticeable at Witton Park. Subsistence for ten or fifteen years on the meagre allowances of Unemployment Benefit, Transitional Payments and Public Assistance have ground down the physical stamina of the population. Hopeless prospects and the absence of opportunity of employment have resulted in the foundation of an unemployable population. Finally the increasing immigration of an undesirable type stamps Witton Park as a derelict village.

### ESCOMB.

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Escomb is a village of 150 to 200 houses with a population of 640. The main part of the villages consists of short colliery rows of poor appearance, arranged in irregular fashion around a village green, in the centre of which stands one of the oldest Churches in England. A straggling street of rather better houses, climbing the hill to the new Church completes the extent of the village. In recent years a Recreation Ground has been laid out on a levelled tract of the George Pit heap and a substantial village hall has been erected under the auspices of the Community Service Council as a communal centre for the village.

The bulk of the houses in Escomb have three

rooms. About 100 of them were built and kept in decent repair by the firm of Stobarts. After the George Pit closed, they were sold, in much the same way as the Witton Park houses, for £30 or £40 each. Rents are slightly higher than at Witton Park, ranging from 5/0 to 7/6 per week. A number of houses in the lower part of Escomb have suffered as a result of pitfalls and some have been demolished on that account. This is an illustration of how near to the surface the coal seams are. In this connection it is interesting to notice that the flood waters in the denuded coal seams appear to be supporting the village. When pumping was started two or three years ago at Dabble Duck, one of the old Etherley Dene pits, it was found that a row of cottages in the lower part of Escomb began to move and some collapsed altogether. This matter will need further investigation, if ever Mr. Arthur M.

Hedley's recommendations for de-watering the mines of South-West Durham are put into operation.

Since the closing down of George Pit and Newton Cap Colliery<sup>24</sup>, half of the mining population of Escomb has left the village. A large number of families went to the Nottingham district and boys and girls have been transferred to employment in nearly every part of the country. The result is that the village is almost entirely inhabited by people of past middle age. The few young people who are left have found work in Bishop Auckland, which is within two miles, or are employed as 'bus or lorry drivers. Approximately eighty per cent. of the male population is said to be unemployed, but the number is difficult to estimate, since unemployment is of too long duration for the figure to be based on the 77 who are in receipt of Unemployment Benefit.



There are 148 children attending the school at Escomb and 119 of them are sufficiently undernourished to be receiving free milk. This indicates that the future population of the village will be of inferior physique. Added to this, there are no prospects of industrial reconstruction and agriculture cannot absorb the unwanted mining community, so that it seems as if this village, too, is derelict. At present there is no appreciable immigration of undesirables and a dogged determination on the part of the older people to make the best of a bad job is worthy of note. It should be remarked that a Small Holdings Scheme to absorb fourteen families was introduced in April 1936 at High Escomb, but since the families, who occupy the new houses in that connection are not Escomb people, it has not actually relieved the unemployment of the village. The scheme is not proving a great success and the ex-miners (from villages in the district) are finding it difficult to market their produce.

### TOFT HILL AND ETHERLEY.

Toft Hill and Etherley, in reality, comprises three villages, strung out on the road from Witton-le-Wear to Bishop Auckland, but in view of their similarity, they may be treated together. Toft Hill is the nearest approach to a mining village, but its appearance as an agricultural village belies its secondary purpose. High Etherley is definitely a residential village, while Low Etherley was the home of lesser officials. According to a Social Service Report made in January 1938, the unemployment percentage in Toft Hill, which is the poorest of the three villages, is 18. Compared with the almost total unemployment in Escomb and Witton Park this is so slight that these villages cannot be classed among the derelict mining villages. The number of people of

TOFT HILL AND ETHERLEY.



The main road through  
Toft Hill

N.B. Varied types of  
houses.

Etherley Poultry Scheme.



independent means living at Etherley has always given the village a superior social standing. It may be due to the desire of this section of the community to help their less fortunate neighbours, that the village of Toft Hill, which is not by any means one of the most distressed villages in the district, was adopted by the Board of Education Social Service Association. At any rate, since 1927 a children's playground has been laid out and a Club House constructed on the site of an old quarry under the auspices of the Community Service Council.

### ETHERLEY DENE.

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Etherley Dene is a small mining village about a mile from Bishop Auckland. It is so long since a pit was in operation there, that it is connected even by old residents with George Pit, Escomb. Judging from the size of the pit heaps at Dabbleduck (between the Weardale Railway and the river) and Jumbo Pit (in a field on the south side of the village), the mining operations in the vicinity of Etherley Dene barely passed the prospecting stage. Another pit known as Etherley Dene Colliery, situated south of the village, was worked so wastefully that the roof collapsed. Yet Stobart's built a village of colliery houses here, presumably to house miners who were expected to work in the Etherley Dene pits.

The village consists of 48 houses, arranged in short cross streets and alongside the road. Two

fields away, a longer row of 21 colliery houses known as Primrose Hill looks southward towards the main part of the village. The houses on the main road are of the four-roomed type and were reconditioned and fitted with new windows and doors about five years ago. The cross streets between the road and the stream are in poor condition and the roadways have never been made up. The bridle road leading to Primrose Hill has only had a good surface since 1937 and until then the inhabitants of these houses were virtually isolated in winter.

After Escomb George Pit closed in 1916, the miners found work at Newton Cap or St. Helen's Colliery, but for the last fifteen years there has been no hope of mining employment, except in small drifts and landsale collieries. For at least ten years the Quarry Drift Colliery Company has been working a drift into the old Newton Cap Royalty between Bishop Auckland and Etherley

Dene and a few of the forty employees there are from Etherley Dene. There is a ready market for the coal in the town. Less than six men are employed at Wilson's Forge in Bishop Auckland and a railwayman, a joiner and a butcher are among the few others who have work. Altogether <sup>1</sup>67 per cent of the men of the village were unemployed last year.

The village had lost its purpose almost before it was built and now it had deteriorated into a somewhat poor suburb of Bishop Auckland. As a village it has little individuality, and housing conditions are not good, so that the community could profitably be incorporated into the neighbouring town, if houses were available.

<sup>1</sup> Figure from Labour Exchange, Bishop Auckland.

TORONTO.  
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Toronto is a small village of colliery houses situated on the north bank of the Wear, less than a mile from Bishop Auckland. It owes its origin to Newton Cap Colliery, which lies behind the village.<sup>1</sup> Its 148 stone houses were all built by the firm of Stobarts soon after Newton Cap Colliery was sunk in 1859. Barrington Street, facing eastward at the east end of the village, is a reminder of the name of this pit. In common with most colliery villages, the houses are two and four-roomed. The rooms are large and well lighted and the houses are in good condition. Conversions to the water carriage system are in progress at present and when these are completed the houses will be as desirable as any to be found in the older colliery villages. Both in appearance and accommodation Toronto is far superior to Etherley Dene,

<sup>1</sup> See Map 16



the other colliery village in this district.

Toronto is not merely a collection of colliery houses. It has a church, a Methodist Chapel, a school and an Institute, besides a very popular and well attended Social Service Centre. Half of the village is made up of Jubilee Street, which faces south and south-west and fronts on to the main road from Crook to Bishop Auckland. Communication is good, therefore, and the village is within very easy reach of Bishop Auckland.

The village was extremely prosperous before 1914, when Newton Cap Colliery employed 1,400 men, many of whom came from Escomb, Witton Park and Bishop Auckland. After 1924, when the colliery closed, and particularly after 1930 when work at the by-products ovens ceased, there was no centre of employment within the village. In February 1938, thirty of the 180

insured workers were unemployed.<sup>1</sup> Since then, however, the colliery and adjoining brick works have been taken over by the North Bitchburn Fireclay Co., Limited and the brickyard has been reopened. Coal and seggar are worked in a drift into the old pit. Altogether 100 men are employed in the brickyard and the drift. This is a very small number compared with the 1,400 displaced when Stobarts gave up interest at Newton Cap. Nor are all the men now employed at Newton Cap living in Toronto. Some are from Witton Park and Escomb. There is very little unemployment in the village now, however, since apart from the drift and brickworks, miners are employed at Fishburn, Mainsforth and Brancepeth Collieries and four or five men work at Low Rough Lea Pipe Works. Those who are unemployed are men who were too old when Newton Cap closed in 1924 to find other employment.

From the standpoint of employment Toronto is

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Labour figure.

not derelict, even though the scale of operations is severely restricted. It is stated that coal is plentiful, a suggestion which is borne out by the fact that 1400 men were displaced at the time of closing. There is, therefore, a possibility of expansion, if the state of the coal trade justifies it. Housing conditions in the village are quite good and since the colliery houses passed into private hands, there has been no influx of an undesirable character. This has been almost impossible, since a large number of the houses were bought and are still owned by the occupiers. Further, the employment of several of the men and young people in Bishop Auckland suggests that Toronto no longer depends entirely upon its colliery. In spite of a migration from the village after the colliery closed, there are still a fair proportion

of young people in the village, and the fact that young and old co-operate extremely well in organising the Social Service Centre on a democratic basis, suggests that the community has not fallen into the lethargy which is commonly found in derelict villages.

The small holding settlement of thirty houses situated at the western end of the village has little connection with Toronto. It is actually in the Crook area and when it was opened in 1936, the unemployed men who took up holdings did not come from Toronto itself, but from anywhere in South-West Durham. Some are making a success of it, but many of the occupants are finding difficulty in making a livelihood. In reality it is a separate village with a distinct community and time will show whether it will justify its existence.

### MORLEY.

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The almost forgotten village of Morley lies on a bye road nearly two miles west of Toft Hill. Consisting of about a dozen houses strung along the road and another twenty houses scattered about the neighbouring countryside, this small hamlet is one of the most isolated in South-West Durham. There is no post office, public house nor shop within two miles of Morley and a small school and church were the only communal buildings, until a Social Service Centre was set up two years ago.

The village is similar in type to those in the Upper Gaunless district. The population is mainly dependent on small holdings, but mining in small landsale drifts augments the family income. During the period of prosperity up to 1914 these

drifts were numerous and though individually they were not of a very important nature, employment was continuous for the farmer-miners living at Morley. In addition, a few men worked at Carterthorne Colliery.

Since 1925 mining has been intermittent.

There is still periodic employment in small local drifts, which are of a temporary nature, being dependent on orders for household coal within South-West Durham.

Carterthorne Colliery has closed down entirely, however.

<sup>1</sup> Out of a total population of 102, 33 of whom were men, only six were unemployed in February 1938.

Like the villages in the Butterknowle district, this small hamlet has experienced depression during the last fourteen years, which has resulted in families moving away. The village cannot be said to be completely derelict, however, since agriculture and mining in small drifts still forms the basis of employment. The

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Labour figure.

community consists largely of older people, who are settled in their ways and used to the quiet life of the country. In short, Morley is slipping back into its role of an agricultural village.

## CHAPTER TEN.

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### CROOK AND TOW LAW DISTRICT.

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The Crook and Tow Law district is an extensive region, whose boundaries follow the watersheds enclosing the valley of the Beechburn Beck. It stretched seven miles from the moorland environs of Tow Law to the colliery village of High Grange, near the junction of the tributary valley with the River Wear. Between the two extremities of the valley there is a difference of 700 feet in altitude, and local conditions and attractions of employment are sufficiently varied to necessitate a sub-division of the district into three smaller regions. These are, for convenience, based on the three largest settlements, namely, Tow Law, Crook and Howden-le-Wear. The Tow Law sub-region, including Hedleyhope and East Hedleyhope is the most outlying. The Crook district takes in the colliery villages arranged in a semi-circle



round the north and western sides of the Crook basin and includes, in addition, the village of Bowden Close. This district forms an entity, because by far the greater part of the coal beneath it has been worked by Pease and Partners. South of Crook the valley narrows and Howden-le-Wear is the centre of a district embracing Fir Tree, Thistleflat and Greenhead, Rumby Hill, North Beechburn and High Grange as well as the colliery rows of Victoria and Howden Colliery which straggle along the valley. Crook and Tow Law themselves will not be discussed in detail, because they are towns and as such present problems beyond the scope of this study.

Though these sub-divisions are necessary for the more detailed description of the separate villages, the district may be considered as a whole, from the standpoint of general development.

The upland basin in which Crook now stands is

## GENERAL VIEW OF CROOK

(from Rumby Hill)

N.B. Stanley Church on skyline.



encircled by a rim of moorland reaching an altitude of over 1,000 feet at Tow Law. Crook itself is only 500 feet above sea level. Consequently the basin is somewhat sheltered and more useful for agriculture, than the bleak wind-swept moors around it. The valley below Crook is even more favourably situated for the development of farming. Because of its situation, therefore, agricultural homesteads<sup>1</sup> were set up in the Crook and Beechburn valley in early times but there was little activity of any other kind until the beginning of the 19th Century. Crook was an insignificant hamlet and the village of Billy Row was of more importance until about 1850. An illustration of the predominance of agricultural operations in the whole district is provided by the population figure, which for Crook and Billy Row Township as a whole was only 193 in 1801. In the parish there were 36 houses, occupied by forty families, thirty<sup>2</sup> of whom were chiefly engaged in farming. Hedleyhope

<sup>1</sup> References to Wodingfield (Woodiefield), Stanley and Billyraw are found in Bishop Hatfield's Survey made 1377 to 1380.

<sup>2</sup> Ref. The Story of Fifty Years of Crook Co-operative Society by Edward Lloyd. Page 19.

Township was occupied by 47 persons and Helmington Row<sup>1</sup> had a population of 121 in the same year.

In this valley, lying near the western fringe of the Coal Measures, coal mining has been an additional occupation since the 15th Century at least. Until the railway era however, coal was excavated in small drifts, which did not provide full time employment for more than a very small proportion of the community. The following passage illustrates the extent of operations as late as 1800. "About the year 1800, High Woodifield Colliery belonged to Mrs. Pearson. It was ten fathoms deep and employed six men. The output of coals was about 2,200 chaldrons, or about 2,800 tons annually.<sup>2</sup> Bitchburn Colliery, at the same time, belonged to the Bishop of Durham and was fifteen fathoms deep. It employed six men and the output was 2,600 chaldrons or about 3,315 tons per annum!"<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Census Returns.

<sup>2</sup> Output at Bowburn Colliery 68,000 tons monthly (816,000 tons annually) for 2,200 employees.

<sup>3</sup> The Story of Fifty Years of Crook Co-operative Society. Page 19.

The opening of the railway from Crook via Sunnybrow and the Rodd Hills Incline to Hartlepool soon after 1830, resulted in widespread mining activities in the valley. The coal seams were tapped by shallow pits or drifts at a number of places and before 1840 coal was worked at Thornley and Hedleyhope in the Tow Law district, at Roddymoor and Peases West, and at Bowden Close, Wheatbottom and Job's Hill east of Crook. In the four years from 1843 to 1846, eleven additional pits were opened in the district and by 1853, when the first burst of activity was dying down, coal was being worked at twenty-five different points. In addition, four blast furnaces were erected at Tow Law in 1846 and these gave an added impetus to mining in the immediate neighbourhood and resulted in the opening of over five hundred coke ovens within a few years. A smaller foundry was set up at Crook in 1840 and was carried on by the Turnbull family

until the beginning of the present century.

Operations were only on a small scale, rarely employing more than 200 or 300 men and in many cases only providing work for twenty or thirty. They had, however, a noticeable effect on the population and settlement in the valley. The population began to show a marked increase after 1831, and between 1831 and 1841, the figures rose from 200 to 538 in the Crook and Billy Row Township and from 97 to 435 in Helmington Row parish. After 1841, however, the increase was even more striking and by 1851, the population of Crook and Billy Row was 2,764, while that of Helmington Row had risen to 1,182.

The increase was not without its effect on the settlement of the valley. In 1857, Crook had the appearance of a rural village with colliery rows set around a spacious green. Wheatbottom was strung out along the road to Willington, much as it is at the present

time. A dozen miners cottages had been erected at Job's Hill near to the Colliery, which was opened in 1844. About half of Helmington Row had been built and the whole village of Bowden Close was already in existence. Rumby Hill, an old farming village, was almost complete and the beginnings of Howden-le-Wear and North Beechburn were in evidence, near to their respective collieries. North and north-west of Crook the old village of Billy Row had been enlarged by the addition of several of Pease's Rows. White Lea had been built and several rows at Tow Law had been constructed to house Irish and other iron workers.

Though fewer pits were sunk in the second half of the century, expansion was rapid until the depression which followed the Franco-Prussian War. New miners flocked into the district and about 1870, a large proportion of these were Irishmen. White Lea was inhabited almost entirely by Irish miners and coke

drawers. In 1888, after the Ironstone mines near Grosmont closed down, there was an immigration of Yorkshiremen, and with them came many Cornish miners, who had been working in the Yorkshire ironstone mines, after the dismantling of the Cornish tin mines. Together with Lancashire miners, these form the main strains in the present population of the valley. Tow Law, situated on the edge of the moorland, attracted numerous workers from Swaledale and Weardale, but large numbers of Irish coke drawers and iron workers have also left their mark on the present population. Very few Welshmen came into the district, though occasional families of Jones and Edwards are to be found.

The period of prosperity before the Great War did not encourage new enterprises in this valley and since then, fresh mining activities have been limited to small drift workings. Undoubtedly, the period between 1840 and 1880 was the most prosperous for the Crook and Tow Law district.



After 1900, signs of restriction in coal-mining became evident in the district. White Lea Drift closed in 1904 and 300 men were displaced. Most of them were taken on at other collieries, so depression was not acute. In 1911 Stanley Pit closed and in 1923 five pits, including Black Prince Colliery at Tow Law were standing idle. The following table illustrates the number and relative size of the collieries in operation in 1923.

T A B L E.<sup>1</sup>  
-----  
T O W      L A W      D I S T R I C T.  
-----

	Number employed.
Barrack Main, Tow Law	48.
Gladdow, Tow Law	8.
Broomshields Drift, Tow Law.	14.
North Marsfield, Tow Law.	Idle.
Black Prince, Tow Law.	Idle.
Hedley Fell.	34.
Hedley Hope.	394.
East Hedley Hope.	16.
Hedley Hill.	59.
	-----
Total.....	<u>573.</u>

<sup>1</sup>  
Colliery Year Book (1923).

# C R O O K     D I S T R I C T. -----

Number employed.

Crook Colliery (Brackenbury)	Idle.
Cold Knott.	83.
Craig Lea.	164.
Steel's House.	Idle.
Abbott's Close.	33.
High Woodisfield.	10.

Roddymoor not included.

Bowden Close not included.

Wooley Colliery not included.

Total.....	<u>290.</u>
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# H O W D E N - L E - W E A R D I S T R I C T. -----

Number employed.

Rumby Hill.	32.
Harperley.	141.
Harperley Park (depends on coal trade)	
Low Beechburn	94.
Hargill.	6.
North Bitchburn.	83.
West Beechburn.	116.
Fir Tree.	24.

Total.....	<u>496.</u>
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In more recent years coal mining has suffered depression, particularly in the Howden-le-Wear district. This has not, however, been as acute as in the rest of South-West Durham and since the beginning of 1937, prospects have been considerably improved. Peases Collieries north-west of Crook have continued production throughout the years of depression and Roddymoor Colliery, together with the Bank Foot By-Products Works, now employs <sup>1</sup> over 1,000 men. Two collieries were reopened in 1937 and have extended operations, until West Thornley Colliery, near Sunnyside employs 130 men and Wooley Pit provides <sup>2</sup> work for another 560 miners. In spite of evidence of closed collieries in the lower valley, the Tow Law and Crook district is the only part of South-West Durham, with the exception of Willington, which is attracting miners to it. This may be only a temporary feature, but the steady production at Roddymoor, the continued

<sup>1</sup> 979 were employed at Roddymoor Colliery in March 1938. The number has since increased. (Ministry of Labour figure).  
<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Labour figures. February 1939.

tapping of virgin areas of coal, the ease with which the coal can be reached and the lack of serious difficulties due to excessive water, suggest that the forecast of many years of work in the district may not be overestimated.

Though the majority of the workers in the Tow Law and Crook district are miners, by-products works and brick flats offer employment to a large number. Bank Foot is a veritable hive of industry and 122 men<sup>1</sup> are employed at the North Bitchburn Brickworks. Distributive trades and public works employ roughly 700 inhabitants of Crook and the surrounding villages<sup>2</sup> and, in addition, there are numerous 'bus drivers and conductors, lorry drivers and railwaymen in Tow Law, Crook and Howden-le-Wear.

Altogether, there is considerable variety in the type of employment to be had in this district.

<sup>1</sup> 1936 Colliery Year Book.

<sup>2</sup> Labour Exchange figure.

It is true, that the region is not so prosperous as it was last century, but depression is not so widely felt as in the rest of South-West Durham. Moreover, there is an atmosphere of energy and resource, which<sup>1</sup> speaks well for the inhabitants. The community refuses to be stranded and submerged in the rising waters of stagnation, which are smothering the mining villages around Bishop Auckland. In February 1937, a group of local enthusiasts formed the Crook and District Auxiliary Development Committee. By advertising and commending the district as suitable for new business enterprises, they hoped to attract new industries and so avert depression. In March 1938, it was announced that their efforts had resulted in proposals for a timber factory to employ 100 men in the manufacture of doors and window frames. Continued efforts on the part of the Committee may succeed in

<sup>1</sup>  
Cff. Men without Work - Report made to the Pilgrim Trust. Page 75.

stimulating industry on a scale large enough to absorb the unemployed of the district.

Further evidence of the go-ahead spirit prevailing in the Tow Law and Crook district is to be seen in the large scale rehousing scheme, which was inaugurated in 1938. A great deal of the colliery property in the region was considered unfit for habitation and Demolition Orders, in certain cases, embraced whole villages. For instance, the hamlet of White Leas is to be completely demolished. Grahamsley has already been pulled down, except for one row of houses which is awaiting its turn. The greater part of Stanley Pit and Sunnyside, several streets in Stanley (Mount Pleasant) and Roddymoor, and the majority of houses in Bowden Close have been removed as a result of the re-housing drive. It must be pointed out that many of the demolished

houses were in no worse condition than old colliery property in other villages in South-West Durham e.g. Fylands. It was realised, however, that expensive improvements were necessary to bring the houses up to the standard of modern requirements and that, moreover, the advantages of regrouping the population outweighed the maintenance of out-of-date isolated villages. For this reason and not on account of outstanding industrial distress, several of the villages in the Tow Law and Crook district must be regarded as derelict.

### TOW LAW DISTRICT.

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The moorland fringe around the headwaters of the Beechburn Beck have become populated as a result of the expansion of coal mining and the manufacture of iron in the last eighty years. The district is too bleak and infertile to be cultivated and could not support even an average agricultural population. In 1841, there was only one farmhouse, where Tow Law stands, so, unlike the Butterknowle district, there is no direct connection between mining and farming.

Tow Law is the most important centre in the district. Within ~~ten~~ years of the erection of six blast furnaces by the Weardale Iron and Coal Company in 1846, a town of over 3,000 inhabitants had grown up. By 1892 the population had increased to 4,564



and, though it has dropped by over 1,000<sup>1</sup> since the Iron Works and neighbouring collieries closed down, it still ranks as a town and as such has problems of a different type to those found in smaller colliery villages. As is the case with Crook and Spennymoor, a detailed investigation into its present condition, is beyond the scope of this study.

1

1921 population 4,070.  
1931 population 3,560

### HEDLEYHOPE.

The single colliery row of twenty poor houses at Hedleyhope Colliery can scarcely claim consideration as a colliery village. Yet it is situated in an isolated position, half a mile east of Tow Law and is quite distinct from the town. It was built for miners working at the neighbouring pit, but after Hedleyhope Colliery was closed some thirty years ago, the miners were absorbed by other local operations, and the need for a separate existence ceased. The Colliery was reopened about 1932<sup>1</sup>, by the Hedley Hope Coal Co., Ltd. who also revived East Hedleyhope Colliery, but the miners employed at the colliery have not sought houses in the immediate neighbourhood. In the days when miners liked to live as near to the pit head as possible, the tiny hamlet may have served some purpose, but now that easy transport precludes the necessity of living in the pit-yard, the colliery row is useless and its occupants would be more comfortably housed at Tow Law.

<sup>1</sup> 143 men were employed in 1936 (Colliery Year Book).

# EAST HEDLEYHOPE.

East Hedleyhope is, strictly speaking, in the Deerness Valley, but it is a derelict village worthy of description. It consisted of 100 houses arranged in five streets, near the colliery from which it takes its name. The houses are mainly of two rooms. Two rows at the upper end of the village were built of zinc sheeting and wood and have already been demolished.

The village has two Methodist Chapels, a school, a post office, a reading room and one public house, but it is described by the villagers themselves as "a dead place". The colliery, which closed down several years ago, was reopened in 1932 or 1933 and in 1936 employed 135 men and boys. Miners travel from Tow Law, Stanley and Esh Winning and, as they prefer to do this to living in the lonely village, there is

<sup>1</sup>  
1936 Colliery Year Book.

no likelihood that new houses will be built. As soon as other houses are found for the remaining occupants of Office Row, Post Office Row and School Row, the village will be abandoned, in spite of the fact that the pit is in operation. It is not derelict on account of neglect by industry, or occupation by a community of inferior type<sup>1</sup> though there is a residue of that nature, but because its utter isolation, together with poor housing conditions makes it unsuitable for habitation, now that people desire something more from life than work and sleep.

1

March 1938 the 17 men registered as unemployed were classed among the unemployables (Ministry of Labour).

### CROOK DISTRICT.

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The group of villages immediately north and north-west of Crook are a direct result of the coal mining operations begun in the vicinity by Pease and Partners in 1844. With the exception of the older part of Billy Row - a rural village - and White Lea, which was built in connection with the drift operated by Bolckow, Vaughan & Co., Ltd. from 1855 to 1889, all the villages are of the same type and built to a fairly uniform plan. The firm of Pease and Partners deserves some credit for the type of colliery house it provided for its workmen and for the open arrangement of the streets. With the exception of the poor colliery rows<sup>1</sup> at South Church, Pease's houses are recognisable by the yellowish fire brick of which they are constructed and in many cases by the gabling above the front windows.

<sup>1</sup>

See Page 451

Almost all Pease's houses in this district were sold about six years ago and 95 per cent of the property was bought by one property owner. The fact that so much ex-colliery property in the neighbourhood of Crook has been demolished in recent years is less a condemnation of the manner in which Pease's houses were constructed, than a commendation of the energetic rehousing efforts of the Crook and Willington Urban District Council.

In 1894, Pease and Partners had four collieries in operation, namely Roddymoor, sunk in 1844, Stanley Pit, started 1850, White Lea, acquired from Bolckow, Vaughan & Co. Ld. in 1889, and Sunnyside, which was sunk in 1867. Roddymoor Colliery was of most consequence, in that five seams were worked there and, in addition, extensive brick works and coke works were in operation at Bank Foot. The villages of Roddymoor, Pease's West, Billy Row and Grahamsley (North Roddymoor) were built to serve this

colliery. White Lea was constructed to house the employees at White Lea Drift, but after that was incorporated in Roddymoor Colliery, it became another of the Roddymoor group of villages. Stanley (Mount Pleasant) and Stanley Pit Village were closely associated with Stanley and Wooley Pits and Sunnyside was connected with Sunnyside and West Thornley Pits and more recently with Roddymoor Colliery. Bowden Close owes its existence to Bowden Close Colliery, which was sunk in 1839.

Demolition has begun in every village mentioned, with the exception of Billy Row and Pease's West. The villages must, therefore, be considered as derelict to a certain degree. In the majority of cases it must be remembered that dereliction is due to unsatisfactory housing conditions and that the term is not applied to the communities. The process of

demolishing old colliery villages and regrouping the population in a planned centre is interesting and worthy of study, in that it is a pioneer effort in the re-planning of South-West Durham.



### SUNNISIDE.

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The colliery village of Sunnyside, consisting of about 300 houses in all, stands over 900 feet above sea level on the main road between Crook and Tow Law. Its connection with West Thornley Colliery, operated by the Weardale Iron and Coal Co. brings the village within the sphere of Tow Law, but the closer association with Pease's Collieries, expressed in the construction of at least half the village by that firm, causes Sunnyside to be included in the Roddymoor group.

West Thornley Colliery with its coke ovens was one of the largest pits in the Tow Law district and gave employment to miners both in Tow Law and Sunnyside. When it closed in 1925, 450 men were displaced.<sup>1</sup>

Sunnyside Pit was a much smaller concern and was not important enough, in itself, to entail the provision of

<sup>1</sup> Social Service Report.

a colliery village. The 150 colliery houses in the village were, however, occupied by miners employed at the Roddymoor pits. For this reason, connection between Sunnyside village and Roddymoor Colliery has always been close.

The village is pleasantly situated and the streets are arranged along the main road. The colliery rows were typical of Pease's houses and the privately owned houses are of the four-roomed type. In recent years, pit falls have damaged several houses and most of the colliery property has been demolished since 1938 under the Crook and Willington Urban District Council's Rehousing Scheme. Sunnyside has, therefore, almost ceased to be a colliery village.

After West Thornley Colliery closed in 1925, employment was restricted. The connection with Roddymoor Colliery, which has worked steadily throughout

the depression, saved the village from becoming derelict in this respect. In 1937, before there was any suggestion of renewed employment at West Thornley Pit, thirty per cent. of the insured population were unemployed and this had been an average figure for the three years preceding it.<sup>1</sup> In October 1937, however, preparations were made to reopen West Thornley Colliery and 230 men and boys were taken on, within a short time. The colliery is still in operation, but only 130 men were employed in February 1939.<sup>2</sup> Sunnyside, never so badly distressed as many mining villages, is, therefore, by no means derelict from the aspect of employment.

The community has not suffered severely from the ill-effects of depression. The miners are energetic - this may result from the invigorating situation of the village - and during the twelve years of partial depression, several travelled each day to Sherburn and

<sup>1</sup> Social Service Report.

<sup>2</sup> Labour Exchange figure.

Fishburn. Some of the young people left the village and found work in London and other districts, but there was work for a certain proportion in the Roddymoor Colliery and Bank Foot By-Products Works. The community is not by any means derelict.

Sunniside as a village is doomed, however. More than half of it is either demolished or scheduled for demolition and no good object would be served by rehousing the population on a site which is threatened with subsidence. The community will eventually, therefore, be incorporated into Crook or Tow Law, and Sunniside will no longer exist. In this instance, housing conditions affected by subsidence, have proved the determining factor in classing the village - not the community - as derelict.

### WHITE LEA.

White Lea, one of the oldest colliery villages in the district, is completely derelict. In the last few months, the houses have been abandoned and demolition has been begun, so that it has ceased to exist as a village.

The thirty houses were of a very poor type. Low one-storey houses with two rooms, they were damp and had very primitive sanitary arrangements. Built on three sides of a square, they were approached by an unmade bridle path.<sup>1</sup> Six years ago the houses were sold by Pease and Partners and were all bought by one property owner and an attempt was made to adapt them into modern requirements. This was found to be impossible and therefore the village was derelict by reason of its housing conditions alone.

<sup>1</sup> See photograph Page 47.

Unemployment was not marked in White Lea, and more than half of the men of the village were employed at Roddymoor Colliery in 1938. Transference of the bulk of the inhabitants to the new housing estate at Roddymoor, has therefore merely caused a regrouping of population. The village itself has been derelict since 1904, when White Lea Drift closed, and the community has been attached to Roddymoor since that date. Now therefore, the population of the village has been absorbed into Roddymoor, and the village, which was out of date in both housing conditions and purpose, is abandoned.

### STANLEY PIT VILLAGE.

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Stanley Pit Village is a collection of colliery houses, distinct from the larger colliery village of Stanley, which stands on the hill above Crook. Its situation is isolated in the extreme. The village lies in a shallow dip in the open moor, where the only feature of interest are the untidy remains of Stanley and Wooley Pits.

The village is derelict. It was built about eighty years ago by the firm of Pease and Partners, for the purpose of housing the miners and coke oven workers who were employed at the Josephine Pit sunk in 1857 and at Wooley Pit which was started seven years later. The smaller drift was finished in 1911, but until 1931 when Wooley Pit closed down, the village was prosperous and between 500 and 600 men were employed. With the closing down of mining in the neighbourhood, the village became derelict as far as employment was concerned. In 1936 ,

STANLEY PIT VILLAGE

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The back of West Row.

N.B The curve in the  
pavement due to  
subsidence

Coke Ovens at the  
bottom of the street.

Damage caused  
by subsidence.





over eighty per cent. of the men and youths were unemployed and the complete isolation of the village must have made life miserable and monotonous in the extreme. Soon after the pit closed, the colliery houses were sold and the firm of Pease and Partners gave up interest in the village. In June 1937, however, there was a prospect of Wooley Pit reopening and before long there was employment for about 450 men and boys. Subsequent expansion has brought the figure up to 560 in February 1939.

The rejuvenation of the life of the colliery marked the end of the village. Renewed working beneath the houses caused subsidence and North Row collapsed. In February 1938, West Row was badly affected by subsidence and the whole street had to be abandoned. Now only one street of houses is occupied. There was no accommodation for the miners

who came into the district to work at the reopened colliery and the situation is too isolated and desolate for new houses to be erected near to the pit. Stanley Pit is, therefore, a derelict village, which will be completely abandoned as soon as houses are available elsewhere for the remaining inhabitants.

### STANLEY - MOUNT PLEASANT.

Like Sunnyside, Stanley is situated on the northern rim of the Crook basin. Its Church is a landmark for miles around and the streets of colliery houses are laid out in open formation around a spacious green. Only the Front Street, on the direct road from Willington to Tow Law, is privately owned. It forms the shopping centre of the village.

The village of 4,000 inhabitants is entirely dependent on the fortunes of Wooley Colliery. Like the smaller village of Stanley Pit, it was completely derelict from the aspect of employment in the years from 1931 to 1937, when the pit was closed. It is estimated that 95 per cent. of the insured population was unemployed during the period of depression. Only occasional miners were employed at Roddymoor Colliery.

A poultry scheme was instituted on the open country between Mount Pleasant and Stanley Pit and, though it was difficult to obtain successful results, owing to the bleak situation of the holdings, unemployed miners tried valiantly to relieve their own distress to some extent. During the six years of depression young people left the village and every sign of dereliction was in evidence.

Since the reopening of Wooley Pit, the village has come to life again. There has been a steady decrease in unemployment and the expanding colliery has absorbed miners with growing families from other distressed districts, particularly Woodland and Bowden Close. It is interesting to note in this connection, that the average age of those who have found work at Wooley Pit since 1937 is 48 years. The majority of the men of the 35 to

40 age group gave up employment after a short time,  
because they were not physically fit enough.<sup>1</sup>

Stanley is in a similar position to Sunnyside. Many of its houses have been demolished, particularly alongside the main road between Billy Row Bank and the Church. It seems probable that others will be scheduled for demolition, if the present rehousing in the Crook area continues. From the standpoint of employment however, the village is not derelict, nor is the community showing signs of deterioration.

<sup>1</sup> Labour Exchange Report.

### BILLY ROW AND PEASE'S WEST.

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Billy Row is the original village of the Crook district. Now the houses to the south of the village green are known as Pease's West, but this is a misleading distinction, since it embraces part of the rural village, while Pease's Colliery rows are situated in the Billy Row sector. All the houses between the Crook and Tow Law railway line and the village of Stanley will be considered together as one village.

Billy Row has a superior standing to any of the other colliery villages built by the firm of Pease and Partners. It compares with Etherley, in that it is the home of many of the officials connected with Pease's collieries. The majority of the houses are colliery property, but those around the green are of a mixed style and several are privately owned. The colliery

houses in Billy Row Bank are typical of those built by the colliery company. Until 35 years ago, they were very low, the upstairs room being only five feet high. It was necessary to kneel down to look through the window and the bedroom was reached by a step ladder.<sup>1</sup> Since the roofs were raised, they are quite good, four-roomed houses and none have been demolished.

The officials are associated with Pease's collieries in general, but the miners are principally employed at Roddymoor or one of the eight drifts associated with it. There was a close connection between Billy Row Bank and Wooley Pit, but after 1931, attention was focussed on Roddymoor Colliery. There is very little unemployment in the village and both in tone and in type of inhabitants, there are no signs of deterioration. Billy Row is undoubtedly one of the best villages in the Crook district.

<sup>1</sup> Cff Sunnybrow.

GRAHAMSLEY (NORTH RODDYMoor).

Grahamsley as a village no longer exists, therefore it is not necessary to describe it. Only Wood Row, between the demolished village and Pease's West, remains and it is awaiting demolition. These houses have been refaced with brick and plaster and, in appearance, they are no worse than the one-storey<sup>1</sup> houses in Gurney Valley, and in better condition than the Wood Row, situated between Middlestone Moor and Westerton Colliery. When they are demolished, the occupants will be rehoused, either in Crook or in the new housing estates at Roddymoor or Thistelflat, and another colliery village in the Crook area will be forgotten.

<sup>1</sup> See Auckland Park district. Page 428



# OLD STONE HOUSES AT GRAHAMSLLEY CROOK

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Front of houses

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showing the loft-  
bedroom unused  
front doors and  
kitchen gardens.



Back of houses

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showing absence  
of yards, and  
built-on  
pantries.

The shell of a  
Colliery house.

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showing the  
difference of  
height between  
the front and  
back and the  
type and size  
of the one  
bedroom.



### RODDYMOOR.

Roddymoor is situated within the basin-like hollow of the Crook valley. Roddymoor Colliery and the Bank Foot By-Products Works separate it from Crook itself. The colliery village was almost identical in type with Grahamsley, in that three rows of houses were arranged on three sides of a square green. At Roddymoor, the fourth side is occupied by officials' houses.

The houses, too, were of the same type, and two of the three rows at Roddymoor have been demolished. The third row, on the north side of the square, is being improved. The houses have four rooms and face south across gardens towards the Colliery. The only apparent disadvantage is found in the earth closets and open ash pits which are situated across the road at the back of the houses. These are being removed and enclosed yards have already been provided for five of the houses.

The significance of Roddymoor at the present time lies in the fact that one of the new housing estates ~~has~~ been established here. It is the new centre, in which the displaced miners and their families from the demolished villages are being rehoused. As a new village, therefore, it cannot be considered derelict.

The new-comers are of mixed types and have been drawn from the demolished houses anywhere in the vicinity of Crook. Some are employed at Roddymoor Colliery and Bank Foot By-Products Works, but the new housing estate was not provided entirely for employees at Pease and Partners' works. Early in 1938, a colony of caravan dwellers was removed from the neighbourhood of Thistleflat and the occupants were rehoused in the Roddymoor estate. A large proportion of these people were of a shiftless type, who were content to live in

Crook Caravan Colony  
(Removed 1938)



degrading conditions on the meagre earnings of periodic casual employment. An example of the kind of people, who went from the colony to new houses at Roddymoor is found in a family of man and wife and eleven children, who had previously existed in a single caravan.

The new village of Roddymoor, though not derelict, may be criticised on three grounds. In the first place, it is situated almost within the colliery premises. This was a common practice last century, when transport was difficult, but it is neither necessary nor desirable in these more enlightened days. Secondly, the community, with its strain of shiftless unemployables, may allow the new village to deteriorate into a slum, and finally, there is no communal centre, except the Social Service Hut, to encourage a spirit of unity among the inhabitants. So far the new housing estate is little more than a collection of houses, which are an improvement on the old colliery property because they are new and modern. Improvement in social amenities is necessary to convert it into a successful village.

### BOWDEN CLOSE.

In situation, Bowden Close is midway between Crook and Willington. It was built before 1857, probably soon after Bowden Close Colliery was opened in 1839. It is, therefore, one of the earliest colliery villages built by Pease and Partners. Like the rest of the poor colliery property in the Crook district, the 84 houses in the village was sold in 1933 and passed into the hands of a private owner.

Housing conditions were particularly bad, partly due to the early period of construction and partly to the position of the houses almost in the colliery yard. The approach to the village is difficult to find. From the main Crook and Willington road, a narrow earth lane leads northward from Helmington Row to the colliery. Along this is strung

the fifty houses, which make up Bowden Terrace. Sebastopol Terrace and California Terrace, each with their primitive detached earth closets and ash pits, are still further from the beaten track.

The colliery, which lies immediately in front of the houses, is derelict now. It was closed in 1931 and 1,200 miners were displaced. Now Pease and Partners have given up interest in the colliery and the remaining coal is worked from Brancepeth Colliery, so there is little likelihood that operations will start again at Bowden Close.

Both colliery and village are derelict. The recent rehousing scheme has resulted in the demolition of a large part of the village in the last two years and there is no likelihood of new houses being built on the present site. Of the

displaced miners, some have been taken on at Brancepeth Colliery, but the greater part found work at Wooley Pit, when it was reopened in 1937, so there is no longer any need for the continued existence of Bowden Close village.



### THE HOWDEN-LE-WEAR DISTRICT.

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South of Crook, the Beechburn valley is characterised by its dismantled collieries. The two chief centres of coal mining were Low Beechburn, north of Howden-le-Wear, and North Bitchburn, situated in the widening valley between Howden-le-Wear and Wear Valley Junction. From the area, which has been covered with waste deposits, both collieries must have been extensive.

North Bitchburn Colliery, sunk in 1841, was the larger of the two. Operations began with a shaft in the side of the hill just below the village of North Beechburn, but within four years they were extended into the valley itself. Towards the end of the century this colliery, with

its flourishing coke ovens and brick works, was the main centre of employment in the district and between 500 and 1000 men must have been engaged. Since the Great War, decline has been rapid. In 1923, only 83 men employed and in 1929 the number was 193, but 98 of these were engaged at the brick works. In 1936, 122 men were engaged at the colliery and employment at the brick works which were in a flourishing state brought the total up to 285 men and boys. Largely on account of the valuable deposits of seggar in the locality, the brick-making industry is likely to continue, even after the exhaustion of the coal seams.

This colliery was the centre of employment for a group of villages. North Beechburn seems to have been the original colliery village attached to it, but the long colliery rows of Victoria, along-

side the Crook railway line and Howden Colliery, on the new main road from Bishop Auckland to Crook, were built in connection with North Bitchburn Colliery. The newer village of High Grange near Wear Valley Junction is still closely associated with the colliery and, of course, many of the employees lived in the larger village of Howden-le-Wear.

X Low Beechburn Colliery between Howden-le-Wear and Crook has been dismantled since 1928. It included pits at Greenhead and Thistleflat, where sinking for coal was begun in 1846. Disused beehive coke ovens are a relic of a flourishing coking industry and Messrs. Girlings Brickworks at Greenhead are a development of the extensive colliery brickyard. Work finally ceased at the colliery in 1928, but decline had set in before the War, and in the last years the number of

employees did not nearly approach the figure of 180,<sup>1</sup> who worked there in 1894.<sup>2</sup> In 1923, for instance, only 94 men were employed.<sup>0</sup> Coal is practically exhausted in the vicinity and therefore there is no likelihood of new mining developments between Crook and Beechburn. In March 1937, a small drift into the top seams was reopened in the hillside below Rumby Hill, but operations are not expected to be of long duration and only 20 men are employed.

The employees at Low Beechburn Colliery were mainly housed in the scattered colliery rows of Greenhead and Thistleflat, which were built as near to the pits as possible. Apart from this, there was no separate colliery village associated with Low Beechburn, and miners, who were not satisfied with the poor colliery houses, lived in Howden-le-Wear or Crook. Occasional miners found

<sup>1</sup> Whellan - Durham.

<sup>2</sup> Colliery Year Book.

houses at Rumby Hill, but though this village overlooks the colliery, there was no close connection between the two.

Apart from the two main collieries, there were smaller pits in the vicinity of Howden-le-Wear, such as Hargill or West Bitchburn and Howden Colliery, but they never employed more than 200 miners and have been dismantled for so long that they are almost forgotten. Towards the edge of the Coalfield in the neighbourhood of Fir Tree, small drifts, employing under twenty men, have been worked from time to time. This peripheral region is comparable with the Woodland district where small quantities of household coal for local landsale will probably be mined for many years. The locality is of no real industrial value and the village of Fir Tree has no vital connection with coal mining.

### HOWDEN-LE-WEAR.

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Howden-le-Wear is a large village in the valley of the Beechburn Beck a mile and a half south of Crook. Owing to the development of coal mining half a mile to the south, it grew after 1841 from a tiny hamlet to a mining village. The greatest increase of population was during the years preceding 1871.

The main centre of the village lies between the Bishop Auckland to Crook Railway and the Beechburn Beck. Here the main roads to Wolsingham and Crook are lined with small shops and substantial houses - evidence of pre-War prosperity. A long colliery row faces the levelled pit heaps of North Bitchburn

Colliery across the new road via High Grange to Bishop Auckland and another equally long colliery row stretches for half a mile alongside the railway, south of the railway station. Between the two rows of colliery houses the valley is covered with pit heaps, dismantled colliery buildings and railway tracks.

In the village itself, there are several mean streets, which have a grey, drab appearance, but housing conditions are not bad. The long colliery row on the road to High Grange has a clean look, which suggests the shining brasses and spotless neatness characteristic of miners' houses in prosperous days. The colliery row, south of Beechburn Station, has less claim to commendation. It is isolated and can only be reached by a bridle path from Wear Valley Junction

or Beechburn Stations. Its very isolation may be the reason for the poorer type of occupant and the neglected condition of the houses.

On the whole, Howden-le-Wear gives one the impression of having seen better days. The atmosphere is one of resignation rather than of striving against depression. Unemployment is higher than in Crook, although there is some work available at North Bitchburn Colliery and Brickworks. In July 1936, out of an insured population of 440, 250 adults were registered as unemployed.<sup>1</sup> This figure includes 70 women and juveniles, but the 180 unemployed men form a large proportion of the employable male population. Undernourishment among school children is noticeable<sup>2</sup> in spite of the gardening achievements of many of the unemployed miners.

Altogether Howden-le-Wear is a distressed

<sup>1</sup> Labour Exchange figure.

<sup>2</sup> 55.3 per cent.



village. In spite of its nearness, it has very little connection with Crook's comparative prosperity. Its community seems to have lost its vigorous element. Since work has been restricted. Industrial conditions are not however, so bad as at Eldon, Escombe or Byers Green, where there is no centre of employment of any kind, and the valuable seggar deposits in the neighbourhood could form the basis of an extended brick making industry, which would absorb some of the unemployed of the village. Coal mining does not appear to have any future, since the coal seams are practically exhausted and, unless some other industrial enterprise is established in the vicinity, Howden-le-Wear will gradually decline in size or else will degenerate into a village of unemployed.

### NORTH BEECHBURN.

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North Beechburn is a mining village of about 70 houses, which stands on the ridge, overlooking the extensive waste heaps of North Bitchburn Colliery, which fill the Beechburn valley below it. It seems to have been the original colliery village, giving its name, only slightly altered, to the drift in the hillside just below it and then to the whole of the developing colliery. Most of the houses are colliery houses and only a few are not well kept, in spite of their age. There are twelve new houses.

North Beechburn is a peculiar village in that it has no true community spirit. It is unfortunate that the boundary between the Hunwick and Bedburn parishes divides the village into two rival and, on

occasion, antagonistic factions. To complicate matters further, there is another district group, namely the Methodist following, which does not co-operate with either of the parish cliques. Feeling runs so high, that it is difficult to persuade the whole community to attend a general meeting, no matter what the purpose or the benefits might be.

Unemployment resulting from the decline of the colliery, has been relieved by the development of the brick works at both North Bitchburn and Low Rough Lea, Hunwick, both of which are within easy reach of the village. There seems to be no other prospect of work in the neighbourhood and the younger part of the population is gradually removing to factory work in the Midlands and South of England, leaving a middle-aged and elderly community to meditate on the untidy relics of one-time prosperity.

### HIGH GRANGE.

High Grange is a small compact village of 100 houses situated on the high side of the main road from Bishop Auckland to Crook, about a mile and a half south-east of Howden-le-Wear. Two streets of well-built, four roomed, colliery houses stand at right angles to the main road and well kept gardens at the other side of the road are a pleasing feature of the village.

There is a close connection between High Grange and North Bitchburn Colliery, situated half a mile away. The Under-Manager of the colliery lives in the village and the bulk of the employed population work there, or at Rough Lea Brickworks, which is operated by the same company. Only twenty

men out of an insured population of 250 are unemployed,<sup>1</sup> so that the village cannot be considered as derelict from the standpoint of employment, even though there is no active centre of industry within the village itself.

Neither housing conditions nor the type of community show any signs of deterioration and this small village is altogether one of the most prosperous in the Howden-le-Wear district.

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Labour figure.

### FIR TREE.

Fir Tree is one of the oldest villages in the Howden district. Situated almost 600 feet above sea level, at the junction of the roads from Witton-le-Wear and Howden-le-Wear, it took on the appearance of a small mining village during the 19th Century, when a number of small pits and drifts operated in the vicinity. The tiny pit heaps and absence of pit head machinery and buildings illustrate the limited extent of the workings. In February, 1938, Peahill Colliery was being worked by only two men.

The situation of the village is pleasant, but some of the miners' cottages are drab and neglected. Only two or three houses of the 100 which make up the village are being demolished, and they are pre-industrial farm buildings and hinds' cottages. In spite of the

general atmosphere of dreariness, housing conditions seem to be fairly good.

Out of the total population, about 25 per cent.<sup>1</sup> are unemployed and some of these are classed as unemployable. It is difficult to imagine that there is employment in the neighbourhood for the remaining 75 per cent. since visible signs of industrial activity are completely lacking. Hidden from the village by woods, there are small collieries towards Harperley, which employ a proportion of the miners from Fir Tree. One employs 12 men, and another provides work for 24.

The village is somewhat isolated, but it cannot be classed as completely derelict. It is fast becoming a village of old people and unemployables and, as such, shows definite marks of deterioration. There is no likelihood of an improvement in the

1

Ministry of Labour figure in 1938.

industrial situation of Fir Tree, since it lies too near to the edge of the coalfield for large scale mining activity to develop. For that very reason, however, small drifts may continue to be worked even after the village has reverted to its true purpose as a rural hamlet.



### RUMBY HILL.

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Rumby Hill, situated on the ridge east of the Beechburn valley, is like Fir Tree, in that it has no industrial background. It is one of the original rural villages of the pre-industrial era and has very little connection with the coal mining activity of the Howden or Crook areas, which it overlooks.

Like Fir Tree, it has suffered from its nearness to a busy colliery district, and it has a drab, neglected appearance. Subsidence has caused damage to the fields surrounding the village and has reduced their value, so that the chief occupation of the population has been impaired.

A few of the thirty cottages are occupied by miners and brick workers, who work in the immediate

neighbourhood. Twelve men, about 25 per cent. of the insured population, are unemployed. The rest are engaged in agriculture and local mining.

Rymby Hill never was a mining village but it has been influenced by coal mining. Now it may be considered as stagnant rather than derelict.

### GREENHEAD AND THISTLEFLAT.

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These uninspiring names are well fitted to the colliery villages they serve. Thistleflat consists of about forty houses, almost adjoining the waste heaps and crumbling beehive coke ovens of Thistleflat Colliery, which lies between the road and railway, half a mile south of Crook. Greenhead, or the Hollow, is the name given to the three rows of colliery houses just across the railway from Thistleflat.

The two hamlets are usually spoken of as one village, partly because they were both connected with Low Beechburn Colliery, which incorporated Thistleflat Colliery and a drift at Greenhead, and partly because together they form a compact black spot in the Howden-le-Wear-Crook district. In reality there are noteworthy

differences between the two hamlets.

Greenhead must have been built soon after 1846. In that year, an Ironstone Drift was started at Greenhead, to provide raw material for the Iron Works, which were set up at Tow Law in the same year. Greenhead was, therefore, associated with the Iron industry rather than with coalmining, until it was found that the deposits of iron ore were too limited to justify further working. Then Greenhead became attached to Low Beechburn Colliery and its brickyard. These associations marked Greenhead off from the purely mining villages of the district and are probably responsible for the reputation for toughness which still persists.

Proximity to the colliery brickyard may not have been very pleasant, but at least it has saved Greenhead from complete dereliction. After the Colliery was dismantled, Messrs. Girling's Brickworks were established at Greenhead,

so that there is still employment for brickworkers from the village. This factor, together with mining employment at Roddymoor, North Bitchburn and local drifts, accounts for the comparatively low unemployment percentage at Greenhead. Out of an insured population of ninety<sup>1</sup> persons, 25 were unemployed in February, 1937, and the number has been reduced since then.

The houses at Greenhead are old and in poor condition and will undoubtedly come under demolition orders in the near future. Meanwhile the community deserves attention. The Social Service Report on the Centre established in the villages, described the men, who were attracted there at first, as disorderly and lacking in interest in anything. After the worst elements were removed, however, the club progressed and now some of the better type of inhabitants are taking part in the social benefits of the Centre.

<sup>1</sup> Social Service Report.

This opinion on the people of Greenhead is borne out to a large extent by other officials, though residents in the district suggest that the unruly element attracts so much more attention than the older respectable section of the community that the hamlet has a worse name than it really deserves.

Thistleflat is larger than Greenhead and is more truly a colliery village. Mining was started at Thistleflat Estate in 1848 and the colliery houses were built soon afterwards. They are in very bad condition and those in one row have only back doors. Since Low Beechburn Colliery was dismantled in 1928, there has been no employment in Thistleflat. In spite of nearness to the main road between Crook and Howden-le-Wear, very few of the employable population, numbering 200, have found work since that time. In May 1936, eighty per cent. of the insured population was unemployed and this had been

an average figure for the past three years at least. Of those who were in employment, a few worked at North Bitchburn Colliery and Brickworks and a few were employed in Crook. The community at Thistleflat seems to be of a poor type. There is less unruliness than at Greenhead, but there is general apathy and lack of initiative. A section of the community consists of ex-miners, who are too old to find fresh employment, but a large part are younger unemployables. Up to 1938 the tendency towards deterioration was increased by the presence of a caravan colony near to the village.<sup>1</sup>

Since 1937 the position of Thistleflat has improved to some extent. The unemployment percentage is lower and the colony of caravans has been removed. Even now, however, Thistleflat is one of the most depressed hamlets in the whole of the Crook district, not merely from the standpoint of housing, but by reason of its inferior community.

<sup>1</sup> See Pages 308 and 309.

GREENHEAD AND THISTLEFLAT

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Derelict coke ovens and pit heaps  
at Low Beechburn Colliery.

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Greenhead in background.



Social Service Centre.

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N.B. Houses have no front doors.



## CHAPTER ELEVEN.

### THE HUNWICK - WILLINGTON DISTRICT.

This district, which includes the town of Willington and the villages of Hunwick, Newfield and Sunnybrow, cannot be described as a derelict area. Yet at least two of the villages named above, viz, Newfield and Sunnybrow, were picked out as such in the Gibb Report. A brief investigation into the condition of the district and particularly of the villages mentioned is, therefore, necessary.

At the present time this is undoubtedly the most prosperous region in South-West Durham. Brancepeth Colliery at Willington provides employment for over 2,000 men and boys. These are drawn from Willington and the immediate neighbourhood, so that there is certainly employment on a large scale within the district. Further, there are valuable

SUNNYBROW AND WILLINGTON.

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SUNNYBROW from Todd Hills.

The old village of the Willington group surrounded by pit heaps.



WILLINGTON. (The new Colliery town).

N.B. The clay pit in the foreground supplies the Todd Hills brick works.

beds of fireclay (seggar) and surface clay on either side of the river. As a result there are flourishing brick works at Newfield and Todd Hills and bricks and sanitary products are manufactured at Rough Lea. In all, about 3,000 men and boys are in employment in the district. Out of a total population of roughly 12,000 this is a fair proportion.

In spite of the comparative prosperity of the area, the villages of Hunwick and Newfield are not fulfilling the functions for which they were intended. Until twenty-five years ago, they were occupied by miners and coke oven workers engaged at Newfield and Hunwick Collieries, which were operated by Bolckow, Vaughan and Co., Ltd. Rough Lea Cottages and part of Hunwick Lane Ends housed miners working at Rough Lea Colliery. Now coal mining, which was the mainstay of the district before the Great War, has

almost been forgotten. Sunnybrow, though derelict in appearance, still serves the purpose for which it was intended.

The development of coal mining in this locality followed the opening of the West Durham Railway (Old Hartlepool Line). Between 1836 and 1841, pits were sunk at Newfield, Hunwick and Sunnybrow. Newfield reached full proportions within ten years and the population, which increased from eight persons in 1831 to 1016 in 1851, has remained almost stationary since that time. Sunnybrow village was completed, except for four streets, prior to 1859. Hunwick and Willington, on the other hand, benefited by renewed mining activity between 1854 and 1856 and the population of both places showed its biggest increase about that time. New Hunwick Colliery was sunk in 1854 and Rough Lea in 1858 and the fact is

reflected in the increase in population from 486 to 1203 persons between 1851 to 1861. Willington grew between 1841 and 1871, when the population increased from 258 to 4,392 persons, as a result of the development of Brancepeth Colliery. Steady expansion since that period had brought the population of the town up to 9,000 at the present time. The Willington collieries are the only ones still in operation. The villages of Hunwick and Newfield have, therefore, lost their one-time purpose, but it must be considered to what extent they have become attached to the Willington collieries. It is also necessary to discuss the present position of Sunnybrow, in order to discover on what grounds it was termed derelict. Willington is too large to be classed as a village and is one of the most prosperous places in South-West Durham, so that it is outside the scope of this study.

### NEWFIELD.

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Newfield has been described as a derelict village. Clinging in irregular fashion to the steep bank east of the River Wear, it looks down upon the dismantled colliery yard and new brick sheds, which occupy the triangular piece of flat ground between the foot of the spur and the river. From the village a wide view of the Hunwick and Willington district may be obtained. Across the river to the south-west lie the disused coke ovens and grass grown pit heaps of Hunwick Colliery and the village of Hunwick stands on the hill behind. The miniature forest of chimneys at Rough Lea is due west across the river and the village of Sunnybrow with its embattlements of pit heaps and disused coke ovens is prominent half a mile further north. North-west and north of Newfield,

NEWFIELD.

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The site of the Colliery.

N.B. The colliery houses in the pit yard.



The Brick Works.

This is a flourishing concern  
employing 130 men.

beyond the river, lies the town of Willington with Brancepeth Colliery behind it.

The village itself has a style of its own. In complete lack of planning or arrangement it is unique among the colliery villages of South-West Durham. With the exception of two streets, it was all built between 1840, when Gibson's Pit was sunk and 1857 when the first Ordnance Survey of the district was made. The houses are built in short streets of from four to twelve houses in a block and are perched on the side of the steep hill at any angle. Some are stone houses of a very early type with one bedroom at the front and a roof which slopes almost to the ground level at the back. Others are two-storey houses of brick. Garden Street consists of houses which have black wood-faced front walls and roofs which slope to within six feet of the ground at the back. The long colliery row of Challies Street



extends along the hillside and the only approach to it is the disused colliery railway, across which stand the ash pits and earth closets of some of the houses. Bush Street and Bridge Street occupy a particularly sunless position in the colliery yard itself. In spite of the fact that only 21 houses out of a total of 225 in the village are privately owned, there is considerable variation in the type and condition of the colliery property. Undoubtedly the mean appearance of the majority of the houses and the rough surface of the steep roads give an impression of bad conditions, which might suggest derelictness to an outside observer.

Below the village, the dismantled colliery premises, with the remains of 500 or 600 coke ovens, give an additional impression of derelictness. In recent years a drift has been reopened into the old mine and operations are expanding. Early in 1939 over sixty

men were employed. This is only a very small number compared with the 1,500, who were engaged as miners and coke drawers at Newfield and Hunwick Collieries twenty-five years ago. The colliery brick works have proved the only real hope of the village, as far as recent employment is concerned. The clay underlying the Beaumont seam is of particular value for the manufacture of fire bricks, and it is largely for the purpose of working this seggar, that the drift into the old pit has been opened. The brick works have been extended and are a flourishing concern, giving employment to 130 men. The brick works and drift together provide employment for nearly 200 men within the village itself and though this is only a third of the number engaged at Newfield Colliery twenty-five years ago, it is a fair proportion of the male population, when it is remembered that there are only 225 houses in the village. Another 42

miners are engaged at Brancepeth Colliery.<sup>1</sup>

The problem is whether the amount of work available at Newfield necessitates a separate village. Housing conditions are not good, though the colliery houses are kept in decent repair and none are scheduled for demolition. Roads are particularly bad, however, and very little can be done to improve them in view of the situation of the village on a steep hill slope. The village is isolated in the extreme. In spite of its extensive view, the only connections across the river with Hunwick or Willington are two disused railway bridges (one leading to Hunwick Station and the other to Sunnybrow) and a road bridge, which is reached from Todd Hills by a precipitous descent and a dangerous hair-pin bend. Road connections with Bishop Auckland are limited to a narrow third class lane, running via Binchester Hall to the Batts and the

<sup>1</sup> Colliery Manager's figure.

market place, and a circuitous route via Todd Hills, Binchester Blocks and the Durham road to the town. The community has not suffered severely from the results of depression, and social amenities in the village include a well-kept Welfare Ground, two Institutes, a Methodist Chapel and two public houses as well as an up-to-date Junior School. Largely due to its isolated position, the village has had to develop into a self-contained entity. There is no strong indication, however, that the community would object to being transferred to Willington. They would lose some of the freedom to roam about the common land and woods, but would probably benefit by improved housing conditions and transport facilities. Though Newfield is not derelict in the same sense as Witton Park, Coundon Grange or Byers Green, in any comprehensive replanning of South-West Durham, the

present extent of employment there would not be  
considered as sufficient for its continued existence.

### SUNNYBROW.

In appearance Sunnybrow is certainly a derelict village. Mr. Thomas Sharp aptly compares it with a walled and moated medieval city, whose walls are old railway embankments, great sprawling pit heaps and a monstrous scavenging tip.<sup>1</sup> Standing on a prominent spur above the Wear, with a small tributary stream on two sides of it and the Bishop Auckland to Durham railway line on the fourth side, the village is shut off from the surrounding district. The remains of row after row of disused beehive coke ovens enclose the village on two sides and the hummocky grass grown pit heaps of three old pits suggest that the centre of employment, for which the fifteen colliery rows were constructed, has long since ceased to operate. A small drift, hidden among the disused colliery buildings and worked by about a dozen men with

a short set of horse drawn tubs, is the only sign of industrial activity.

The condition of the houses is miserable in the extreme. There is little to suggest to an observer that this drab village was the operating centre of the Willington collieries. Long before Willington grew into a town, Sunnybrow was the home of the colliery officials. In 1894, Thomas Yeoman, resident manager, George Keith Urwin, engineman, and John William Hudspeth, colliery clerk are recorded among the inhabitants of the village.<sup>1</sup> The colliery owners, Messrs. Strakers and Love, endowed their village with sites for two chapels. They also helped to provide an exceptionally well built Church. This is so out of keeping with the village itself, that its situation half a mile away is not surprising. The village also boasted a reading room and a Temperance Hall. A modern school has been built in more pleasant surroundings near to the Church.

The houses themselves are of a poor type. They are low, two-storey buildings of brick, arranged in long streets. In type they are similar to houses at Fylands and in Billy Row Bank, but unlike them, they have not been improved since they were built. Consequently the stepp ladders, which were fairly common in colliery houses at the beginning of the Century, are still used in many houses in Sunnybrow. The upstairs room is so low that it is difficult for a tall man to stand upright and the window is at floor level. Only thirteen houses are owned by the Colliery Company at the present time. The rest, numbering 255, were sold to a private agent in 1936. Now most of them are scheduled for demolition and several houses have already been pulled down. From the point of view of housing, therefore, Sunnybrow is derelict. When the present demolition is





Partially demolished houses at Sunnybrow.

N.B. The low-pitched roof and  
low upstairs room.

completed, only two or three streets will be left standing among piles of rubbish covering acres of ground. Unless the colliery and village site is cleaned up, the remaining houses will fast deteriorate into slums, for such miserable surroundings will not encourage very good tenants.

Quite apart from any considerations of employment or community, the village of Sunnybrow is derelict. The displaced families are being re-housed in an entirely new village, which is in process of construction in the vicinity of the Church and school already mentioned. The new site is only a quarter of a mile from the condemned village, but it is on the road from Hunwick to Willington and in pleasant rural surroundings. Undoubtedly it is an improvement on the old village, but it remains to be seen whether there is any

justification, beyond the provision of new houses, for an entirely new village in this locality.

The colliery at Sunnybrow is closed, except for the small drift mentioned. Actually the coal seams are still being worked, but operations are carried on from the Brancepeth shafts. In January 1938, 190 miners and coke-oven workers from Sunnybrow were employed at Brancepeth Colliery. In that month the total number of insured male workers was 400, so that almost half of the employable population was engaged at that Colliery.<sup>1</sup> It is a unit in a scheme of centralisation. It is a debateable point, whether centralisation of settlement, instead of the construction of a new village, would not have been advisable too. The miners are, to all intents and purposes, attached to Brancepeth Colliery and the conversion of Willington into a well planned town, with adequate social services, seems preferable to the construction of new housing estates, which are merely modern repetitions of the old type of colliery village.

1

Of the rest, all except 29 men are employed in nearby collieries, ~~drifts~~ and brickworks.

### BINCHESTER.

The colliery village of Binchester Blocks, consisting of 125 houses of Westerton stone, lies half a mile to the west of the main road between Durham and Bishop Auckland almost midway between Spennymoor and Bishop Auckland. It is well laid out in pleasant rural surroundings around a triangular village green, and by reason of the open arrangement and the clean appearance of the grey stone houses, which are too far from a colliery to be blackened by smoke, the village gives a good impression, which is matched by its reputation.

Binchester Blocks is not an old colliery village. Sinking operations were started at Westerton Colliery, rather more than half a mile to the east, in 1872, and the village was begun in the same year. The

houses are substantially built and their superior quality is probably due to the fact that the coal industry was in a prosperous state at the time when they were erected.<sup>1</sup>

In accordance with common practice at that time, the houses were built to suit families of different sizes. The Cross Streets between Gladstone Terrace and the Granville Terrace are two-roomed houses and at each end of each of the four blocks comprising Granville Terrace, there are two houses of similar accommodation. Gladstone Terrace consists of three-roomed houses and Granville Terrace, except for the houses already mentioned, is made up of four-roomed houses. Self contained yards and water taps in each house have always been a feature which raised Binchester above the level of many colliery villages. Small gardens are

<sup>1</sup>  
Cff Byers Green Page 355.

attached to most of the houses and allotment gardens are available. The village has a Church and two Chapels, a school and in recent years, a Social Service Centre, and the nearest public house is at Nutter's Buildings - a mile away.

On account of the good colliery houses, Binchester attracted a superior type of workman. The miners came from other pits, where conditions were not as good as at Westerton, and are therefore of mixed origin. There is a remarkable absence of both Welsh and Irish miners in the village and this may have some bearing on the peace-loving reputation the village enjoyed. From consideration of other villages, where English, Welsh and Irish miners lived side by side, it has been gathered that week-end fights between the three elements were usually based on national differences. The oldest resident in Binchester until recent weeks was

Billy Blower who came from Norfolk. His successor is the son of a farmer, who came from Gilling in North Yorkshire to work on a farm at Brancepeth, but gave up farming to help in the sinking of Sleetburn shaft, near Langley Moor.

Westerton Colliery worked particularly well until the Great War and it gave employment to over 1,000 miners. The High Main and Brockwell seams were exploited and 400 beehive coke ovens were in operation. Depression was felt after the War, however, and the colliery was closed down from 1926 to 1928. Work was started again in 1929, chiefly by means of a drift near Merrington Lane, but operations ceased altogether in 1931. Local miners agree that, though the pit is now flooded, virgin areas of coal, particularly in the Brockwell seam, could be tapped by a new shaft and exploitation could continue for another eighty years.

Until there is a scarcity of coal, there is little likelihood that this will be done and meanwhile the colliery is derelict.

Binchester Blocks has been abandoned by industry since 1931, but it has not experienced the same ill-effects as the neighbouring village of Byers Green, which has been without a centre of employment for the same length of time. After the colliery closed, many of the young men went to work in the Kent coalfield and in ironworks in Lincolnshire. Some however, found work in other collieries owned by Dorman, Long & Co. and continued to live in the village. As a result, there has been a depletion among the younger generation and the average age ~~in~~ of the Binchester population is reckoned at over 40 years. The majority of the men are between the ages of 55 and 80 years. In this the village is showing the same signs of



derelictness as Byers Green and many of the other distressed colliery villages already described.

After Westerton Colliery closed down, unemployment was not widespread. The miners were taken on at the Dean and Chapter Colliery, at Bowburn, Chilton and Mainsforth, all of which were expanding after 1931. The colliery houses were not sold and the majority of them are still occupied by miners working at Dorman, Long & Co. collieries. Those who were not transferred to one of these collieries, found employment elsewhere. A 'bus leaves Binchester about nine p.m. and takes ten or twelve men to work at Thrislington and 'buses during the day carry smaller numbers to the same colliery for other shifts. Several men are employed at Brancepeth Colliery and travel by cycle.<sup>1</sup> Only a few of the oldest miners did not find employment.

<sup>1</sup> 21 employed in 1937 (Colliery Manager).

Some miners, employed at Dean and Chapter and Chilton, have come to live in the village since 1931, in order to occupy colliery houses. In February 1937, the number of unemployed men was only 17<sup>1</sup> out of a total insured population of 170. In the present year, there are not more than twenty who have no work. This is very different from the state of unemployment at Byers Green.

Since 1931, there has been no immigration of unemployed men and their families into the village. Houses let to any but colliery employees are rented at 8/6 per week for a four-roomed house. The rent of 6/3 per week for a three-roomed house, is increased by 2/0 when new tenants come in, therefore there is no inducement for unemployed men with no prospects of work in the vicinity, to seek houses in Binchester.

In spite of the fact that the majority of

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Labour figure.

men are employed at their own type of work and there has been no undesirable immigration, the village and community of Binchester are showing signs of deterioration. The village is not quite so neat and tidy as it used to be, gardens tend to be neglected and the hitherto well-kept sports field is now uncared for. There seems to be less energy and initiative among the people and less interest is shown in communal activities and social functions, than was the case before the War. For instance, the village had a noted Cricket Club, but now it is difficult to find members for it.

All these signs of deterioration are slight when compared with those found in certain ex-colliery villages, but they are unmistakable. They may be explained by the fact, that the majority of the miners are over 40 years of age and moreover 9

travel distances to work each day. After a day's work at the high pressure required in modern collieries and an extra hour or more spent in travelling, the miners - already past the prime of life - cannot be expected to have a great deal of time or energy for other occupations. As an instance, the Poultry Scheme holdings, which are let to employed miners, do not receive as much attention as they require.

Though deterioration is only slight at present, and only the earliest stages of dereliction are in evidence, there seems no hope for Binchester. Already an old people's village, it is not difficult to foresee what will happen when the present inhabitants die or become too old for work. Unless there is a marked revival in the coal mining industry, the village and community will become derelict, even though at present it is one of the least derelict of the distressed mining villages.

### BYERS GREEN.

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Byers Green, pleasantly situated on sloping ground dropping gently north-westward to the Wear, might be mistaken from the distance, for a quiet agricultural village. Its mixed architecture and the informal arrangement of its houses do not suggest a mining village. Half a mile away, however, the gaunt relics of Byers Green Colliery, together with two or three typical colliery rows awaiting demolition, serve as a reminder of the original purpose of the village.<sup>1</sup>

Like most of its neighbouring villages in the South West Durham coalfield, the growth of Byers Green has been closely connected with the expansion of a colliery. Until 1830 or thereabouts the Old Hall and the nearby farms of medium size were symbolic of the agricultural nature of the locality. It is recorded, however, that in 1836 borings for coal were made on the Old Park Royalty (east of the present Byers Green Railway Station)

<sup>1</sup>

See Map 18.

In the same year two large Coal Companies were established in the Durham Coalfield and one, under the name of the Durham County Coal Company, leased royalties at Whitworth (Spennymoor) and Byers Green. The interest in this somewhat isolated district was an immediate result of the opening of a railway to facilitate the transport of coal via Sunnybrow, Todd Hills and Byers Green to West Hartlepool. In 1840, preliminary borings resulted in the opening of Byers Green Colliery (Michael Pit), but misfortune, in the form of excessive water prevented any immediate success and it was not until 1845, after the pit had been flooded for two or three years that operations were re-started. After this initial set-back, work must have continued fairly steadily and in 1859, a second shaft was sunk near to the Old Park Terrace. Work at the Michael Pit went on until 1885 but, in the meantime, in 1873,

another shaft had been sunk beside it, within a few yards of the West Hartlepool Railway. The demand for coal during the Franco-Prussian War was doubtless responsible for the sinking of the new shaft. Scarcely had the new pit been opened, however, when misfortune once again came upon Byers Green. A general depression in the coal trade, (due to the slackening demand for coal after the War), resulted in stoppages and irregular work throughout the coalfield and in 1879 over seventy pits in the County were standing idle. After the trade recovery about 1890, Byers Green Colliery enjoyed prosperity with few stoppages until 1931, when work ceased altogether.

The Brockwell Seam (good coking coal) was extensively exploited at Byers Green and old-type beehive coke ovens were in operation at the pit head, until new by-product ovens were installed during the Great War.

In addition, brick works were attached to the Colliery and, on an average, thirty men, a large number for a colliery brickyard, were employed there. Altogether the Colliery, with its brickworks and by-products ovens employed 800 men<sup>1</sup> and boys at the peak of its prosperity. After 1926, work was more irregular and in 1929, for instance, 242 men<sup>2</sup> were employed. In 1931 when the colliery closed, it was estimated that 400 men<sup>3</sup> were displaced.

The varied fortunes of Byers Green Colliery were reflected in the growth of the village. It was a usual practice for a Colliery Company to build houses for its employees.<sup>4</sup> In fact, it was almost a necessity, because employment was so plentiful in the South-West Durham coalfield between 1825 and 1872, that miners could choose their colliery and showed preference to those with

<sup>1</sup> Two local miners estimated the number as 1000 and 800 respectively. The second miner proved rather more reliable on other points, therefore 800 was taken as the figure.

<sup>2</sup> 1929 Colliery Year Book.

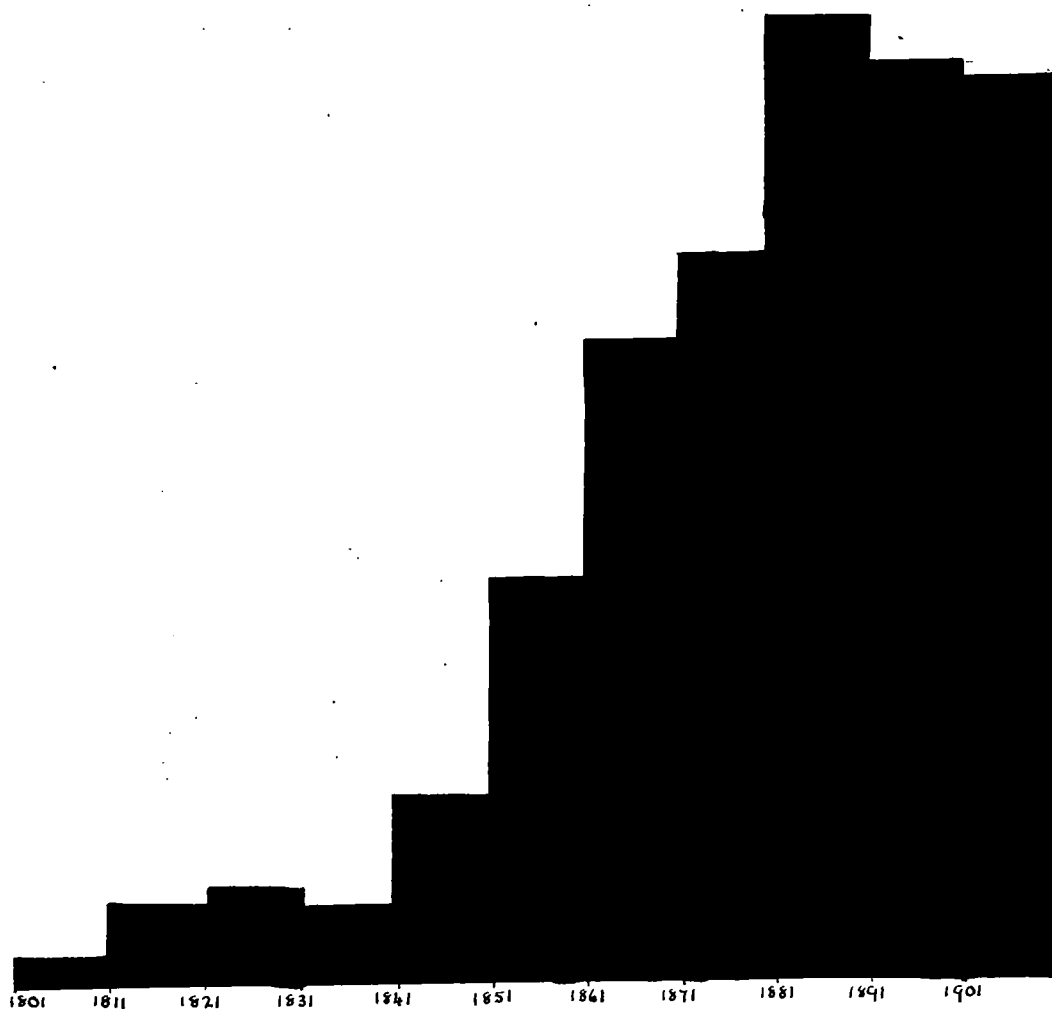
<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Labour figure.

<sup>4</sup> Reference Page 43



THE POPULATION OF BYERS GREEN

1801 to 1901



Scale :- Vertical. 1 inch = 500 persons. Horizontal  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch = 10 years.

housing accommodation within a short distance.

At Byers Green this feature of colliery development was neglected, most likely on account of clouded prospects, when the newly opened Michael Pit was flooded between 1840 and 1845 and again after the new pit was sunk in 1873. Three colliery rows were erected near to the pit head in connection with the Michael Pit, but the total number of houses was only 37. These were not, by any means, sufficient to house the miners, who sought work in the new pit and already before <sup>1</sup> 1859 at least 130 houses had been built privately half a mile away, forming the nucleus of the present village of Byers Green. Shortly after 1859 an attempt was made to increase the number of colliery houses by building Old Park Terrace, near to the second shaft. Only one side of the square which had been planned, was completed and building proceeded so leisurely that the street of 18 houses is still known as Mount Slowly.

<sup>1</sup>

Six-inch Ordnance Survey.

Between 1859 and 1897 private individuals added to the village of Byers Green to the extent of another 190 houses of which 39 were leased to the Colliery Company for the accommodation of some of their workmen. Since 1900 a few more streets have been added to the village.

It is little wonder, in view of the haphazard building of houses, that there is little arrangement or uniformity in the housing conditions of the village. It is therefore, impossible to generalise or to deal in detail with every type of house.

Distinction must be preserved between the hamlet of 37 colliery houses (17 now demolished) at the pit head and the village of Byers Green itself.

The hamlet at the colliery is a typical mining "village" - a village only in the number of its houses.

BYERS GREEN.

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Michael Terrace, Byers Green Colliery.

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It has no community meeting place of any description, except the pit yard, in which some of the cottages were built. All the houses are scheduled for demolition and only Michael Terrace, facing Westward with its back to the colliery from which it took its name, is still occupied. These houses are the best of those grouped around the pit and for that reason have remained occupied. They are, in spite of that, of a very old type, built of local stone, but repaired in places with bricks from the colliery. They rank as two storey houses, but the upstairs room in each house is little more than a loft converted into a low bedroom. Downstairs, there is a fairly large living room in the front of the house, with a small scullery behind in some cases. Poor though these houses seem, they must have been desirable when compared with the four or six houses, known as the Barracks, and now unoccupied, which were situated in the

colliery yard behind Michael Terrace. These low one storey cottages, with two rooms, were overshadowed on the east side by the pit heap and on the west by the higher houses of Michael Terrace. Now their empty shells have a gloomy dismal appearance. Perhaps their situation was less dreary, though it could scarcely be more healthy before 1931, when the blaze of the coke ovens and the glow of the burning pit heap lighted up the pit yard. In spite of the coal dust and the rattle of the cage at the pit head, there must have been some interest in life, when the pit employed some hundreds of miners and loaded coal trucks went creaking along the Hartlepool Railway. Now there is not even the satisfaction of any kind of employment as compensation for the out of date houses, the complete lack of social amenities and the isolation of the hamlet at Byers Green Colliery. The road past the houses along which miners walked from the Batts (Bishop Auckland) and

Newfield is quiet and grass grown and the old railway through the pit yard was pulled up nearly twenty years ago. Now the miners living at Byers Green Colliery, who have found other employment, walk or travel on cycles to Brancepeth Colliery  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles away across the river, or to Chilton and the Dean and Chapter Colliery at Ferryhill. The children walk half a mile to school at Byers Green and the unemployed ex-miners gather on the bridge across the silent railway track and wonder what the future holds for them and Byers Green. In spite of their declaration that "more coal is left in the pit than ever came out of it", there seems little reason to believe that the flooded and dismantled mine will ever be worked again. Within the next few years, the entire hamlet at Byers Green Colliery will be demolished and its removal will mark the end of another colliery "village," which fulfilled its primary function in 1931, when the pit closed. Since it boasts

no social amenities for the community, it is considered as a village only on the grounds of separate situation of a group of houses. Now that the reason for its separate existence is gone and the houses are in bad condition, there seems every reason to consider this hamlet as a derelict village, which would be best removed.

Byers Green itself is a much larger village than the colliery hamlet already described. It grew up round a pre-industrial agricultural nucleus and like Coundon, St. Helen's Auckland and Toft Hill it is a true village with a church, chapels and shops. Its social amenities provide facilities for dancing and outdoor games and a playground for children, and in recent years, a Social Service Centre has been opened in the village.

Housing conditions show great variety. Most of the older houses erected before 1859 lie on



the north-east (right) side of the High Street. Some are built of local stone, but many are of bricks made of surface clay in the small brickyard, which was a going concern when private builders were extending the village. The older houses were arranged in small groups or around courtyards and reference to Map 18 will show the four houses called Golden Corner and three Pratt's Cottages as well as Dodd's Terrace and Pear Tree Square, which are in the form of courtyards. After 1859, streets were added in the neighbourhood of the brickflats and on the opposite side of the High Street, and by degrees, as houses were needed, the village took on its present proportions.

Some of the newer houses in Byers Green, particularly those in the High Street near the Church, are well built, red brick houses of five or six rooms, many of them owner-occupied. On the other hand

Brockwell and Harvey Streets, built privately but leased to the Colliery Company, are low pitched houses of two or three rooms, very similar in type to old colliery houses. These have been neglected and have suffered at the hands of short term tenants since the Colliery lease expired and now they present as poor an appearance as any houses in Byers Green - an appearance not improved by the unmade streets between them. Taken on the whole, however, the majority of houses in the village are in fairly good condition, very few being scheduled for demolition.

As regards employment, the state of Byers Green is not so satisfactory. Since 1931 there has been no centre of employment of any kind, within at least a mile of the village. The best of the younger displaced miners left Byers Green for Horden, Easington and Seaham Harbour and the Dorman, Long collieries of Bowburn and Ferryhill soon after the closing of Byers

Green Colliery. Many of those who remained, however, did find employment within easy travelling distance. In 1938, 85 Byers Green<sup>1</sup> men were employed at Brancepeth Colliery just across the river and several walk across the fields to Page Bank to work in the drift there. A few travel to Chilton and the Dean and Chapter Colliery and less than ten have found employment at the brickworks, recently opened at Todd Hills on the site of the old railway station. Taken in all, about thirty per cent of the insured population are out of work. Since the majority of those who are employed, are working within easy travelling distance, the village cannot be considered as completely derelict, even though the colliery, which was the original justification of its existence, is dismantled.

Neither on the grounds of housing nor

<sup>1</sup>

Figure given by the Manager of Brancepeth Colliery.

employment can Byers Green be ranked as particularly distressed above the average for South West Durham. When the investigation is continued to the community itself, however, unmistakable signs of dereliction are to be found. As in most colliery villages, the population of Byers Green is of mixed origin, including several Irish families and a few ex-miners, whose parents came from North Wales (e.g. Hughes) about 1870. It has been suggested by several life long residents (miners themselves) in the village, that while Byers Green miners were hard working and competent, the best possible type of miners were not attracted to this colliery, because houses were not provided. If this is a correct judgement, then Byers Green had a bad start in this respect, too. After 1931 there was the usual migration away from the abandoned colliery. As has already been discussed, it is usually only miners under 35 or 40 years of age, who can

stand the strain of work in the large new collieries, where the speed and tension of machine working render miners used to working in older collieries at a disadvantage.<sup>1</sup> Those who left Byers Green, therefore, were mostly of the middle age group, between 25 and 40 years of age. This migration has deprived the community of one generation, so that now Byers Green is mainly inhabited by miners of over 40 years of age, who were too old to find places in the new collieries, and by a younger generation, who were too young when the pit closed in 1931 to have started work as miners. Of the older men, many have found employment under poor but less strenuous circumstances in drifts such as those at Page Bank and Middlestone Moor. The more fortunate are using their skill in different seams in Brancepeth Colliery. Some realise that they are too old to adapt themselves to modern methods and have resigned themselves to unemployment.

<sup>1</sup> See p 79.

Whether employed at present or not, however, these older men and their wives form a steady, self respecting element in the community. They have known hard work and prosperity. Many of them have bought and occupy their own houses and, given an opportunity to do their own specialised type of work, would willingly do so. It is their misfortune, not their fault, that unemployment faced them at an age, when they could not adapt themselves easily to new methods.

The younger element in the community has had little outlet since the colliery closed. Mining is not attractive to boys leaving school and only a few have found employment at Brancepeth Colliery. A very infrequent bus service to Bishop Auckland and Spennymoor has limited the possibility of employment in either town. Consequently many of the boys and young men, who still live in Byers Green have never been employed and constitute a

stagnant element, which will never, under present circumstances, develop along the lines of the older generation.

The "work-shy" group in Byers Green has been augmented in recent years by families from Witton Park, Merrington Lane (Spennymoor) and Middlesbrough. It is generally stated, in respect to this drifting element, that cheap rents are the attraction. This is overrated both in the case of Witton Park and Byers Green. The drifting population is in evidence, but rents of 6/0 for a two-roomed house and 8/0 or 9/0 for a four-roomed house cannot be responsible for its presence in Byers Green. The reason is more subtle. It has become known that it is fairly easy to obtain Public Assistance at Byers Green and this in itself accounts for the comings and goings of families, who have no connection with the village.

Byers Green has not a promising future, when it is considered that once the old mining stock of the village dies out, as it will do within ten or fifteen years, it will, in the absence of a middle generation, be replaced by a community consisting largely of young unemployables and work-shy adherents of Public Assistance Committees. This tendency may sound over rated, but evidence of it is already visible in the way in which the younger generation is dominating the activities of the Social Service Centre. Efforts to improve the amenities of the village have been turned down, because no immediate reward was forthcoming and a suggestion brought forward by the South West Durham Development Board that a light industry could be established here was abandoned, because the proposal entailed the clearing and preparation of a site by the villagers.



In conclusion , Byers Green must be considered as almost derelict, less on account of the situation and physical structure of the village, than because of its decadent community. The unfortunate circumstances of the development of the colliery, as well as the closing of the pit have been largely responsible for the present composition of the population. Further, the isolation of the village and lack of opportunities for employment for the younger generation outside the village have emphasised features, which are evident to a lesser degree in a number of one-time mining villages. Altogether Byers Green, in spite of its pleasant appearance from a distance and its healthy situation presents a definite problem by reason of its derelict community.

## CHAPTER TWELVE.

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### PAGE BANK.

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Beautifully situated on the left bank of the River Wear between the wooded parks of Brancepeth and Whitworth Hall, Page Bank has, since 1931, earned the title of a derelict village. It was listed in the Gibb Report, issued in February 1937, as one of the backwater villages, which should be demolished and it is also considered derelict by the Community Service Council and by Mr. Thomas Sharp. It remains to examine the grounds on which this judgement has been based.

Unlike Byers Green, Page Bank is a typical mining village in appearance. Four parallel streets face south-west in regular formation, comprising 183 houses in all. In two rows the houses have four rooms each. Downstairs there is a kitchen-living



Oldest Colliery  
houses round  
pit shaft.

The dismantled  
Colliery  
(South Brancepeth)



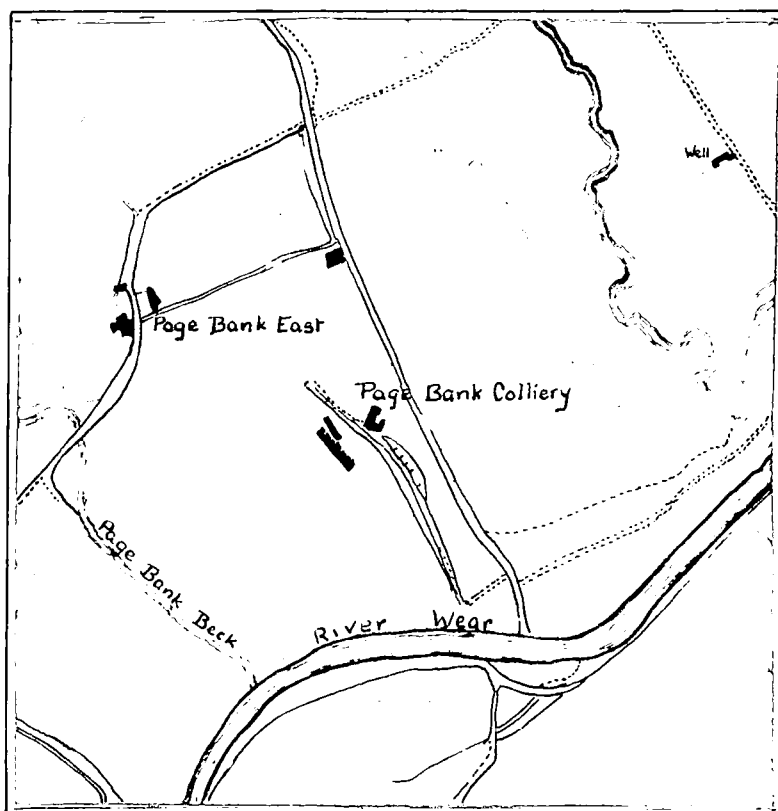
General view of  
the village.  
N.B Uniform  
type of houses.

room at the back and a seldom-used sitting room at the front and upstairs there are two bedrooms - a large one and a small one. The remaining two streets consist of three-roomed houses, with two bedrooms upstairs and one living room downstairs. Each house in the village has a garden. In fact, some have gardens at both back and front. As a result, the streets are well spaced and the appearance of the village is less crowded than, for instance, is Sunnybrow or Eden Pit.

The whole is uniform in appearance and was built by the Colliery Company soon after it started operations at the South Brancepeth Colliery in 1853. Building started not long before the 1857 Ordnance Survey was made and Old Row, the first street in Page Bank, was only half finished at the time.<sup>1</sup> The rest of Page Bank was completed within a few years and no additions to the village, with the exception of the

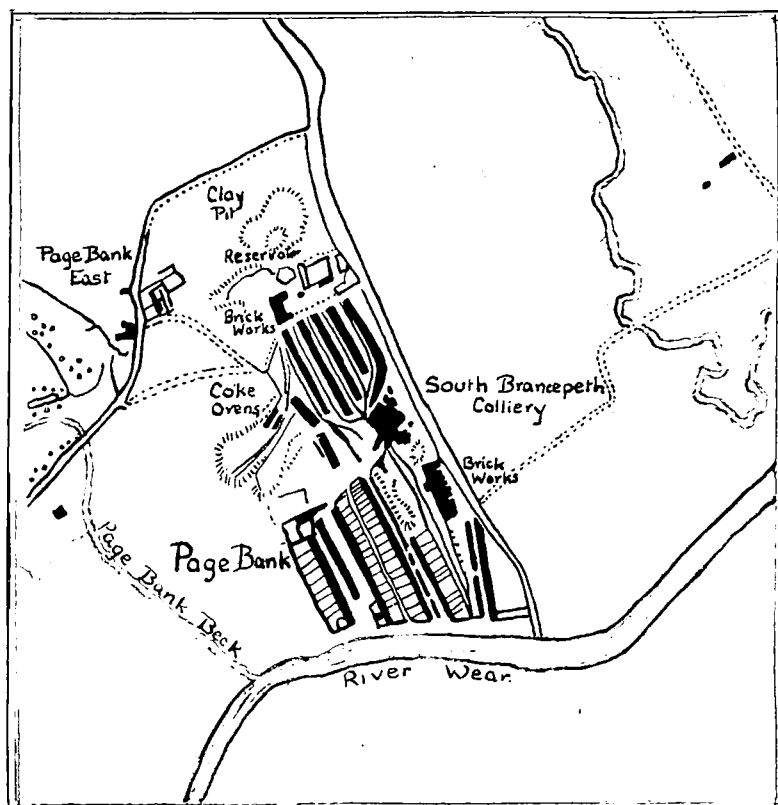
<sup>1</sup> See accompanying Maps.

## THE GROWTH OF PAGE BANK.



PAGE BANK IN 1857.

Scale - 6 inches to 1 mile.



PAGE BANK IN 1897.

Scale - 6 inches to 1 mile.

school and Social Service Hut, have been made in the last seventy years. Until the colliery was dismantled in 1931, 175 of the 183 houses were Colliery property.

Page Bank is a peculiarly isolated village. With Byers Green, its nearest neighbour, it has no connection except by field paths. A half-hourly 'bus service (Jewitt's) is maintained between Spennymoor and Page Bank along a pleasant but decidedly second class road, but the 'bus is compelled to stop and unload its passengers on the Whitworth side of the river, because the only entry to the village is by an old narrow railway bridge on which the wooden sleepers, which supported the lines, are still upraised. From Brancepeth a second class road approaches the village, but no 'bus service is maintained along it.

Such an isolated village has need of some social amenities for its inhabitants. Page Bank, however, has very few. The nearest Church is half

a mile away across the Wear at Whitworth. Apart from a Wesleyan Chapel and a school, the only communal buildings in the village are the British Legion Hut and the Social Service Centre. A children's playground has been wedged between the streets and the pit heaps. Page Bank was essentially a dormitory village for the men who worked in the South Brancepeth Colliery. Now it is just a dormitory village for the men who do not work at all or work away.

Life in Page Bank was centred round the pit<sup>1</sup> where 300 to 500 men were employed. Of these about sixty per cent lived in the village, while the remainder travelled in from Spennymoor and villages nearby. In 1926, sixty per cent of the total employees would amount to 288, which means that the whole working population would be absorbed. Up to 1921, 312 beehive coke ovens were in operation, giving employment to seventy more men

1

In 1923, 327 men were employed. (1923 Colliery Year Book)  
 In July 1927, 480 men were employed. (Under Manager's figure)  
 In 1929, 451 men were employed. (1929 Colliery Year Book).

and producing about 2100 tons of coke per week. In addition, seggar or fine clay was worked and brickworks employing thirty men, formed a flourishing side line to coal mining.

In 1931, however, the colliery closed. The Busty and Brockwell seams were completely worked out and an explosion and a fire in the shaft marked the end of the colliery's vigorous life of eighty years. The colliery was dismantled and everything of value removed and only acres of low, undulating pit heaps on two sides of the village and the gaunt shell of the engine house now remain to remind Page Bank of its reason for existence.

In recent years the brick works have been restarted, but only ten<sup>1</sup> or fifteen men are employed there and several of these are not residents in the village. The only other type of employment found near to Page Bank

<sup>1</sup> Ten according to Ministry of Labour - October 1937.



now consists of small drifts working into top seams on the old South Brancepeth and Whitworth Royalties. One of these, half a mile north-east of the village, is larger than is usual for this type of coal mine and provided employment for 130 men. These, however, are not drawn entirely from Page Bank. Some walk or cycle from Browney and Brandon or from Spennymoor and of those now living in Page Bank, several are not natives of the village, but have moved in in the last two years to be nearer to their work.

In spite of the fact that the main colliery is closed and that the brickworks and small drifts in the neighbourhood are not dependent on Page Bank for their supply of labour, sixty per cent. of the insured population of 175 was in employment in October 1937 and there is reason to believe that the figure may be slightly higher now.<sup>1</sup> The majority<sup>2</sup> are engaged at

<sup>1</sup> The coal trade has improved since 1937 on account of the increased manufacture of armaments.

<sup>2</sup> In April 1939, 130 men were employed at Bowburn from Page Bank and Spennymoor (Colliery Office figure).

Bowburn Colliery ten miles away, and are either conveyed there by special buses at a charge of three shillings per week, or else travel on bicycles.

The connection between Bowburn and Page Bank is worthy of note. Both collieries are owned by Dorman, Long & Co. and the sudden expansion of Bowburn Colliery coincided with the closing of South Brancepeth. As a result, the displaced Page Bank miners sought employment at Bowburn and many of them were given work. Houses were few in the tiny agricultural village of Bowburn and as Page Bank was within travelling distance, it became a dormitory village for Bowburn Colliery. When new houses were built at Bowburn, Page Bank miners, who were employed there, hastened to move. Some, who were fortunate enough to obtain colliery houses, have settled down in their new surroundings, but a surprisingly large number moved back to Page Bank after a short stay and resumed travelling to work. The reason for this is to

be found in the difference in rents. The new Council and Scheme houses are rented at 14/0 per week, whereas houses in Page Bank may be rented at 7/6 to 8/6 per week. Even after paying 3/0 a week in 'bus fares, it is more economical to live in the old village and travel to work than to enjoy the modern conveniences of the new housing estates at Bowburn.

Page Bank, therefore, still seems to be performing some service. True to its original purpose, it remains a dormitory village. The distance from the main centre of employment has increased, but not out of proportion to the extended facilities for transport in the past eighty years. Two points need further investigation. In the first place, is Page Bank a good dormitory village from the standpoint of housing accommodation? Secondly, are the inhabitants satisfied

with their existence in a mere dormitory village, or do they realise their lack of amenities and suffer from their isolation?

When the colliery closed in 1931, the colliery houses in Page Bank were offered for sale. Some of the "substantial terrace houses" as they were described, were bought by miners, who had saved up the necessary £25 and sought to provide themselves with some measure of security for their old age. The rest of the village was bought up by three or four men, one of whom, in particular, has made a practice, during the past ten years, of buying up old colliery houses, in the hope that an ample return for the initial outlay will accrue before the houses are scheduled for demolition. Since they have ceased to belong to the Colliery Company, the houses have fallen into disrepair. There is no great incentive

to spend much money on repairing houses in a derelict village, which outside investigators have doomed. In addition, subsidence following the last period of working back towards the shaft, has affected the houses, though not so seriously as at Stanley Pit<sup>1</sup> or even Browney Colliery. Even as a dormitory village for a colliery ten miles away, Page Bank is becoming derelict.

The inhabitants of Page Bank include approximately seventy men and their families, who are unemployed. Of the rest, the majority work at Bowburn, but a few are employed at drifts in the neighbourhood. A report made to the Community Service Council before the Social Service Hut was opened gives an impression of the people of the village. It says that Page Bank men had apparently not made much effort to get work because Browney Colliery has to get men from as far away as Tudhoe and further, it goes on to state that

<sup>1</sup>

See Page 297

the Unemployment Assistance Board officials in Spennymoor and the Public Assistance Committee in Willington regarded the village as another Witton Park - in other words as a collecting ground for undesirables. The latter opinion may be deserved, but the former assertion is surely based on an incomplete understanding of the conditions of employment in collieries at the present time. The age and strength of the applicants is of more consequence than their place of residence.

Out of the 700 inhabitants of the village, 205<sup>1</sup> are children of school age. About one-third are middle-aged or elderly people, of whom the men will probably never be re-employed, except in local drifts, because the strain of work in large pits is too great for any but men in the prime of life. Of the third, who are between school leaving age and forty, most of the men are already in employment somewhere.

<sup>1</sup> This is a much higher proportion than at Byers Green where there are 291 children out of a total population of 1,962.

Several of the older inhabitants are tied to the village, partly because they occupy their own houses and would lose what little they have saved if they attempted to sell them, but partly because modern industry offers them no means of employment anywhere else. Those who work at Bowburn, but live in Page Bank, do so because the rents are lower, and a few miners e.g. from Brownney have moved into Page Bank to be nearer to their work at Page Bank Drift. This leaves little room for unemployed of the undesirable class. This type is, moreover, usually attracted by low rents and the rents of 7/6 and 8/6, except when compared with Bowburn, cannot be considered very low. In short, most of the people who live in Page Bank are compelled to do so by circumstances.

The people of the village are realising their extreme isolation and lack of amenities. The British

Legion and Social Service Huts are insufficient recompense for an infrequent 'bus service to the nearest town. Shopping facilities are limited to two or three house-shops and there is no picture house nearer than Spennymoor. The general opinion in the village seems to indicate that many of the inhabitants would not be sorry to leave Page Bank, if circumstances permitted. With local employment almost non-existent, and housing conditions fast decaying, it is probable, therefore, that this village could be abandoned in the future and its population removed to some more suitable centre.



## CHAPTER THIRTEEN.

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### AUCKLAND PARK - ELDON DISTRICT.

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The Auckland Park-Eldon group of villages lies in a small valley about two miles long, which joins the Gaunless from the east at South Church. From Shildon Bank or from Old Eldon village, one views what seems to be an extensive village covering an area a mile wide by two miles long, broken by colliery waste heaps and occasional fields and marshes.<sup>1</sup> In reality, seven distinct villages can be picked out, but space is so limited that they might be said to have almost grown into one another. On the north side of the valley, the long colliery rows of Auckland Park, Gurney Valley and Black Boy curve along the hillside. Across the narrow

<sup>1</sup>. See Map 19.

stream on the south side lie Eldon, Eldon Lane and Coronation strung out along the road from South Church to Old Eldon. Bridging the half mile strip between the two rows of villages are Close House (between Black Boy and Eldon) and Coundon Grange (between Auckland Park and Eldon Lane). The agricultural village of Old Eldon looks down from the east on these comparatively modern colliery villages, while the ancient Church of St. Andrew with the colliery rows of South Church, which cluster around it, guard the entrance to the valley from the west.

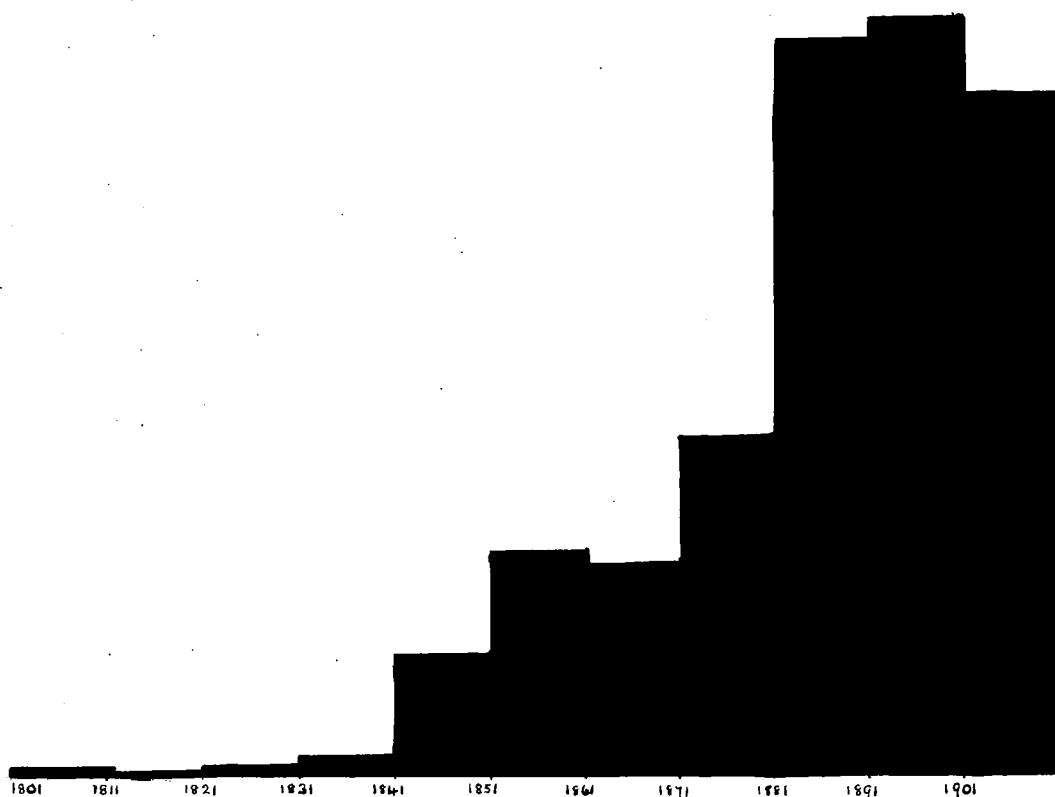
The concentration of settlement in this insignificant valley has been due to particularly intensive coal mining activity. On the north side of the valley, exploitation was carried on by the Darlington firm of Backhouse & Co. at the collieries known as the Black Boy group, two of which were in

operation before the railway era (beginning in 1825). The original Black Boy Colliery, more recently known as Old Auckland Park and situated half a mile north of the present Auckland Park Colliery, was in operation from 1810 to 1830. Gurney Pit, now bearing the name of Black Boy Colliery, is of almost equally early origin, but experienced a much longer life.

After the introduction of railways into the district in 1825, a new impetus was given to coal mining. Another colliery of the Black Boy group was sunk in this valley, namely the Machine Pit, now known as Auckland Park Colliery and the only one still in operation in the locality. The owners of the Black Boy group of pits, in turn Nicholas Wood, Bolckow, Vaughan & Co., Ltd. and Dorman, Long & Co., Ltd. have been responsible for all the coal mining activity in the valley north of the small stream which joins

THE POPULATION OF COUNDON GRANGE TOWNSHIP

1801 to 1901.



Scale - Vertical. 1 inch = 500 persons. Horizontal.  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch = 10 years.

the Gaunless at South Church. On the south side of the stream exploitation of the rich coal seams was begun in two places by the firm of Pease and Partners. In 1829 Eldon Colliery was opened little more than a stone's throw from Gurney Pit. A mile to the westward Adelaide Pit had already become an extensive concern by 1856.

The expansion in coal mining is illustrated by the growth of population between 1831 and 1841. In the parishes of Coundon Grange and Eldon the population increased from 173 to 499 in these ten years. A large part of this early immigration consisted of leadminers from Weardale and Teesdale, who were attracted to Eldon Colliery and settled in the old type of colliery houses which formed the nucleus of the present village of Eldon. The newly opened Adelaide Pit drew miners, but not dalespeople,

to South Church, where Pease and Partners had built the first of their colliery rows. The fact that these houses were of very poor quality may account for the rough type of workman, which was always associated with South Church. In connection with the <sup>1</sup>two Black Boy Collieries, namely Gurney Pit and Machine Pit, 78 houses known as Gurney Villa were built for the accommodation of the miners. These were low, two roomed houses of very poor quality strung out in a single line along the hill side between the two pits.

Already before 1859 when the first 6" Ordnance Survey was made, there were in this valley three distinct villages, Gurney Valley, South Church and Eldon, each connected with a different colliery and with distinctive characteristics, resulting from different social backgrounds. In addition there

<sup>1</sup> The original Black Boy Colliery closed in 1830.

were the beginnings of four other villages. About 30 houses had already been built privately at Coundon Grange, on a low lying marshy site near to the clay pit and brickyard, which supplied the building materials. These houses were occupied by miners working in the Black Boy collieries. Six colliery houses at Auckland Park and ten privately owned houses at Close House form the nuclei of two more villages, one connected with Auckland Park Pit, then known as the Black Boy Machine Pit, and the other with Eldon Colliery, and 42 houses in Eldon Lane, including Paddy's Row, were already occupied by miners at the Adelaide Pit.

Between 1861 and 1871 the population of the locality increased from 863 to 1588 and by 1881 it had reached 3253. This increase of population was a result of the 1870 boom in the iron industry

and therefore in the coking industry. The Black Boy pits were expanding and the influx of miners and coke oven workers made it necessary that more houses should be built. Before 1897 the colliery built village of Auckland Park with the exception of Douglass Crescent had come into existence and the wood faced colliery rows of Black Boy had been added to the village of Gurney Valley. In addition, 240 more privately built houses occupied by Black Boy employees completed the village of Coundon Grange within a few years of 1872.

The depression in the mining industry following the Franco Prussian War cannot have affected the mines in this valley very seriously. A strike at Eldon Colliery in 1879 was evidence of industrial unrest, but the fact that Welsh miners were brought in to take the places of the Eldon miners, (who were turned out of the colliery houses) suggests that the demand for



coal was not materially lessened. In fact, even after the strike was settled new miners kept on pouring into the district. In 1878 a group of Cornish miners arrived at Eldon. They had left the decadent tin mines of their own district in order to join in the exploitation of the comparatively new ironstone mines in Cleveland. On hearing of even better prospects of employment in South-West Durham, however, they finally settled in the Bishop Auckland district and left their mark on Eldon by introducing Cornish methods of minigg into the John Henry Pit which was sunk in 1864 in connection with Eldon Colliery. Between 1880 and 1890 the coking industry developed on an extensive scale at Auckland Park, Eldon and Adelaide Collieries. The immediate result was an influx of coke oven workers, as distinct from miners. The scarcity of houses became acute and the privately owned brick flats at

Eldon and Coundon Grange, as well as those worked in connection with the collieries, were kept busy supplying building materials for the additional streets, already mentioned in connection with the villages of Auckland Park, Gurney Valley and Coundon Grange as well as for new houses in Eldon, Eldon Lane and Close House. Coke oven workers were not entitled to "free" colliery houses as miners were and they did not, therefore, settle in the colliery owned villages of Auckland Park, Gurney Valley or Eldon. The coke drawers, connected with the Adelaide coke ovens, became established, in the main, in the privately owned houses of Eldon Lane and South Church. Many of the coke oven workers at Auckland Park Colliery found houses in Coundon Grange and those connected with Eldon Colliery settled in the main street in Close House or in Eldon Lane. In these privately built villages, miners and coke oven workers lived side

by side, but in Eldon Lane coke drawers outnumbered miners to such an extent that it became known as a village for coke oven workers.

As a result of this second period of expansion in the mining and coking industry of this small valley, all seven villages in the district almost reached their present proportions. Not only were there definite distinctions between the purely mining villages and the privately built villages, but finer differentiation was becoming evident. The coke ovens at Auckland Park Colliery were constructed in front of the Gurney Valley houses and overlooking Coundon Grange. Though both Gurney Valley and Auckland Park consisted of colliery houses, occupied only by miners, only the poorer type of family would endure the heat and grime and constant pall of smoke from the coke ovens which hung over the Gurney Valley houses. The more progressive and more

respectable miner was not content to live under such conditions and preferred a house in Auckland Park or at the Black Boy end of Gurney Valley. Hence the distinctions in social standing began at this period and these have not yet been forgotten, even though the coke ovens have long since been extinguished.

A further immigration of coke oven workers took place, when the new By-Product Ovens were introduced in the early part of this century. A great many of the newcomers were coke drawers from Tees-side, especially from South Bank, but not a few were Irishmen. Most of the Irish were from North Ireland or the Wicklow district and being of the tall, fair Nordic type and used to an outdoor occupation, they preferred coke oven work to actual mining. Therefore the coke workers' villages acquired yet another distinctive feature, based on differences of race and

often of religion. In short, by this time the villages in the valley had earned the reputations, which still cling to them. Auckland Park, consisting of well built colliery houses with gardens away from the smoke of the pit, still has a reputation for respectability and cleanliness. Gurney Valley, in spite of the fact that the by products ovens less than forty yards away are derelict now, is still the home of a poorer type of miner and the stigma of one time unclean habits still clings. The east end of the village, known as Black Boy, has a reputation for honesty, which may have some connection with the strong Welsh element still found among its inhabitants. Eldon, a community of miners derived mainly from the Dales, enjoys a standing equal to that of Auckland Park. Close House, being privately owned and part of it built more recently than 1900, has greater variety both in accommodation and community.

A strong Welsh colony, dating from the 1879 strike at Eldon Colliery is still present in the higher part of the village and an atmosphere of cleanliness and respectability is apparent, in spite of the narrow streets and crowded appearance of the village. Eldon Lane with its post-1900 addition of Coronation, has always been connected with coke oven workers, many of them Irish, who, in spite of a certain reputation for roughness and drunkenness, could afford a better type of house than the usual colliery style, by reason of their higher wages. Coundon Grange, on account of its situation and lay out, has always attracted the least desirable type of resident and has earned a reputation not even surpassed by South Church, where it is said that forty years ago it was not safe to attempt to pass through the village alone at night.

Until the Great War, the valley enjoyed

outstanding prosperity. Building went on, particularly between South Church and Eldon Lane and at Close House. In 1913 there was still employment for newcomers and Auckland Park Colliery employed 1200 men, Eldon 1700 to 1800, Adelaide Pit 500 men, while the old pit of Black Boy, which was declining, still gave work to 200 men.

After the Great War, coal mining in County Durham suffered an intense depression, which was felt particularly keenly in South-West Durham. In the Auckland Park - Eldon district, Black Boy Colliery and the Adelaide Pit were the first to succumb. The best coal had already been worked in the old pit at Black Boy and the cost of working less accessible coal became prohibitive in 1923. Adelaide Pit closed down in 1924. It had not been in operation for so long as Black Boy, but was still an old colliery. Further, Pease and Partners, the owners of Adelaide Pit, had recently paid

£15,000 in compensation, when subsidence caused damage to St. Andrew's Church and they were not anxious to meet further claims of a similar kind. <sup>1</sup>Excessive water in old workings had been causing trouble in the pits of the district for some time and when pumping ceased at Adelaide Pit, other collieries in the neighbourhood were affected. Fortunately for this locality, the flood water drained towards Shildon and West Auckland at first and it was not until pumping ceased in those pits that Auckland Park and Eldon Collieries were seriously troubled. In spite of this, however, Auckland Park Colliery was showing signs of depression. Intermittent employment and fluctuating numbers mark the post-War period.<sup>2</sup> The By Products ovens were dismantled and the colliery became but a shadow of its former self (230 employees in 1937 as compared with 1200 in 1913). In a

1. See Physical Factors, Pages 105 to 107.

2  
 1923 - Pit idle - Bolckow, Vaughan & Co., Ltd. Colliery Year Book.  
 1926 - 600 men employed. (Ministry of Labour figure).  
 1929 - Pit idle. 215 men employed on surface. Coll. Year Book.  
 1936 - 110 men employed. Dorman, Long & Co. Ltd. Colly. Year Book.  
 1937 - 230 men employed. (Ministry of Labour figure).



restricted capacity, work is still going on at Auckland Park Colliery.

Eldon Colliery underwent slack periods, too, but the number of employees remained at a high figure (over 1400 men) right up to the eve of closing.

Excessive water was causing trouble after Shildon Lodge Pit closed in 1928 and it was estimated that the cost of pumping was as high as 4/0 for every ton of coal drawn. In spite of that, intensive exploitation went on right until the day before the lease expired. The firm of Pease and Partners were undergoing a period of financial difficulty and this, together with the cost of pumping, prevented the renewal of the lease, but it was certainly not shortage of coal, since over 1400 men were employed up to the time of closing down.

Apart from small private brick flats and those attached to the collieries, there has never been

ELDON COLLIERY

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Derelict Colliery premises surrounded  
by colliery waste heaps.  
N.B. Newness of Washery plant on the left.



Houses at John Henry Pit - now derelict.  
Pit heaps all around.

any other form of industrial employment except coal mining<sup>1</sup> in this valley. After Eldon Colliery closed down in 1931, the only centre of employment in the locality was Auckland Park Colliery and numbers were limited even there. Therefore the usual process of scratching the surface and making the most of an almost hopeless situation began in this district, two. Small drifts were opened, working into the top seams of the dismantled pits. Eldon Drift, employing 56 men, is being worked by Pease and Partners into the old Eldon Royalty at the east end of the valley and seems of a more permanent nature than is usual for such workings. Eldon Bank Drift, working into the old Adelaide Royalty near to Shildon Tunnel employs about 20 men. South Church Drift, which was working into the Adelaide Royalty from the west side of the old colliery, was typical of these operations. It was a small private concern and details supplied by the Manager in January 1938 revealed the

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At South Church there were three mills and a brewery, but less than 100 men were employed there altogether.

following facts. Operations were begun in December 1933 and 42 men and boys were employed. "Prospects for the future are not bright, as coal is not plentiful and what there is, is difficult to win, some of it being waterlogged. There is an abnormally bad roof to contend with, which makes the timber cost exceedingly heavy!" The coal was used for household and industrial purposes, but the significant point was, that out of 42 employees, only three were residents in the immediate locality.

Apart from other drifts, which do not necessarily provide work for men in the immediate district, the only other centre of employment in the Auckland Park - Eldon valley is to be found in the reconstructed brick works at Eldon Colliery. After the colliery lease expired, the colliery brick flats were taken over by Lord Eldon and they have proved such a flourishing concern that now sixty men are employed there.

Such is the industrial background of the villages of Auckland Park, Gurney Valley, Eldon, Close House, Eldon Lane, Coundon Grange and South Church. It will be seen that, in spite of the close proximity of the villages, traditional distinctions have left their mark on the communities to such an extent that features of individuality are still preserved. Naturally these are not so pronounced now as in the pre-War days of prosperity. Since then there has been a re-shuffling among the people, resulting from a movement away of miners. Several families left Coundon Grange to seek work in the mines near Doncaster and fifty or sixty families went to Billingham from Eldon Lane and Eldon shortly after Eldon Colliery closed in 1931. Dorman, Long & Company, Limited have, within the last four years, attempted to provide colliery houses in Auckland Park for their employees working at that and other of their collieries, so that unemployed miners living in

those houses had to find houses elsewhere. If, in addition to these factors, it is remembered that 59 men from Eldon and 17 from Eldon Lane and Coundon Grange travel daily to work at Fishburn and an equally large number are taken in special 'buses to Dean and Chapter, Chilton and Thrislington Collieries, it will be understood that a fundamental upheaval in the social structure of this locality has taken place in the last twenty years. Yet, in spite of this recent tendency there is a clannishness in the villages, which requires further explanation.

### AUCKLAND PARK.

Auckland Park, strung out along the northern slope of the valley, consists of 144 colliery houses arranged in two long rows facing south and about sixty more privately owned houses in Douglass Crescent and Grange Avenue. The 100 colliery houses, comprising William Street, have four rooms and half of Thomas Street are two-roomed and half three-roomed houses. Douglass Crescent and Grange Avenue are newer five-roomed, brick houses of good quality. All the colliery houses have long gardens.

William Street consists of two storey houses, 55 of which are wood faced and built before 1897. They are very similar both in appearance and structure to the two storey colliery houses at Leasingthorne.

# AUCKLAND PARK COLLIERY.

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Thomas Street, Auckland Park  
with Colliery in background.  
N.B. Bend in roof-line at extreme end  
- due to subsidence.



Gurney Valley.  
The two-roomed, single-storey houses  
in the foreground are the poorest  
houses associated with this Colliery.



Thomas Street is stone built, half of the houses having attic bedrooms, while half consist of two-storey (i.e. one bedroom, living room and scullery) houses. The whole village is well spaced and the houses are in good condition, though there is evidence, that undermining has affected Thomas Street. The old type of ash pits have been removed and a water carriage system has been installed. Each house has a garden and the community enjoys a reputation for good gardening. Village amenities include a Church and Church Hall, a Reading Room supported for many years by workmen's subscriptions and a Colliery Welfare Scheme with a Children's Playground, Tennis Courts etc. opened two or three years ago. The majority of the men in the village are employed either at Auckland Park Colliery or at another of Dorman, Long & Co's collieries. In October, 1937 only <sup>1</sup> 55 men were unemployed. According to the Electoral Rolls for

<sup>1</sup> It is possible that this figure includes Gurney Valley, as this was omitted from the Ministry of Labour list. In that case the unemployment percentage for Auckland Park will be lower still.

1938, there were approximately 256 adult male residents in the village, which means that the unemployment percentage was 21.4. This is a low figure in South-West Durham and there is no reason to believe that it will be higher in 1939. Therefore, though the colliery is restricted as compared with its former size and the By Products ovens are mere scrap heaps, the village of Auckland Park cannot be considered derelict from any standpoint. The majority of the community is in employment and is well housed. The village has sufficient social amenities for its size. It is quite pleasantly situated and the community is of a good type and wholesome tradition.

### GURNEY VALLEY.

Gurney Valley is separated from Auckland Park in space by about 120 yards, but in social standing by a veritable chasm. The village consists of 144 Colliery houses, strung out in a long row broken into three parts. The oldest houses are in the two rows nearest to Auckland Park. These 78 houses, built before 1859, were originally one-storey, stone houses of two rooms, with open ash pits and foul closets built into the hillside behind the houses. Between the front of the houses and 100 blazing By-Products Ovens there was the length of a garden. The front door was, therefore, never used and all traffic went on along an unmade road behind the houses, between the back doors and the outbuildings in the bankside. Fortunately this state of affairs does not exist to-day. The houses have been improved and 34 of them have been made into three or

four-roomed houses, either by the addition of another storey or by making the attic into a bedroom. The 44 houses nearest to Auckland Park and facing the coke ovens most directly are still two-roomed houses; then there are 16 three-roomed houses and the rest towards Black Boy now have four rooms. The road behind the houses has been made up and the open ash pits have been removed, though a water carriage system has not yet been installed. Yards have been added to the houses, but unfortunately in one batch of houses the scullery window of each house looks into the next door yard. Finally the unpleasant odour and smoke of the blazing coke ovens is no longer a nuisance to the occupants, though the littered waste heaps and remains of a disused colliery railway do not form an inspiring prospect from the front of the houses. The gardens are not, on the whole, as well kept as in Auckland

BLACK BOY

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Wood-faced Colliery houses.

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Park, but the gardening tradition could scarcely develop, where the heat and grime of the coke ovens made cultivation a disappointing task.

The houses in Black Boy, which complete the village, are wood-faced, four-roomed houses of the same type and built at the same period as those mentioned already in Auckland Park. They stand high, climbing obliquely up the side of the hill at the east end of the valley and, though only separated from the extensive Black Boy Colliery pit heaps by the length of their front gardens, they are still sufficiently high above the waste heaps for a clear prospect of Eldon to be obtained. These houses are superior to the older Gurney Valley houses and are comparable with Auckland Park houses.

The village may be described as a poor relation of Auckland Park. The fact that Black Boy

Colliery is closed does not mean that the village is deprived of its centre of employment, since miners from Gurney Valley have always been associated with Auckland Park as much as with Black Boy Colliery. With the exception of the Black Boy houses, Gurney Valley, because of its unpleasant and grimy situation and very primitive sanitation, has always been occupied by the miners, who would put up with any kind of house, so that the inhabitants are generally of a poorer type than at Auckland Park. Except for a school and one or two tiny shops, there are no amenities in the village, but, again, Auckland Park is near enough to provide a Church, a meeting place, and a Welfare ground. No separate figures are obtainable, but it is reasonable to believe that the unemployment percentage is only slightly higher than in Auckland Park, since the majority of the men in the village are employed either

at Auckland Park or at another colliery under the same ownership. Few families of an undesirable type have moved in, but the population tends, on the whole, to be rather stagnant. The village is not derelict - yet, but, in my opinion, it would become derelict more rapidly than Auckland Park, were the colliery which serves both, to close down.



### COUNDON GRANGE.

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The third village associated with the Black Boy group of collieries is Coundon Grange. Twelve streets, comprising 277 houses in all, are arranged in close formation and literally surrounded by coke oven waste heaps and growing pit heaps of Auckland Park Colliery, the Council ash tip and an old clay pit, only recently filled in. The village is still known locally as Brickyard, as a reminder of the two brick flats near which it was built. The low situation, in a marshy hollow, overshadowed by high colliery waste heaps, together with the closeness of the streets which face each other, east and west, hinders the sunshine from reaching the majority of the houses. In addition, the smoky pall from the colliery chimneys (and previously from the beehive

and patent coke ovens) and the thick mists which often hang over the marshy hollow at night, do not indicate a healthy situation.

The houses themselves are not in bad condition. About 60 have two rooms, 85 have three rooms and the rest are of a four-roomed type. Built of bricks from the nearby brick flats, they are privately owned, though some used to be leased by the Colliery Company. The houses have yards and the narrow streets are paved. In spite of this, however, the very situation of Coundon Grange makes it an unpleasant place in which to live. Consequently rents are low and a poor type of occupant has been attracted to the village. Even in days of prosperity Coundon Grange was occupied by the poorest type of workman. Nor were these always miners, since the houses were not built or owned by the Colliery Company. Since the colliery has declined and the coke

ovens have been closed down the more enterprising of the inhabitants have left the village. Several families, for instance, went to the Doncaster mining district. A few families with no prospect of work have moved into the village from Witton Park and other villages, where slum property has been demolished, but the majority of the houses, vacated by miners who have left the village, have been reoccupied by young married people and their numerous children, who are existing on unemployment benefit or public assistance.

Apart from a Chapel and one Public House, the village has no amenities except a playing field, a quarter of a mile away, which has been given by the Colliery Company. On account of its situation the village has never been of a very desirable type and now it is definitely the poorest quarter in the whole valley. Its community is deteriorating in character

and there is no reason to believe that any industrial improvement will occur to arrest this deterioration.

In short, Coundon Grange is decidedly the most derelict village in this valley, as a place and as a community, and the district would benefit by its removal.

ELDON.  
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Just as Auckland Park is the chief village of the group attached to the Black Boy Collieries and is the centre of the social life of its immediate neighbourhood, so Eldon, at the opposite end of the valley, is the most important of the villages connected with Peases' Collieries. It consists of 299 houses, all of which were colliery property prior to 1931, when Eldon Colliery closed down. A Colliery Institute, including a Dance Hall and Gymnasium and more recently Swimming Baths, which serve not only the surrounding villages, but also the town of Bishop Auckland, were built and supported by workmen's subscriptions. Like the colliery houses, both Institute and Swimming Baths have now passed into private hands. A well laid out Miners' Welfare Scheme was opened a few years before 1931, but with the lapse

SETTLEMENT IN CONNECTION WITH  
ELDON COLLIERY.

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Houses at the  
John Henry Pit.

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Low 2-roomed houses  
built before 1857.

Eldon Village.

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Colliery rows of  
3 and 4 rooms.  
West Row (on right)  
older 2-roomed houses  
Houses face West.



Close House.

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4-roomed houses built  
since 1900.  
Eldon on hillside in  
the distance.

of the Welfare grant, it is now a veritable wilderness with grass growing a foot high on the bowling green and tennis courts. Additional amenities include a small Chapel and a Church and Church Hall situated between Eldon and Eldon Lane.

The village itself is well spaced and each house has a garden. Two rows face each other across the South Church and Old Eldon road at the point where it is crossed by the Coundon to Shildon road. The rest of the village, however, is arranged in rows facing westward and climbing the hill at right angles to the South Church to Old Eldon road. The houses are of the usual colliery type consisting of two, three or <sup>1</sup>four rooms, but the majority were not in a very good state of repair, when the colliery lease expired. Fifty or more were bought by one agent, who has acquired similar property in other derelict villages,

1

- 32 - two-roomed houses.
- 159 - three-roomed houses.
- 77 - four-roomed houses.
- 31 - four and five-roomed Official's houses.

and in order to prevent a demolition order, the houses were refaced, yards were added and flush lavatories were installed in place of the earth closets, which had been situated across the road. Hall's Row and New Row have suffered as a result of pit falls, but have been repaired. The majority of the streets have never been made up and the roadway, in many cases, consists of bed rock with cinder filled hollows. As is usual in the colliery villages, the front doors of the houses are seldom used and all communications are maintained via the back doors.

Since 1931 there has been no major centre of employment in Eldon. After the Coal Royalty was given up, the brickworks were taken over and extended by the Eldon Brick Company for Lord Eldon, and the output and staff employed have doubled in the last eight years. The sixty men employed there, however,



together with 56 working at Eldon Drift and less than twenty engaged at Eldon Bank Drift, are a mere handful compared with the 1450 men who were in employment at the colliery when it closed. Consequently it is not surprising that 50 or 60 families were transferred by the Labour Exchange to Billingham shortly after 1931, or that other families have removed to Fishburn, Ferryhill and Chilton. At Horden and in several colliery villages in Kent there are colonies of Eldon men and their families, who were not content to eke out a miserable existence in a condemned village. In spite of the number of families who have left Eldon since 1931, there are still some employed miners living in the village. Special 'buses take 59 men every day to Fishburn and others travel by 'bus or cycle to Thrislington, Chilton and the Dean

and Chapter Colliery. Yet, despite the enterprise, which has enabled so many men to find employment, there were 128 unemployed in October 1937. Out of a total population of 1612, this is an approximate unemployment percentage of 23.6.

Like many other one time colliery villages in this district, Eldon is on the down-grade. The younger generation of its enterprising community, with self-respecting, industrious Dales tradition, is leaving the doomed village, which is fast becoming a village for old people. Though there is undoubtedly<sup>1</sup> plenty of coal left in Eldon Colliery, there is little prospect of its reopening on account of the accumulation of flood water in the workings. The future apparently holds nothing for the village. Like its overgrown Welfare Ground, it is already showing signs of the wasteful results of neglect.

1

1450 men were employed up to the eve of closing.

### CLOSE HOUSE.

Close House is the name given to the group of 157 houses, which cluster along the road from Eldon to Black Boy. Unlike either of these villages, they were not built in regular formation as colliery houses. There is considerable variety both in appearance and arrangement, but only one street has houses of more than four rooms, since the village was built for miners who were generally considered to be satisfied with two, three or four rooms. The majority of the houses are of brick and very few have gardens. Village amenities are limited to two Chapels, a Public House and a Workmen's Club.

The community has always been associated with Eldon Colliery and still shows traces in family

names of the mixture of immigrants who settled in the district. The Welsh, who came to work at Eldon in 1879 are remembered in the Edwards, Owens and Jones, who live in the main street still. The family names of Teesdale, Dent, Hoggett, Metcalfe, Beadle, Peacock, Lowes, Lowery, Raine and Walton are a reminder that a large proportion of the earliest immigrants to Eldon Colliery were from Weardale, Teesdale and Swaledale. The Callaghans, Murphy's and O'Brien's are descendants of the Irish coke oven workers, while the Scotch Lindays and Douglasses, the Buckles from Essex and Gowlands from Staffordshire illustrate the extent to which Eldon Colliery attracted workmen from a variety of districts.

Since Eldon Colliery closed, miners have sought employment elsewhere and some now work at Thrislington and Fishburn. A few are employed at

the Mainsforth and Dean and Chapter Collieries near Ferryhill and some at the small local drifts and Eldon Brick Works.

In October 1937 forty-five men were registered as unemployed. According to the Electoral Roll for 1938 the male population of the village numbers 179, which means that the unemployment percentage was 25.1. Like Eldon, Close House is tending to become a village of old people. Of those who travel to work each day some are tied to the village by the fact that they own the houses they occupy. The prospects of the village are so poor that these could only be sold at a low figure. Hence the older people, who have invested their life savings in a house, have no choice but to remain in the village. The younger people are not restrained in the same way and the more energetic ones have left the village, though there is a residue

of less enterprising young people, who are partly dependent on the savings of their older relatives. Like Eldon, there seems to be no bright future for Close House, and not only the village but the community will soon have out-lived its usefulness.

### ELDON LANE.

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Eldon Lane together with Coronation is the largest village in the valley. Its 441 houses are, on the whole, well built and more roomy than is general in colliery villages. Except for Paddy's Row (Campbell Terrace) and Deanery Streets, which were built in the early days of the Adelaide Colliery, the village is in good condition. Coronation, in particular, having been built in the last forty years, consists of four and five-roomed brick houses, of substantial appearance. Part of Deanery Street consists of two-roomed houses, but in the rest of Eldon Lane the houses have three and usually four rooms. Only four streets (in Coronation) have gardens and all the houses are privately owned.

Social amenities consist of a Chapel, a School, a Public House and a very successful Workmen's Club with the only Picture House in the valley attached to it.

The village has always been associated with Adelaide Colliery and was built mainly for the coke oven workers. This is probably why the houses are bigger than colliery houses, for coke oven workers, having a higher wage, could afford a larger house. Coronation was always considered the most respectable part of the village and a certain reputation for roughness among the coke drawers was confined to the older part of Eldon Lane.

After Adelaide Colliery closed in 1924, employment was found both in the colliery and at the coke ovens at Eldon. When, in 1931, Eldon



Colliery closed down, several of the displaced Eldon Lane miners went to Horden and a few migrated to the Kent coalfield. Some are now employed in the Dorman Long & Co., Ltd. collieries and seventeen men travel each day from Eldon Lane to Fishburn. In 1937, 182 men were unemployed, which is under 30%.

### SOUTH CHURCH.

South Church is by far the oldest village in the district. The hamlet which clustered around the Norman Church and the Deanery bears no resemblance, however, to the squalid colliery rows which grew up early in the 19th Century between the ancient Church and the river Gaunless. The more modern and more respectable part of South Church stands aloof from the colliery village across the Gaunless towards Eldon Lane.

The village, like Eldon Lane, is therefore divided into two parts. The newer brick houses with five rooms on the east side of the Gaunless, stand high and are in very good condition. Like Coronation, they were built about forty years ago for the better type of miner and coke oven worker at the Adelaide

Colliery and they have an air of substance and respectability. The circumstances which brought about the change in the status of Coronation from a prosperous village to one bordering on dereliction have had similar results in this section of South Church. An air of self-reliant aloofness hides the tragic endeavour to keep up appearances in the face of increasing poverty.

South Church proper was almost all in existence before 1856. The firm of Pease and Partners, who usually provided particularly good houses for their employees, constructed the first and probably the worst of their colliery rows in this village. About sixty houses arranged in three low rows are still known as Peases' Rows. They look miserable enough now, with their dirty, earth streets and grimy walls and encircled by the inky waters of the Gaunless, but their condition

is much improved since the time when the common ash tips and earth closets set at the end of each street made the houses almost unapproachable.

With the exception of five streets, all the rest of this part of the village amounting to 259 houses is in keeping with Peases' Rows. The majority of the houses are low, two-storey buildings with two or three rooms. They are arranged in a peculiarly jumbled fashion around courtyards and alleys, with several short streets between the river and the main South Church to Cabin Gate road. Most of the houses, being old, are in bad repair. The streets have never been made up and the houses are too close together to allow much light to penetrate the general smoky gloom of the village.

The greater part of the village was built by private enterprise for the accommodation of

Adelaide miners. Amenities include a self supporting Miners' Institute, but this has fallen into disuse in the fifteen years during which the village has had no centre of employment. A Boys' Club and a Social Service Hut opened in February 1938 now cater for the leisure time of the young unemployables, who are numerous in the village. Two Chapels and, of course, the Church of St. Andrew complete the amenities of the village with the exception of four public houses.

It is a striking feature that South Church has four public houses, whereas there are only five, including two Workmen's Clubs in all the other six villages dealt with in this valley. This is <sup>in</sup> keeping with the reputation for drunkenness and rowdiness held by the community until 1924. After fifteen years of hopeless unemployment for at least 30% of the male population, any traces of roughness have

faded into apathy. Rents of 6/0 for even the smallest houses have succeeded in keeping out undesirable families of the drifting type, but the village, never very pleasant, has degenerated into the home of a community consisting of old people, who have been cast aside by modern industry and young unemployables, who have not yet been able to find a place for themselves in the swiftly turning industrial machine.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### COUNDON - LEASINGTHORNE DISTRICT.

This small mining district , two miles long by a mile wide, lies to the east of Bishop Auckland along a saddle of upland between two higher spurs, on one of which are situated the agricultural villages of Westerton, Middlestone and Kirk Merrington and on the other the farming hamlets of Grange Hill and Howlish Hall. Leasingthorne lies in a small basin at the eastern end of the region and the colliery villages of Leeholme and Tottenham are situated between it and Coundon. New Coundon, Coundon Gate and Canney Hill are strung along the Bishop Auckland to Durham road.

The development of the district has been based mainly on the fortunes of Leasingthorne Colliery, but, like the rest of South-West Durham, mining

operations have been carried on for several centuries.

<sup>1</sup> Records state that in 1360 a new mine was opened at Coundon. Many of these shallow shafts, which were only used until lack of ventilation stopped work, are scattered over the neighbourhood. <sup>2</sup> In 1810 the first of the Black Boy Collieries was sunk by Jonathan Backhouse of Darlington between Canney Hill and Auckland Park. Another shaft was put down at Coundon Gate and Westerton Old Pit, half a mile south of Westerton village, was begun in 1822. Jaw Blades Colliery and a shaft east of Tottenham were also being worked in the early part of the century.

These mining operations before Leasingthorne Colliery was sunk in 1842 were not without their effects on the population and settlement of the district. From a stationary figure of 163 in 1811, the population of Coundon Township increased to 990 by 1841. The extra

<sup>1</sup> "Coundon Parish and the Edens" Page 6 by J.H.Walker.

<sup>2</sup> Ref. Auckland Park-Eldon District. Page 403



WESTERTON COTTAGES

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Front View



Back View.

The pit has been closed over thirty years.  
Only one house is occupied.

numbers meant additions to the existing agricultural village of Coundon with its Manor House and Old Hall. Between 1830 and 1840, Wharton Street was extended and after 1841, part of Collingwood Street was added to the village. In connection with Westerton Old Pit, six low houses were erected near the pit head and the colliery houses known as New Coundon were built. A few cottages and the Black Boy Inn formed the beginnings of Canney Hill.

From their beginning in 1810, the Black Boy group of collieries had by far the most important effect on the district. Leasingthorne Colliery was the main centre of activities since it was nearest, and in itself, it was responsible for the growth of Leasingthorne Village and Tottenham and later of Leeholme. Towards the end of the century, however, half of the mining population of Coundon itself were

employed at Auckland Park and Black Boy Collieries.

In 1842 another Black Boy pit was sunk near Leasingthorne Farm. Coal was so near to the surface that the shaft was only ten feet deep, and operations were begun on a larger scale than in the earlier pits of the district. The influx of miners into the district made further building necessary and five colliery rows known as Tottenham, comprising 138 houses in all, were erected in 1850 near to three still older rows connected with an earlier pit. Near to the pit head at Leasingthorne 55 low, one-storey houses were built by the colliery owner at that time, Nicholas Wood.

By 1859, when the survey was made for the first 6" Ordnance Map of the district, the beginnings of all the present day villages except Leeholme were in existence.<sup>1</sup> Coundon continued to grow by the

<sup>1</sup> See Map 20 of Coundon-Leasingthorne district in 1857.

addition of privately built houses behind Collingwood Street. Before 1870, the population of Coundon Township had reached 3000. The colliery owners had added four rows of wood-faced, two-storey houses to the village of Leasingthorne. With the exception of nineteen privately owned houses, all the present village of Leasingthorne was in existence by 1870. Messrs. Woods also constructed three colliery rows, comprising 82 houses, off Collingwood Street to cope with the newcomers.

The colliery at Leasingthorne developed rapidly and was a lodestone to miners from all parts of the country. 79-year-old Mr. Lee, now living at Middlestone Moor, came to Leasingthorne at the age of ten. He was only one of hundreds of Irish families who came via Liverpool from the Wicklow district, where the sulphur mines were closing down. Successful miners

spread the news of their good fortune and sent for relatives to join them, until Tottenham became known as Little Ireland. The families of Kelly, Cullen, Lee, Grady, Toole, Conlon, O'Rourke and Reilly, who live in Tottenham now, are reminiscent of this immigration.

Cornish miners settled in Coundon, too and are still remembered in the families of Sangster and Wallhead. Staffordshire miners were attracted by prospects of higher wages and shorter hours and the Gowlands and Walters in Coundon are descendants of some of the families, who came to Leasingthorne in the prosperous early seventies. Would-be miners came from Lancashire. For instance, the Eales family left a carpet factory which was closing down and joined in the exploitation of the district, settling both in Coundon and Leasingthorne.

In 1872 the firm of Bolckow, Vaughan & Co., Ltd. took over the Black Boy Collieries, and Leasingthorne came under Welsh management. The immediate result was an immigration of lead miners and other workmen from North Wales. Unlike the Irish, who came to the district because relatives wrote for them to come, the Welsh, as a rule, applied for work before they came. A large number went to Trimdon Colliery first and moved from there to Leasingthorne. The numerous families of Hughes, Lewis, Davies, Thomas, Williams, Phillips, Evans, Lloyd, Roberts, Rodda, Salisbury, Bellas and Griffiths still living in Coundon are proof of the extent of this immigration. Leasingthorne village has its Welsh element, too, though the numbers are not so large, since it is a much smaller village.

By far the greatest development of the district resulted from the sinking of two new shafts

THE POPULATION OF COUNDON TOWNSHIP

1801 to 1901



Scale -- Vertical. 1 inch = 500 persons. Horizontal  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch = 10 years.

at Leasingthorne in 1901. The colliery now employed 2000 men and in 1902, it was found necessary to build an entirely new village of 317 houses to accommodate the additional miners. This village, called Leeholme after Mr. Lee, a director of the Colliery Company, was planned and built by Mr. Derwent, who was a pioneer in the matter of providing substantial houses of good quality for miners. The greater part of the village consists of four, five and six-roomed houses. They have a finished, neat appearance after nearly forty years and look superior in type to the hastily built Council houses, which have been added to the village in recent years.

This expansion at Leasingthorne attracted miners from collieries which were closing down. Some of these were from the Butterknowle district, where, in spite of the number of new pits which were



sunk towards the end of the century, operations were on a very small scale and barely capable of absorbing the displaced miners from other pits in the neighbourhood. A large proportion of these had come originally from Swaledale and Teesdale and, together with lead miners direct from the Yorkshire Dales and Weardale, who were out of employment because the lead mines were finished, they formed a strong Dales element among the Leasingthorne community. They did not occupy Leeholme as a matter of course, for the superior houses there were taken by the most progressive of the miners already in the district. Their families may still be traced in Coundon, Leeholme and Leasingthorne, however, in such names as Walton, Lonsdale, Fairless, Metcalfe, Richmond, Peacock, Teesdale and Raine.

The present depressed condition of this group of villages is due to the decline of the Black

Boy Collieries, particularly Auckland Park and Leasingthorne. Auckland Park Colliery has been discussed in another section.

Unlike the majority of pits in South-West Durham, the prosperity of Leasingthorne Colliery did not wane after the War.<sup>1</sup> In 1923, 1079 men were employed and in 1929 the number had risen again to 1596. By 1936, however, only 475 men were working at Leasingthorne. The drop of over 1000 men in seven years caused serious unemployment in Coundon, Leeholme and Leasingthorne. Between 35 and 45 families went to live at Dean Bank, having found work at Dean and Chapter Colliery, which is under the same management as Leasingthorne. A large number have more recently moved to Chilton, where they were taken on at the colliery. Many of the younger men have left the district altogether

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Figures taken from the 1923, 1929 and 1936 Colliery Year Books.

difficult and wages low. Unemployment is not high among the younger men, since a good proportion are employed in shops and offices in Bishop Auckland. There seems to be no noticeable antipathy towards mining among the boys and young men, such as is found in certain of the villages in the Durham coalfield.

These villages have been included by the Ministry of Labour in a list of derelict villages in County Durham. Leasingthorne, in particular, was picked out for special reference in the 1934 Report on the Special Areas (page 76) and has been treated by the Community Service Council as one of the most derelict villages in the county. Leasingthorne is, in many ways, in a worse position than either Leeholme or Coundon, but after a full investigation it cannot be classed

with villages like Witton Park, Escomb or Coundon Grange.

A further brief examination of the individual villages will show differences and will provide a basis for comparison with other villages in South-West Durham.

# LEASINGTHORNE.

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Leasingthorne is a small village of 142<sup>1</sup> colliery houses and 19 privately owned houses nestling in a hollow, a mile east of the original village of Coundon. It is a simple, compact colliery village and much easier of description than the network of complicated overgrown villages lying to the south of it, or the larger single mining villages in the neighbourhood such as Sunnybrow or Byers Green. This may be the reason why it has been chosen as a typical derelict colliery village by previous investigators.

Leasingthorne is an old mining village, all except Chapel Bank, opposite to the new Social Service Centre, and Eden Terrace between the

<sup>1</sup> There were 155, but part of Heap Row has already been demolished.



Stone Row.

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One-storey colliery houses.

Heap Row.

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Poor one-storey  
houses, shut in  
between pit heaps.



Larch Terrace.

-----  
Newer wood-faced houses  
built after 1859.



village proper and Merrington, having been built before 1870. Housing conditions are not, therefore, modern. Heap Row and Stone Row are very small, two-roomed, stone houses of one storey, built soon after the colliery opened. Heap Row overshadowed by high pit heaps, is being demolished. The four rows of wood-faced houses (100 in all) at the south end of the village have four rooms and enclosed yards of fair size and are kept in good condition by Dorman, Long & Co., Ltd., the present colliery owners. Three or four houses in Ash Terrace suffered slightly as a result of pit falls in December, 1938, but the damage was repaired. While these houses may be considered poor, when compared with those in Leeholme, they are of exactly the same type as Black Boy houses and superior to a large proportion of the two or

three-roomed colliery houses in South-West Durham.

Employment, though on a restricted scale, may still be obtained at the colliery, so that the village has not lost its reason for existence.

The majority of the men are <sup>1</sup> employed, either at Leasingthorne or at another colliery belonging to Dorman, Long & Co., Ltd., e.g. Chilton and Dean and Chapter Collieries, because colliery houses are so limited, that they are kept, as far as possible for employed miners. For that reason an immigration of undesirable, unemployed families is virtually impossible. Only four families have come into the village and they are from Dean Bank, Ferryhill.

In spite of the moderately good housing conditions and the relatively low percentage of unemployment, there is some evidence of decadence among the community. The village school is small and only 64 children under eleven years of age

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A few men are also employed at Eldon Drift.



attend there. Yet 54 of these children are in receipt of free milk. This is an abnormally high rate for a village where there is still employment. The reason may be found in the status of Leasingthorne village as compared with Leeholme or Coundon. The old established village of Coundon is the commercial and social centre of the immediate district, while Leeholme, by reason of its superior houses, is the home of the officials and the better paid miners. Leasingthorne, suffering from inferior houses and lack of social amenities, has a less progressive community. In the event of Leasingthorne Colliery closing down, the village and community would most probably show signs of rapid deterioration, but until that disaster takes place or some planned regrouping of population on a large scale is undertaken in Durham County, the village cannot be described as derelict. A popular Social Service

Centre with 364 members is meanwhile providing a somewhat belated centre for communal activities.

### LEECHOLME.

Leechholme, the new colliery village connected with Leasingthorne, is situated midway between Coundon and Leasingthorne. Until 1900, there were only three houses, namely Hartley Cottages, on the site of the village. Now there are 317 colliery houses, 53 privately-owned houses and 83 Council houses. Of the colliery houses, 238 have five rooms and 20 are six-roomed houses.

The village is laid out in streets running north and south, except for the Council houses, which are more openly arranged in crescents and squares. There is little doubt that the Council houses are inferior to the colliery and private property, but so far housing conditions throughout the villagemay

COLLIERY VILLAGES CONNECTED WITH  
LEASINGTHORNE COLLIERY.

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Tottenham Rows.



Leeholme.

Officials' houses on right.

be said to be particularly good. Undermining has affected about six houses in recent years, but repairs have restored them to good condition.

There is very little unemployment in Leeholme. Not all the miners are employed at Leasingthorne, but the colliery houses are all occupied by miners, working at one of the collieries owned by Dorman, Long & Co., Ltd. A number of colliery officials, including some employed at the Dean and Chapter Colliery, live in the village, which, in preference to Leasingthorne, has also been provided with a well planned and popular Colliery Welfare Ground.

Enough has been said to indicate that Leeholme cannot be described as a derelict village, either in respect to its housing conditions or its community. Were Leasingthorne Colliery to close

down, the village would probably suffer through the moving away of the more progressive section of its community, but in the present state of affairs, its position is as good as that of any colliery village in South-West Durham.

# COUNDON.

Coundon is the most important village of this group. From a small agricultural hamlet without a Church, the village has grown into a small town since 1811, by reason of the development of coal mining in the vicinity. Without Tottenham Rows, which form a distinct ~~sub~~-division at the east end of the village, there are over 750 houses in Coundon.

In spite of its connection with mining at Black Boy, Auckland Park and Leasingthorne Collieries, Coundon is not, strictly speaking, a colliery village. Four streets comprising 100 houses, were colliery property - owned or leased - but they are now all privately owned. Apart from that, the village grew by private housing schemes and present housing conditions are as varied as ownership. <sup>1</sup> Five short

<sup>1</sup> Silver Street, Marshall's Yard, Maughan's Yard, Lockey's Buildings and Ship Terrace.

C O U N D O N .

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Coundon from the south.

N.B. Kirk Merrington in the distance.  
The long colliery rows in the foreground.



Jaw Blades Pit, Coundon.

One of the small land-sale collieries.



streets of two and three-roomed houses, built before 1857, making a total of 50 houses, are in poor condition, but in the rest of Coundon, houses are of good type and in good condition.

The village is the social centre of its district. In 1873 the small Church, built 32 years previously, was replaced by a larger one of Westerton stone. There are four Non-Conformist Churches and a Roman Catholic Church, which was finally opened in 1934 after the large Catholic community had struggled for thirty years to possess a Church of their own. Coundon has a picture house, eight public houses and five clubs of various types. It had a Parish Council which was started in 1895. Finally Collingwood Street is the shopping centre for the people of Coundon, Leecholme and Leasingthorne. A frequent 'bus service connects the village with Bishop Auckland.

In many respects Coundon occupies a similar position in relation to its immediate district to that of Bishop Auckland in South-West Durham. Its community, therefore, is not essentially connected with the colliery. There are shopkeepers, insurance agents, teachers, builders, joiners and a variety of craftsmen engaged in the village, only indirectly dependent on the mining industry. The decline of Leasingthorne, Black Boy and Auckland Park Collieries has affected this section of the community to some extent, but has not resulted in wholesale unemployment. It has narrowed opportunities of employment for young people and, in the last ten years, many have left the district for the Doncaster mines and the factories of London and Birmingham. A large proportion of those left are employed in Bishop Auckland. Some are unemployed. Altogether, the thinning out of young

people in Coundon is not so noticeable as in the smaller mining villages. For this reason and because of the miners from the West Auckland district, who have settled in the village and further, because miners of all ages are still employed at Leasingthorne, the age-composition of the community is in a fairly normal state. The village, therefore, does not at present show striking signs of being derelict. It is not easy to estimate how long the presence of distributive and similar occupations would preserve the village from this fate, if Leasingthorne were to close.

### TOTTENHAM.

Tottenham, though in situation part of Coundon village, is distinct in formation, in community and in tradition from the parent village and consequently requires separate treatment.

Built in 1850, the five colliery rows of local stone are arranged in block formation. The front row, Eden Terrace, faces south and gardens separate it from the main Bishop Auckland to Hartlepool road. The rows behind it are more compact, however, and half the houses face north. The village is made up of small houses typical of the early style of colliery property. Fifty-six houses have three rooms and eighty-four are of the two-roomed type. Considering their age, they are

all in reasonably good condition. Until 45 or 50 years ago they were in a deplorable state. Like Peases Rows at South Church, the houses had no ash-pits and rubbish was tipped into the middle of the street. The water supply was limited to taps in the street, one tap serving several houses, and Eden Terrace earned the name of Tank Row, because all water had to be drawn from a tank at the end of the street. Improvements were made about 40 years ago at the time when Mr. Derwent, who was responsible for Leeholme, was the house agent to the colliery company. Yards were added to the houses in every street except Wye Terrace and the general condition of the village was improved.

Since the Irish immigration about 1870, Tottenham has been known as Little Ireland and

the name still clings on account of the large proportion of Irish families still to be found there. Up to the early years of this century, the village had an extremely bad name for drunkenness and rowdyism. It was a place notorious for its rough, sturdy "characters," and policemen were only to be seen in pairs in the vicinity.

Of recent years there has been a great change in the tone of the community. Though the majority were always firm adherents of the Roman Catholic faith, a large number were not sufficiently devout in practice to allow themselves to be influenced by the teachings of either Church or School, both of which were three miles away in Bishop Auckland. In 1904, however, a Roman Catholic School was opened in Coundon, near enough to exercise a civilising influence on the younger generation of Tottenham. In the course

of thirty years, this has borne fruit and the general standard of the community has been raised.

Following the decline of Leasingthorne Colliery since 1930, a number of families have left Tottenham and have settled at Doncaster and Chesterfield and in Kent. The result has been a depletion in the youth of the village, more marked than in Coundon. Not all of the young people have gone, however. Many of those remaining have occupied the houses, which have been vacated by the families who have left the village. Nor has this meant the establishment of unemployables. The younger generation in Tottenham is distinctly more respectable and of a better type, than their grandparents who earned such notoriety for the village.

The restriction of employment at Leasingthorne Colliery has not resulted in marked unemployment among

the miners living in these colliery houses. Out of 166 possible workers, 110 are engaged either at Leasingthorne Colliery or at another of Dorman, Long & Co.'s collieries. The following table shows the numbers employed at each :-

	Eden Terr.	Tees Terr.	Wye Terr.	Esk Terr.	Tyne Terr.	Total.
Leasingthorne Coll.	16	8	11	9	21	65
Chilton Colliery	3	4	6	7	12	32
Auckland Park Coll.	2	1	-	1	3	7
Dean & Chapter Coll.	2	2	-	2	-	6
Eldon Drift.	1	-	-	-	-	1
Unemployed	12	6	6	7	6	37
Compensation (Disabled).	1	1	1	1	1	5
Old Age Pension	2	2	1	1	1	7
Others.	3	2	1	-	-	6
	42	26	26	28	44	166

Figures obtained at each house in the village  
August, 1939.



It is noticeable that of the rest, only one miner is working at a pit outside Dorman, Long & Co's sphere. The number of unemployed workers is 37, which is a percentage of only 22.3.

From this investigation, it is evident that despite the age of Tottenham, both the village and its community have undergone a marked improvement in the last thirty years. The village, cannot, therefore, be classed as derelict.

CANNEY HILL, COUNDON GATE AND NEW COUNDON.

Last century these were three separate hamlets, but they have grown together and so lost sight of their original purpose, that they may be considered together.

Canney Hill was chiefly associated with a pottery, which produced good earthenware until 1913, but its old, one storey, stone houses were connected with Old Black Boy Colliery which operated from 1810 to 1830. New Coundon was mainly built about 1840 to house miners working in Westerton Old Pit, which was sunk in 1822. Coundon Gate is of more recent origin, having been constructed in the second half of the 19th Century, but it, too, was associated with one of the old pits in the district.

Canney Hill and Coundon Gate are now joined by Park Avenue and Grange View which consist of good,

five-roomed brick houses built after 1900. Except for Bowman Terrace, which is an old colliery row of one storey stone houses, Canney Hill now forms a respectable suburb of Bishop Auckland, with which is it linked by the new houses built along the Durham road. There is very little evidence of the roughness, which characterised the old village before the pottery closed. Now the majority of the larger houses are occupied by men in good positions and in private business in and around Bishop Auckland, so that the village is better described as a residential suburb than a derelict village.

Coundon Gate is a smaller group of 42 houses situated in the angle between the Coundon and the Durham roads. The houses are small and not in very good condition and the community is mainly unemployed. Many of the men were miners engaged at Auckland Park and Black Boy Collieries, but since employment has been

restricted in the Auckland Park district, only a few have found work at Chilton or Leasingthorne Collieries. There is a Methodist Chapel in the village and the Social Service Centre at Coundon Railway Station is only about two hundred yards away. Altogether, the village is in a very depressed condition.

New Coundon is separated from Coundon Gate by the length of a field - a children's recreation ground which serves Canney Hill, Coundon Gate and New Coundon - adjoining the main Durham road. It is a group of fifty colliery houses of an old type. Only a few have four rooms and the rest are two or three-roomed houses. Except for North Terrace, which faces Westerton, and four houses in East Terrace, the houses are arranged along the east side of the Durham road and look westward across the Bishop's Park. The majority have slates fastened

on to the wall near the front door, as a reminder of their mining connection.

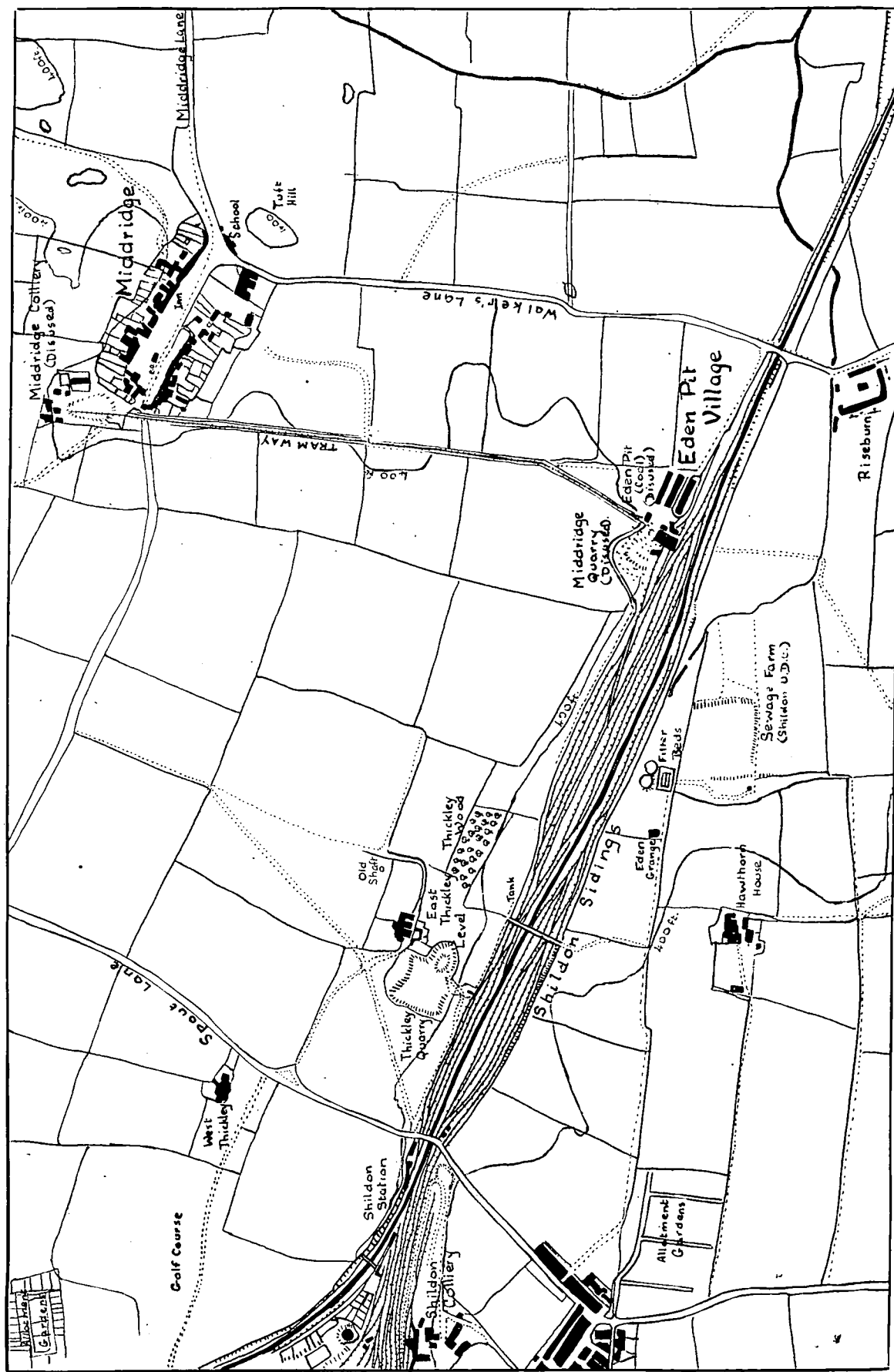
Since their association with Westerton was broken, the mining community at New Coundon has been stranded. Some found employment at Leasingthorne Colliery and more recently a few have been taken on at Chilton Colliery, but work is irregular for the majority and unemployment is widespread. The Social Service Centre between New Coundon and Coundon Gate provided for the leisure of many of the inhabitants, but as far as serious matters are concerned, New Coundon is undoubtedly a derelict village.

### EDEN PIT.

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Eden Pit, situated three-quarters of a mile south of Middridge and a mile east of New Shildon, is a typical colliery hamlet. Until a Social Service Centre was established there in recent years, it had no village meeting place of any description, except the open space at the end of its three drab streets. It is approached from Middridge by a narrow country lane in bad repair and there is no connection with Shildon except by a footpath. The children of Eden Pit, for the most part, walk across the fields to Middridge School, though a few of the more enterprising attend one of the larger schools at Shildon. This hamlet, or village in the broad sense of the term, consists of thirty-six houses perched above

0 1/4 1/2 3/4 1 mile



MAP THE POSITION OF EDEN PIT — FROM THE 1923 ORDNANCE SURVEY

Scale - 6 inches = 1 mile

1 mile

the railway and it had a population of 165<sup>1</sup> at the last census. This has been slightly reduced by the removal of a few families in recent years.

The village was constructed to house the miners, who worked at the Eden Pit situated at the western end of the three colliery rows. It was named after, and owned by, Sir William Eden, from whom the Weardale Steel, Coal and Coke Company leased the houses and the colliery. Little is known of the history of the pit itself, except that it was worked in connection with Middridge Colliery, and miners who worked there, before it finally closed over thirty-five years ago, cannot remember its days of prosperity. The shaft may still be seen alongside the Shildon to Darlington Railway and, as this section of the line follows the course of the original Stockton and Darlington Railway, coal could be transported easily. The colliery

1

The Ministry of Labour figure was given as 80, but the above figure is considered more accurate as it was given by the man who took the census.



finally closed shortly after 1900, however, and there has been no employment within the village since.

Whereas, before the pit closed, men were walking from Shildon and Eldon to work at Eden Pit, now employment had to be sought elsewhere. Miners moved away. Many went to Spennymoor to the Tudhoe Iron Works, which were opened by the Weardale Steel, Coal and Coke Co. A few went to Leasingthorne, which was expanding then, and some found work at the Railway Shops at Shildon. Now, however, little indication remains of either the pit or the mining community. Most of the present inhabitants have drifted into Eden Pit Village since it became derelict and of the few who are employed, three or four work at the Shildon Railway Shops and a very few work irregularly at Brick flats in Darlington. The rest are unemployed. These details of employment among the population were given to me in the village

itself, by a man who interests himself more than anyone else in the social life of the community and they are, in my opinion, more reliable than the somewhat contradictory evidence given by two officials of the Ministry of Labour. The first, based on the state of employment in October, 1937, gave the unemployment percentage as 50, consisting of twenty men and one boy. Of these, six had been unemployed for less than one year (due to temporary work on the roads), four between one and two years, one between two and three years, four between three and four years and five for periods of more than five years. The second, received in February, 1938, stated that the unemployment figure was 20, and that this meant almost total unemployment. Both reports were based on hearsay, as neither official had seen Eden Pit. In any case, however, it will be seen that the village is derelict from the point of

# EDEN PIT



Eden Pit from the East

-----  
 showing the only road  
 into the village  
 The first row, facing  
 the railway, on left.  
 Common meeting place  
 at end of third row,  
 i.e. on right.



From the West.

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 Taken from the  
 pit yard.  
 Social Service  
 Hut in  
 foreground.

Riseburn  
 -----  
 after  
 demolition.



view of employment.

The housing conditions of Eden Pit must be considered in relation to the population. Each of the three rows consists of twelve brick houses, but they are not uniform in type. The row facing the railway, consists of four-roomed houses, with two bedrooms upstairs, and a parlour and kitchen downstairs. The houses have gardens at the front but the enclosed yards, which have been added at the back, contain the old type of earth closets. At one end of this row is the old colliery office and at the other end the disused pit shaft.

Behind this is the second row, which faces the back of the street already described. These houses have three rooms, two bedrooms upstairs and a living room downstairs, but they have no privacy either at the front or the back. There are neither

gardens nor yards and the earth closets and coal houses are across a narrow back way.

The third row looks north-west across the fields towards Middridge, though Middridge is scarcely visible across the stretch of semi-waste land used for allotment gardens. In this street the houses have two rooms, one upstairs and one downstairs, but a scullery has been added at the back. The downstairs room is small and draughty, having the open staircase, the front door and the back door into the scullery all opening into it. The window is small and the doorway low and narrow, resulting in stuffiness in summer.

The houses throughout the village are in need of general repairs and paint, and the cost of a proposed sewer - there is no sewer at present - is estimated at £4,000. If the houses were reconditioned it is estimated that they would not last more than ten

years. At present, having been sold with the rest of the Eden Estate, they are owned by private individuals. Thirteen at least are the property of a Jewish firm in Liverpool.

In these surroundings, it is not difficult to appreciate the condition of hopelessness into which the community has sunk. Few of the present inhabitants are descended from the original mining population. Some have come in from Witton Park. A number of young people from Shildon have settled down here to lives of unemployment and there seems to be very little evidence in the village of initiative or energy. Both children and parents look underfed and badly clothed - a fact which is not surprising in a village, where almost the whole population has subsisted for a lengthy period on unemployment benefit or relief given by the Unemployment Assistance Board and Public Assistance Committees.

There is no indication of roughness amongst the inhabitants - just lethargy.

Eden Pit seems to be in every sense a derelict village. It has no centre of employment, unemployment is general among its inhabitants, housing conditions are bad and the community itself seems to have been left stranded. Actually it will, before, long, be completely abandoned and share the fate of Riseburn, just across the railway, of which only one house and three rows of rubbish remain. The population~~s~~ from the condemned houses, is to be transferred to a new housing estate between Shildon and Middridge. But is the problem solved by these methods? The village will be demolished, but the derelict community will only have been transferred to another site.

### CONCLUSION.

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As a result of this enquiry into the economic and social condition of Durham County as a whole, and South-West Durham in particular, certain conclusions have been reached. These will only be dealt with in outline, since the main purpose of the study was to examine the problem of the derelict villages in the County and state the facts relating to their condition, rather than to suggest a comprehensive solution.

From the general survey of the state of employment in the County, it has been concluded that certain areas, of which South-West Durham, the Deerness Valley and the Rainton district are the chief, are almost devoid of centres of employment. Certain physical factors, for instance, partial exhaustion



of the coal seams in the Deerness Valley, small-scale methods of working in the Rainton District, and serious flooding of the collieries in South-West Durham, have assisted in singling out these districts as the most depressed in the County.

The detailed examination of South-West Durham has shown that all the villages are not depressed to the same level and some are far from being derelict. The old established villages, which were scattered throughout the district in the pre-industrial period, have some justification for their existence as separate units, by reason of their rural associations. Of this group, Escombe is by far the most distressed, both in housing conditions and in the state of its community. The village and the land around it have been so severely damaged as a result of mining, that it is extremely doubtful if it can ever recover its rural status.

Villages such as Woodland, Cockfield, Lands, Morley, Middridge, Fir Tree, Rumby Hill and Etherley are showing signs of recovery from ill-usage by industry. Their communities are readjusting their life on a semi-agricultural basis. In most cases, this means depopulation to some extent, since agriculture cannot support more than a fraction of the number of work people, who were employed in coal mining.<sup>1</sup> In both Middridge and Morley the small number of unemployed miners is explained by the fact that the ex-miner's have moved away, leaving the village to the farming communities, rather than that the miners have turned to farming. At Lands, on the other hand, some of the unemployed miners have proved that they can adapt themselves to farming of the small holding type.

The villages, which were a direct result of industry are, however, in a different plight. The

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See "A Derelict Area" by Thomas Sharp, Page 46. He says "If agriculture could be intensified to the standard of the Norfolk arable farms employing thirty-three workers per one thousand acres (which is very unlikely), it would still employ only 6 per cent. of the population!"

size of the mining village depended upon the size of the colliery and in South-West Durham, with its numerous small pits, the majority are groups of 40 to 100 houses, often with no communal centres, built in relation to nothing except the collieries they served. Now that the pits are dismantled, the smaller colliery villages are entirely without purpose. Most of them have very little in the way of social amenities and further, consist only of out-of-date houses, but whether this is the case or not, their removal would do much to tidy-up South-West Durham. The example set by the Crook and Willington Urban District Council in the demolition of the colliery hamlets around Crook, might be followed with equal satisfaction in the case of Burnt Houses, Fylands, Etherley Dene, Eden Pit, Gurney Valley (the one-storey houses at least), New Coundon, Coundon Gate, Byers Green Colliery, Greenhead and

Thistleflat and the colliery rows at Ramshaw and in the neighbourhood of Howden-le-Wear. Like Crake Scar, their situation is artificial and bears no relation to present or future industrial circumstances.

Local authorities have already considered the demolition of many of these isolated villages on the grounds of unsuitable housing. Strenuous objections have been raised by the owners of the threatened property, who protest that improvements would bring the conditions of the houses up to the standard required by the Ministry of Health. It is repeatedly pointed out, however, that such improvements would be costly and out of all proportion to the value of the property. For instance, it was stated at a meeting of the Barnard Castle Rural Council in June, 1939, in respect of condemned houses at Burnt Houses, that they were valued at £120 each and it would cost £175 each

to repair them. Apart from this factor, it is a mistaken and shorted sighted policy to prolong the life of these small colliery villages, which in every respect have served their purpose. In every case quoted, the houses have been expropriated by the colliery owners since industrial depression set in, and whole blocks of them belong to agents, who have made speculation in slum property a profitable business in recent years. They must have covered their initial outlay long since by income from rents, and it is neither sensible nor fair to the village communities and the local authorities to preserve unneeded hamlets for their sole benefit. Very few of the ex-colliery houses in any of these villages are owned by the occupants, who sought to provide at least a home for themselves in their old age. Therefore, the problem of destroying the life

savings of the residents is not raised.

There is another aspect in the consideration of the future of these isolated colliery rows. Poor housing conditions and fairly low rents, coupled with the disadvantages of isolation and lack of opportunity for either employment or social intercourse are tending to attract a poor type of inhabitant, when houses become vacant. This is one of the most distressing features of the South-West Durham Coalfield. It is noticed in the case of almost every small hamlet, where blocks of colliery houses have been bought up by a dealer in slum property. In fact, observation throughout the district has shown that rapid deterioration in community spirit has followed hard on the heels of expropriation of colliery houses. The small isolated hamlets, which do not form attractive homes for enterprising people, are fast

becoming dumps for the most inferior and least desirable elements in the population. These people will never improve in habits by being segregated in such uninspiring conditions as are found in the colliery rows under discussion. Nor is it a recommendation to the district to permit the growth of small undesirable communities - and in-breeding of poor stock would undoubtedly lead to an increased proportion within a few generations. The only method of avoiding this tendency is to remove the hamlets. In every case mentioned, they have completely outlived their usefulness and housing conditions are too poor to advocate their preservation.

The larger villages, which are abandoned relics of industrial expansion, form a more complex problem. They may be divided into two types, namely those, which existed before the development

of coalmining, but have grown out of all recognition as a result of industry, and those which have no other claim to existence except on the grounds of industry.

Examples of the older type are found at Evenwood, West Auckland, St.Helen's Auckland, Coundon, South Church and Hunwick. In the case of West Auckland and Coundon in particular, the villages form small shopping centres for the immediate neighbourhood. They are communal centres of long standing and their unity of spirit depends on more than industrial interest. South Church is the chief exception in this group. Although it is a village of such ancient origin, its usefulness has been smothered by some of the ugliest features of industrial growth to be found anywhere in the coalfield. Like Escomb it is questionable whether it will ever recover from



the severe ill-treatment of the 19th Century industrialists. They cannot be classed as derelict, even when industry in the locality has declined. In every case, there are streets of houses which ought to be demolished, but the need in these villages is for tidying-up rather than complete removal.

The larger industrial villages are not so easily dealt with. Witton Park has a population of 2,512, Byers Green of 1,962, Eldon of 1,612 and Page Bank of 700. Coundon Grange, Eldon Lane, Close House, High Grange, Sunnybrow, Leeholme, Leasingthorne, Newfield and Binchester are only a few of the smaller mining villages, which must be considered in this section. Detailed discussions of these villages has shown that there are differences, which must be

taken into account. Leeholme and High Grange are well built villages, where the majority of the employable population are working. In Close House and Binchester housing conditions are quite good, but employment in the district is limited. In the case of Coundon Grange, Eldon Lane, Eldon, Leasingthorne and Newfield, there is only limited employment and housing conditions are below the standard of modern requirements. Sunnybrow is derelict by reason of its bad housing, although there is employment for its workpeople in the neighbourhood. Witton Park, Byers Green and Page Bank are large isolated villages with practically nothing in the way of employment and the housing, though not completely worn out yet, will not long withstand ill-treatment at the hands of a

deteriorating community. To these considerations must be added the fact that every village, with the possible exception of Leeholme, is suffering because of the draining away of the most energetic types and the replacement by less enterprising people. In the case of Binchester and High Grange the process is just beginning; in Close House and Eldon and Eldon Lane it has already resulted in a preponderance of elderly people; in Leasingthorne there is a certain inferiority, but in Page Bank, Coundon Grange, Byers Green and Witton Park there is marked deterioration, though in each case, there still remains a virile section of the community.

It is comparatively easy to class all these mining villages, where there is no employment as derelict. It is much more difficult to decide

what should be done with them. It is almost certain that even planned de-watering of the collieries and a revival of coal mining could not absorb the surplus unemployed population in these villages. Captain Euan Wallace in the Interim Report on Coal-mining published in connection with his 1934 Report on the Depressed Areas (Durham and Tyneside), points out, that multiplicity of ownership of royalties and lack of a comprehensive plan for the utilisation of the mineral resources of the coalfield are, at present, insurmountable drawbacks to the re-establishment of coal mining, especially in South-West Durham. Further, he questions whether it is in the national interests to glut the market with coking coal, now that the demands of the iron and steel trade are reduced.<sup>1</sup> Since his conclusions sum up the official view on the revival of coal mining in South-West

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Reports on Investigations into the Industrial Conditions in Certain Depressed Areas (1934), page 111.

Durham, it is wasted effort to base plans for the reconditioning of the area on the assumption that the pits will again absorb the working population. On the other hand, it must be pointed out that the policy of discarding this part of the coalfield is somewhat shortsighted. In the first place, the accumulated water in South-West Durham is likely to bring disaster to the collieries further east, unless some plan for dewatering the pits is adopted. Secondly, the coal resources of Great Britain are limited and, though there is no apparent shortage yet, at the present rate of exploitation, it may be necessary to return to the old half-used sources of supply in fifty or seventy years time.

South-West Durham cannot, in its steadily worsening condition, wait half a century for a revival in the coal industry. There is no

indication that the next generation will be able to supply the skilled labour for the industry, which is to be found now, and the colliery hamlets would certainly require replacement before that time. Further, a revival of coal mining either now or in the distant future, would not absorb all the employable population. Therefore improvement must be sought in other directions.

There are two standard recommendations, which have been put forward in almost every report on any of the distressed areas in the county, namely the removal of the people from the depressed areas, or the introduction of new industries. The one is open defeatism and admission that the problem is too big to handle, and the other is an uphill struggle against almost overwhelming odds. From the regional point of view, the effects of transference, and

especially of juvenile transference, are deplorable. It has been argued, that it is better that boys and girls should have work away from home, than that they should degenerate mentally and physically through years of idleness. That may be true, but for many of them the employment only lasts until they reach the age of 21, after which unemployment away from home cannot be much better than unemployment at home. Juveniles from the distressed areas are a form of cheap labour, which savours strongly of the transference of children from the workhouses in the South to employment in the mills of the North at the beginning of the Industrial Period.<sup>1</sup> In South-West Durham, it has already had the effect of draining away the most enterprising of the younger generation and in other declining districts in Durham County, a similar process has started.

<sup>1</sup>

History of England, G.M. Trevelyan, page 607

Actually, transference, even if it were desirable, cannot embrace the whole population. Instead of alleviating the distress of the derelict villages, it is only intensifying it, by removing the leaven and revealing the hard core of unemployment.

The suggestion of introducing new industries has not met with much support so far. The reasons are obvious. Rates are high and sites need cleaning up. Industrialists prefer to set up new works on the outskirts of London. There is no attraction to the derelict areas, unless it is a sentimental one and the chief outcome of this, so far, has been one timber factory at Crook, capable of employing about 100 men. Obviously there will be no large scale development of new industries, unless there is a constructive replanning of the districts.



This requires effort, knowledge of the people and the locality, and, above all, foresight. Replanning must embrace housing as well as industry.

The St. Helen's Trading Estate marks the initial stage in the attraction of light industry to South-West Durham, but it does not form part of a comprehensive scheme. The re-housing campaign of the Crook and Willington Urban District Council meets a real need, but it is no more a part of a large scale plan, than re-housing at Cockfield, West Auckland, Coundon or Fir Tree. The site of the new hamlets attached to the Escomb and Toronto small holdings was a result of chance rather than regional planning.

The need for a plan is urgent. Recommendations for the demolition of old houses are constantly being made and new houses must be provided somewhere.

At present, there is no control over rebuilding.

New housing estates - potentially derelict villages in fifty years - may be set up anywhere.

Undoubtedly, the people, who have not already been transferred from the district must live, but it seems a veritable contradiction to condemn and demolish a village, because it is derelict and then build on or near the site. This is happening at a number of places. Even the new housing estate at Roddymoor, Crook is within a stone's throw of the old village. At South Church, a new village has been attached to the old colliery rows clustered around the Church. In the case of Sunnybrow, a new village is being constructed a quarter of a mile away, near to the Church and School, which stood aloof from the crowded colliery streets. This is an improvement, but water, light, and sewers must

be conducted to the new site, which is a mile from Willington, the nearest town.

In the place of these well-intentioned but haphazard attempts to rehouse the people of South-West Durham, a regrouping of population seems desirable. This could be achieved by planning small towns, with adequate amenities, in certain chosen localities. For this purpose, the claims of the old-established villages, such as West Auckland and Coundon, and unspoilt villages such as Etherley must be considered. They could be enlarged to absorb the communities of surrounding small villages and this would bring less opposition from villages, than enforced removal to some more distant centre. The small mining villages with poor housing conditions would, of necessity, be demolished first and, only after these had been

removed, could the wholesale demolition of the larger colliery villages be undertaken.

The rehousing of the village communities of South-West Durham would do much to tidy up the district. If the removal of colliery waste heaps and the reconditioning of the land proceeded on parallel lines with rehousing, South-West Durham would be a more attractive place and there would, perhaps, be no need to enforce industrialists to set up new industries in the district.<sup>1</sup> There would be no need to establish industries within the new centres, since transport is good enough to preclude the necessity of living within walking distance of employment.

Only a short discussion of possible industries can be embodied in this summary of recommendations for the future of the district.

1. A Survey of Industrial Facilities of the N.E. Coast - "Disappearance of the ever present reminder of past prosperity of the region would assist in turning the thoughts of the unemployed and employers alike to the future - instead of to the dead glory of the coal trade" - page 75.

There are valuable deposits of seggar (fire clay) and surface clay, which would justify the development of the manufacture of bricks and sanitary products, on the lines of Shaw, Knight's Enamelstone Works and the North Bitchburn and Rough Lea Brick and Tile Works. An extensive rehousing scheme would absorb an increased supply of bricks made in the locality, if the industry could be put on a footing to compete successfully with the Peterborough Brick Combine. The Survey of the Industrial facilities of the North East Coast, by the North East Development Board, suggests other industries, which could be developed from the natural resources of the district. A point which must be emphasised, is that, whether the industry is newly introduced or developed from existing small scale concerns, it must give work to the adult labour of the district. Light industries,

such as those which have been set up at St. Helen's Trading Estate, are utilising the juvenile labour of the area, but some use must be made of adult male labour, before the unemployment problem can be considered as solved.

The most urgent need is for a plan for the reconditioning of the district. There are almost insurmountable difficulties, based on the present economic and social organisation and government, but these must be overcome before South-West Durham can again play its part in the economic life of the country. It must be pointed out, that South-West Durham is really only a test case. The same fate will overtake other parts of Durham County, as coal mining becomes more restricted, until the greater part of the county will be considered as derelict. It must be seriously considered, whether the country

can afford to allow one district to become a useless dependent upon the more prosperous part. The village communities of South-West Durham can still be used, but use of them should be made without any further delay, otherwise deterioration may reach such an advanced stage, that the district and the people will become absolutely useless.

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A P P E N D I X

O N E

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MOVEMENT OF FAMILIES AWAY FROM BROWNEY  
AFTER CLOSING OF COLLIERY IN  
AUGUST, 1938.

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Name of Family.	New Residence.	Occupation.
Smith.	Easington.	Mining.
Drane.	Easington.	Mining.
Hall.	Easington.	Mining.
Kirkpartrick.	Easington.	Mining.
Winnard.	Easington.	Mining.
Howell.	Easington.	Mining.
Kelley.	Easington.	Mining.
Dagleigh.	Sherburn Hill.	Mining.
Taylorson.	Sherburn Hill.	Mining.
Watson.	Sherburn Hill	Mining.
Beresford.	Bowburn.	Mining.
Wilson.	Bowburn.	Mining.
Herron.	Elswick Colliery.	Mining.
Bulmer.	Elswick Colliery.	Mining.
Bellis.	Page Bank.	Mining.
Jackson.	Birtley.	Mining.
Baker.	Wallsend.	Mining.
Jobling.	Brandon.	Mining.
Richardson.	Littleburn.	Mining.
Wood.	Ferryhill.	Mining.
Howe.	Kent.	Mining.
Spence.	Oxford.	Electrician.
Smith.	Exeter.	Mechanin.
Calvert.	Sussex.	Farming.
Small.	Neville's Cross.	Gardening.
Hurst.	York.	Quarrying.
Fothergill.	Devon.	Motor Mechanic.

Another family (Prince) moved from Page Bank to  
Browney and then to Horden - all mining.

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A P P E N D I X

T W O

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## TEESDALE DISTRICT.

Official Number (C.C.)	Name of School.	Dept.	No. of Children on Milk List.	Total No. of Children in School	%
	Barnard Castle				34.6
1	C.E.	J.M.	48	139	}
1	C.E.	I.	51	146	
2	Cl.	S.M.	40	136	
3	R.C.	M.	22	44	
43	Cockfield C.E.	M.I.	70	151	}
402	Cockfield Cl.	M.	102	190	
73	Egglesstone C.E.	M	31	57	54.3
89	Forest-in-Teesdale Cl.M.		0	58	0
90	Harwood-in-Teesdale C.M.		0	24	0
91	Gainford C.E.	M.	23	73	31.5
124	Ingleton C.E.	M.	37	76	48.9
138	Langleydale C.E.	M.	0	32	0
153	Newbiggin Cl.	M.	0	44	0
205	Staindrop C.E.	I.	30	52	}
206	Staindrop C.E.	M.	97	182	
207	Streatlam and Stainton C.E.	J.M	5	22	22.7
249	Whorlton C.E.	M.	17	36	47.2
258	Winston C.E.	M.	22	44	50
268	Woodland Cl.	M.	45	93	48.3
314	Middleton-in- Teesdale Cl.	M.	65	168	}
		I.	16	54	

## DARLINGTON DISTRICT.

Official Number (C.C.)	Name of School.	Dept.	No. of Children on Milk List.	Total No. of Children in School.	%
22	Blackwell Cl.	J.M.	11	26	42.3
26	Brafferton C.E.	J.M.	10	18	55.5
64	Denton.	M.	17	41	41.4
92	Aycliffe Diamond Jubilee Cl.	S.M.	19	48	} 36.7
93	Aycliffe C.E.	J.M.	28	80	
97	Great Stainton C.E.	M.	0	13	0
109	Heighington Endowed C.E.	M.	39	91	42.8
113	High Coniscliffe C.E.	M.	0	40	0
121	Hurworth Cl.	M.	44	174	25.2
140	Low Coniscliffe Cl.	M.	16	16	100
150	Bradbury & Morden C.E.	J.M.	12	27	44.4
152	Neasham-in-Hurworth C.	J.M.	0	28	0
164	Piercébridge C.E.	J.M.	0	23	0
178	Sadberge C.E.	M	18	63	28.5
315	Middleton St. George Cl.	M.I.	90	230	39.1

WEARDALE DISTRICT

Official Number (C.C.)	Name of School	Dept.	No. of Children on Milk List	Total No. of Children in School	%
119	Hunstanworth Parochial	M	-	26	0
208	Stanhope	M	10	72	} 8.9
209	Barrington C.E.	JM	-	19	
331	Crawleyside C.E.	M	11	143	
210	Stanhope Cl.	M	-	21	0
327	Eastgate C.E.	M	7	88	7.9
328	Frosterley South Cl.	M	-	25	0
329	Lanehead Cl.	M	9	76	11.8
330	Rookhope Cl.	M	-	104	0
332	St. Johns Chapel Cl.	M	-	104	0
333	Wearhead Cl.	M	-	60	0
400	Westgate Cl.	M	71	237	} 25.92
410	Wolsingham Cl.	M.I.	0	37	
	Wolsingham R.C.	M			

## CROOK DISTRICT.

Official Number (C.C.)	Name of School	Dept.	No. of Children on Milk List.	Total No. of Children in School	%
58 286	Crook R.C. Crook Cl.	M.I. B.G.I.	107 498	160 980	53.0
100	Hamsterley Cl.	J.M.	0	57	0
120	Hunwick Inter.Cl. Hunwick Cl.	I. <sup>SM</sup> J.M.	164	360	45.5
183	Satley C.E.	J.M.	0	36	0
200 264 265	Tow Law R.C. Tow Law C.E. Tow Law Cl.	M. J.M. SM. J.M.	57 120 163	83 176 293	61.6
212	Oakenshaw Cl.	M	113	193	58.5
250 251 354	Willington C.E. Willington R.C. Willington Cl.	M M M.I.	55 83 243	102 115 580	47.8
287	Helmington Row Cl.	M.I.	114	172	66.2
288	Peases West Cl.	M.I.	108	225	48.0
289	Stanley (Crook) Cl.	M.I.	169	269	62.4
290	Sunniside Cl.	M.	59	98	60.2
291	Sunnybrow Cl.	J.M.	47	94	50.0
319	Fir Tree Cl.	M	36	65	55.3
320	Howden-le-Wear Cl.	M	129	233	55.3
362	Witton-le-Wear Cl.	J.M.	16	48	33.3

## BISHOP AUCKLAND DISTRICT.

Official Number: (C.C.)	Name of School.	Dept.	No. of Children on Milk List.	Total No. of Children in School	%
	Bishop Auckland				37.2
15	Barrington C.E.	S.M.	127	256	}
16	St. Annes C.E.	J.M.I.	154	341	
17	Etherley Lane Cl.	J.M.	46	147	
18	R. C.	M.I.	173	369	
155	Newton Cap Cl.	J.M.	33	59	
377	Cockton Hill Cl.	B.G.I.	214	835	
23	Bolam	M	-	31	0
50	Coundon Cl.	JM.I.	241	475	}
368	Leeholme Cl.	S.M.	226	295	
387	Coundon R.C.	M.	134	201	
51	Auckland Park Cl.	B.	112	285	}
194	Close House Cl.	G.I.	159	334	
76	Witton Park R.C.	M.	109	130	}
77	Witton Park Cl.	M.I.	409	470	
84	Evenwood C.E.	M.	53	173	30.6
86	Morley Cl.	M	25	86	29.0
87	Ramshaw Cl.	M	74	148	50.0
142	Lynesack Cl.	M	21	70	30.0
143	Butterknowle Cl.	M	92	165	55.7
147	Middridge C.E.	M	38	77	49.3
156	High Grange Cl.	J.M.	18	35	51.4
168	Escomb Cl.	M.I.	119	148	80.4
179	Fylands Bridge C.E.	I.	27	35	77.1
180	South Church Cl.	J.M.	30	80	37.5
182	St. Helens Auckland.	JM.I.	139	277	50.1

Official Number (C.C.)	Name of School	Dept.	No. of Children on Milk List	Total No. of Children in School	%
193	New Shildon All Saints C.E.	M	84	204	37.5
195	Shildon Cl.	SB.JM.I.	235	644	
196	Shildon St.John's CE.	MI.	108	246	
396	Shildon Timothy Hackworth Cl.	SG.JM.I.	215	617	
235	Etherley Cl.	I.	23	47	31.0
236	Toft Hill Cl.	M.	81	187	
237	West Auckland Cl.	I.	52	147	35.4
339	West Auckland	S.M.	91	256	
	Copeland Lane I.Cl.				
252	Rushyford Cl.	J.M	13	32	40.6
579	Eldon Lane Cl.	M	125	191	63.2
74	Eldon Cl.	J.M.	83	138	



SPENNYMOOR DISTRICT.  
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Official Number (C.C.)	Name of School.	Dept.	No. of Children on Milk List	Total No. of Children in School.	%
36	Byers Green Cl.	M.I.	189	291	64.94
54	Coxhoe C.E.	J.M.	87	102	85.29
154	Newfield Cl.	J.M.	46	93	49.46
157	Binchester Cl.	M	73	123	59.34
198	Broom Cottages Cl.	M.I.	85	411	20.68
213	Page Bank Cl.	M.	140	205	68.28
222	Ferryhill C.E.	I	10	64	15.63
	Spennymoor				
223	King Street Cl.	B.G.I.	158	495	} 45.54
227	C. E.	M.	115	173	
345	North Road Cl.	B.G.	199	339	
346	Rosa Street Cl.	B.G.I.	181	427	
224	Merrington Cl.	M	54	128	42.19
	Tudhoe				
225	R. C.	M.I.	164	268	} 50.89
228	Upper Church-St.Cl.	M.	100	139	
343	Coll. Cl.	M.	77	263	
275	Cassop Cl.	M.I.	169	354	47.74
276	Tursdale Cl.	M.	40	77	51.95
277	Chilton Buildings Cl.	B.G.I.	213	583	36.54
278	Ferryhill Station Cl.	M.I.	98	324	30.25
282	West Cornforth Cl.	SM.JM.	228	570	39.99
283	Cornforth Lane Cl.	M.I.	179	446	40.15
284	East Hetton Cl.	M.I.	92	294	31.30
285	Mount Pleasant Cl.	I.	92	244	37.70
292	Croxdale Cl.	M	46	125	36.81

Official Number (C.C.)	Name of School	Dept.	No. of Children on Milk List	Total No. of Children in School	%
312	Leasingthorne Cl.	J.M.	54	64	84.37
313	Middlestone Moor Cl.	M	128	179	71.50
344	East Howle Cl.	M	119	162	73.45
376	Dean Bank Cl.	B.G.I.	108	993	10.87
407	Bowburn Cl.	M.	186	316	58.86

DURHAM DISTRICT.

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Official Number (C.C.)	Name of School.	Dept.	No. of Children on Milk List	Total No. of Children in School	%
5	Belmont C.E.	M.I.	70	212	33.02
6	Gilesgate Moor Cl.	M.I.	118	274	43.06
28	New Brancepeth Cl.	B.G.I.	116	411	28.23
29	North Brancepeth Cl.	SM.JM.I.	76	344	} 21.9
33	Langley Moor R.C.	M.I.	48	221	
31	Brandon Inter Cl. Brandon Cl.	M J.M.I. }	84	700	12.0
32	Browney Cl.	JM	18	116	15.52
34	Waterhouses Cl.	JM	22	137	} 24.8
105	Waterhouses Inter Cl.	M	78	266	
35	Broompark Cl.	M	57	141	40.42
42	Witton Gilbert Cl.	M.I.	57	162	35.19
48	Cornsay Colliery Cl.	M.I.	67	179	} 34.72
49	New Cornsay R.C.	M	7	34	
78	Esh Winning Cl.	JM.	61	222	27.48
79	Esh C.E.	M.	6	30	20.
80	Langley Park Cl.	B.G.I.	131	536	24.44
81	Esh Laude R.C.	M	21	154	13.63
82	Newhouse R.C.	M	18	136	13.23
83	Ushaw Moor Cl.	M.I.	116	315	} 39.4
202	Ushaw Moor R.C.	M	103	242	
107	East Hedley Hope Cl.	J.M.	17	62	27.42
108	Hedley Hill Cl.	M	14	45	31.11
130	Kimbleworth Cl.	M	43	190	22.63

Official Number (C.C.)	Name of School.	Dept.	No. of Children on Milk List	Total No. of Children in School	%
136	Hamsteels C.E.	M.I.	35	144	24.31
165	Littletown Cl.	J.M.	8	34	23.53
166	Pittington Cl.	SM.JM.	89	219	40.64
167	Nettlesworth Cl.	I	25	110	22.73
187	Ludworth Cl.	M	138	239	57.75
188	Shadforth C.E.	J.M.	17	41	41.46
189	Sherburn Cl.	M	106	263	40.30
191	Sherburn Hill Cl.	B.G.	129	256	50.40
192	Sherburn Hill Cl.	I			
197	Shincliffe C.E.	M	34	78	43.59
260	Sacrison R C.	M.I.	36	165	21.82
261	Sacrison Cl.	B.G.I.	139	698	19.91
270	Bearpark Cl.	M I	59	352	16.30
296	Framwellgate Moor Cl.	B.G I.	106	365	29.04

CHESTER-LE-STREET DISTRICT

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Official Number (C.C.)	Name of School.	Dept.	No. of Children on Milk List.	Total No. of Children in School	%
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	Birtley				
11	East Cl.	S.M.	119	372	31.6
12	Ravensworth Tce.Cl.	J.M.	94	305	
13	R. C.	SM.JM.	151	448	
14	Elisabethville Cl.	JB.JG.I.	164	501	
389	George St. Cl.	M.I.	105	377	
	Chester-le-Street.				
39	C. E.	SM.JB.	89	279	17.1
		JG.	24	181	
		I.	6	48	
40	R. C.	M.	47	192	
88	Inter. Cl.	M.	84	447	
366	Red Rose Cl.	J.M.	9	178	33.3
389	Cl.	J.M.I.	112	622	
72	Edmondsley Cl.	M.I.	112	335	
95	Lumley Cocken Lane Cl.	S.M.	33	148	19.2
96	Lumley Cl.	J.M.	20	128	
101	Fatfield Cl.	B.G.I.	118	430	27.4
132	Eighton Banks C.E.	M.	86	267	32.2
133	Kibblesworth Cl.	M.	32	142	22.5
134	Lamesley C.E.	J.M.	0	21	0
159	Beamish Cl.	J.M.	72	99	72.7
163	West Pelton Cl.	M.I.	99	392	25.2
226	Pelton Roseberry Cl.	B.G.I.	441	829	53.2
384	Pelton Inter. Cl.	SM.JM.I.			
231	Waldridge Cl.	I.	5	30	16.7
267	Fencehouses Inter.Cl.	M.	53	364	10.3
	Fencehouses Cl.	J.M.	0	151	

Official Number (C.C.)	Name of School	Dept.	No. of Children on Milk List.	Total No. of Children in School	%
370	New Lambton Cl.	J.M.	30	164	18.3
386	Grange Villa Cl.	M.I.	76	313	24.2
408	Waldridge Lane Cl.	M	43	179	24.0

## WEST STANLEY DISTRICT.

Official Number (C.C.)	Name of School	Dept.	No. of Children on Milk List	Total No. of Children in School	%
19	Bloemfontein Cl.	M.I.	123	353	34.8
55	Craghead Cl.	M.I.	129	377	34.2
85	Greencroft Cl.	I.	14	48	29.1
160	Burnopfield Inter.Cl.	M.	120	290	} 42.6
214	Burnopfield Cl.	J.M.	49	169	
242	Burnopfield R.C.	M.	64	177	
201	South Moor Cl.	M.I.	141	366	} 34.9
381	South Moor				
	Greenland Cl.	SM.JM.I.	183	530	
409	South Moor R.C.	M.I.	69	160	} 42.0
215	Flint Hill Cl.	J.M.	42	100	
216	Stanley R.C.	M.I.	135	227	} 45.2
326	West Stanley Shield				
	Row Inter.Cl.	B.G.	218	432	
340	Front Street Cl.	J.M.	202	474	
341	High Street Cl.	I.	75	258	} 27.9
281	Collierley Cl.	SM.JM.I.	160	572	
301	Catchgate Cl.	B.G I.	247	568	43.4
307	Annfield Plain Cl.	B.G.I.	177	477	37.1
308	Hare Law Cl.	M.	36	80	45.0
309	Oxhill Cl.	M.I.	122	254	48.0
310	West Kyo Cl.	M	8	31	25.8
321	Annfield Plain Int.Cl.	B.G.	166	563	29.4
334	Causey Row Cl.	J.M.	13	31	41.9
335	East Stanley Cl.	JM.I.	102	224	45.5

Official Number (C.C.)	Name of School.	Dept.	No. of Children on Milk List	Total No. of Children in School	%
336	Tanfield Lea Cl.	JM.	91	321	28.3
337	Tanfield Burnop- field Leazes Cl.	JM.	71	143	49.6
338	Pickering Nook Cl.	JM.	26	93	29.0
388	Dipton R.C.	M.I.	104	290	35.8
412	Towneley Memorial Inter. R.C.	M.	82	169	48.5

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## HOUGHTON-LE-SPRING DISTRICT.

Official Number (C.C.)	Name of School.	Dept.	No. of Children on Milk List	Total No. of Children in School.	%
4	Houghton-le-Spring Inter. Cl.	M	250	362	30.6
41	Newtown Cl.	I	27	57	
115	R. C.	M.I.	105	376	
116	Cl.	JM.I.	-	676	
118	St. Michael's C.E.	M.	120	167	
70	East Rainton Cl.	M	135	241	56.0
110	Easington Lane Inter. Cl.	M	400	838	49.1
204	Cl.				
	R. C.	J.M.	54	85	
111	Eppleton Coll. Cl.	SM.JM.I.	358	838	42.7
112	Hetton-le-Hole C.E.	JB.	207	159	46.2
369	Hetton-le-Hole Cl.	JG.I.		289	
114	Chilton Moor Cl.	JM.	78	183	42.6
149	Moorsley Cl.	MI.	63	197	31.9
238	New Herrington Cl.	B G.I.	89	646	13.7
239	Leamside Cl.	M.I.	257	397	86.5
240	Penshaw R.C.	J.M.	44	129	34.1
266	Hetton-le-Hole Lyons Boys Inter. Cl.	M	257	563	45.4
	Cl.	JM.I.			
298	High Usworth Cl.	J.M.	54	185	29.1
299	Usworth Coll. Inter. Cl.	M	290	989	29.3
	Usworth Coll. Cl.	JM.I.			
300	Springwell Cl.	M	13	217	6.1
317	Newbottle Cl.	B G.I.	83	427	17.2
318	Newbottle Paddock Stile Cl.	M	39	221	

Official Number (C.C.)	Name of School	Dept.	No. of Children on Milk List.	Total No. of Children in School	%
322	New Penshaw Cl.	B.G.I.	86	400	21.5
324	Shiney Row Cl.	B.G I.	124	650	19.0
	Washington				
347	Biddick Cl.	J.M.	124	283	} 48.5
348	Coll. Cl.	J.M.	41	149	
364	St. Bedes R.C.	I.	54	125	
232	St. Joseph's R.C.	M	246	400	
385	Dubmire Cl.	J.M.I.	41	197	20.8
391	Washington Glebe				
	Inter. Cl.	M	} 101	} 612	} 16.5
	Glebe Cl.	JM.			

## NORTH EASTERN DISTRICT.

Official Number (C.C.)	Name of School.	Dept.	No. of Children on Milk List	Total No. of Children in School	%
24	Boldon C.E.	M	45	145	31.0
	New Seaham				27.5
59	R.C.	J.M.	45	138	}
177	Low Coll. Cl.	J.M.	118	391	
184	High Coll. Cl.	JB.I.	57	189	
306	Cl.	JM.I.	68	329	
	Seaham Harbour				33.3
61	C.E.	J.M.	104	263	}
62	R.C.	SM.JM.	193	582	
63	Cl.	JB.JG.I.	139	299	
176	Deneside Cl.	JM. I.	210	696	
256	Inter.Cl.	B.G.	306	878	
297	Camden Sq. Inter.Cl.	M.	136	486	
371	Viceroy St. Cl.	I.	45	195	
	Ryhope				37.2
170	Inter. Cl.	M	135	385	}
171	R. C.	M.I.	133	301	
172	Village C.E.	M.I.	72	293	
233	Ryhope St. Cl.	JB.JG.I.	261	635	
174	Dawdon Cl.	JB.JG.I.	208	515	40.3
203	New Silksworth				}
	Ryhope Rd. Cl.	IB.IG.	69	276	
229	New Silksworth Cl.	JB.JG.	136	421	
230	New Silksworth R.C.)	M	47	131	
199	Silksworth C.E.	J.M.	0	48	
382	Silksworth Inter.Cl.	M	78	390	
245	Cleadon C.E.	I	2	43	}
399	Cleadon Cl.	M	0	170	
247	Marsden Cl.	JM	25	190	13.1
248	Whitburn Cl.	SM.JM.	0	382	0.
273	East Boldon Cl.	J.M.	26	175	15.5
294	Ford Cl.	B.G.I.	153	473	32.3

Official Number (C.C.)	Name of School.	Dept.	No. of Children on Milk List	Total No. of Children in School	%
305	Castletown Cl.	B.G.I.	130	465	29.2
393	Whiteleas Cl.	J.M.	15	52	28.8
405	Boldon Coll.				31.0
	Inter. Cl.	B.G.	141	413	
131	Hedworth Lane Cl.	J.M.I.	131	413	
274	North Rd. Cl.	I.	51	215	

EASINGTON DISTRICT.  
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Official Number (C.C.)	Name of School.	Dept.	No. of Children on Milk List	Total No. of Children in School	%
38	Castle Eden	M	-	57	0.
66	Easington C.E.	M	35	189	18.5
68	Murton Colliery Cl.	SB.SG.JM. I	783	1581	49.5
69	East Murton R.C.	M.	109	214	50.9
104	South Hetton Cl.	B.G.I.	198	562	35.2
106	Hawthorn Cl.	M.	16	33	48.5
122	Horden Our Lady's Inter R.C.	M	33	185	} 18.2
365	Horden Colliery Cl.	SM.B.G. JB.JG.	458	2370	
404	Horden R.C.	JM.	24	261	
123	Hutton Henry C.E.	M.	23	119	19.2
148	Hesleden Cl.	M.I.	31	233	} 28.7
162	Cold Hesleden Cl.	M.	80	153	
190	Easington Colly.Cl.	SB.JB.SG. JG.	665	1856	35.7
217	Thornley R.C.	M.I.	136	261	} 43.9
342	Thornley Cl.	SM.JM.	272	668	
218	Deaf Hill Cl.	G.I.	114	613	} 16.9
356	Trimdon Foundry Cl.	B			
259	Blackhall Colly.Cl.	B.G.I	174	1049	16.5
302	Haswell Cl.	SM.JM.I	240	441	54.4
304	Station Town Cl.	M.I.	52	277	18.7
357	Wheatley Hill Cl.	SB.SG.JM. I	343	995	34.4
358	Wingate Cl.	SB.SG.JM. I	94	690	} 18.3
253	Wingate R.C.	M	65	176	

Official Number (C.C.)	Name of School	Dept.	No. of Children on Milk List.	Total No. of Children in Schol	%
367	Shotton Cl.	SB.SG.JB.	381	1072	} 35.4
		JG. I.			
241	Shotton Fleming Field R.C.	M.	106	299	}
395	Hardwick R.C.	M.	42	182	
					23.0

SOUTH-EASTERN DISTRICT.  
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Official Number (C.C.)	Name of School.	Dept.	No. of Children on Milk List.	Total No. of Children in School	%
8	Billingham C.E.	M.I.	13	321	} .5
103	Billingham R.C.	M.	-	377	
375	Billingham Inter Cl.	M.	-	615	
	Billingham Cl.	JB.JG.I.	-	938	
9	Haverton Hill Cl.	B.G.I.	146	664	21.9
10	Port Clarence R.C.	M	88	202	43.5
20	Bishop Middleham C.E.	M.	40	169	23.6
21	Bishopton.	M.	-	41	0
37	Trimdon Grange Cl.	I	17	160	} 14.1
219	Trimdon Grange Cl.	M	49	308	
52	Cowpen Bewley	M	-	25	0
53	High Clarence Cl.	M	57	173	32.9
65	Egglescliffe.	M	30	92	32.5
67	Fishburn Cl.	SM.I	84	396	21.2
75	Elwick Hall C.E.	M	-	56	0
94	Greatham C.E.	M	10	131	7.6
98	Grindon C.E.	M	-	28	0
99	Wynyard Park C.E.	M	-	38	0
102	Hart C.E.	M	28	81	34.5
139	Long Newton C.E.	M	-	26	0
169	Redmarshall C.E.	M	-	42	0
186	Sedgefield Cl.	M.I.	72	263	27.3
220	Trimdon Parochial.	M	-	108	0

Official Number (C.C.)	Name of School.	Dept.	No. of Children on Milk List	Total No. of Children in School	%
221	Trimdon R.C.	M.I.	95	266	35.7
353	Stillington Cl.	M.I.	82	181	45.3
363	Wolviston Cl.	M	13	82	15.6
380	Preston-on-Tees Cl.	M	54	171	31.5
392	Belasis R.C.	M	60	144	41.6
411	Graythorp Cl.	M	17	91	18.6



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B I B L I O G R A P H Y.

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## B I B L I O G R A P H Y.

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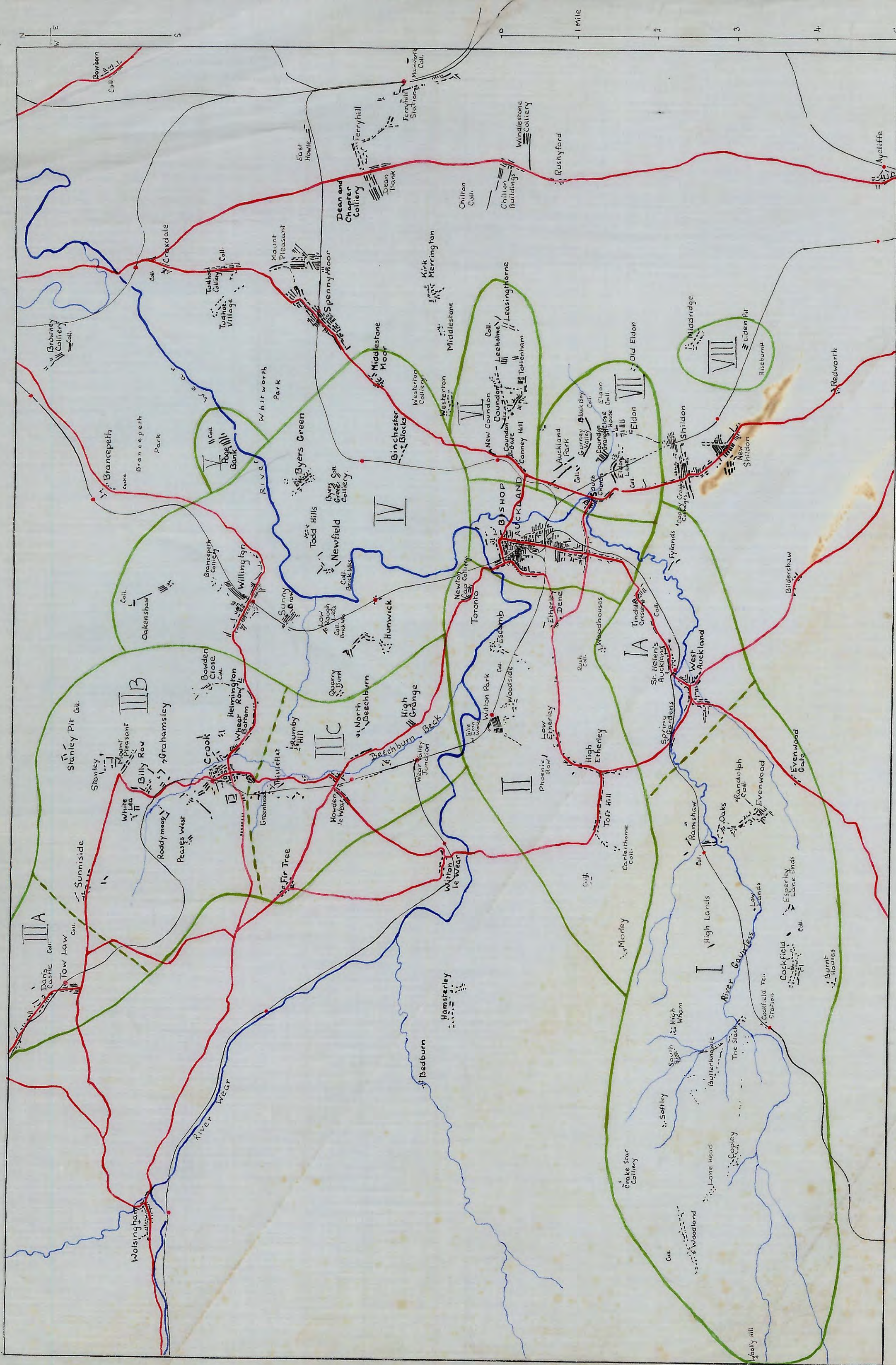
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MAP II. SOUTH WEST DURHAM SHOWING SUBDIVISION INTO SMALLER REGIONS.

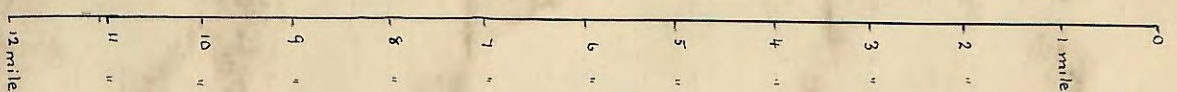
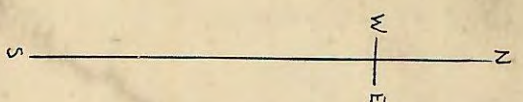
- Key:-
- I Upper Gaunless Valley
  - IA West Auckland District
  - II Etherley - Wilton Park District
  - IIIA Tow Law District
  - IIIB Crook District
  - IIIC Howden-le-Wear District

- IV Hunwick - Willington District
  - V Page Bank
  - VI Coundon - Leasingthorne District
  - VII Auckland Park - Eldon District
  - VIII Eldon Pit
- Regional Boundaries  
Sub-Regional Boundaries  
Main Roads  
Railways

Scale: One Inch = One Mile.

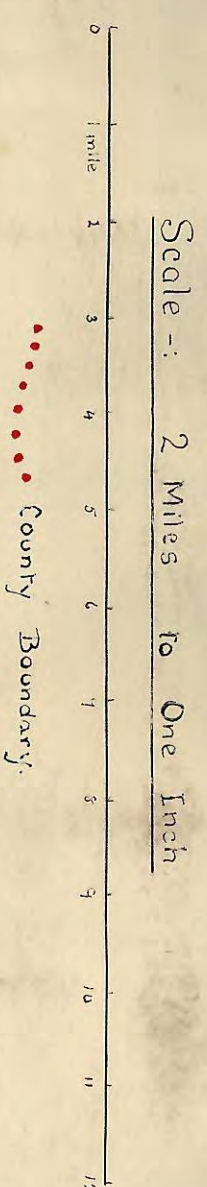


# MAP OF COUNTY DURHAM SHOWING GEOLOGICAL STRUCTURE

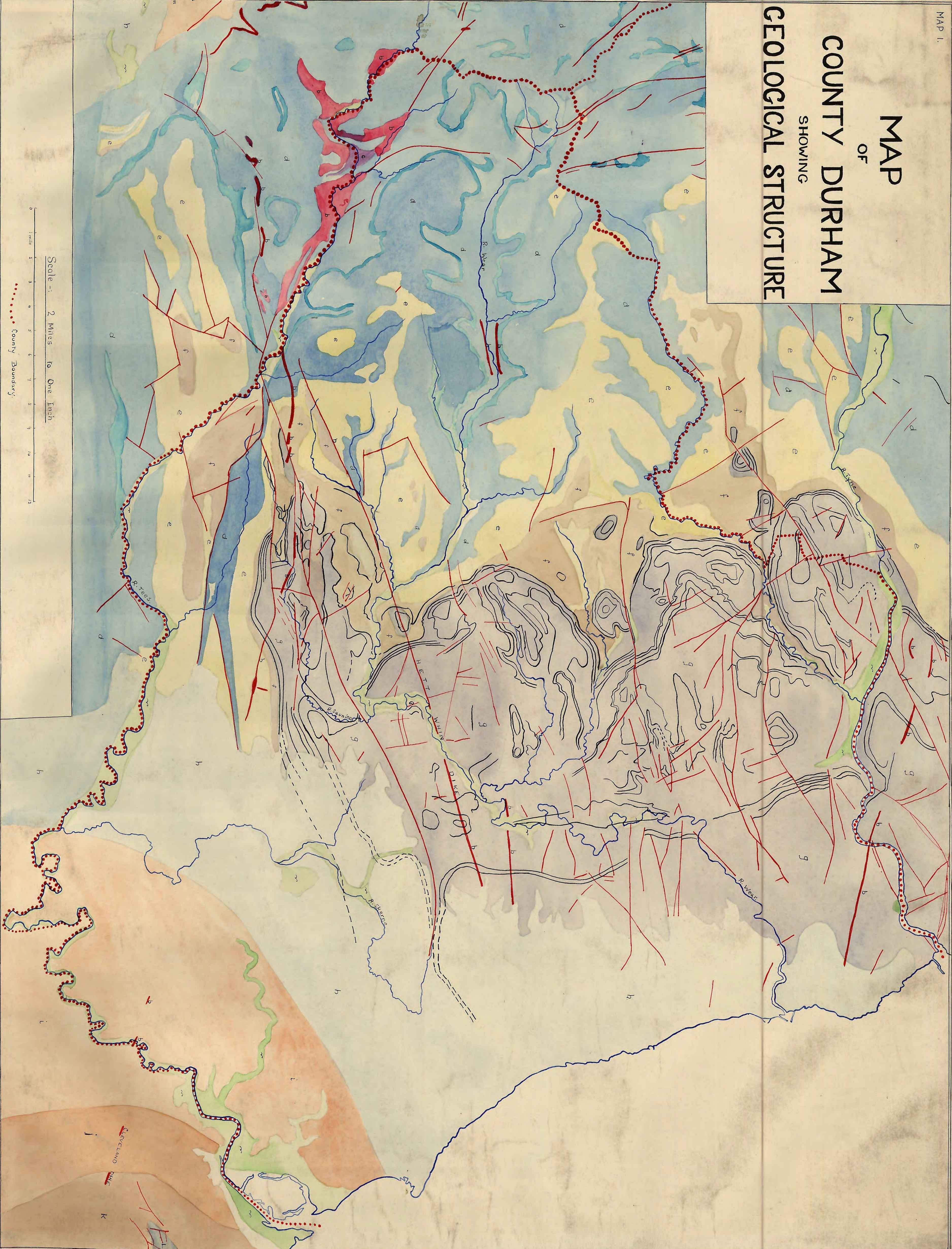


KEY.

~	Alluvium and River Terraces
L	Ergative Series Grey Limestones
k	Lower Lias
J	Keuper Marl with Rock Salt
i	Keuper Sandstone
h	Magnesian Limestone
g	Middle Coal Measures Numerous thick beds
f	Lower Coal Measures Few beds
e	Milstone Grit occasional coals
d	Upper Limestone Series
c	Stockdale Shales
b	Sills and Dikes
—	Coal Outcrops
—	Faults

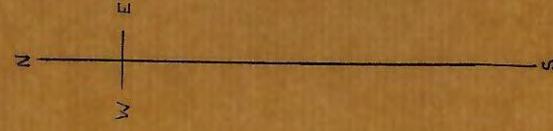


..... County Boundary





MAP  
OF  
COUNTY DURHAM  
SHOWING  
DURATION  
OF  
UNEMPLOYMENT



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

KEY

- Collieries closed between 1930 and 1935 (i.e. 5 to 9 years)
- Collieries closed between 1925 and 1930 (i.e. 10 to 15 years)
- ◼ Collieries closed between 1910 and 1925 (i.e. 15 to 25 years)
- ◼ Collieries closed before 1910 (i.e. over 25 years)

Only collieries employing the bulk of the local population have been included

Scale = 2 Miles to One Inch

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12  
County Boundary





# MAP OF COUNTY DURHAM SHOWING COLLIERY EMPLOYMENT IN 1936

MAP 4.



## KEY

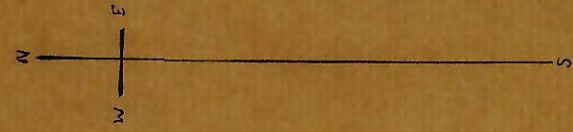
- ◻ Under 10 men employed
- ◻ 1000 - 2000
- ◻ 10 - 50 men
- ◻ 2000 - 3000
- ◻ 50 - 100 men
- ◻ 3000 - 4000
- ◻ 100 - 250 men
- ◻ 250 - 500 men
- ◻ 500 - 750 men
- ◻ Over 4,000
- ◻ 750 - 1000 men

Scale - 2 Miles to One Inch





# MAP OF COUNTY DURHAM SHOWING VILLAGES WITH NO CENTRE OF EMPLOYMENT



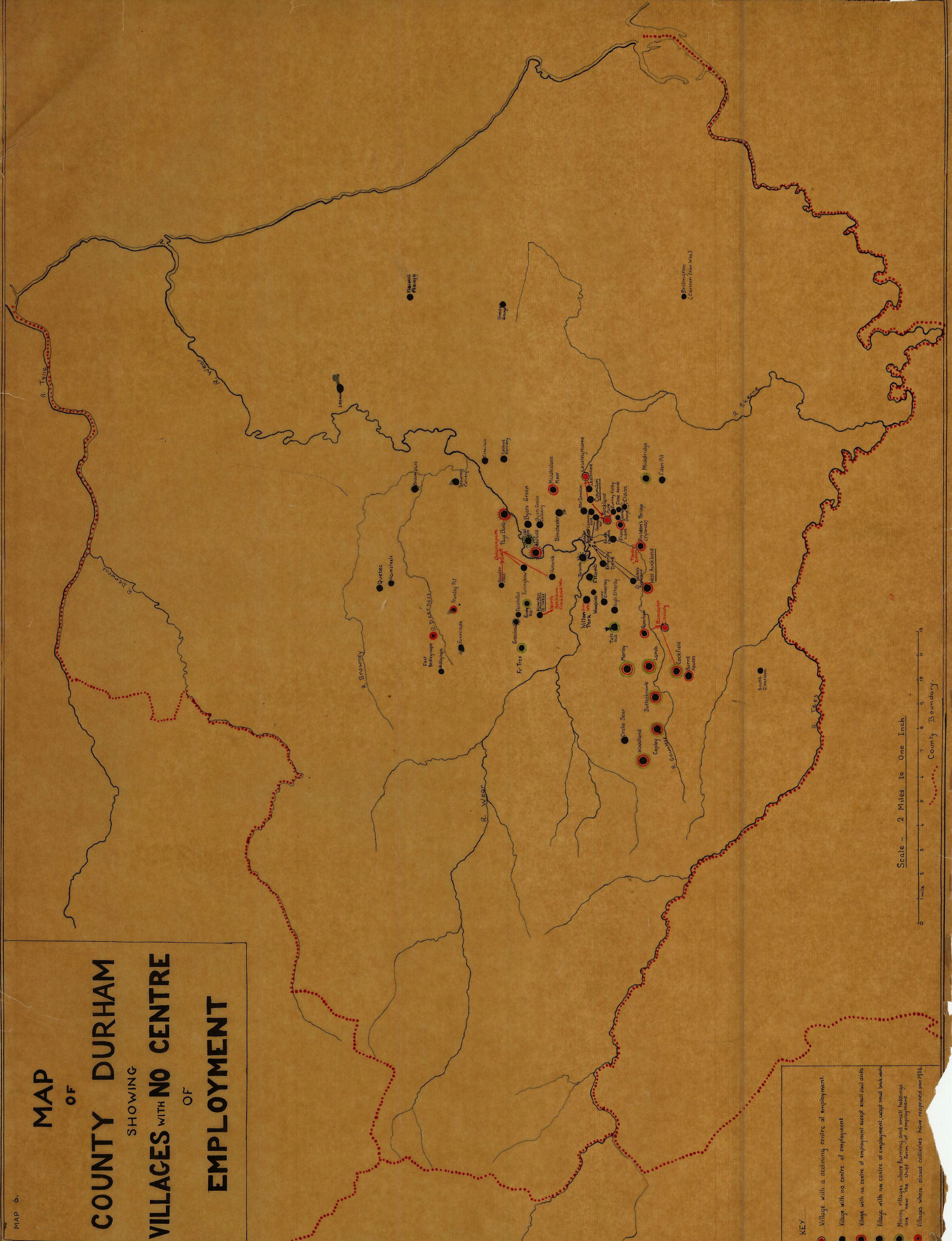
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

## KEY

- Village with a declining centre of employment.
- Village with no centre of employment.
- Village with no centre of employment except small coal drifts.
- Village with no centre of employment, except small brick works.
- Mining villages where farming and small holdings are 'new' the chief form of employment.
- Villages where closed collieries have reopened since 1946.

Scale - 2 Miles to One Inch

0 1 mile 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12  
County Boundary.



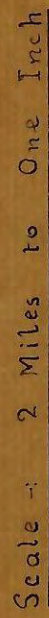


The lines indicate the direction and distance, which miners travel to some of the expanding collieries.

The thickness of the lines is an approximate indication of the proportion from each village.

The use of colours is merely to lessen confusion

Names of villages from which employees are drawn may be found from reference to Map 10.



County Boundary.



MAP 3.

MAP  
OF  
COUNTY DURHAM  
SHOWING  
COLLIERY EMPLOYMENT  
IN  
1929



**KEY**

○ Under 10 men employed	1000 - 2000
● 10 - 50 men	
● 50 - 100 men	2000 - 3000
● 100 - 250 men	
● 250 - 500 men	3000 - 4000
● 500 - 750 men	
● 750 - 1000 men	Over 4000

Scale - 2 Miles to One Inch



MAP  
OF  
COUNTY DURHAM  
SHOWING  
COLLIERY EMPLOYMENT  
IN  
1923

KEY

- Under 10 men employed.
- 10 - 50 men.
- 50 - 100 men.
- 100 - 250 men.
- 250 - 500 men.
- 500 - 750 men.
- 750 - 1,000 men.
- 1,000 - 2,000
- 2,000 - 3,000
- 3,000 - 4,000
- Over 4,000.

Scale - 2 Miles to One Inch

County Boundary



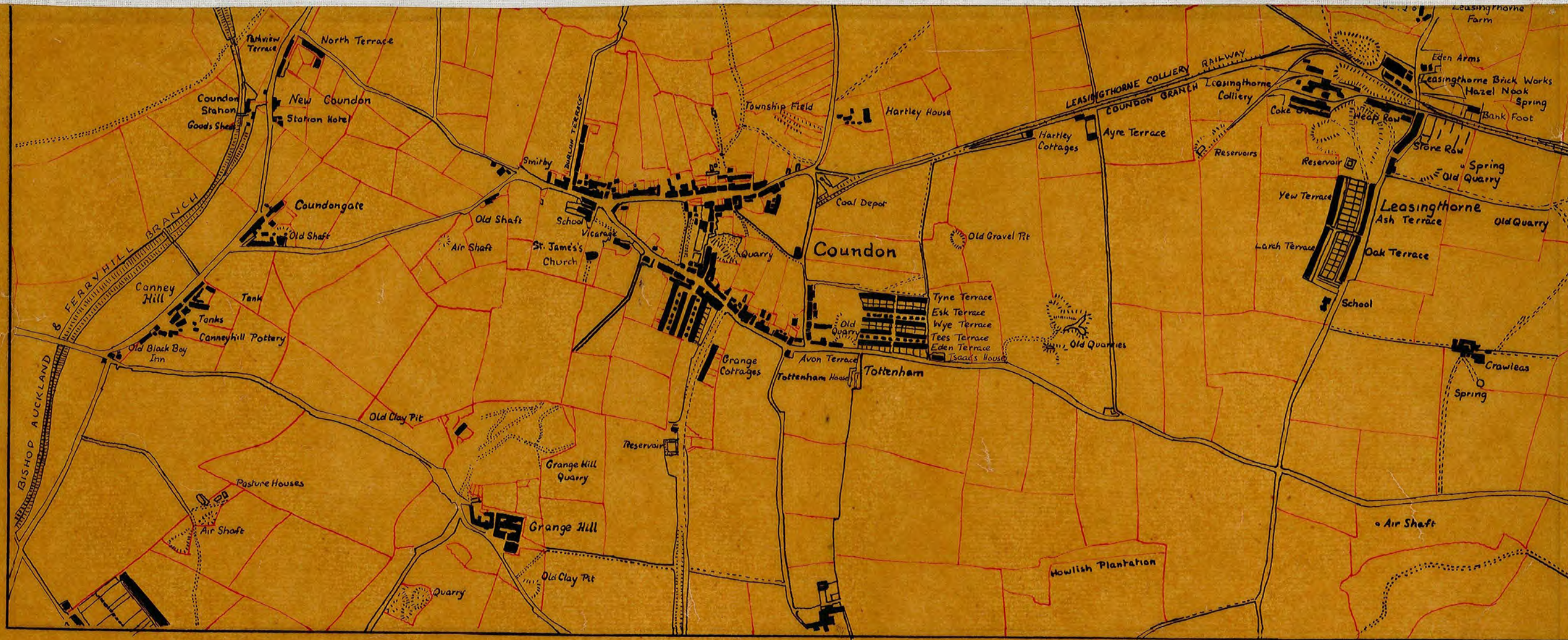




MAP 18. BYERS GREEN FROM THE 1923 ORDNANCE SURVEY.

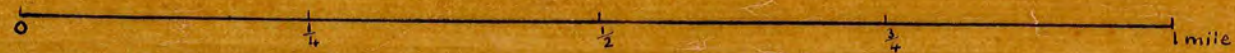
Scale - 2.5 inches = 1 mile



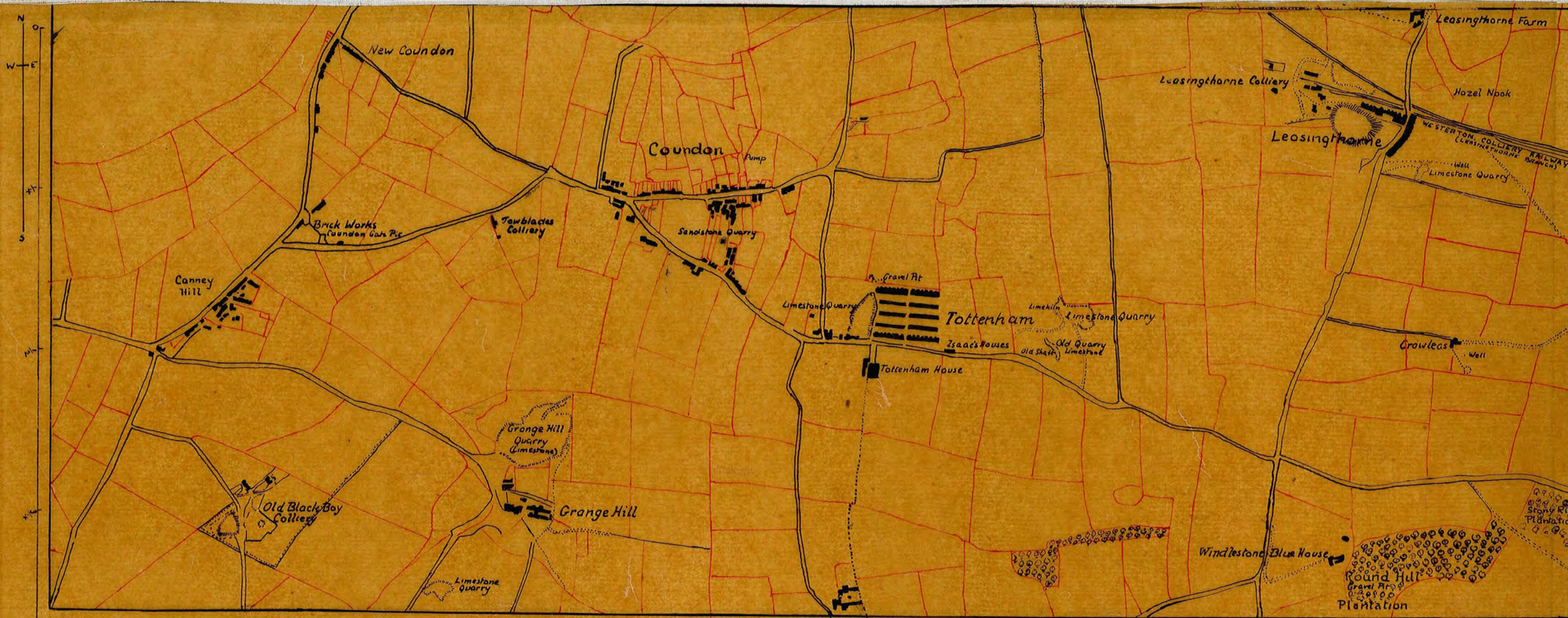


MAP 21. THE COUNDON - LEASINGTHORNE DISTRICT IN 1896 - AS ENGRAVED ON THE 1898 ORDNANCE SURVEY

Scale = Six Inches to One Statute Mile  $\frac{1}{10360}$

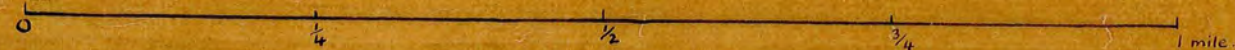




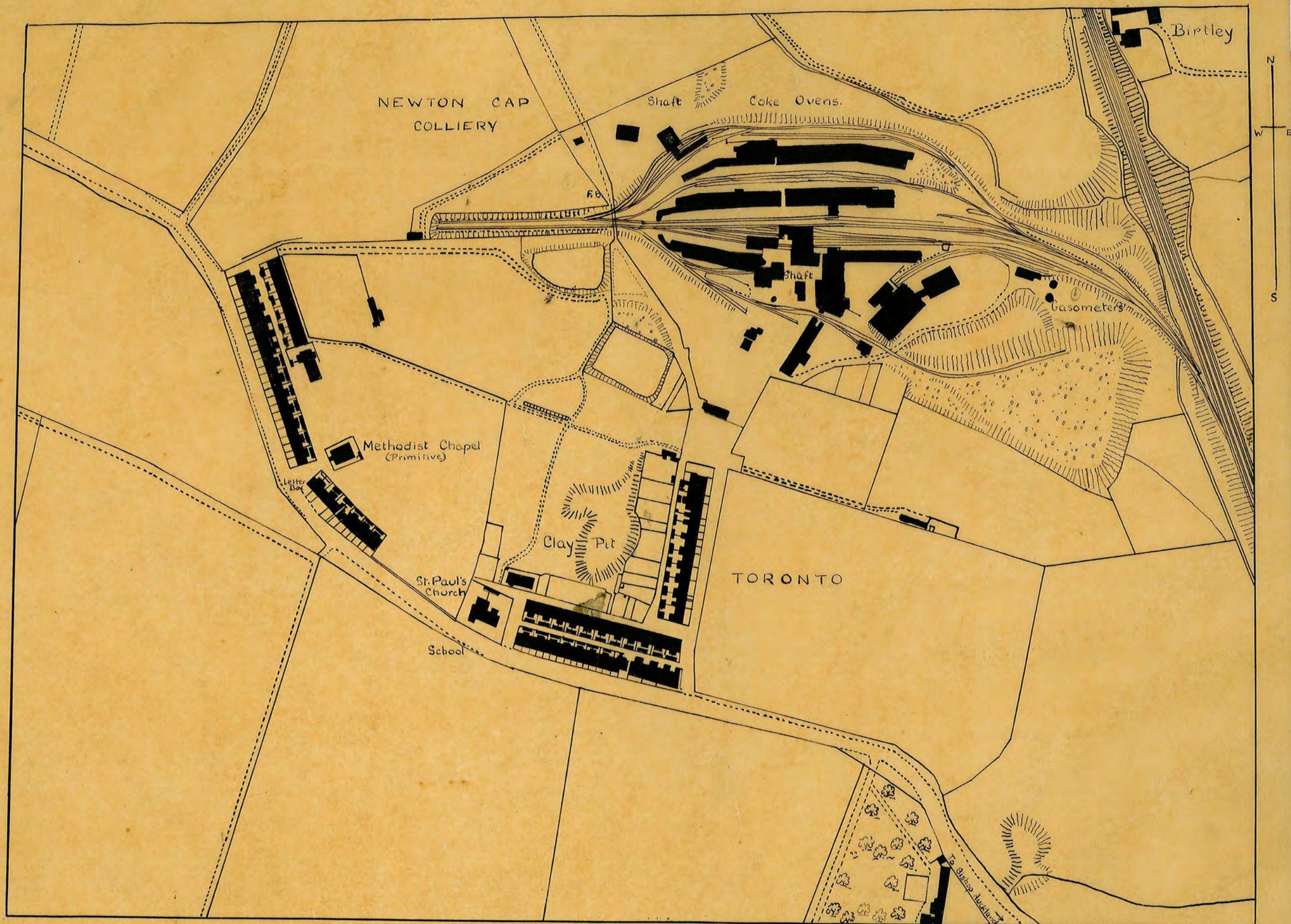


MAP 20. THE COUNDON - LEASINGTHORNE DISTRICT IN 1857 — AS ENGRAVED ON THE 1859 ORDNANCE SURVEY.

Scale = Six Inches to One Statute Mile.  $\frac{1}{10360}$







MAP 16.

NEWTON CAP COLLIERY AND TORONTO — FROM THE 1897 ORDNANCE SURVEY

A TYPICAL COLLIERY AND COLLIERY VILLAGE.

Scale 25 inches to 1 mile





MAP 19. THE AUCKLAND PARK — ELDON DISTRICT. FROM THE 1923 ORDNANCE SURVEY.





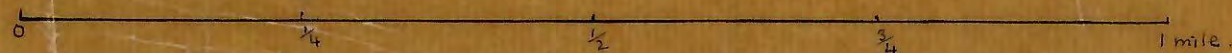
MAP 9. THE RAINTON — LEAMSIDE DISTRICT. FROM THE 1921 ORDNANCE SURVEY.  
Scale: 6 inches to 1 mile.





MAP 14. THE WEST AUCKLAND DISTRICT IN 1897 — AS ENGRAVED ON THE 1898 ORDNANCE SURVEY.

Scale —: Six Inches to One Statute Mile  $\frac{1}{10560}$

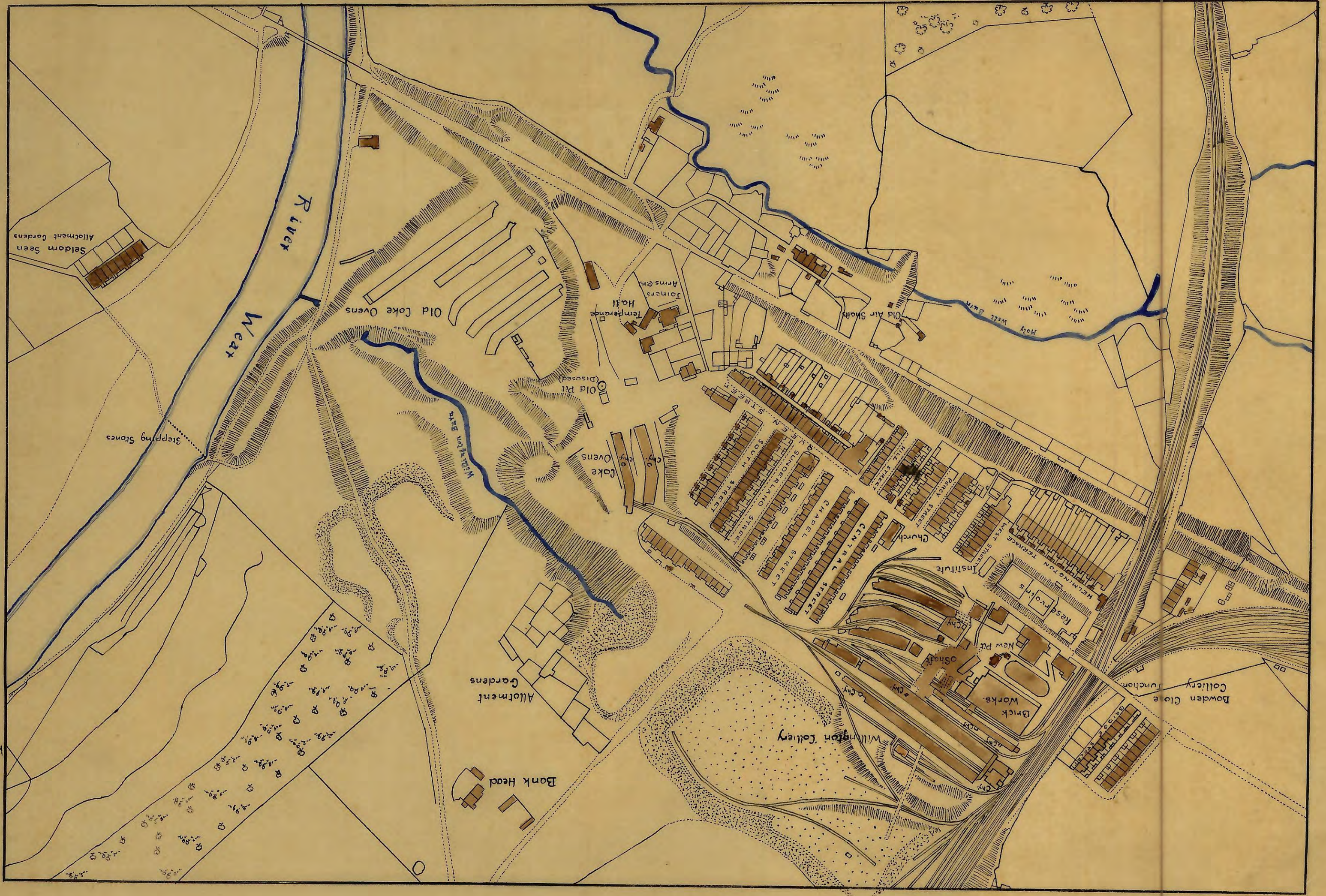




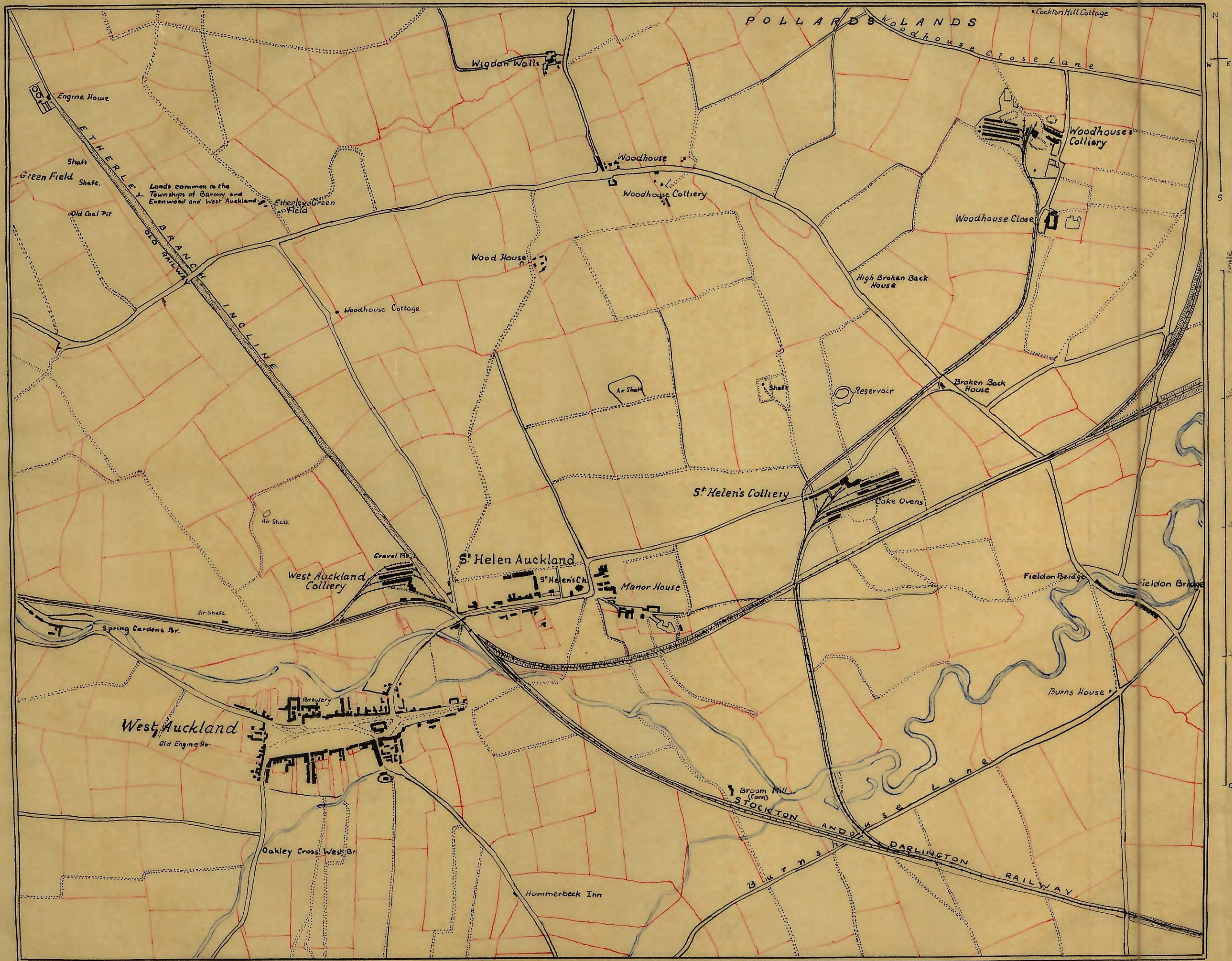
Scale — 25 inches = 1 mile.

FROM THE 1923 ORDNANCE SURVEY

MAP 17. SUNNYBROW

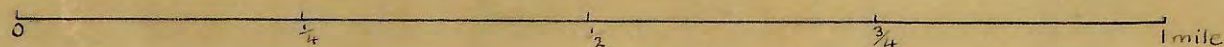






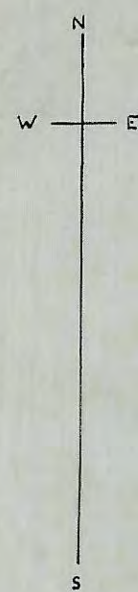
MAP 13. THE WEST AUCKLAND DISTRICT IN 1857 — AS ENGRAVED ON THE 1859 ORDNANCE SURVEY.

Scale — Six Inches to One Statute Mile.  $\frac{1}{10360}$





# MAP OF COUNTY DURHAM SHOWING SETTLEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS



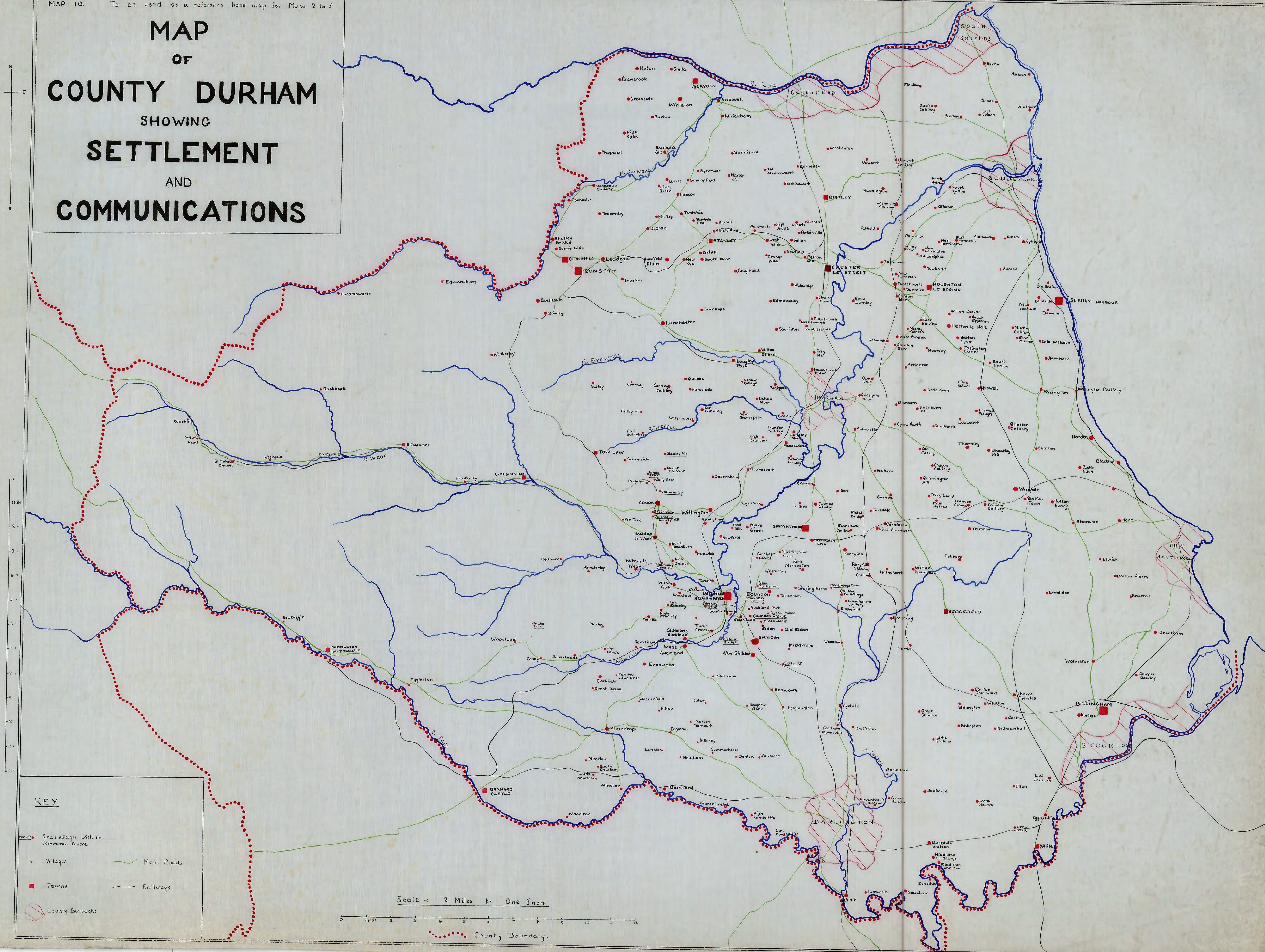
0  
1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12

## KEY

- Small villages with no communal centre.
- Villages
- Towns
- County Boroughs
- Main Roads
- Railways

Scale - 2 Miles to One Inch

County Boundary.





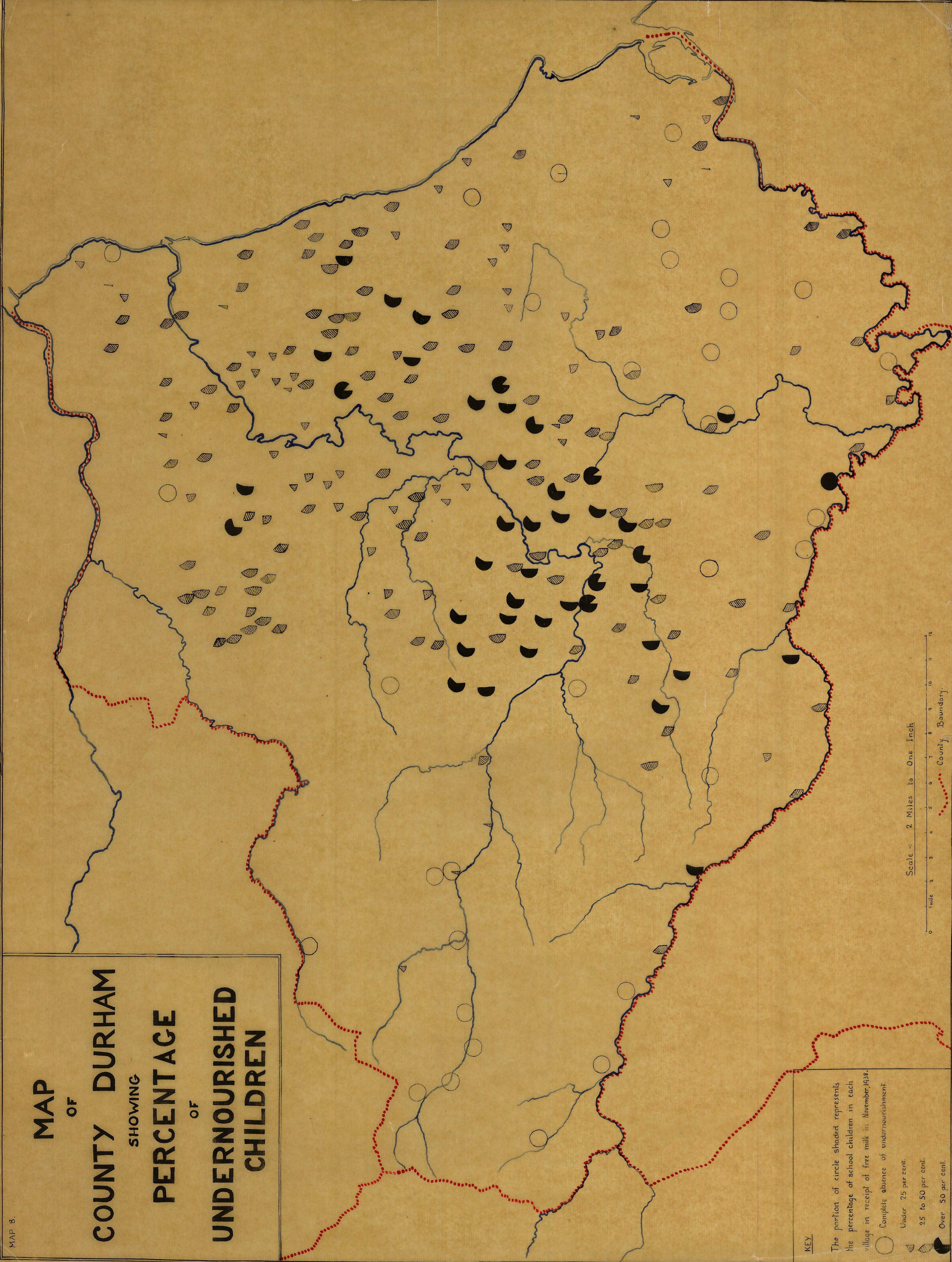
MAP 12. THE GAUNLESS VALLEY IN 1857 — AS ENGRAVED ON THE 1859 ORDNANCE SURVEY

Scale: Six Inches to One Statute Mile  
Contour Interval: 100 Feet





MAP  
OF  
COUNTY DURHAM  
SHOWING  
PERCENTAGE  
OF  
UNDERNOURISHED  
CHILDREN



KEY

The portion of circle shaded represents the percentage of school children in each village in receipt of free milk in November, 1938.

○ Complete absence of undernourishment.

◐ Under 25 per cent.

◑ 25 to 50 per cent.

◒ Over 50 per cent.

Scale - 2 Miles to One Inch

County Boundary.





WITTON PARK  
IRON WORKS  
(Disused).

Old Coke Ovens

Old Drift (Coal)

Radcliffe

St. Paul's Church

Carwood House

Woodside House

Woodside Farm

WOODSIDE

Vicarage

Drift (coal)

Woodlands House Farm

Woodlands Farm

Spring

Hickwood