Memory, Heritage and Loss in Former Coal Mining Communities of the Durham Coalfield

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Abstract

This research investigates how post-industrial communities invoke collective memories and emotional attachments to a shared industrial past to foster contemporary communal identities and belonging. The field site is the former Durham Coalfield, whose economic base and social fabric were ruptured by the mining industry's decline. Drawing on theories of collective memory, heritage, identity and belonging, I take a social constructivist approach to analyse how locals leverage democratised forms of industrial heritage – narratives, places, objects, and rituals curated 'from below' – to make sense of destabilising losses to the social order. Centring affective and experiential engagements with the remains of the industrial era, the study reveals industrial heritage as a conduit for the reconstitution of communal bonds within the rubble of rupture. Findings elucidate how strategic deployment of industrial heritage enables the invocation of continuity with the romanticised industrial past to sustain collective identities despite upheaval. I contribute textured ethnographic insights and conceptual development regarding the vital emotional afterlives of industries within processes of meaning-making and communal resilience in post-industrial places.

Declaration

The work and contents of this thesis have not been submitted elsewhere for any other degree or qualification

Statement of Copyright

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Foreword

My thesis emerges from a moment of profound transformation in former industrial communities. As the physical remnants of industry disappear and generational memory fades, questions of how communities maintain their sense of self become increasingly urgent. The research presented here examines how former mining towns navigate this challenge, revealing the intricate ways shared memories and heritage practices weave together past and present.

The following work offers an academic analysis and a window into how communities actively shape their identity in the aftermath of industrial decline. Through ethnographic observation and theoretical engagement, it illuminates the vital role that emotional connections to the industrial past play in sustaining community bonds and fostering resilience.

As many similar communities face comparable challenges globally, this research contributes to understanding how people make meaning from major economic and social transitions. It demonstrates that industrial heritage is about preserving the past and actively shaping the present and future. A few historical details will assist in situating the research.

In 1913, the Durham Coalfield was the largest coal producer in Britain, and Britain was the world's primary coal producer. During the twentieth century, other parts of Britain overtook Durham, and other nations overtook Britain. However, by 1984, coal

was still Britain's primary energy source.[1] In 1974, the national miners' strike led to the toppling of the Conservative Government led by Edward Heath and its replacement by a Labour Government led by former Prime Minister Harold Wilson (Hughes, 2012). By 1979, the Conservatives had returned to power. In 1984, the government implemented the Ridley Plan (Ridley, 1974) for mine closures that had been drawn up in 1977 following the 1974 defeat[2]. This resulted in a widely but not universally supported miners' strike. The government had planned for the strike by building up coal stocks and arranging to import foreign coal. The police were mobilised to allow non-striking miners to enter the mines and prevent picketing miners from travelling to picket lines and other workplaces, such as coking plants.

The strike lasted a year, but in March 1985, the miners were defeated and returned to work. The closure plan was implemented, and by 1993, all the mines in the Durham coalfield were closed. Wearmouth was the last deep coal mine of the County Durham coalfield to close, with the last shift at the pit on 10 December 1993. The villages where mining had been the major employer were prosperous communities. However, following the pit closures, these areas became sites of social and economic deprivation.

[1] Coal industry in the UK - statistics & facts | Statista

[2] The Final Report of the Nationalised Industries Policy Group, better known as the Ridley Report or Ridley Plan (after Nicholas Ridley, the group's chair), was a Conservative document, drawn up in 1977 while the Tories were in opposition, outlining a strategy for running and privatising nationalised industries — like mines, buses, shipbuilding and airports — when they were back in power.
One political objective must be to fragment the public sector of industry into a few independent units, which could eventually be denationalised. [p. 6]
The confidential report was leaked to *The Economist* a year after it was drafted. The report's annex, "Countering the Political Threat", drew controversy for the language with which it described the working-class formed in trade unions. The Tories saw the working-class as their enemies, demonised them as communist disruptors, and wanted to provoke a battle with them (p. 24)

The National Coal Board's exploratory boring in the 1980s located sufficient coal reserves to last three hundred years at the then-current consumption rate.[3]. In response to a question on coal reserves, the Earl of Halsbury said in Parliament in 1984, during the Miners' Strike -

> My Lords, having regard to the fact that our recoverable reserves stretch at least as far into the future as the Industrial Revolution stretches into the past, might it not be otiose to waste time estimating recoverable reserves in terms of centuries.[4]

There is a widely held belief amongst miners that the government orchestrated the 1984/85 strike to weaken the trade union movement rather than for economic or environmental motives. The former mining communities of Durham never recovered from the loss of the mining industry; they did not find a new identity. Many people in these communities still identify themselves with the mining industry. One way of doing this is by engaging in heritage activities. However, these heritage activities can become sources of conflict and a battleground where underlying divisions between community groups can be fought.

[3] Historical data: coal reserves of collieries | The National Archives

[4] Coal Reserves - Hansard - UK Parliament

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

My dissertation examines how present-day communities invoke recollections and imaginations of a shared industrial past to foster a collective identity. Central to this is the argument that industrial heritage is a dynamic resource strategically mobilised in contemporary contexts to forge solidarity and reinforce communal bonds. However, this mobilisation of the past does not occur in a vacuum; it is inextricably linked to the enduring impact of mining experiences on relationships, corporeal realities, and landscapes in the present.

The research posits a dual presence of the past: firstly, as a narrative and performative construct actively employed to strengthen communal ties, and secondly, as an embodied reality manifest in the lived experiences of residents in former mining towns. While acknowledging that the processes of narration, memory, and memorialisation are inevitably shaped by present interests and contemporary experiences of loss, this study resists a reductionist, presentist approach that would subordinate the historical past entirely to current concerns.

Instead, the research adopts a nuanced perspective that recognises the complex interplay between past and present. It explores how the socio-cultural, economic, and physical experiences associated with mining continue to influence contemporary life while examining how these historical elements are selectively invoked, reinterpreted, and repurposed to address present-day challenges and aspirations.

This approach enables a more comprehensive understanding of the role of industrial heritage in post-industrial communities, acknowledging its instrumental use in contemporary identity formation and its enduring, embodied impact on social structures and individual experiences.

More simply, I argue that people's pasts shape them, but current views and interests reinterpret those pasts. The past can be used to maintain or fracture communal bonds.

1.2 The Field Site

The former Durham Coalfield, the location of the study, comprises a collection of villages and small towns that covered north, east, and central Durham. From the natural boundaries of the River Tyne and the North Sea, it extended to Consett and beyond Bishop Auckland in the west. The southern boundary of the coalfield ran diagonally from below Bishop Auckland across to the east coast, just north of Hartlepool (Durham County Records Office.[5]). The area described represents the total historical extent of Durham's mining operations, rather than simultaneously active mines. Mining activity shifted across this region over time, as documented by Durham Mining Museum's records of openings and closures[6]. This dynamic pattern of mining operations is significant for understanding the temporal characteristics of the study area.

I selected Hetton-le-Hole as a focal point for historical and ethnographic research due to its significant role in the history of mining. Chapter Two provides a brief history of Hetton and situates it within the broader context of the Durham Coalfield's history. My positionality as a native of County Durham and Hetton-le-Hole with an occupational background in regional mining motivated my initial choice of research site. Thus, despite over thirty years of absence, I possessed immersed cultural fluency. In this context, doing ‘anthropology at home’ is as much about sociocultural familiarity as it is about local knowledge. I share dialects, histories, and habitus with Hetton residents, which engenders intuitive comprehension of behaviours and terminology. My embodied mining knowledge facilitates communication that could present an obstacle to an outsider.

[5] Durham Mining Museum - 1898 Key Map
[6] Durham Mining Museum - List of Mines

Yet, as Gupta and Ferguson (1997) noted, assuming clear insider/outsider binaries risks simplifying complex affinities within fluid field sites. My hybridity across temporal, vocational, and residential axes complicates straightforward identification with any singular community grouping. Moreover, the etic insights gleaned from decades of an external viewpoint may prove equally valuable. Ultimately, my interlocutors would determine my positioning through their responses and expectations.

Thus, I consciously debated anthropology's disciplinary relationship with the familiar when selecting a fieldsite at home. As Jackson (1987) and Morton (1999) detail, studying one's own society contradicts the longstanding assumption that anthropological inquiry necessitates foreign fieldwork and domestic analysis. Indeed, British anthropology initially focused on deriving laws from 'primitive' colonial societies (Goody 1995, p. 171).

No absolute insider or outsider position existed for me. Upon returning to research mining heritage preservation, local responses reflected memories, curiosities and acceptance, indicating my liminality. This research draws on my unique position as an insider and outsider in this former mining town. As someone who grew up in the community, I can draw on the shared memories of local life and maintain the analytical distance necessary for research. This dual perspective shapes my methodology and analysis throughout the thesis. Having entered the research field, I became aware of the amount of heritage work undertaken by local people. Therefore, I decided to change my focus from identity to heritage and culture. This was not abandoning my original question because, as I shall argue, identity, heritage, culture, and memory are all elements of the same phenomenon. Due to the new focus on heritage, I expanded my research community to include individuals engaged in heritage work. This necessitated an extension of my research method. Rather than simply interviewing these people, I became involved in the work that they were doing as a participant observer.

I benefited immensely from the local and natural history society's recently published village atlas in Hetton-le-Hole. (HLHS 2015), which chronicles the area from its

Carboniferous origins to the present day. This comprehensive chronicle synthesising diverse primary and secondary sources proved an invaluable time-saving resource, mitigating my need for extensive independent archival investigation.

Numerous booklets on Hetton and other Durham mining settlements, written by community members, offered grassroots perspectives on the locality and occupational lifeways. Consulting such vernacular expertise and emic interpretations contextualised my understanding of local heritage and identity.

Furthermore, identifying over fifty theses from Durham University related to County Durham mining and mining communities illuminated significant prior academic inquiries from which I could build.

Rigorously surveying site-specific amateur historiography, community publications, and academic literature before commencing fieldwork enhances the interpretive, analytical, and representational credibility of the ethnography of the place and people under study. Such contextual immersion clarifies the contributions original field data may offer to broader interdisciplinary debates.

Coleman and Collins (2020) challenge traditional concepts of 'the field' in ethnography, arguing against dismissing spatial considerations while emphasising that fields are as much ‘performed' as 'discovered’. They advocate for redefining the field as the social worlds and relationships that ethnographers enter, moving beyond spatial immersion to join the flows and trajectories of social interaction. This approach blurs the distinctions between 'home' and 'away' and questions the relevance of the diaspora concept.

My research aligns with this flexible approach to social fieldwork. While I began with a spatially defined field site, it became clear that limiting my research to that location would provide an incomplete view. Initially focused on Hetton-le-Hole, my research expanded to encompass other mining communities in Durham. This occurred through my work with Education for Action and my use of social media, which has been described as "netnography" (Bowler Jr. 2010).

My primary focus is democratised forms of industrial heritage – narratives, places, objects, and rituals curated autonomously by community members rather than heritage professionals. This 'heritage from below' genre, a significant aspect of my research, channels what Halbwachs (1992) terms 'collective memory', transferring intergenerational understandings of the past.

One of this thesis's significant contributions is its auto-ethnographic quality. As a former miner, campaigner, activist, and individual deeply committed to the mining heritage of County Durham, I draw extensively on my knowledge and experience. This connection offers a unique perspective on these critical issues and highlights my positionality within the Durham mining community.

An account of events towards the end of my research is intended to immerse the reader in the setting, conveying the atmosphere and significance of Redhills - the Durham Miners' Association headquarters. This account situates me as being embedded in the Durham mining community, with deep personal ties to key figures and organisations working to preserve mining heritage. By mentioning specific events, lectures, films, and interactions around Redhills, I introduce some critical ideas, networks, and sources of data and memory that will inform the research while grounding them in actual incidents. In the following account, I have employed the historical present tense to create a sense of immediacy and vividness, aiming to help readers imagine they are experiencing the events alongside the anthropologist.

It is Wednesday, July 10th, 2019. I am sitting in the oak-panelled committee room of Redhills, the Durham Miners Association (DMA) headquarters, a Grade II listed building that Historic England has selected as one of the most important buildings in the country's history. The walls are bedecked with black and white photographs of miners working in the Durham Coalfield's thin seams.

I am watching a film titled "Death of a Miner." On the screen, an image of a wrecking ball demolishes the surface buildings of ‘Cotia[7] Pit,’ reducing them to piles of rubble.

[7] Harraton Colliery was known as 'Cotia Pit'. This was because of the large number of Scottish people working there, who had migrated south for work. The name 'Cotia Pit' comes from Nova Scotia, which the area became known as to the local people.

I envisage the scene as a metaphor for the destruction of the mining industry, along with the villages that grew around it and the lives of the people who depended on it.

The eponymous miner is Jack Elliott. His grandsons, Bill and John, and other family sit opposite me. They are all folk singers, The Elliotts of Birtley. When the film concludes, John Elliot will lead the family in singing "Farewell to Cotia."[8], a lament about the closing of the mine written by Jock Purdon, a close friend and associate of Jack. Jock and Jack are portrayed in the Cotia Banner, which hangs in the Pitmen's Parliament, the main debating chamber of Redhills. The chamber resembles a Methodist Chapel, emphasising the links between the Primitive Methodists and the early union leaders.

Bill Elliott and several other audience members are members of Education for Action (E4A). This organisation aims to educate schoolchildren, sixth-form students, and the general public about the history, culture, and politics of the mining industry. Over the past two weeks, we were all engaged in activities designed to achieve these objectives.

I immersed myself in a series of interconnected events related to the mining industry in Durham. In addition to the screening of "Death of a Miner," I attended "Mining the Memories," which featured people reminiscing about the annual Durham Miners Gala. I had been involved in the production of the film.

I attended a lecture by Professor Huw Beynon on Sam Watson, a post-war leader of the Durham Miners Association (DMA). This lecture highlighted the intricate connections between the DMA and the Labour Party. As a former student of Beynon at Durham University from 1986 to 1989, I reflected on the scholarly works on industrial relations in the mining industry, including Beynon's forthcoming publication with Ray Hudson (2021).

[8] Farewell to Cotia is also the title of an article MITCHELL, J. 2014. 'Farewell to 'Cotia'': The English Folk Revival, the Pit Elegy, and the Nationalization of British Coal, 1947–70. *Twentieth Century British History,* 25**,** 585-601.

My involvement also extended to educational initiatives. I observed my colleague David Wray, whom I met at Durham University in 1986, presenting to sixth-form students on mining iconography and the 1984-1985 Miners Strike. As a former miner who participated in this strike, I found myself uniquely positioned as both researcher and participant in these discussions.

I attended the third, Dave Hopper[9] Memorial Lecture, which featured speakers from the Labour Party and the United Mine Workers of America. This event highlighted the international connections within the mining labour movement that the DMA has maintained over the years. For example, see the photographs and memorabilia in the muniments room in Chapter Seven.

Throughout these experiences, I have been struck by the complex network of academics, activists, and former miners who preserve and analyse mining history and culture. My ongoing research into mining memorials in my hometown of Hetton-le-Hole further exemplifies this interconnectedness.

Reflecting on these events and connections, I am reminded of the multifaceted nature of mining industry studies, encompassing academic, historical, and deeply personal elements. My insider and researcher position continues to inform my perspective on this rich and complex field.

The section above explores my engagement with preserving and educating people about Durham's mining history and culture through various events, films, lectures, and personal connections in the mining community in the days leading up to the 2019 Durham Miners Gala. It demonstrates to the reader that Redhills is an important building that plays a significant role in preserving the mining culture in Durham.

I have close personal ties to the Durham mining community, including friendships with former miners, academics studying mining, and families personally impacted by

[9] A former General Secretary of the DMA who died in 2016.

pit closures. This demonstrates that I have been engaged with or embedded in this community for some time.

Mining heritage and places like the Durham Miners Association headquarters are important in memorialising the past and enabling cultural revival. Preserving collective memory matters to my work. I take an experiential, emotionally attuned approach to my research, noting how spaces, films, music, and lectures conjure poignant memories for the miners' strike veterans.

In summary, the account indicates my insider perspective on and passion for maintaining Durham’s mining legacy, which I approach through academic study and personal advocacy.

1.3 Key Concepts

My thesis explores the interconnected concepts of heritage, memory, and belonging within post-industrial communities. These themes and notions of identity, culture, and place intertwine. By examining these complex relationships, I aim to shed light on how communities navigate the enduring resonance of their industrial past in the face of economic, social, and cultural transformations.

Heritage, a cornerstone of contemporary research, encompasses tangible and intangible elements that societies consider significant and deserving of preservation. It serves as a conduit through which we interact with the past, contextualise our place in the world, and forge connections to our ancestral roots. My particular interest lies in 'heritage from below' (Robertson, 2016), also known as 'grassroots heritage' (Liu, 2010). This approach emphasises the everyday meaning-making practices of communities, contrasting with the institutional preservation of ostensibly objective artefacts. This perspective aligns with Laurajane Smith's (2006, p. 7) critique of the Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD), wherein she posits that heritage is fundamentally a cultural practice of constructing meanings about the past.

Memory, another key concept in my research, represents the subjective animation of inheritance. As Maurice Halbwachs (1950; 1992) argued, collective memory underscores the social framing of memory and its continual reconstruction through rituals, narratives, practices, and debates. In post-industrial communities, collective memory plays a crucial role in preserving the significance of disappeared occupations and anchoring identity amid the destabilising impacts of industrial decline. However, I am mindful of critiques that question imprecise applications of collective memory and conflate it with broader cultural continuity (Berliner 2005). Thus, my ethnographic work examines the periodic and partial invocation of collective memory in discourses, embodiments, and disputes where the resonance of industrial lifeways becomes temporarily concrete.

The concept of belonging is deeply intertwined with constructions of place and identity within communal contexts. As Degnen (2005) observes, engaging with landscapes as multitemporal entities layered with complex histories provides nuanced insights into the concept of belonging. My research explores how residual place attachments enable belonging to persist despite the locale's economic precarity and physical transformations. Identity is a concept that remains subject to debate (Yuval-Davis 2010), and both influences and is influenced by the ongoing transformation of place, belonging, and memory in the aftermath of industrial site closures. I align with Yuval-Davis's definition of identity as a specific narrative through which individuals communicate their sense of self, their distinctions from others, and their aspirations or perceived obligations to themselves and others (2010, p. 279). In post-industrial communities, we observe the persistence of occupational titles and spatial affiliations. These endure through linguistic expressions and subjective reinterpretations of place, even as the physical environment deteriorates. This persistence highlights the enduring impact of post-industrial legacies on individuals and communities transitioning from their industrial roots.

My research aims to untangle the complex co-construction of self and society in relation to place and memory and to reckon with post-industrial sticking points that

reveal the diverse modes of persistence, rupture, adaptation, and contestation at play as communal inheritances slip out of reach. By examining the intersections of meaning-making, recollection, selfhood, and emplacement, I aim to illuminate how memory is substantiated as heritage; identity is sustained through narrative anchoring to evaporating referents, and belonging is preserved through ongoing investment in selectively sustaining significance accrued during pivotal, yet terminated, epochs of localised cultural formation. In doing so, I hope to contribute to the anthropological understanding of the endurance of the past in the present at the post-industrial nexus of memory and matter.

1.4 A Mixed Methods Approach

In my study of mining heritage in Durham, with a focus on my hometown of Hetton-le-Hole, I have employed a holistic and evolving methodological approach. As a researcher and a native of the area, I have found myself navigating a complex landscape of memory, identity, and heritage in this post-industrial setting.

My position as an insider and outsider to the community has added a layer of complexity to my study. Having grown up in Hetton but been absent for over thirty years, I possess a unique blend of cultural fluency and distanced perspective. This dual positionality has enabled me to leverage intuitive understanding and fresh insights, challenging the traditional insider/outsider binary in anthropological research.

I began my fieldwork with an 'arrival story', emphasising the importance of walking to gain a 'feel' for the place (Evans and Jones 2011). This initial exploration laid the groundwork for a multifaceted research approach, encompassing life history interviews, participant observation, and engagement with local history groups and community events. My ability to navigate local dialects and shared cultural knowledge proved invaluable in establishing rapport and gathering rich data.

As my study progressed, I found my focus shifting from identity to heritage and culture, reflecting the significant heritage work I observed being undertaken by local people. This shift necessitated an expansion of my research methods, including more extensive participant observation in community projects such as the Hetton Memorial and the Education for Action initiative.

My research combines historical analysis with contemporary investigation, using Walkerdine's (2016) concept of 'affective history' as a framework. This approach helps me understand how past experiences and events influence current psychological and social conditions. To strengthen this analysis, I have incorporated visual anthropology methods, using film and photographs to illustrate personal stories and document social changes over time.

Social media, particularly Facebook, emerged as a valuable research tool for me. It allowed me to join online communities, arrange meetings, and analyse posts as data. I balanced this modern approach with more traditional methods, including studying local publications, community-written booklets, and academic theses related to Durham's mining history.

I have also incorporated literary anthropology into my research, analysing locally grounded novels to gain insights into the cultural richness of the mining community and the working-class interiorities. This approach has provided me with valuable perspectives that are often overlooked in conventional historical narratives.

Throughout my research, I have reflected on the advantages and challenges of conducting long-term, part-time research in my local area. While this approach has allowed me to witness changes over time and develop my ideas more thoroughly, it has also required constant awareness of ongoing events at my research site.

In conclusion, I would characterise my methodological approach as flexible, deep, and integrative of multiple perspectives. Combining traditional ethnographic techniques with innovative methods, such as examining how social media is transforming the ways communities actively find new resources to engage in and create heritage from below.

1.5 Thesis Structure

Chapter Two examines how the rapid industrialisation of Hetton, a rural English community, through the introduction of coal mining in the 19th century, fundamentally transformed its social, economic, and cultural landscape. It examines how the influx of miners and new technologies altered existing social structures and power dynamics, leading to labour exploitation and unrest. The chapter explores the miners' responses to these changes, including forming unions. It also delves into the distinct cultural practices, traditions, and events that emerged from the mining industry, contributing to creating a unique occupational community. Through this analysis, the chapter demonstrates how mining heritage encompasses economic history and the dynamic creation of values, relationships, and collective memory in response to industrial capitalism.

Chapter Three delves into the occupational culture of coal miners, examining how their unique work environment shapes identity and social relations. It explores the concept of ‘pit sense’, the tacit knowledge crucial for underground survival, and how this distinctive culture is transmitted across generations. The chapter also analyses how technological changes have challenged miners' autonomy and how they have adapted to preserve their occupational identity.

Chapter Four focuses on social memory, place attachment, and belonging in mining communities. Drawing on anthropological perspectives, it examines how place attachment is formed and experienced collectively, relationally, and through embodied processes. The chapter emphasises the importance of place in studying locality-based communities.

Chapter Five continues the exploration of space and belonging, concentrating on leisure activities and their associated spaces in mining towns. It analyses how various institutions, from pubs to brass bands, facilitated social interaction and community bonding.

Chapter Six provides an overview of mining communities' representations across various cultural forms. It adopts an anthropological perspective to examine how these representations shape and reflect social meanings, identities, and power dynamics, emphasising the importance of insider perspectives in countering dominant narratives.

Chapter Seven focuses on the relationship between heritage and education, centring on activities at the Durham Miners Association headquarters. It discusses my involvement with Education for Action and its aims to educate about mining history and culture while promoting trade unionism.

Chapter Eight investigates how former mining communities preserve and transmit their heritage through public monuments, private memorabilia collections, and events like the Durham Miners' Gala. It analyses these practices using anthropological theories of material culture, social memory, and ritual.

Chapter Nine explores the concept of contested heritage through a case study of the Hetton-le-Hole monument. It examines how attempts to restore community identity can sometimes reignite old conflicts and discusses broader political shifts in mining communities, including changing voting patterns.

Chapter Ten examines the role of cyberspace in fostering community among former mining communities. It considers how social media platforms have become important spaces for interaction and heritage preservation and discusses the implications for anthropological study.

Finally, Chapter Eleven summarises the thesis, draws conclusions, and suggests avenues for further research in this field.

1.6 Summary

This introductory chapter presents a holistic overview of an ethnographic study examining how post-industrial communities in former coal mining areas invoke

collective memories and emotional attachments to their shared industrial past to foster contemporary communal identities and belonging. The research focuses on the Durham coalfield, particularly the town of Hetton-le-Hole, and employs a mixed-methods approach combining historical inquiry, participant observation, interviews, and social media analysis. As a native of the area with a background in mining, I navigate the complex position of both insider and outsider in this research context. I introduce key concepts such as heritage, memory, and belonging, emphasising the importance of heritage from below and the strategic mobilisation of industrial heritage in contemporary contexts. It also highlights my auto-ethnographic approach and my deep personal ties to the Durham mining community. The introduction sets the stage for an in-depth exploration of how communities negotiate the loss of their industrial base through various forms of heritage practices and memory work.

The subsequent chapters of the thesis comprise a multifaceted exploration of mining heritage and identity in post-industrial communities. The thesis will delve into the historical background of mining and trade unionism, analyse the occupational culture of coal miners, examine social memory and place attachment, and explore the role of leisure activities in community belonging. It will also investigate artistic portrayals of mining communities, discuss memorials and festivals, and address issues of contested heritage and changing political landscapes. The thesis will conclude with an examination of heritage education initiatives and the role of cyberspace in preserving and sharing mining heritage.

Central to this analysis is the tension between two distinct ways in which the past operates in these communities. On the one hand, the mining past exists as an embodied, lived experience — deeply embedded in people's sense of being and their tangible connection to specific places, shaping their everyday understanding of who they are and where they belong. On the other hand, this same past is consciously mobilised and reinterpreted to serve present-day needs and aspirations, becoming a strategic resource that communities can deploy to maintain social bonds, assert political claims, or attract heritage tourism. This dual nature of the past — as both unconscious lived heritage and conscious cultural strategy — pervades

the thesis, revealing how mining communities navigate between authentic historical experiences and strategic representations of their heritage.

Chapter 2 The Development of Mining and Trade Unionism

2.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses how occupations and work cultures shape heritage and belonging in communities. It gives an anthropological analysis of how industrialisation in the 19th century rapidly transformed a rural English community. It traces how the sinking of coal mines in previously agricultural Hetton spawned economic growth, labour exploitation, and unrest that became ingrained in local culture.

It describes how the introduction of technology, private capital, and wage labour dynamics fundamentally altered Hetton's social structures and power relations. Rural social ties and roles were upended as mine owners brought in throngs of miners, stratifying society between labour and management and transforming social networks.

The analysis also reveals how miners responded to restrictive, unsafe work conditions by forming solidarity movements and unions. These movements allowed miners to create collective identities and social relations. Even though early efforts like Hepburn's union were crushed, they planted seeds of labour activism that blossomed into future organisations such as the Durham Miners Association.

Additionally, the chapter provides insight into how the mining industry spawned distinct cultural practices, beliefs, songs, and events that forged an occupational community. The dangers of mining work and the shared experience of labour exploitation cultivated traditions like the Miners Gala that strengthened social ties.

The chapter discusses how rapid industrialisation shapes social life, power dynamics, culture, and resistance. Through an anthropological lens, we can understand mining heritage as economic history and the dynamic formation of distinctive values, relationships, and collective memory in response to industrial capitalism.

2.2 Increasing Demand and Demographic Expansion

Hetton was transformed from a small agricultural hamlet in 1820 to a significant mining community in the mid-19th century. Initially, it consisted of just a few houses around Hetton Hall and Bleach Green, with most residents working in agriculture. The establishment of coal mining operations would dramatically shape the area's development.

Industrialisation, as well as the expanding London and international markets, increased demand for coal. In 1800, the introduction of steam power and steel used in mining enhanced demand (Galloway 1971, p. 363). The rise of steam power also made it possible to exploit coal reserves that hitherto would have been unreachable or unworkable without mechanical power (Boyd 1895, p. 37). Previously, the costs of transporting coal overland meant that it had to be sold locally where it was not mined close to a navigable waterway; this was known as 'landsale' coal (Galloway 1971, p. 54). However, at the beginning of the 20th Century, steam power and railways began to facilitate the transport of coal above ground, thus making it a more marketable commodity (Galloway 1882, pp 182-199). Furthermore, the ships taking the fuel to its principal market in London were returning with ballast such as sand and clay. These became raw materials for industries such as pottery and glassmaking, which used coal in large quantities to develop the home market. Therefore, there was an urgent need to find new reserves.

Until the early nineteenth century, mining engineers thought there was no useful coal to be found under the magnesium limestone escarpment on which Hetton is situated (Sill 1979a, p. 146). However, in 1815, Dr William Smith, a civil engineer, mineral

surveyor and geologist, completed a stratigraphic map of Britain (Winchester and Morris 2002). He demonstrated, theoretically, that coal measures lay under the limestone escarpment; his theory was later proven by boring (Hull 1861, p. 156). As contemporary observers Parson and White noted:

> The winning of this colliery formed a new era in the history of mines and geological science. Geologists previously asserted that coal did not exist beneath the Magnesian Limestone, or, if it did exist, they said it must have deteriorated both in quality and thickness, but this colliery has been sunk through a bed of this stone, fifty-eight yards in thickness; and so far from being deteriorated, the coal is excellent both in quality and thickness" (Parson and White 1828, p. 128).

The Hetton Colliery project required a vast amount of investment beyond the means of John Lyons, who owned the land where the boring had been carried out. The Hetton Coal Company was set up to finance the project; the company quickly became a rival of the established leaders of the trade, such as the lords Lambton and Londonderry, who attempted to destroy it (Jaffe 1991, p. 44).

The project faced two immediate challenges: transportation and labour. Located approximately six miles Northeast of Durham City, Hetton's position away from any navigable waterway demanded innovative solutions. This led to the construction of a railway that ran eight miles between Hetton and the staithes at Sunderland (Galloway 1898, p. 450).

To recoup its substantial investment, the newly formed Hetton Coal Company needed to maximise production as quickly as possible. This required a large labour force, which they sought to acquire from workers already employed by the 'old coal-owners' - the landed gentry and the Church (Sill 1979b). The old and new coal owners thus became rivals not just for the coal market but also for labour.

The rapid development transformed the area demographically. The first census in 1801 shows Hetton having a population of only 212, but by 1821, when the shafts were being sunk and the railway was being built, it had reached 919. Even with this

small population, thirty public houses and five breweries already existed, along with eight schools and several shops and businesses, indicating an influx of entrepreneurs speculating on the settlement's promising future. Within five years, two more collieries opened within a mile of the Hetton Colliery, and new urbanisation developed around these. The overall result was dramatic: a rural community of under three hundred people in 1811 became a town of almost 6,000 by 1831 (Sill 1974).

The coal company's ownership of additional housing provided another means of controlling the workforce. The land was purchased from the local gentry, representing a substantial change in the cadastre and a power shift from the gentry to these new capitalists. Hetton was not just a new community—it was a new type of town, a young settlement that, within a few years, began to rival the ancient city of Durham in size.

2.2 Disputes and the Beginnings of Unionism

Financial pressures and exploitation fundamentally shaped the relationship between mine owners and workers in early British mining history. Mine owners, faced with high development costs, consistently sought to minimise wages while maintaining control over their workforce. This dynamic led to the introduction of various mechanisms of control, most notably the Bond system.

The Bond, which originated from agricultural labour relationships, was implemented to address the coal owners' dual concerns: potential labour shortages and wage competition between pits. While workers often received signing bonuses for accepting the Bond, owners developed manipulative practices to maintain control.

The system was notably one-sided. Miners were required to accept harsh conditions and fines and commit to working at a single colliery for the entire term. In contrast, colliery owners made no reciprocal guarantees of steady employment. The signing process, which typically occurred around April 5th after 1809, involved officials reading out pay rates and conditions to assembled workers. To entice quick signing,

owners offered a small bounty of 2s. 6d (12.5p), with additional incentives for the first signers, often creating a desperate rush among workers to secure employment.

At times, the owners were forced to pay the miners a considerable fee for signing the Bond. However, many miners were less inclined to go to work when they had money in their pockets. Therefore, they would not begin working until the binding money had run out. The owners' solution to this problem was to pay the miners their binding money in a public house. The idea was that at least some miners would spend their binding money on drink, so they would be forced to go to work immediately instead of taking a few days off before returning. This is a clear distinction between those who conserved their wealth and those who perceived it as a bonus and aimed for swift gratification (Dunn 1844, p. 27; Webb 1921, p. 11; Welbourne 1923. p. 23).

The most insidious method of maximising profit by the owners was the means used to avoid paying the men for the work that they had done. One means was to fine the men when a coal tub contained too much stone. In such cases, the men would be fined and not paid for the coal they had produced; the owners would still sell it (Webb 1921, p. 62). A second method was to gradually increase the size of the corve (coal basket) without the men noticing (Welbourne 1923, p. 108). The men were not above trying to cheat the owners, as described in the first handbook of coal-mining techniques ever produced (J.C. 1990). The miners placed large pieces of coal at the bottom of the corve to fill the space so that it appeared to be full. They would be reprimanded and fined for this practice. Over 120 years later, things had not changed; tubs had replaced the corves, but the principle was the same.

Another means of control involved the miners' homes. The coal owners owned the miners' houses, so if the men did strike, the owners could evict them and their families in the hope that they would persuade them to return to work. Alternatively, the houses would be used to attract blackleg labour[10] to replace the striking miners.

[10] The term blackleg for a strike-breaker is so common in English usage that it is rarely defined. One definition of the term has its origins in coal mining, as strike-breakers would return covered in black coal dust, which would give away that they had been working whilst others had been on strike. It is

If the families had been evicted, that would have been bad enough, but the candymen[11] deliberately damaged the furniture, abused the women, and jeered at the men. The damage to the furniture was intended to anger the ‘house proud’ women (Welbourne 1923, p. 76).

The power to evict miners and their families from their homes was the most potent weapon the coal owners had at their disposal. For Marx, the combination of capitalist and landlord was a factor that distinguished mining from other industries (Marx 1971, p. 501). This tactic was successfully used to break many disputes (Webb and Webb 1894; Webb 1921, pp. 44, 46; Welbourne 1923, p. 317). This tactic was used in 1831 to attempt to break a strike at Hetton.

If the owners thought that the women would persuade the men to return to work, this did not happen in most cases; instead, they supported the strikes. The women supported the miners' decision (to remain on strike), saying that ‘life on bread and coffee could not be made more wretched by a short starvation’ (Welbourne 1923, p. 189). The owners charged several of the women with intimidation (Welbourne 1923, p. 216). ‘The women strewed the furniture with pepper, and boxes thickly coated with tar were placed as formal furniture to be removed. This exhorted the men to arm themselves with pick-shafts (Welbourne 1923, p. 264). ‘Crowds of hooting women followed such men who dared to work’ (Welbourne 1923, p. 275). This illustrates how women were not just supporters but active participants in industrial resistance, willing to face both hardship and legal consequences to protect their communities' interests. This account challenges any notion that industrial disputes were solely male affairs. Women were militant activists who played a crucial role in maintaining strike solidarity.

featured in the song ‘The Blackleg Miner’, which was written in the early 19th Century about a miners strike in Northumberland.
‘Oh, divn’t gan near the Seghill mine, Across the way they hang a line to catch the throat and break the spine of the dirty blackleg miners’ (O'donnell, J. C. (1985) 'Industrial songs as part of a culture', *International Journal of Music Education*, (1): 7-11.)

[11] Candymen were rag and bone men who were used as assistants to the bailiff during strikes.

The development of trade unionism in the mining industries of Durham and Northumberland began long before the development of the East Durham Coalfield. The imposition of the conditions of The Bond was the primary cause of a dispute that broke out in 1765. The secondary is that the owners wanted to change the date the Bonds were signed. On August 14th, 1765, 4,000 Durham miners went on strike. On August 31st, the Owners gave way to the central issue by agreeing to offer leaving certificates on the termination of each contract. By then, the miners had raised their demands to include wage increases and the immediate cancellation of existing contracts. By October, the miners had returned to work, having won on the counts of the contracts but not on the wages (Webb 1921, p. 4; Sweezy 1938, p.34; Ashton and Sykes 1964, pp 90-91). For the next seventy-five years, the industrial unrest amongst Durham Miners was centred around The Bond, which was not abolished until 1872. Sidney Webb notes that in 1921, several members of the DMA remember being bound in their youth (Webb 1921, p. 6).

Historian Richard Fynes (1873, p. 13) writes that before 1809, miners had met in large numbers to discuss issues related to their work. However, before then, he knew of no account of any stable organisation amongst them. In 1809, the coal owners arranged for the annual binding day to be moved from October until the end of December or the beginning of January. This would mean that the binding period for that year was extended from twelve to fifteen months. The owners did not consult the men on this change, but initially, the miners agreed to it. However, they realised their mistake and demanded that the binding day be moved back to October 18th. The owners refused, so the men went on strike on October 19th,1809. Delegates from the collieries of both Durham and Northumberland held meetings to keep the men united, but magistrates, assisted by the military, pursued and hunted down the miners' leaders. So many miners were imprisoned, and the prisons were all full. The Bishop of Durham, Shute Barrington, assisted the owners by offering his stables as a temporary prison in which over eight hundred miners were interred. Fynes (1873) sees this hunting down and imprisoning of the men as a turning point in their consciousness when they begin to realise and reject the nature of their condition. Fynes thinks there was no definite union, but the men were held together without any

formal organisation, which would have made them liable to prosecution under the Combination Acts[12]. The Acts were repealed in 1824, easing the conditions restricting workers from forming collectives.

In 1825, an organisation, The Colliers of the United Association of Durham and Northumberland (CUADN), was formed. This association published *A Voice from the Coalmines,* 'an ably written and eloquent description' (Fynes 1873, p. 26). It outlines the various grievances the miners have with their employers. The conditions of the miners are compared, unfavourably, with 'galley slaves chained at the oar' and 'Negroes in West India plantations who are better fed, better clad and enjoy more of the pleasures of life than the pitmen of this district' (1873, p 34). This may seem an absurd claim for the miners to make. Still, it is clear from this document and others that the miners were living in abject poverty and were being cheated out of their meagre wages. It was not in the interests of the slave owners for the slaves to be starving, but of course, they were treated with extreme cruelty if they rebelled in any way. It is important to remember that this document was written at a time when the slave *trade* had been abolished (1809), but slavery itself was still legal, it being entirely abolished in 1838. Therefore, there would have been a great deal of public

1 In 1799 and 1800, during the French Wars, the Combination Acts were passed by Pitt's government. These laws forbade societies or amalgamations of persons for the purpose of political reform. Interference with commerce and trade became illegal. The penalty for breaking these laws was 3 months in gaol. Pitt passed the Combination Acts because trade clubs and societies had effectively demanded wage rises to keep pace with inflation. The government saw wage claims as a clear sign of disaffection. The Combination Acts introduced no new principle into law because unlawful combinations were already unlawful. These Combination Acts offered faster application of the law. They provided for summary trial before a JP instead of awaiting the Assize. The new laws were not widely used because existing, older laws were much more severe, providing a sentence of 7 years transportation. The Combination Acts were passed because:

- there was a fear of both industrial and social democracy, which were equated with Jacobinism.
- there was a desire and determination from Pitt to prevent industry being held to ransom in time of war.
- perhaps there was an element of snobbery; a belief that the lower orders should be kept in their place.
- the landed gentry did not understand industrial society and harsh legislation was their way of maintaining law and order.

  http://www.historyhome.co.uk/c-eight/l-pool/combacts.htm

sympathy towards the plight of slaves; comparing the miners with the slaves was a brilliant public relations move. The document is peppered with biblical quotations; it is clear from the text that the writers are religious, well-educated (probably by Primitive Methodism), knowledgeable in the process and technicalities of mining, and aware of the costs to employers of running the mines. They are aware of the advantages of group action but do not favour strike action or any form of violence.

A second document was produced in 1826, aimed directly at the coal owners and their viewers[13], appealing to them to ease the conditions of the miners. Lord Londonderry acquired a copy and directly sent it to the Home Secretary, appealing to him for assistance in suppressing the Union of the Pitmen. The coal owners refused to heed either of the documents, and the Durham miners withdrew their labour. The miners demanded that disputes be settled by a committee composed of two viewers and two hewers. The Coalowners Union Committee, which was not a corporate body, refused to deal with the miners' association because it was not a corporate body. The miners, having neither the resources nor an influential trade union, returned to work under the same conditions. The conditions continued to deteriorate until 1830 when wages were as low as 8s or 10s per week (Webb 1921, p. 28). Nothing more is known of the CUADN, but in 1831, a new union appeared at Hetton-le-Hole, which became known as Hepburn's Union.

Tommy Hepburn is the first of the miners' leaders to be mentioned by name in history. He was a coal-hewer at Hetton Colliery; he became a Primitive Methodist lay preacher and was one of few educated miners. He was almost certainly an associate of a man named Mackintosh, who lived in the same community and shared similar values. Mackintosh attempted to establish a cooperative store in Hetton in 1825 (Welbourne 1923, p. 24). This was nineteen years before the Rochdale Pioneers.[14]

[13] Papers of the North of England Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineers Reference: NRO 3410/Bell/11/173 Creation dates: 1826. Scope and Content Pamphlet entitled A Candid Appeal to the Coal Owners and Viewers. from the Committee of the Colliers United Association

[14] A group of workers in Rochdale, Lancashire who were suffering the consequences of the Industrial Revolution. About half of them were skilled handloom weavers who faced competition from the power-loom. They pooled their funds and opened a small store just before Christmas 1844, they are credited with inspiring and developing the model for the Co-operative Movement Holyoake, G.-J. (1893) 'Self-

According to Richard Fynes (1873, p.16), Mackintosh was a bold and honest man (who) felt degraded by his fellow men and set about the great social work of cooperation to ameliorate himself and his fellows. The term ‘cooperation here is particularly relevant as that was to be the miners’ tactic of choice instead of confrontation. Mackintosh attempted to start a cooperative movement, but the determined opposition of the owners defeated his efforts. His motives were also treated with suspicion by the community in general.

Hepburn was a hewer, and hewers worked a relatively short day of about six hours because they only had a limited amount of energy to spend. It was to the advantage of both the men and the owners that they spent that energy in as short a time as possible (Webb 1921, p. 70; Welbourne 1923, p. 232). As hewers were paid by the amount of coal they produced, it made no difference to the owner how long they worked. On the other hand, ‘back bye’ workers who worked away from the coalface had to work as many as sixteen hours per day. The hewer would have more leisure time if he could get his coal off quickly.

Hepburn was to devote this time to educating himself and preaching to his fellow miners. Miners were renowned for drunkenness; Hepburn railed against the evils of drink and encouraged them to trust in God and save themselves through education and unionism (Welbourne 1923, p. 34). As Hepburn preached in the villages surrounding Hetton, he contacted men of a similar nature. These men became respected and trusted by the miners.

Hepburn claimed that the viewers' power over bread and shelter made the pitmen ‘slaves to the tempers and caprices of the viewers. ' He was aware of the problematic nature of the arrangements. Initially, however, he offered no remedy. Eventually, though, in 1832, he sought legal counsel regarding the pitmen’s rights to their homes.

help by the people: The history of the Rochdale pioneers: 1844-1892', Fairbairn, B. (1994) 'The meaning of Rochdale: The Rochdale pioneers and the co-operative principles', Walton, J. K. (2015) 'Revisiting the Rochdale pioneers', *Labour History Review*, 80(3): 215-48.

Unionisation in Durham began when, on January 1st, 1831, miners from the more extensive collieries of the Durham Coalfield met at Hetton-le-Hole. The ostensible purpose of the meeting was to form a Collier's Benefit Society, and it was held with the approval of the coal owners[15]. In reality, the meeting was the inaugural meeting of what was to become the first miners' union. Hetton became the recognised centre of this new union, and Thomas Hepburn became its undisputed leader. Hepburn's views on life were influenced by writers such as Thomas Paine. He believed in democratic rights for ordinary working people; his style was non-confrontational. At meetings, he encouraged moderation and abstention from his followers.

In February and March 1831, mass meetings of miners were held in County Durham and Newcastle (Webb 1921, p.28; Welbourne 1923. pp. 26-28; Jaffe 1991, p. 150). The union demanded that wage reductions be reversed, and that the working day of the boys be limited to twelve hours. If these demands were not met, a general strike would ensue. The owners conceded to most of the demands. Hepburn is credited with the first victory for miners' trade unionism in Durham, and his non-confrontational style avoided violence (Webb 1921, p. 31).

The victory was short-lived, however. In 1832, a further confrontation occurred. On this occasion, Hepburn was unable to prevent violence. The owners' sole aim was now to destroy the union. At Hetton, officers of the Metropolitan Police, special constables, and a military contingent were drafted in to deal with the miners who were refusing to work and leave their cottages. If a group of two or three men assembled, they were arrested and imprisoned in the colliery buildings.

Evictions began on the 21st of April 1832. These were not resisted, but that night, Errington, a miner who had returned to work, was found shot dead. Four men from Hetton were charged with his murder. This was the first of a series of violent and bloody conflicts surrounding the strike. This violence was contrary to Hepburn's

[15] Newcastle Chronicle 15/01/1831. p.3. 'On the 1st inst. a meeting took place, at Hetton-le-Hole, men employed in the collieries, to form themselves into benefit society to relieve each other when sick or lame, &c. The meeting was well attended from all the principal collieries, and it has the countenance and approval of the masters, it will, in all probability, become very important society.

wishes, who preferred a non-confrontational approach to a settlement. The four Hetton men were tried on the charge of murder at Durham Assizes on 30th July 1832, where the charges against two of the men were dismissed, and the remaining two were found not guilty.

There was another killing connected to this dispute in July 1832; a special constable, George Weddle, was indicted for the manslaughter of a miner called Cuthbert Skipsey. Weddle had shot and killed Skipsey during an incident in which unarmed miners had been confronted by police armed with pistols. Weddle was found guilty and sentenced to six months hard labour[16].

The coal owners eventually crushed Hepburn's Union, and Hepburn ended his life in poverty and obscurity. He is, however, remembered today as each year there is a memorial service dedicated to him.

2.3 The Durham Miners Association

The Durham Miners' Association (DMA) has a history of over 150 years, originating from the 1860s labour disputes in the county. The DMA played major historical roles in UK mining unionisation, negotiating worker rights and wages and endorsing political candidates. This impact has shaped local economies and politics over generations, and it is deeply ingrained in the fabric of Durham's mining culture and heritage. Landmarks like the DMA's first Miners' Hall and its current Redhills headquarters are symbols of the union's significance and contribution to Durham's physical environment. The Durham Miners' Gala, discussed in Chapter Seven of this thesis, is a central feature of mining culture in Durham, and its continuation relies on the DMA. A brief history of the DMA will help the reader understand why it remains important to the former mining communities.

The DMA was formed in 1869 after a dispute over pay cuts at Wearmouth Colliery led to miners breaking their employment bonds and refusing to work. A series of meetings led by William Patterson, Tommy Ramsey, and Nicholas Wilkinson

[16] Newcastle Courant 11th August 1832.

established the DMA across Durham County to abolish the unpopular Yearly Bond system (Wilson 1908, p. 3).

Following initial membership fluctuations, William Crawford assumed leadership in 1870 (Wilson 1908, p. 6). He rapidly grew the union, making it the largest miners' union in the UK. Vital early successes included abolishing the Yearly Bond in 1872 and agreeing on standard salaries in 1874. The DMA engaged in strikes and negotiations over subsequent decades to maintain worker rights despite economic downturns.

The DMA joined the Miners' National Union in 1878 (Wilson 1908, p. 35) and endorsed Liberal-Labour candidates politically in the late 19th century (Wilson 1908, pp. 194-197). Due to policy disagreements, it attempted unsuccessfully to join the Miners' Federation of Great Britain on several occasions. After the 1908 Eight Hours Bill, the DMA formally joined the Federation (Wilson 1908, p. 278).

After nationalisation, the DMA became part of the National Union of Mineworkers (Arnot 1961, p. 427). By 1900, the membership had grown to 80,00. To accommodate the growth in membership, it relocated from its original headquarters to its current Redhills location (Webb 1921, p. 116). After functioning as the Durham Area of the NUM, it reverted to being the DMA in 2018 upon the dissolution of the NUM. It continues to assist retired miners.

2.4 Conclusion

The transformation of Hetton-le-Hole from a rural community to an industrial mining town in the 19th century exemplifies the profound impact of industrialisation on local communities. This chapter has traced the economic, social, and cultural changes that accompanied the development of coal mining in the area, revealing how new technologies, capitalist structures, and labour relations reshaped the landscape and social fabric of Hetton.

The rapid growth of Hetton's population and economy following the sinking of its first deep mine in 1820 demonstrates the transformative power of industrial capitalism. However, this economic boom came at a significant human cost. The exploitation of miners through mechanisms like the Bond system, punitive fines, and company-owned housing highlights the stark power imbalances that characterised early industrial relations.

The emergence of trade unionism, through figures like Tommy Hepburn, represents a critical response to these exploitative conditions. Despite facing fierce opposition from mine owners and authorities, early union efforts laid the groundwork for future organisations like the Durham Miners' Association. These unions not only fought for better working conditions and fair wages but also fostered a sense of collective identity and solidarity among miners.

The development of mining in Hetton-le-Hole and the subsequent labour struggles demonstrate that industrial heritage encompasses more than just technological advancements or economic growth. It is deeply intertwined with the lived experiences of workers, their families, and communities. The cultural practices, social bonds, and collective memories formed during this period continue to shape the identity of former mining communities today, as this thesis will demonstrate.

Reflecting on this history, it becomes clear that heritage is not a static concept but a dynamic process of remembering, interpreting, and re-evaluating the past. The story of Hetton-le-Hole's transformation from an agricultural village to a bustling mining town, along with the subsequent development of trade unionism, provides valuable insights into the complex relationships between work, community, and identity in industrial societies. This understanding is crucial as we consider how post-industrial communities navigate their heritage and identity in the face of ongoing economic and social changes.

The following chapter delves deeper into the unique occupational culture of coal miners, exploring the complex interplay between their work, identity, and community life. Building on the historical context of mining development and trade unionism

discussed previously, this chapter offers an anthropological perspective on the miners' way of life. It examines how the demanding and dangerous nature of underground work shaped shared values, behaviours, and social dynamics among miners. Through a combination of personal experience, ethnographic research, and engagement with relevant literature, the chapter provides valuable insights into the miners' world at a time when this distinctive culture is rapidly disappearing. This exploration of mining culture serves as a crucial foundation for understanding the ongoing impact of mining heritage in contemporary society.

Chapter 3 The Miner

3.1 Introduction

The occupational culture of coal miners has long been a topic of anthropological and sociological inquiry. In this chapter, I look at the miners as an occupational group. While recognising heterogeneity across individual experiences, ethnographic observation reveals shared tendencies among miners - including specific outlooks, values, and behaviours - that appear influenced by the demands, risks, and camaraderie endemic to extractive labour. Although allowing for outliers and exceptions, the exigencies of mining shape several inclinations that are widely evident across this community, stemming from adaptation to environmental constraints and occupational cultures forged underground.

Approaching the miner from an anthropological perspective reveals a complex occupational role that is intertwined with community and masculine identity. Participant observation studies enable the first-hand experience of initiation rites, humour, risk-taking, and tacit forms of sensory knowledge that develop through embodied habits in the underground environment. The detailed descriptions and analysis reveal subtle dynamics surrounding hierarchy, loyalty, and resistance to changes that threaten occupational autonomy.

As the bodily experience of miners becomes obsolete with remote-control technology, this analysis has contemporary policy relevance for knowledge retention and community sustainability. It argues that occupational identity and culture are deeply rooted, persisting even when the material conditions that initially shaped them change. This anchors the current resurgence of interest in mining heritage and memory as communities face irreversible economic losses.

With pits gone in Britain, recording miners' voices is vital to retaining this connection between labour and place for those who follow. The themes around occupational

folklore and rites of passage remain integral to post-industrial identities. Overall, the analysis lays bare the profound historical and sociological legacies of miners, rendering their unique way of life visible just as it vanishes. The chapter is relevant to the overall theme of the thesis because it provides a critical backstory and context about the composition of mining culture, values, social dynamics and embodied knowledge. This is essential baseline information for assessing continuity and change as memories of mining decline. The focus on occupational identity even when material conditions change. This idea of culture echoing onward despite the loss of actual mines directly supports the research topic on impacts in post-mining towns.

I describe mining culture and reveal how deeply embedded and meaningful it became for individuals and their way of life. This depth of cultural integration influences how communities cope with deindustrialisation. Attention to hierarchies, solidarity, and attitudes toward management contextualises post-mining labour options and the integration of ex-miners into new industries or unemployment. Psychological and social adjustment are shaped by cultural experiences. Discussion of the disappearance of tacit knowledge helps explain the loss of status and skills issues faced by mining communities seeking economic alternatives.

I utilise my experience living in a mining community and working in the industry, along with ethnographic research and engagement with relevant literature. Mines are challenging for anthropologists to observe, as they differ from other working environments due to their spatial layout (Keskula 2012). Miners can make themselves invisible by turning out their cap lamps; they can also detect managers approaching by the light from their lamps (Yarrow 1979). The space of the mine differs from that of the factory because it involves a combination of engaging with the natural environment and utilising technology. Despite the difficulties she mentioned, Keskula completed her ethnography. However, she could not be given a ‘meaningful job’ due to a ban on women working as underground miners that was introduced in the 1950s.

George Orwell made several underground visits when researching *The Road to Wigan Pier* (Orwell and Gollancz 1937); Patricia Rae (1999) has argued that the book is an example of 'modernist anthropology, a genre whose goal is to give an uncensored account of an ethnographer's difficulties in the field' (1999. p. 71). Rae disputes feminist critics such as Storm Jameson, Daphne Patai and Beatrix Campbell, who argue that Orwell was contemptuous of the class he claimed to serve. I agree with Rae regarding Orwell's opinions of the miners, based on his underground visits. Orwell expressed a high opinion of the miners he observed on his visits. J. B. Priestly visited mining villages in East Durham on his *English Journey.* He had no desire to go down a mine, but he spoke highly of the miners, although not of the villages where they lived (Priestly 1935, pp. 338-340). Not all writers, however, had respect for miners. As discussed in the following section, many writers had a very low opinion of miners and their communities.

3.2 Miners: From 'Brutish Savages' to Union Leaders

The historical perception of miners in media and public discourse has been marked by persistent negative stereotypes, portraying them as brutal, wild, and uneducated people prone to vice. This characterisation dates back to at least 1776 when a London newspaper described Durham pitmen in stark terms:

> A very strange kind of being, half-savage at the best. Many thousands of them live entirely underground, where they burrow and breed like rabbits (Cohen 1997, p. 15).

In Newcastle, miners were known for their distinctive dialect, which was reportedly incomprehensible to outsiders. Yorkshire miners were similarly portrayed as an isolated community:

> Having association only amongst themselves, acquiring habits and ideas peculiar to themselves, and even their amusements are peculiar - they invariably intermarry, and it is not uncommon in the marriage to

> commingle the blood of the same family. The miners lived like utter savages, cut off from the middle class and other sections of the labouring classes (Halevy and Watkin 1937, p. 231).

Numerous historical sources reference miners' supposed savagery, drunkenness, and godlessness (Williams 1962, pp. 44ff; Lloyd 1978; Houston 1983, p. 14; Flinn 1984, p. 339; Metcalfe 1990, p. 41). Lewis Mumford, a prominent historian and sociologist, attributed these characteristics to their working environment:

> Like the soldier coming out of the trenches, the miner wants a sudden relief and an immediate departure from his routine. No less notorious than the slatternly disorder of the mining town are the drinking and gambling that go on in it: a necessary compensation for the daily toil. Released from his routine, the miner takes a chance at cards, dice, or whippet racing, hoping that it will bring the swift reward denied him in the drudging efforts of the mine itself. The heroism of the miner is genuine, hence his simple animal poise, profound personal pride and self-respect. But the brutalisation is also inevitably there. (Mumford 1934. pp. 72-73).

First-hand accounts from the Durham coalfields during World War I, collected by John Salisbury, provide insight into the recreational activities of miners. Bill Halliday, a ‘foot racer’, recalled:

> Ah wez the champion runner among the pitmen a few yors ago the undisputed champion sprinter. Ma fancy wez one hundred and twenty yords. Ah wez nivvor beat in a match in ma life. Then there wez ma race with Thomas Elliott, of Langley Moor, and ma great race with Ned Neale, whee Ah beat by inches. Hundreds of pounds wez lost and won on that occasion. But ahl the money Aa won went the syam way-in drinking and riotous living. (Salisbury 1916, p. 113).

Fighting was also prevalent:

> Whenivvor thoo went alang Bowburn Road on a Sunday thoo'd be sure to see Harry Taylor fighting, jacket off, wescut off, and mony a time shart off as weel. (Salisbury 1916, p. 154).

However, some miners actively challenged these stereotypes. George Parkinson, a miner and lay preacher, recounted an encounter in London where he confronted these prejudices directly. When told by a well-dressed gentleman that miners were "rough and uncultivated with a good deal of the savage about them, great eaters, drinkers and gamblers," Parkinson revealed his own occupation, forcing the man to confront his biases (Parkinson 1911, pp. 98, 99).

Despite these negative characterisations, miners demonstrated remarkable resilience and wit. As Thomlinson observed:

> The coal fields abound in interesting characters. During my life, I have known many. Grave, gay, clever, stupid, but all without exception, showing unmistakably their English origin, sometimes in a way that hurts the beholder. The Englishman's ability to poke fun out of his own mistakes and misfortunes has for many years been a fascinating thing to me. Miners have that ability to an astonishing degree. (Thomlinson, p.129, quoted in Howard 1995, p. 161).

The perceived ‘savagery’ of miners attracted significant religious attention. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, described miners as being in the "first ranks of ignorance and savagery of every kind" (Flinn 1984, p. 435). This perception motivated Primitive Methodist missionaries to focus their efforts on mining communities. Their work reportedly led to significant social changes, with reports of decreased gambling, fighting, and drinking in various mining villages (Colls 1987, pp.118-120).

Patterson's accounts detail the transformation of several mining communities:

> Hetton, Easington Lane, Middle Rainton, Murton, and other places being rescued from the lowest depths of degradation (Patterson, 1909, p. 253).

> As we have already seen, from the entrance of the early missionaries, Hetton was the centre of mighty spiritual exploits. The preaching power of some of the miners was extraordinary. The leaders were all men of God. Revival power and glory rewarded their fidelity and zeal after they had accepted their new responsibilities, as had been their experience before, and the union camp meetings held between Hetton and Houghton were memorable occasions. (Patterson 1909, p. 26).

These religious connections played a crucial role in the development of miners' unions—Eden's history of Durham credits Methodism with fostering union development (Eden 1953, p. 591). However, Steve Bruce suggests that the appeal may have been less about religion and more about the practical skills it offered: ‘attendant secular civic virtues: confidence in public speaking, honesty, literacy, and administrative experience’ (Bruce 2011, p. 340).

This historical narrative reveals a complex transformation: while early stereotypes portrayed miners as brutal and savage, viewing their pastimes as mere hedonism, the dangers and camaraderie of underground labour fostered positive traits like group solidarity, mutual aid, eloquence, and administrative skills—qualities that would prove crucial in their eventual organisation and unionisation.

3.3 Positive Effects of the Mining Environment

This Section presents an opposing perspective to that outlined above. That is one in which the mining environment and close-knit communities, while hazardous, also nurtured solidarity, rhetorical skills, integrity, and other civic virtues. Some aspects of miners' culture facilitated their eventual organisation, rather than merely embodying social problems.

John Fitzpatrick finds that the mining environment can have a positive impact on the miner's character. Fitzpatrick conducted a participant observation study in a mine located in the Western United States. He was a full participant, working as a miner for three months, and his interest was in how people adapt to working in dangerous

environments. Quoting Homans (1951, 2017) and Seashore (1954), Fitzpatrick argues that the limited opportunities for social interaction increase social attraction and encourage group cohesiveness (Fitzpatrick 1980).

In a quantitative study, Goodman and Leyden (1991) found that familiarity within groups of miners led to increased productivity. This, in turn, was based on mutual trust whilst working in a potentially dangerous environment. Sociologist James K Skipper found a positive relationship between the nicknames miners gave each other and group solidarity (1986). The notions of brutalising, group cohesiveness, and looking after one another, whether friends or foes, recur frequently in studies of miners, fiction, and biography.

Royden Harrison (1978) challenges the common perception of the coalminer as the 'archetypal proletarian', the working-class hero. His view claimed that the miners lacked employable skills and could only improve their living and working conditions by presenting a united front to their employers. However, the combination of the geographical isolation of the villages they lived in, and the brutal, unpleasant nature of their labour led to a highly developed sense of community that fostered industrial militancy. This generalisation is contested by Harrison and the writers of the eight essays that make up the book. First, they contend that many of the traits of a competent craftsman were present in miners, particularly those who worked at the coal face. The coal miner held his abilities in high regard, zealously guarded them, and strived to attain the status of a labour aristocrat. Indeed, these men were held in high regard in their communities, but they seldom sought positions of authority, such as membership on club committees or local councils.

3.4 Miners and Masculinity

In Britain, mining has been a male occupation since 1842[17]. This section examines representations of masculinity and gender dynamics in mining communities, drawing

[17] This restriction was removed in 2014.

on ethnographic studies and gender theory to analyse how dangerous underground labour has shaped a distinct masculine culture. The unique character of male-dominated work environments has provided a fertile environment for the development of gender studies (Wicks 2002, p. 309). The citation below is from a study of masculinity amongst Chilean copper miners. However, as shall be demonstrated in this section, the issues of masculinity are common to all types of underground mining. As Beatrix Campbell has observed:

> Miners around the world are renowned for both their militancy and their masculinity. Studies of miners tend to celebrate and embrace miners as central to their combative labour politics and to accept their particular mutations of manhood as natural. ‘miners are men's love object’ (Campbell 1984, p. 94) cited in (Klubock 1996, p. 435).

Ben Clarke (2008) examines representations of mining communities through an ethnographic lens in Noble Bodies: Orwell, Miners, and Masculinity. Many of the works he refers to were discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis. Clarke constructs an idealised image of mining communities as cohesively bound by masculine codes of physical courage, endurance, and solidarity forged through dangerous labour underground whose values, activism, and family structures form an integrated social world contrasting the rootlessness of middle-class life. However, this mythologisation overlooks pervasive domestic violence, alcoholism, and the marginalisation of women in mining towns. While positioning such communities as a model for a socialist society, Orwell's portrait conceals their dependence on excluding outsiders and ‘others,’ preventing accurate access or identification by the middle-class observer. Orwell’s position remains that of a perpetual outsider gazing nostalgically upon a romanticised working-class world sustained by a narrow set of gendered cultural practices and traditions.

There are many references, in the various coalfields, to a coal miner with enormous strength and prodigious productivity. He appeared in the British coalfields under many names during the hand-hewing era. When coal mining became mechanised, he gained mythical status. He became a source of pride for miners and their

communities, symbolising the contributions that coal miners in the UK made to society in the 20th century.

When Ewan MacColl, Peggy Seeger, and Charles Parker began recording miners like John Williams for a Radio Ballad, The Big Hewer, in 1961 (Walters, 2020), they already had a shrewd idea that the men they would meet would not conform to their preconceptions. They expected the miners to be tough, forthright, and politically aware, but to find men and women -so strongly imbued with a sense of history, of a long struggle shared, and above all, who could talk brilliantly and with an overwhelming sense of their fundamental importance as human beings - this was a revelation for MacColl, Seeger and Parker. To be treated as equals by such miners was, they began to feel, an honour and a responsibility not to be held lightly.

It quickly became apparent to them that the only way to deal adequately with the miner was to make him an epic figure, a daunting prospect until they realised that the men were themselves giving them the means to do just this. Wherever they went, they heard stories and recorded some ninety miners' tales. Moreover, among these tales, they began to discern a figure of the archetypal miner, the ‘Big Hewer’. Born of the hand-hewing days, when every pit had its ace collier, famed for prodigious output, he had passed with mechanisation into myth, becoming the collective expression of the miners' pride in his work and his proper place in society. In all of the collieries I have worked in and the pits of the miners I have interviewed in my research, such men existed. Most recently, when I worked at Alston Colliery in Cumbria in 2022, I was told of a man who had a special shovel made for him because he could not fill sufficient coal with the standard shovel. The same man was sent for by the local police when his brother was causing trouble in a local pub. He went to the pub, knocked his brother unconscious with one punch and left.

The big hewers were examples of an extreme type of "hypermasculinity" (Somerville and Bernoth, 2001; Abrahamsson and Somerville, 2005). The unique character of male-dominated work environments has provided a fertile environment for the development of gender studies (Wicks 2002, p. 309).

In the article cited below, Patricia Sexton is writing about the feminisation of men, of boys being ‘sissified’ by women. While underground, men did not have women to feminise them; they stressed all the values Sexton lists. If they did not possess those qualities when they started the pit, they would have to adopt them to survive.

> What does it mean to be masculine? It means holding male values and following male behaviour norms. Male norms stress values such as courage, inner direction, certain forms of aggression, autonomy, mastery, technological skill, group solidarity, adventure, and a considerable amount of toughness in mind and body (Sexton 1969, p. 15).

Hegemonic masculinity is the pattern of practice that maintains men's dominance over women while simultaneously creating a hierarchy of masculinities. The concept has influenced thinking about men, gender and social hierarchy since it was first proposed in a study of social inequality in Australian High Schools (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, p. 232). Hegemonic Masculinity Theory is often cited as a contributing factor to the character of the miner. Many researchers of gender and masculinity turn to miners as their study group. Some of these will be discussed below.

The 1842 Mines and Collieries Act prohibited women and boys under twelve years old from working underground in any mines in Britain. Before that date, women worked underground, usually in the transportation of coal rather than its production. The coalfields of Durham and Northumberland are an exception to this rule, as evidence from several sources suggests that no women worked underground in those coalfields at the time of the enquiry.[18]

It is clear from reading the evidence to the Commission that the reason for excluding women was on the grounds of morality rather than to protect them from arduous work. For example, Peter Kirby mentions ’nakedness’ 43 times and sexual eighteen times in a 16-page article (2007). The references are from the evidence, which

[18] Hansard https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1842/jun/07/employment-of-women-and-children-in

included drawings of naked adults and children working underground. Jane Humphries argues that naked exploitation was a greater evil than naked bodies. She suggests that the obsession with nakedness and sexuality might be attributed to the ruling classes' concern for social stability and the family, which sexually liberated women could threaten (1981, p. 26).

It has been argued that the 1842 Act has had the unintended consequence of ‘hyper-masculinising’ the mining industry as it became the model for the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to adopt protective legislation for women in the mining Industry (Lahiri-Dutt 2019). The same author had, however, previously argued that mining was being feminised (Lahiri‐Dutt 2015).

Where women are employed as underground miners, there appear to be problems in integrating them into the workforce. For example, anthropologist Asanda P. Benya conducted her research in a South African platinum mine (Benya 2016; Benya 2017). Benya found many obstacles for women who wished to work in mines. Some of these were there for the women’s safety; for example, specific medical examinations could not be carried out if a woman were pregnant or menstruating. There were, however, problems with harassment from men who did not want the women there. However, she also found that women allocated to heavy tasks often did not perform the tasks themselves but instead had men do them for them. This could be interpreted as the men being kind to the women or maintaining their dominant position by demonstrating that they were not up to the job or the women being very smart. Benya concluded that the occupational culture in mining needed to change to accommodate women in the industry; men’s attitudes had to change, and they had to accept women as their equal coworkers.

In an article entitled Ladies, Flirts and Tomboys, Kristen R. Yount (1991) examined the strategies employed by women to manage sexual harassment in an underground coal mine in two western USA mining communities. The title of the article describes the tactics used. The ladies were usually over fifty years of age and acted in a ‘ladylike manner,’ hoping the men would respect this. The ’flirts’ were all young,

attractive, and single (1991, p. 407); they flirted with the men to get them to do their work for them. The tomboys were slightly older than the flirts but also mostly single and attractive. However, their strategy was to disassociate themselves from the female stereotype and concentrate on their work as miners. The tomboys also joined in with the practical jokes and horseplay. This group was the most successful in being promoted to higher-paid jobs on the coalface, and the men treated them as one of their own.

Practical joking has long been a tradition in many communities to lighten spirits and strengthen social bonds. When done respectfully, practical jokes allow community members to tease one another, test boundaries playfully, and ultimately affirm their connection. The anthropological perspective sees humour and play as core to human nature across cultures. Mary Douglas has argued that anthropologists often overlook joking and humour as meaningful cultural practices. She argues that they should be examined more closely to determine what they reveal about social relations and thought systems (Douglas 1968, p. 361).

Laughter serves vital social functions, bringing people together through shared amusement and mirth. Practical jokes are a form of physical humour that allows people to temporarily disrupt normality and hierarchies in a socially sanctioned way. By catching each other off guard with silly pranks, people can momentarily transcend their roles and statuses to interact on a more equal playing field. This builds a sense of camaraderie and closeness.

Practical jokes also allow community members to implicitly communicate and negotiate boundaries of acceptable behaviour within the group (Douglas 1968, p. 371). A joke that goes too far will not land well, indicating to the prankster that they have overstepped. If well-intentioned jokes are taken in stride, it signals that the target is open to such playful antics. This establishes norms for what is considered proper conduct among friends, colleagues, classmates, and teammates.

Radcliffe-Brown discussed horseplay in relation to ‘primitive societies.’ He saw these joking relationships as a mutually permitted form of disrespect. These relationships,

though, can play a role in establishing and maintaining a social hierarchy (1952, pp. 90-105). In this section, I will discuss how the various forms of this type of behaviour are employed in the context of the coal mine. This relates to my argument in two distinct ways. Firstly, this behaviour creates and enforces the hierarchy that persists underground. Secondly, the scenarios described here are remembered by participants and witnesses because they represent a break from the routine of life underground.

During my mining career, I witnessed numerous hazing incidents and instances of practical joking. I was also told similar stories by many research participants. These varied from relatively harmless tricks to physical and psychological torture. For example, an ex-miner from Boldon Colliery told me of an incident in which a trainee who had been guilty of subordination was bound, gagged and placed in an empty mine car that was going into the mine to be filled. The car was last in the 'set' (train). The man operating the mechanism for filling the set was told of the youth in the last car. He filled all but one of the cars and then began to fill the last one before he stopped, and the victim was released. This must have caused some degree of psychological harm. Some tricks were quite disgusting, such as when a man at Eppleton Colliery was tricked into eating a mouse in a sandwich. The man was renowned for scrounging food; the trick backfired as he remarked, 'That was a nice piece of ham.'

David Collinson (1988) discusses the role of humour in the workplace in an article entitled' Masculinity, Joking and Conflict in Shop-floor Relations'. Collinson includes examples from British coal mining. However, he does not cite David Douglass, who devotes an entire chapter of A Miner's Life to what Yorkshire miners call pilking: a funny mockery (Douglass and Krieger 1983, pp. 45-54). Douglass sees pilking as a way of dealing with the omnipresence of danger and death - 'if it were not for the jokes everybody would be fighting' 1983, p, 46).

3.5 The Miner and His Environment Pit Sense

Miners must balance two competing imperatives: surviving their shift and demonstrating the risk-taking behaviour associated with mining culture. Pit sense is the concept that Pierre Bourdieu termed ’habitus,’ a system of embodied dispositions and tendencies that organise how individuals perceive and react to the social world around them (Bourdieu 2017, pp. 43-52). The notion of ‘embodiment’ refers to the processes through which social locations (e.g., class, ethnicity, gender, generation, geographic location, nationality) and the collective values with which they are associated become embedded in the flesh and blood body Power, 2008, in (Stergiou-Kita et al. 2017). The notion of pit sense may seem contradictory because, as discussed above, being hypermasculine often involves taking risks. In practice, though, people would be aware of the risk but still be willing to take a chance to save time or effort.

The term ‘pit sense’ has dual significance in mining culture. First, it refers to sound judgment grounded in hands-on experience and practical understanding of the mine environment. Second, it functions like an additional sensory capability - comparable to the traditional five senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch, with the crucial addition of proprioception (the body's awareness of its position in space). This specialised form of intelligence, developed through direct experience underground, was highly valued within mining communities. Just as we instinctively use our senses to navigate the world, experienced miners have developed a refined "pit sense" that helps them perceive and respond to the unique challenges of underground work. This combination of practical wisdom and heightened environmental awareness made pit sense an essential and respected attribute among miners.[19] It has been argued that the term emerged in the post-World War II era (Kamoche and Maguire, 2011, p. 726), but I heard it used by miners who were born at the end of the 19th century, who told me they had learned it from their fathers when they were young. I agree with Kamoche and Maguire that pit sense is part of miners' self-image and

[19] Refers to how the brain understands where the body is in space.

identity, which empowers them to make decisions outside of management's direct control (Kamoche and Maguire, 2011, p. 727). Being in control is a crucial aspect of the miners' ethos. They do not like being told how to do their job and would often stop working when managers arrive[20].

The following quotation is from fieldwork by philosophers Margaret Sommerville and Lena Abrahamson in Australia in 2003; a miner describes what pit sense means.

> Well, pit sense is, most blokes have it. They might take it for granted, especially if they've been in the pits for a long time. But they have got it. A lot of the blokes have pit sense. They know that the roof's bad; they know by hearing it, they know by smell, they know by the sense of just being there and being uncomfortable, the heaviness of the air, that you're in a place where you shouldn't be, lack of oxygen or gas. You'll feel the hairs move up on your legs, y' know, with blackdamp or something there (Somerville and Abrahamsson 2003, p. 26).

Beverly Sauer, a professor of English and rhetoric, examined the problem of roof support in coal mines. Her task was to construct a theoretical framework that describes how texts represent sensory information. She defines pit sense as

> Embodied sensory knowledge, direct physical sensations felt or perceived in specific local environments. Miners feel or sense this as physical signs or sensations in their bodies. Miners learn to understand danger as instincts, hunches, or feelings…. Pit sense is physical and sensory knowledge in the most literal sense: it exists in the ability of the human body to feel differences in pressure and hear differences in sounds (Sauer, 1999, p. 137).

The issue of tacit versus codified knowledge is a real problem in mining. Management can produce a set of codified rules, but in practice, decisions often need to be made instantaneously. This can only happen when the necessary

[20] I know this from personal experience.

knowledge has been embodied. There are legal implications. For example, to what extent is the miner responsible for his safety? How can knowledge be defined if it cannot be codified?

As technology develops, removing the miner from the mine is increasingly possible. This raises the question of whether someone operating a mine from the surface is a miner. I first thought about this issue whilst watching a presentation on sea-bed mining. The machines used were very similar to underground mining machines with which I was familiar. The operators, though, were located on a ship on the surface.

The quotation below is taken from a study of a hard-rock mine in Sweden. In this mine, the miners are being moved from the underground to the surface, where they operate the machines remotely.

> As a miner, it must take a couple of years before 'you can see the rock' and 'feel the rock.' Every day when I come to work, I am always cautious that anything can happen. I do not come and enter here; just relax and finish and go home. I have to be in this kind of state every working day. I have to be sharp (Sanda, Johansson and Johansson 2011, p. 402).

The authors found that the miners still used their tacit knowledge of the rock while located on the surface. The old mining culture was still influential; the surface-located operators still regarded themselves as miners. They changed their clothes at the end of the shift, even though they were just as clean as they had been at the beginning. Some staff, though, were still located underground. These, especially those engaged in manual work, regarded themselves as real miners. The underground workers regarded the surface operators as 'weak and somewhat feminine entities' (p Sanda, Johansson and Johansson 2011, p. 402). It would be interesting to observe what happens when the cohort of remote miners who have worked underground have retired and are presumably replaced by people who do not have that experience.

Pit sense, as a mode of risk assessment, is relevant to the health and safety literature and is related to discourse and social identity (Sauer, 1999), as well as

learning and sense-making in highly uncertain work environments (Kamoche & Maguire, 2011).

Mineworkers were found to learn safety through the experience of performing their work, while trainers reported using safety training in simulated environments and codified practice (Somerville and Abrahamsson, 2003). The view of knowledge as situated practice challenges the dominant conception of knowledge as objectified and separable from those who create it and experience it (Gherardi, 2006).

Fitzpatrick's (1980) participant observation study found that formal procedures were often ignored and that coal miners relied on informal work practices to alleviate the dangers of underground work. Leger (1992) and Kamoche and Maguire (2011) discovered that underground gold miners relied on their tacit knowledge of detecting loose rocks. They also use the term' pit sense' and argue that it conflicts with knowledge management theories, which view it as an objectified asset that resides with management professionals (Dennis et al., 2011, p. 725). Dave Douglass and Joel Krieger (1983) use the term 'pit sense 'several times. Douglass, himself a former Durham miner whom I have met on many occasions, was very familiar with the concept.

Alvin Gouldner's classic study of bureaucracy in a gypsum mine examines the clash between old and new management styles. He takes advantage of the opportunity presented by the old manager's replacement with a younger man to explore managers' attempts to replace traditional ways of working with new, codified methods (1954).

David Alsop, himself a former miner, and Moira Calvely researched amongst miners in Britain's then five remaining mines. They link the nature of the work, tacit knowledge and identity.

> To a great extent, a coal miner's identity is aligned with his work's dirty, dangerous, and unpredictable nature. However, the work calls for utilising tacit knowledge and skills, which are also embedded within this identity. The underlying belief of miners is that the capabilities of new technological

> working practices do not extend to replacing them at the coal face and that their unique identity as coal miners, combined with the unusual nature of the job, provides them with a force for mediating management control (Allsop and Calveley 2009, p. 57).

Reliance on tacit knowledge, however, can pose its own problems. By definition, tacit knowledge is in a constant state of flux. Therefore, if an accident seems unlikely because there has been no incidence for some time, miners are likely to take risks that may lead to an accident. Following an incident, the miners will return to using safe practices for a while but eventually revert to taking shortcuts and risk-taking (Hopkins 1984). Hopkins conducted ethnographic research in New South Wales coal mines and found that a level of "machismo" masculinity affected risk-taking. Interestingly, he found no link between risk-taking and the desire to earn more bonus money. Still, they would take risks to avoid extra work. He concluded that management needed to take greater responsibility for accident prevention. Based on my mining experience, I find all of Hopkins' findings tenable. I worked in situations where bonuses were paid and where they were not. The attitude of the men did not seem to be much affected. Before and after bonuses were introduced, miners would always take risks. They would also take opportunities to be idle when something held up the production process. Managers were complicit in non-compliance with the rule book. I recall a situation where the bearing of the face conveyor had collapsed and was glowing red. The overman suggested that we run a hose on it until the end of the shift. I agreed, and a man was stationed to play a water hose on the faulty bearing. I should have insisted that work cease, and the bearing be changed. There was no actual fire risk as long as the man kept the water trained on the bearing. Production was everything.

When it was common practice to send young children underground, the first job they were given was as a ‘trapper’- their duty was to open and close a ventilation door[21] to allow the passing of persons and vehicles. Children were used as trappers because the work was not physically demanding but sending them down the pit at an

[21] These doors act as valves to control the airflow through the mine.

early age had the effect of habituating them to the environment. Sitting, often in the dark[22], for up to twelve hours per day, acclimatised them to the mine conditions. The child would be familiar with the darkness, smell, and changing movement of the air as the doors opened and closed. Before he began work at the pit, he would have been surrounded by its influence throughout his life. He would have been awakened by the siren that called the men to work before the beginning of each shift; he would have smelled the pit on his father's dirty clothes and seen the 'buttons' on his back[23] as he bathed in front of the fire. The boy would have learned the 'pitmatic' language from listening to stories his father and older brothers told around the Sunday dinner table.

Trapping was the first job of nine-year-old George Parkinson, who vividly describes his first day underground. His father takes him to his door, hews a hole for him to shelter in, fixes a nail to tie his door string to, instructs him on what he must do, and leaves him with some candles. George is quite happy until his last candle burns out; he becomes afraid of the darkness.

> I sat in my hole, afraid to breathe. The fearful silence became almost oppressive till I noticed for the first time the sounds made by the gentle oozing of gas and of water escaping from the close-grained coal around. A strange and harmonious combination of soft and pleasant sounds they made, delicately varied in tone, rising and falling, now feeble, now full…. All the sounds combined to form a symphony which seemed very beautiful to a little trapper boy (Parkinson 1911, p. 19).

It is a privilege to have someone with Parkinson's literary ability and the experience of being a very young miner to provide such a description. A few weeks later, his candle goes out again. This time, he notices another phenomenon.

[22] They did not really need a light to do their job, they just kept hold of the string that was attached to the door. Candles were expensive, and this has been suggested as the origin of the phrase 'not worth a light'. Dave Wray tells visitors to Redhills this.
[23]'Buttons' were scar tissue on a miner's back caused by abrasion from the roof whilst pushing a tub in a low roadway. The roadway was cut to a height just sufficient to admit a pony.

> As I sat musing alone my eye was attracted to something white about two yards from me, and the longer I gazed at it the clearer and whiter it became…. I had heard people talk of ‘haunts’ and ‘ghosts’…. Fear began to rise and deepen…

It turned out that George had seen material from a decaying prop that had become luminous in the dark[24]. When he had acquired a new candle, George cut pieces of the material and stuck them to the walls and roof around him, making a ‘starry firmament’. The next time his candle went out, he pretended to himself that he was looking at the night sky.

The following quotations are taken from the evidence of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Children's Employment (Commission 1842).

James Pearce recounts how he began trapping at the age of seven and was paid 6d (2.5p) per day. On one occasion, he fell asleep and was beaten by a driver. An explosion at Willington Colliery was attributed to a child falling asleep and leaving his door open, which allowed gas to accumulate. Even though he was beaten and abused, William Drury says he would rather be in the pit than in school.

The mine owners tell a different story than their young employees. William Newbould, a colliery owner, testified.

> The boys work twelve hours a day, off and on, but it is not hard work, and they do not work the whole time. Being in the pit keeps the children out of mischief, and they are always in the dry, and their health is good, better than that of those who are running about in all weathers. They like being in the pit themselves. The proprietor has sufficient control over all parties to prevent any ill-usage.

The first trip underground was a significant day in most miners' lives; it marked a rite of passage. Typical comments from miners I interviewed were, ‘You knew you were

[24] This is a well-known phenomenon produced by a lichen panellus stipticus commonly known as’foxfire’.

a man once you had been down.' The work often did not involve moving more than a few metres from the shaft bottom: 'I just pushed tubs around the shaft bottom.'

Most miners I contacted during my research began working in the pit directly after school. They left school on Friday and started work the following Monday. One of these was Joseph Purvis, whom I interviewed in his Aged Miners Cottage.[25] Joseph had worked his way up to being a deputy[26]. However, he told me that he had never liked working down the pit and was glad when he was made redundant when Eppleton closed.

Joseph said, 'I left school on the Friday, went to Eppleton (colliery) to see the training officer, was sent to Elemore (colliery) on the Saturday for a medical (examination) and started at Eppleton, on the screens at two o'clock on the Monday Morning.'

Most new boys were sent to work on the screens. These were steel conveyors onto which coal was tipped directly from the pit. The boys' job was to pick out the larger pieces of stone, leaving the coal to be conveyed to the coal preparation plant. Old and injured men were also employed here, as well as boys who were deemed unfit, either physically or mentally, to be sent underground. The older miners would tell stories of their time underground so that the boys would learn about pit life and its accompanying nomenclature. At collieries such as Eppleton, Elemore and Murton, where the coal was transported to and processed at a central location, the first job was usually working in the stockyard, loading materials to be sent underground.

When asked why they chose pitwork, the usual answer was, 'My father and his father before he had been miners'. This was considered sufficient as an answer. A few had had another job before going to the pit. One had secured a job in a carpet factory and worked there for a few weeks, but most of his friends had gone to the pit, and he was encouraged to join them. Another interviewee had been offered a job at

[25] These were homes that were provided for retired miners by the National Coal Board. Currently they are managed by a Durham Aged Miners Housing Association (DAMHA)
[26] A sort of foreman, also responsible for the use of explosives and first aid.

the local Cooperative Store, but when the store manager discovered the boy's father was a miner, he withdrew the offer and told him to find a job at the pit instead.

The first descent of a deep mine is a salient experience for a miner. It is a rite of passage in the transition from the surface to the underground world. I recall the first time I ever went down the pit. I was working in the boiler house, which once supplied steam to the winders but was now only used to heat the pithead baths. The fitter I was apprenticed to was Wilf Liddle. Every day, he went underground to inspect the Hutton-Seam pump. The seam had long been worked out, but the pump was still required to keep the lower seams dry. Wilf had promised to take me underground. I could not wait; one cannot call oneself a miner if one has never been underground. We first collected our lamps from the lamp cabin on the day in question. I felt proud walking across the pit yard carrying Wilf's tool bag, and with my lamp's cable draped around my neck, we never put the lamps onto the helmet until we started work. Before getting into the cage, Wilf collected a plank of wood. I asked him what it was for; he said I would soon find out. As in many of the stories related below, my ears popped, too, as the cage descended, and the air pressure increased. When we got to the Hutton Seam, there was no onsetter[27] to help us out of the cage. Wilf lifted the cage gate and laid the plank between the cage and the side of the shaft. The steel flaps that had once covered this gap were no longer in use. Wilf stepped onto the plank and the landing. He told me to follow him. This was the part I found scary, but I had no choice but to follow him. It was only a short walk to the pump, which we inspected. On the way back, I was not bothered about walking the plank. This must have been an important experience for me, as it occurred in the summer of 1966, and fifty-three years later, I can still recall it in every detail.

George Parkinson recounts his first descent at the age of nine.

> A corf filled with bricks hung from the end of the chain. My father seated himself on this, and the banksman lifted me on beside him…. My heart

[27] The 'cage' (elevator) attendant.

> beat rapidly; a strange tremor crept over me as the corf swung to and fro over the mouth of the pit (Parkinson 1911, p. 18).

George Hitchin also relates the experience of his first descent.

> The cage came to the surface; the banksman put in his ‘keps'[28], and as the cage rested on these iron protrusions, the chains that suspended it went slack. We got in—eight men in each of the three decks. The gates closed. Bells rang, and the banksman grasped his keps lever. I heard the chains above my head clanking as they lifted slowly to take the weight. The cage lifted a few feet, and I found I was looking over the banksman's head. Then, as the cage dropped, he seemed to shoot upwards; his face, his midriff and finally, his feet, in that order, shot past my eyes. We plunged downwards into the darkness. The wind whistled past as the cage gathered speed. I closed my eyes and gripped my lamp. My stomach seemed to have been left behind (Hitchin 1962, p. 84).

Jack Lawson makes no mention of being perturbed by his first descent; instead, he cannot wait to get into the ‘Aladdin’s Cave, whose mystery called and drew me like a magnet, and I was thrilled when at last I found myself… sliding slowly and silently down the deep shaft’ (Lawson 1936, p. 72).

A common theme amongst the miners’ stories is the role of the mother, who gets up early to make a hearty breakfast for the boy on the first day; she also gives him his bait[29] and a bottle of water or cold tea. She has prepared his clothes for him to put on. On his return, she prepares his bath and makes his dinner. There is almost a ritualistic element to these proceedings. The first day down was a rite of passage. ' You go down a boy and come back a man ’is a theme in both the literature and the interviews I conducted. This may seem over-romanticising, but miners know they are privy to specialised knowledge that is becoming increasingly rare.

[28] Keps are struts that keep the cage in place when it is at the surface.
[29] Packed lunch.

Some new miners found the experience exciting as well as intimidating. I asked miners on The Pits 'Facebook page[30] to tell me of their first descent.

> I remember the excitement of walking to get my lamp and rescuer, then the air doors I struggled to open for the first time. As I stood at the shaft side, I was nervous about the thought of going hundreds of feet into the earth; as we descended the shaft, you could feel the warm, stale, smelling air. Welcome to man's world. (Gary).

> We spent the first few days on the surface. Then, it's time to go down. Putting me lamp and rescuer on my belt. Man was I all fingers and thumbs bomb (self-rescuer) upside down. Everyone is taking Mickey out of one another. First taste of pit banter in the lamp room. Our turn. Walking up steps to headgear and cage with trepidation and handing token to banksman for the first time. I am a miner now. We stepped into the cage; we all went quiet and heard the rap. Wow, down we went, stomach in mouth, then levelled off. We started laughing, and the instructor broke the ice. Never looked back after that. Miner for thirty years. [Later, back at his own pit] I felt 10-foot-tall passing overman's cabin where my dad was sitting. A wink sufficed off him; the memory of that day will be with me forever, both proud men. (Leslie G).

> My first time underground, we, as a group, went into the cage of the local hard man who was our age; everyone was scared of him. As we descended, he started being agitated, and by the time we got to the pit bottom, he was sobbing and begging to be taken back to the surface. At that moment, he lost all his hard-man street cred and never made his big gob go after that. The word cry-baby did not sit with him very well. (David D).[31]

[30] See chapter 9.4.
[31] This tale may be apocryphal, an urban legend. I have heard several versions of it.

The stories above present the idea that the pit itself, as an actor, is making or breaking the young novice miners. The idea that working underground made boys into men occurs repeatedly, both in the literature and in interviews. It changes one's status concerning those above ground because one is now privy to the mysterious secret world.

Miner and author Dave Douglass developed a fear of the descent many years into his mining career, the reason being the Markham Main disaster in 1973 when the cage rope broke, sending eighteen men crashing to their deaths.

> I started going through agony going down there; I used to absolutely hate and dread it when (the cage) dropped away. I (was) absolutely terrified by the situation. (Douglass and Krieger 1983, p.2).

I clearly remember the disaster, but it didn't deter me from working underground. The accident was caused by the failure of a braking component (Demand and Lawley, 1986). I knew that extra checks on the winding equipment would have been made at every colliery in the country; it was probably the safest time ever to descend a mineshaft.

The habitual knowledge and sensory attunement to hazards underground, described as 'pit sense' in this section, relied on accumulated personal experience of manual work and conditions in the pits. The following section outlines significant developments in mining methods, detailing how mechanisation and remote-control mining could jeopardise such hard-won tacit knowledge if bodily practice underground fades across generations.

3.6 Mining Methods

Knowing the work itself and how developments in methods impacted the social life of the mining community is a valuable aid to understanding the miner and mining heritage. The history of mining methods is not the central focus of this thesis; however, an overview is provided here for context.

Extensive developments in mining techniques have significantly disrupted miners' traditional work structures and social relationships. Under the old bord and pillar system,[32] Small teams worked autonomously at their own pace, demonstrating a high degree of skill and control. The introduction of longwall[33] mining using conveyors required coordination between shifts performing different functions in a three-stage cycle of undercutting, filling, and then advancing.

Studies by researchers from the Tavistock Institute[34] (Trist 1963) identified issues caused by the transition from independent, autonomous work groups to interdependent roles. Solutions like ’composite working' were introduced, making workgroups multi-skilled and autonomous again, improving productivity. Further mechanisation, such as shearers and hydraulic supports, aimed to increase output but diminished miners' skills and control. Remote control mining was attempted but not fully implemented due to cost and resistance from miners.

The Tavistock researchers found that the new interdependent roles led to problems such as stress and absenteeism. Solutions like ’composite working’ aimed to make groups multi-skilled and self-regulating again. However, further mechanisation with shearers and powered supports increased output but diminished miner autonomy. Remote control mining met with resistance and was abandoned due to cost concerns, although research continues.

This brief analysis examines how technical changes impacted aspects such as miners’ status, identity, tacit knowledge, and control over the production process. It argues that miners have resisted the loss of autonomy and sought to adapt work practices to retain occupational culture. The complete removal of people from underground work seems unlikely, but remote operation raises questions about knowledge retention as the bodily experience of pit work fades over generations.

[32] A system in which the coal was worked in a grid pattern.
[33] A system in which two roadways were drive up to 300m apart. The coal face was driven between the roads and worked forwards.
[34] This was an action research project that brought together psychologists and social anthropologists Rapoport, R. N. J. H. r. (1970) 'Three dilemmas in action research: With special reference to the tavistock experience', 23(6): 499-513.

Chapter 4 Social Memory, Place Attachment and Belonging

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the interrelated concepts of social memory, place attachment, and belonging through an ethnographic study in the former mining town of Hetton-le-Hole. I explore how the memory of a place can foster a sense of connection and identification for people and communities. Landscape, space and the body are significant sites for cultural meaning, social and political memory, and public discourse in anthropological studies of space and place. Space can be employed to convey social meanings that are contested historically and culturally produced. The hermeneutic study of space examines space as a symbolic medium and acknowledges that place evokes feelings of connection and identification through lived experience (Aucoin 2017). Aucoin highlights how our understanding of space goes beyond mere physical attributes to include emotional, symbolic, and experiential dimensions. It is particularly relevant when discussing topics like mining communities, where the physical space of the mine and the surrounding community hold deep symbolic and emotional significance for the people who lived and worked there.

Belonging is a vaguely defined but intrinsically human phenomenon. The earliest theories focused on feelings or notions of ‘rootedness’, which essentially means being at home in one's surroundings. Definitions of belonging have not deviated much from these fundamental notions. The concept of belonging is closely related to place attachment, sense of place, and community. All these ideas revolve around the notion that belonging refers to an emotional attachment and identification with a defined spatial area. Where we belong feels comfortable to us. Here, I examine these concepts and their relationship to people’s memories of the place where they

live. The idea of belonging implies a specific place where the attachment is felt. Belongingness, therefore, is regarded as a cognitive association with a setting or particular area (Isfahani 2017). According to Altman and Low (2012), belongingness to place is a symbolic relationship that people build with a location while denoting cultural, emotional, and dramatic significance. Drawing on Maurice Halbwachs's (1950) work on collective memory, the chapter examines how residents construct a shared identity and attachment to a place based on memories and interpretations of the coalfield's history, particularly its mining heritage.

I return to Hetton after a 20-year absence and observe the dramatic physical changes to the landscape resulting from deindustrialization and urban redevelopment. Through interviews and 'go-along' walking tours of the town with longtime resident Martin, I examine the complex feelings of loss, nostalgia, and longing that permeate residents' narratives about social and economic change. The demolition of physical structures prompts recollections of close-knit communities in decades past, even as new housing developments alter the visual landscape.

Ultimately, the chapter argues that collective social memory persists as a 'glue' holding the community together, shaping the interpretation of heritage and identity. Feelings of belonging remain deeply rooted in conceptions of place that, while transformed, retain echoes of the storied mining history. The conclusion situates Hetton within broader debates, such as the role of reflective nostalgia and place attachment in post-industrial towns.

4.2 Walking and Hanging Around Hetton

The following is a first-hand account of my initial impressions upon revisiting my hometown of Hetton-le-Hole after a long absence. Through walks and conversations with longtime resident Martin Lewins, a vivid portrait emerges of how the landscape triggers vivid recollections of the town's industrial heyday. Weaving personal memoir with ethnographic observation, the passage illustrates the complex interplay between place, memory, and identity in a post-industrial community. Martin's granular

descriptions of demolished sites, the losses endured, and the persistence of ghostly past images alongside present-day decay reveal how the mining era indelibly shapes townspeople’s worldviews and attachments. However, glimmers of optimism endure - famous sons still bind Hettonians to the locale's legacy, and convivial spaces like working men's clubs and Methodist church halls reinforce communal bonds. The analysis confronts the realities of post-industrial decline while affirming the enduring emotional resonance of place.

On my first visit to Hetton, I arrived by motorcycle. Subsequently, most of my journeys were made by bus. I rode from Houghton-le-Spring along Hetton Road and crossed Rough Dene Burn, which marks the boundary between Houghton and Hetton. Large houses are in extensive gardens, and expensive cars are in the driveways. As I approached the town centre, the appearance of affluence deteriorated slightly; the houses became terraced but still tidy and well-maintained. I turn into Regent Street, where more terraced private housing is found until one reaches the top of the street. Here, I observed that my late grandmother and aunt's house, along with the surrounding streets where I had spent much of my childhood, had gone, razed to the ground with nothing built in their place, a wasteland. I was now seeing two images, one before my eyes, the other behind them, the former of a place and the latter of a space that was no longer a place. I turned right onto Market Street, and the Eppleton Arms pub had been converted into flats. The former Co-op shops on the right were now carpet shops, and The Shepherd's Pub was still open (but has now closed). There was a carpark where part of the street had been demolished, several shops had been converted to residential use, several more were shuttered, and there were three takeaway food outlets, an Indian Restaurant, a gym, and a second-hand goods shop. The newsagent was still there, and there was a barber and a hairdresser. The town's main shopping centre was a down-market residential and shopping area. I turned left into Eppleton Row, one of the few remaining streets of original miners' cottages. I headed up the 'Pit Lonnen ' leading towards the site of the former Eppleton Colliery. The site is now a quarry, extracting the limestone that had been a barrier to the original miners. A bank of wind turbines had now usurped the skyline-dominating-role of the pit headgear; all traces of the

colliery buildings had gone. I turned right into the site of the original Hetton Colliery, now a country park with boating lakes and woodland walks. I parked my motorcycle and walked through the park back towards the town.

Along the back of Victory Street, two men around forty to fifty years of age were leaning over the back wall, smoking hand-rolled cigarettes. 'Are yee lost?' one of them shouted. I realised it would have seemed unusual for someone dressed in motorcycle clothing to be walking along their back street. They would have known everyone in the area, and I would have been recognised as a stranger. I went over to them and explained that I was from Hetton and was writing something about the town. Speaking in a strong version of the local dialect, he told me that the place had been spoiled by ‘incomers’ from Sunderland, who were drug addicts and criminals. He advised against going to one particular council estate. ‘Hmn, ye will not knar the place now, marra. Pubs and shops ahl closed; ahl these new fowks coming in from Sunland and ahll ower: druggies an’ the like. Yuh dursent gan up Peat Carr now, y will get stabbed.’

The man was referring to the loss of ‘local’ people, people who ‘belonged’ and lamenting that they had been replaced by incomers whom he was blaming for social evils such as drug-taking, theft and anti-social behaviour. It emerged that the two men were also motorcyclists. They knew some of the bikers I had associated with when I lived in Hetton; there is a sense of camaraderie among motorcyclists (Tunnicliff et al., 2011). This commonality consistently facilitates cooperation from people in research. I subsequently walked around the Peat Car estate and every other residential area of Hetton. I was not stabbed, but having worked in social housing, it was evident to me that some of the estates were in a condition that housing officers would categorise as ‘difficult to let’ a euphemism for what was once called ‘problem’ or even ‘sink’ estates.

I made my way, by a somewhat circuitous route, towards the town centre, walking down Caroline Street, named after one of the Eppleton Shafts, named after one of the original owner’s daughters. Some of the cottages in this street remained; others had been replaced by modern housing belonging to a housing association. The

Caroline pub was now a butcher’s shop. I turned left onto the route of the original Stephenson railway, which was marked by signs. I passed the Primitive Methodist Chapel, which is still in use.

Upon reaching the town centre, the first thing that struck me was the absence of the Anglican Church. It had been reduced to a pile of rubble. Otherwise, the town centre looked reasonably prosperous, and the Co-op was now two takeaway outlets; the former Barrington Boy's School was now a Tesco's Supermarket; there were several cafes; two pubs remained open; at one time, there had been over twenty pubs in Hetton. Overall, the centre seemed to have fared better than Market Street. I then visited the old cemetery and the tomb of Nicholas Wood, a famous mining engineer and author, which was in a poor state of repair. Having gained some idea of what the town was like, I returned to my motorcycle through the country park.

When I began my research, I discovered there was a local history association following Jeanette Edward’s lead (Edwards 2000). I went to one of their monthly meetings at Eppleton Church Hall. I was informed about Saturday coffee mornings at the Union Street Methodist Church Hall. I went to the hall the following Saturday; I bought a cup of tea and a biscuit from the lady from the history group. She directed me to a table where a group of men were sitting and talking. I introduced myself, explained that I was writing about Hetton, and asked if I could speak to them. They said that they were happy to help me. The following year, I joined the group most Saturdays, except when I was away from Durham. I joined in the conversations, steering them, when possible, to subjects such as their life histories, their working lives, and their leisure interests. With their permission, I left a recording device on the table. The device was about the size of a small mobile ‘phone. It appears they soon forgot about its presence.

One attendee of the local history meetings and the coffee mornings, Martin Lewins, emerged as a key informant (McKenna and Main 2013) throughout my fieldwork. Martin, who was in his late eighties, had been employed as a joiner. His job was to maintain the properties belonging to the colliery, including offices and the miners’ houses. Martin offered to guide me on walks throughout Hetton to illustrate vanished

sites central to his memories. This practice aligned with the go-along ethnographic method explored by Evans and Jones (2011) and Adams and Larkham (2015), whose research indicates that mobile interviews unfolding through meaningful landscapes can profoundly shape and stimulate participants' recollections. As we traced routes now erased from the physical environment, Mr Lewins vividly conjured structures and events from decades earlier through the granular description. He appeared to access what Jon Anderson (2004) terms ‘talking whilst walking’ by transforming his surroundings to trigger associated images and narratives from the past.

Our walks thus surfaced multilayered vistas in which remnants of present-day Hetton intermingled with resurrected traces of its mining heritage. This highlights the potential for nostalgia to foster new perspectives when integrated into situated practice. By walking with the ghosts of memory amid altered streets and demolished sites, fresh understandings of identity and belonging in this post-industrial community emerged. During the walks I took with Martin, as detailed below, he used material objects to narrate his family's history and that of the town in general (Bennett 2015). Martin had worked at the original Hetton Colliery but not as a miner; he had been a joiner who maintained the surface buildings and the colliery houses. He had intimate knowledge of the town and how the miners lived; he had been in most of their houses at one time or another. On these walks, he described to me, in great detail, what had existed on each site in the past. For example, just outside the Methodist Chapel was The Square. There were three cottages built together, each of a different size. Every household had a rainwater barrel used for washing hair, as tap water made one's hair dull and lifeless. I recalled that my aunts followed the same practice. Martin recalled his own childhood home. 'We had Yorkshire light windows… sash-bars that rattled when a train passed'. 'The fireplace in our house had a round oven with a set-pot for boiling water'. Later, I went into a similar house in a nearby street. Therefore, using Martin's description and my observation, I could build a mental picture of the inside of a miner's house in the 1930s and earlier.

As Martin's house was right next to the railway, which was unfenced, he said that one of his favourite pastimes had been to watch the man with his red flag stop the traffic when a train was approaching. The man had lost his leg in World War One, so he could not work in the mine. He then mentioned his sister, whom he had never known as she had died when she was only ten years of age. Next, he referred to his mother talking about the 'big funerals' of the women who had been killed in a railway disaster in 1928. He also told of his mother crying as she told him of an accident in which a woman was run over and killed by a butcher's cart. He described the accident in minute detail even though he had not witnessed it. Martin would have been only about five years old at the time of the accident, so could he remember it from the first telling, or had his mother retold the story later?

Martin could also describe, again in detail, the shops and the owners that had occupied them in his youth. Mr Ritson, who wore a bowler hat and a warehouse jacket, stood in a tiny space behind his counter, mending shoes. He had only one window facing Caroline Street. It was only twelve inches from the ground, a nine-inch step down into his shop. The walks with Martin enabled me to create a mental picture of what the town was like in earlier times; I can re-trace the route while listening to the recording and imagine the scene as described to me.

Martin also told me of his own life in Hetton. Due to his job as a joiner, he describes houses with meticulous detail. 'One room had a wooden floor, the other a 9’ x 9’ x 3’ brick tile.’ He told me of houses being 'stoved out,’ i.e., fumigated when one family left and before a new one moved in. Infectious diseases such as typhoid, scarlet fever, measles, and mumps were common.

During the coffee mornings and other occasions, people were eager to mention famous individuals with connections to the town. Hetton does seem to produce many famous people, especially in football. The most famous footballing Hettonians are Bob Paisley, who has a memorial to him in the town centre, Harry Potts, who was a player and manager at Burnley, and Alan Ball, who played mainly in Scotland, and Ralph Coates, a one-time apprentice colliery fitter who played for several 1st Division clubs and England. The Princess of Wales’s great-grandparents grew up in Hetton-

le-Hole. Her first cousin twice removed, John Harrison, who still lives in the village, said it was initially a shock to realise that he is now distantly related to the future King of England. The actor Eddie Redmayne is the great-grandson of Sir Richard Redmayne, who spent his early mining career in Hetton. The economist Lord Terence Burns, holder of several top-level government and industrial posts, as well as multiple honorary doctorates and professorships, is the son of a Hetton coalminer. The musician and record producer Trevor Horn, a member of ‘The Buggles’ (‘Video Killed the Radio Star’) and lead singer of the prog rock group ‘Yes,’ was often mentioned. However, no one seemed to know about his sister, the novelist Marjorie De Luca, or his brother, the television producer Ken Horn. Famous musicians are better known than novelists and producers.

After the coffee mornings, I often went to the local workmen’s club, the ‘Big Club.’ During one of my visits to a former Eppleton underground locomotive driver, who had subsequently worked on excavating the Channel Tunnel, he told me about a visit to the Brewers Arms, just across the road. One evening, he went to the pub, stepped over a 'drunk’ who was lying across the doorway, ordered a pint and began drinking. A few minutes later, several police cars arrived with sirens sounding and blue lights flashing. He told me that the man had been stabbed and was, in fact, dead. I checked that the murder had taken place, but it seemed odd that the bar person served him a drink, and no one mentioned the stabbing. The same man told me the name of the man who had burned down the church, which was adjacent to the club. It was someone I knew, and he was from one of the notorious families, which, according to other stories I have been told, existed in most mining communities.

Through my walks and conversations with Martin and others, I came to appreciate the deep imprint the mining era has left on the town's physical landscape and social memory. However, I also discovered spaces of resilience where attachment endures—the Methodist church hall reinforcing communal ties, the working men's club where miners socialised, and the stories of famous sons binding Hettonians to their legacy.

As I revisited my hometown of Hetton-le-Hole, I found myself grappling with several theoretical concepts that emerged from my observations and interactions. The interplay between place, memory, and identity became starkly apparent as I walked through the changed landscape, experiencing what felt like a palimpsest of past and present. My vision seemed to operate on two levels simultaneously - the physical reality before me and the remembered spaces of my youth, illustrating how deeply our sense of self is tied to our environment.

The nostalgia expressed by longtime residents, such as Martin Lewins, served as both a reaction to and a critique of the social changes that had swept through Hetton. Through our walks together, I experienced firsthand the power of ‘go-along ethnography,’ as Martin's recollections were triggered and shaped by our movement through meaningful landscapes. His use of material objects and physical spaces to narrate personal and communal histories demonstrated the crucial role of materiality in constructing and maintaining social memory.

I observed how the community constructed and maintained boundaries, often through processes of othering ‘incomers,’ reflecting deeper sociological dynamics at play. The post-industrial transformation of Hetton provided a vivid case study of how deindustrialisation impacts not just the economy but also the social and cultural fabric of communities. Yet, amidst this decline, I also witnessed surprising resilience. The persistence of community spaces, such as the Methodist church hall, and shared narratives about famous locals demonstrate how communities adapt and maintain continuity in the face of structural changes.

Through this ethnographic journey, I came to understand Hetton not just as a town in decline, but as a complex social ecosystem grappling with its past, present, and future. These observations contribute to broader discussions in urban sociology, economic geography, and community studies, offering insights into how communities navigate the challenges of post-industrial transformation.

I had initially met Martin through the local history group. The group was of great benefit to my research.

4.3 Hetton Local History

The Hetton Local and Natural History Association aims to advance public knowledge and education regarding the heritage, history, and social development of Hetton-le-Hole and its surrounding areas. Their objectives include establishing and maintaining an archive containing local artefacts, photographs, audio recordings, and documents, which will be made available to residents. Additionally, they intend to conduct and publish original and secondary research on relevant historical, social, and related subjects. Overall, the group's purpose is to preserve, protect, improve, and develop the historical heritage of the Hetton-le-Hole district for public benefit.

The association convenes monthly member meetings in a church hall in Hetton's town centre. Lectures feature semi-professional speakers and group members discussing specialised subjects aligned with the organisation's preservation mission. As an active contributor, I have delivered several presentations that draw on my ethnographic study of themes in local mining historiography, technological practices, and commemorative spaces. Following these talks, I engaged interested attendees in informal discussions during which they exhibited an impressive command of details related to the community's industrial past. My overall impression from these productive interchanges is that association participants represent a uniquely informed cohort possessing valuable insider perspectives on how mining heritage continues to shape the town's identity. Their intricate knowledge illustrates how deeply history is ingrained in the collective memories of Hettonians, despite the passing of its economic base. This could be regarded as a sort of ‘member checking’ as described by Birt, et al. (2016), a method of validating the information provided by interlocutors.

Research by Twells, et al. (2018) is entitled ‘It is about giving yourself a sense of belonging’. The research indicates that initial motivations for engaging with

community history include an interest in history, a commitment to one's local community, a desire to contribute positively to society, and a wish to interact with like-minded individuals and make new discoveries. As involvement continues over time, additional rewards emerge that further motivate ongoing participation, including the development of social connections, a sense of identity and belonging, acquisition of new skills and achievements, feelings of satisfaction, earning the respect of others, and improvements in physical, cognitive, emotional, and psychosocial well-being. In essence, community history provides an opportunity to enhance the local area, educate and engage residents, foster meaningful connections, and create a lasting legacy, ultimately making a profound difference in people's lives.

Demographically, most of the members of the group were retired from work. This makes sense because this group tends to have more free time and is often seeking something valuable and interesting to do with it. However, although the meetings were usually attended by thirty to forty people who appeared to enjoy the presentations, there were far fewer who were prepared to join the committee or do any research. Some attendees said that knowing more about the place they lived in increased their sense of belonging. One man said his physical health had improved because he had been prompted to go on walks to visit places mentioned in the lectures. The Association also organised walking trips to places of local interest. The more physically active members attended these.

4.4 Life Histories

Although everyone had individual stories, a pattern emerged in people's life histories. Most men had left school on a Friday, begun work at the pit on the following Monday, and stayed in the industry, either until they retired or until their pit closed, and there were no more left to which they could be transferred. In this section, as well as in my interviews, I draw on research conducted by Professor Robert Gildea of the University of Oxford. I was involved with the project as my wife, Liz, and I transcribed many of the interviews. I was one of the interviewees and knew most of the people

from Durham whom Robert interviewed. I have permission from Robert to use the material once his book has been published, which it now has (Gildea 2023).

> Went to school on a Friday. That night I went up to the pit and we had a bit talk, I signed a paper and then I started at the pit the following Monday morning. (Paul S. RG 11/09/2020).

> I left school at 16 and like me dad, me granddad, family, uncles and, and school friends, you started working at the pit. (Ken W. RG 7/10/2020).

One miner from Hetton had a successful interview for a job as a shop assistant at the local Cooperative Store, however –

> The manager found out that me dad worked at the pit, so he told me that I would have to go to work there as well. (My interview Joseph. K, 11/02/2014).

Many fathers, including mine, did not want their sons to go down the pit. My story was very similar to Dave's –

> He did not want me down the mine. Few miners want their sons to go down the mines, although many do. However, he didn't want me down the pit. But when I said that it's a trade[35], I'll have a trade, he said, 'Fair enough,' and I was signed on to start in the Eden Colliery. (Dave W, RG 07/09/2020).

In Consett, there was alternative employment, but -

> If you were a Catholic, you could struggle to get a job in the steelworks. (Peter B (RG. 09/09/2020).

Women usually worked in shops, factories, or offices but often ceased employment when they married or were pregnant with their first child.

[35] This means that he was to be trained as a skilled craftsman.

> Well, I continued to work; we saved up a little bit and went on some holidays abroad, and then I became pregnant. And I left work and became a full-time mam. (Elspeth F. RG 16/03/2020).

Large families were a feature of the mining villages. I recall several large families in Hetton. As a child, I had friends from a family of twelve children.

> My sister's husband was a miner, and he had sixteen brothers. And each of them worked in the local pit. Everything revolved around the pit when you left school, and you had to go to the mine if your father was employed there. (Bill F RG 16/03/2020).

Several former miners told me that rather than feeling nostalgic about a particular place, their sense of belonging was to the mining industry, not to a village or colliery. Some people had worked in several pits and had moved home accordingly. The men who had been in other occupations since the pits closed still identified themselves as miners. For example, one of the volunteer curators of the Durham Mining Museum at Spennymoor had worked in the local cigarette factory for thirty years but still saw himself as a miner.

Former miners liked to meet up with their old colleagues and reminisce about their mining days, and some were actively involved in heritage activities.

> When you have 30 years down the mine, it doesn't leave you easily; it's always with you all the time. In fact, I'll be meeting four guys tomorrow; every Tuesday we meet, and we all worked in the mines and most of the conversation will be about the old days. I've actually got the old Chester Moor Colliery banner at the moment. And we are in the process of raising some funds to get it restored. So that's one of the projects that I've got on at the moment (Bill F RG 16/03/2020).

As previously stated, my research was focused on miners and their families; they tended not to have much to say about their home lives. All miners typically had similar home lives - wives who worked minimally outside the home and large families

to support. There may not be seen as much unique to share or distinguish about one's domestic life. When miners gathered and reminisced, the focus was enjoying shared memories around meaningful mining experiences. There was little time or need to bring up individual home lives.

4.5 Summary and Conclusions

This chapter has explored the interrelated concepts of social memory, place attachment, and belonging in the post-industrial former mining town of Hetton-le-Hole. Drawing on Maurice Halbwachs' theory of collective memory, it examined how residents construct a shared identity and attachment to place based on common interpretations of the town's coal mining history.

I returned to Hetton after a 20-year absence and walked around with longtime resident Martin to observe the dramatic physical changes to the landscape resulting from deindustrialisation and urban redevelopment. Martin's vivid, granular descriptions of now-demolished sites prompted detailed recollections of close-knit communities in decades past, even as new housing developments alter the visual landscape. This demonstrated how the mining era indelibly shaped townspeople’s worldviews and attachments.

Interactions with the local history association and during informal social gatherings also revealed an impressive command of details related to Hetton's industrial past. This further evidenced how deeply history resides in collective memories, fostering an ongoing sense of belonging despite economic transformations. Famous sons connected to mining, such as record producer Trevor Horn and football manager Bob Paisley, help cement ties binding Hettonians to their legacy.

Overall, while the chapter confronted the stark realities of post-industrial decline, it also uncovered spaces of resilience—the Methodist church hall reinforcing communal bonds, miners’ reunions fuelling nostalgia, and a shared interpretation of heritage persisting as a social glue.

This analysis of place attachment, memory and belonging in a former mining community relates directly to the research interest in how post-industrial towns can evoke recollections and imaginations of a shared history rooted in coal mining. Despite massive economic and physical changes rendering the landscape nearly unrecognisable, Hettonians retain deep connections to mining heritage through intertwined spaces of memory, narrative, and communal interaction. Granular descriptions of now-vanished sites trigger vivid recollections of the storied past. Local history groups work actively to document and preserve community knowledge. Stories of famous native sons keep memories of hard lives and a sense of solidarity alive.

This conclusion situates Hetton as exemplifying how reflective nostalgia around a romanticised industrial era can paradoxically fuel a hopeful sense of identity and belonging in the present. When anchored to spaces of communal interaction like working men's clubs and church halls, idealised recollections of tight-knit mining communities become a social glue forging ongoing attachments. This suggests that through collective remembrance and heritage preservation efforts, post-industrial towns can reinvent themselves around imaginaries rooted in their storied legacies.

Chapter 5 Space Leisure and Belonging

5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the complex phenomenon of nostalgia as it relates to the erosion of spaces and practices that historically nurtured community and belonging within the former mining village of Hetton-le-Hole. As Dominic Boyer (2006) elucidates, nostalgic discourses embed within them a 'politics of the future' – hints of what is hoped for and feared regarding a community's prospects. Nostalgia entangles loss and longing with anticipation. It operates within a society's imagined horizon of expectations, weaving visions of a vanished past with ideals yet to be realised.

In the chapter, I probe the complex spatial dynamics and contested processes of belonging encoded in the everyday, often taken-for-granted leisure venues that hold affective meaning for marginalised people. Narratives of loss and nostalgia swirl around demolished landmarks; fierce efforts to preserve remaining pigeon sheds and allotments tell of deep attachments to place and way of life.

I aim to show how sociocultural ecosystems enabling mutual security and citizenship have degraded over time for marginalised communities, fuelling nostalgia that entwines loss with demanding voices that must shape any vision for just, inclusive futures in the region and beyond.

In collecting personal narratives and collective discourses of nostalgia, I probe the dialectic between continuity and discontinuity that mining communities navigate amidst rupture. Specifically, I show how attachment to demolished or faded landmarks of leisure and recreation reflects anxiety regarding the resources for solidarity and mutual aid in the present. Laments over lost sporting grounds, public houses and communal halls bespeak a yearning for forms of collectivism seen as

foundational to working-class identity yet imperilled in the atomised, post-industrial landscape.

As anthropologists studying how communities experience time and maintain cultural patterns, examining nostalgia helps us understand the complex temporal nature of mining settlements. These communities simultaneously look to the past and future. By studying how people remember and long for shared spaces and community events, we can identify threads of continuity that help struggling populations cope with dramatic changes. At the same time, we must critically analyse how nostalgic narratives can become moral arguments calling for the revival of spaces and policies that promote social cohesion. I explore the intricate connections between leisure activities, social spaces, and notions of identity and belonging within mining communities in North East England. Drawing on historical records, social media ethnography, and oral history interviews in the town of Hetton-le-Hole, I investigate how recreational practices and locales shaped communal bonds and the cultivation of place-based working-class identity.

The analysis is situated in relation to Alan Metcalfe's seminal research on leisure and sport in late 19th- and early 20th-century mining villages. His granular examination documented the centrality of brass bands, pubs, reading groups, and myriad pursuits in forging solidarity among marginalised mine workers during periods of technological upheaval. Building on Metcalfe's scholarship, I offer a contemporary exploration of leisure's role in the post-industrial present.

The initial sections introduce relevant social theories related to spaces, identity, and class. I then delve into the memories and attachments of Hetton residents to meaningful leisure sites, such as cinemas, pubs, and church halls, showing how deeply ingrained these were as landmarks within the community's heritage. I outline the many activities and events that comprised everyday social life across mining settlements, from pigeon racing to talent contests at the local Miners Hall.

Residents expressed nostalgia for demolished or faded leisure institutions such as cinemas, sports grounds and the Miners' Hall. This reveals how these places held

cherished meaning for the community and its identity. Their loss is lamented. When a Facebook image of a bowling team was posted, it elicited nostalgic reflections from commenters. Two women recognised their father in the photo. Others fondly reminisced about watching games and eating picnics in the park. The demise of facilities and green spaces that once existed at Hetton Park is noted with nostalgia and seen as a loss to the community's heritage. People reflect on the band hall that was relocated to the Beamish Museum, as it represented a significant cultural landmark. More generally, the shared experiences and tales communicated through social media postings and interviews reveal sentimental ties to establishments, events, and locations associated with the leisure past of mining towns. Thus, the analysis reveals that locals yearn for the recreation areas, social gathering places, and physical locations that were once integral to their community's existence but have since disappeared or been destroyed. They miss these unique locations and time spent together. A deep imprint of this shared legacy on their collective identity and sense of place is indicated by nostalgia for it.

By sharing their stories, informants reveal the nuanced ways in which leisure practices facilitated cultural rituals and forms of social bonding. By tracing this lived experience, the analysis reveals how recreational activities provided essential venues through which solidarities were forged and a sense of belonging cultivated among mining populations.

5.2 The Spatial Division of Everyday Life

As Henri Lefebvre (2012) theorised, social existence acquires meaning through spatialisation: it is the ongoing production of ‘social space’ that structures possibilities for interpersonal connections and shared experiences. Within the gendered and classed contexts of industrial villages, specific leisure sites facilitated cultural rituals and modes of community building. Football pitches, pubs, union halls and religious buildings anchored civic participation and cross-cutting social ties in mining settlements otherwise bifurcated by mine/home divides under capitalist

relations. Nonetheless, exclusionary practices, sometimes subtle, sometimes explicit - adhered within these spaces despite pretensions to inclusivity.

5.3 Public Houses and Workmen's Clubs

According to Sandiford and Divers (2011), pubs have long been an integral part of British society, often regarded as a cornerstone of community life. They feature prominently in classic British literature from Chaucer to Dickens, reflecting and shaping their significance. More recently, they have become a common dramatic device on television and radio, further indicating their cultural centrality. However, despite the pub's traditional social importance, their viability has come under increasing threat in recent years. As Smith discusses, the decline of small businesses like village pubs can induce a profound 'sense of angst' (Smith 2008, p.3) and a feeling of communal loss, illustrating the passing of a treasured way of life. Though once seen as essential for sustaining communities, the closure of rural pubs, post offices, and corner shops is now an accepted facet of economic and social change. So, while pubs retain a symbolic resonance in British culture, their actual status may be less secure than sentimental stereotypes suggest.

The pub is a critical analysis site for understanding community formation and social organisation. As a public arena facilitating interpersonal encounters, the pub constitutes a 'third space'[36] separate from private domestic environments and formal public spheres. Though the norms within such spaces may appear informal or disorganised to outsiders, a distinct culture emerges through the repeated interactions of habitual clientele in the unique spatiotemporal setting of the local pub.

'When individuals enter a particular pub, they are purchasing far more than a particular product, such as a drink or a meal. They also purchase an experience or ambience, which is associated with desire and the creation and expression of

[36] The idea of" **third space**" conceives the encounter of two distinct and unequal social groups as taking place in a special **third space Ikas, K. and Wagner, G. (2008)** ***Communicating in the third space*****. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge". .**

identity and lifestyle. What is important is not the actual products consumed but the meanings attached to those products (Watson and Bennett 2002, p. 207). Regular patrons co-create a coded system of implicit rules, behaviours, relationships, and shared meanings (Plecadite and Nagy n.d). In other words, what constitutes the distinctive 'pub culture' in each community is actively produced and reinforced from the bottom-up by participants through ongoing processes of interaction and negotiation.

As an anthropologist, observing and documenting these nuanced dynamics within English pubs can provide critical insights into how groups at the micro level socially construct spaces, identities, and notions of community. Rather than disorderly spaces as occasionally perceived by those unfamiliar with their internal logics, regular pubs consistently regulate and reproduce cultural forms by 'societies-writ-small.'

Writing in the journal *Medical Anthropology*, Hunt and Satterlee (2023) investigated the drinking practices of two socially contrasting groups. It examined how pubs establish separate group identities and maintain social boundaries. Instead of helping to dissolve any social barriers that might have existed between such social groups, pubs tended to consolidate them. I did not find their results surprising. In February 2018, Hetton resident Susan Hodkinson asked on Facebook, 'What was your favourite pub in Hetton'? Susan's question brought forward 236 responses[37]and people referred to The Bat Cave, The Top House, and The No. 9, none of which were the correct names of the pubs. Reading through the hundreds of responses, I confirmed what I already knew. Some pubs were rough, and one could expect to see or be involved in a disturbance. Others, such as The Caroline, were renowned for having good bands playing on Saturdays.

The Cross House was reputed to be haunted, and the owner of the present house, Karen Brook, asks, 'We need to find out who the miner is that comes in the house still thinking it's a pub' he's been seen a few times walking from one room to another

[37] (20+) Hetton Le Hole in Pictures administered by Hetton Local and Natural History | Facebook

through the walls. (Brook 2015). This led to a series of posts referring to the pub being haunted. For example, John Goymer posted -

> Bob Gordon's wife, Violet - my grandma - died in the Cross House of Diabetes at the age of thirty-one. Her photo hung in our house as kids. As a little child, my sister said repeatedly, 'That lady talks to me.'
> Mam eventually had the horrors and took the photo down. My sister objected, saying that 'the lady' was lovely and that she said how much she loved her. In the 1980s, a newspaper story about the family in The Cross House told how the children said a lady spoke to them and was friendly and affectionate. We obviously saw the connection between Violet's early death, leaving four very young children in the Cross House, my sister's experience, and the Echo story. Her children, including my mam, had to be sent to live with other family. Hope that qualifies as spooky!! (Goymer 2015).

Pubs were centres for organised sports and recreation. Darts teams, both men's and women's, were associated with the pubs, indicating a level of gender inclusivity. Football teams were also associated with the pubs. These establishments acted as focal points for organised sports and recreational activities within the community.

One traditional sport, quoits, was revived in the early 1960s. At that time, I was working for a small engineering firm. As a sideline, my co-workers and I made the equipment and installed it in the pub backyards in the evenings. Although we didn't realise it at the time, we were contributing to the preservation of local heritage.

An alternative to the pub was the working men's clubs. Lawrence Marlow (1980) explains the origin, development, and ideology of the workingmen's club movement. The movement was founded in 1862 to deliver a pleasant, relaxing space for the working man after his day's work. It was to be an alternative to the public house, a place of sober self-improvement. Its founders came from the nobility and the clergy. The ideology was paternalistic, based on the notion that working men were not yet mature enough to know how to spend their leisure time. The problem with the theory,

though, was that the movement needed to attract what Marlow terms the 'superior' working men, those who were already establishing themselves through the trade unions and the political system, the very people who would not subordinate themselves to the benevolent despots who were running what by 1862 had become the Clubs and Institutes Union (CIU); by the early 1880s, the clubs had become democratised and were being run *by* as well as *for* working men. By then, the clubs were no longer 'dry'; after much controversy and debate, some clubs started selling beer in 1886.

5.4 Theatres and Cinemas in Hetton-le-Hole

In the 19th century, entertainment in Hetton-le-Hole and surrounding areas was makeshift and local. Specifically, basic theatres operated out of the backyards of venues such as pubs. For example, in 1840, Collets Theatre was located behind the Brewers Arms pub in Hetton-le-Hole. Similarly, in 1890, a theatre run by Mr Thompson, the cabinet maker, operated behind the Free Gardeners Arms pub in Easington Lane.

The main formal venue for live entertainment in Hetton-le-Hole was the Standard Theatre, which was purpose-built in 1874 with a seating capacity of 800 people. It featured a gallery, changing rooms, a stage, and storage sheds. Many famous performers appeared there before it closed and was converted into a bus parking facility in 1916. Its history was fascinating enough to attract the curiosity of British comedian and music hall historian Roy Hudd.

In 1909, Ralph Barton built another entertainment venue called the Pavilion, which served as a theatre and an early cinema. Local groups like the Hetton Amateur Operatic Society put on productions there over the years. It also hosted silent films accompanied by live musicians. Films were swapped between the Pavilion and other local cinemas to vary offerings. In addition to entertainment, the Barton family also used the Pavilion to run soup kitchens during the 1926 miners' strike. After over 40 years in operation, the Pavilion finally closed in 1959, ending the era of live theatrical

entertainment in Hetton-le-Hole. The first of the Pavilion managers was Mr W Lindon Travers, father of the film stars Bill and Linden Travers.

The mention of Lindon Travers reminded me of an afternoon when I was visiting my mother, who was watching a 1938 film, *The Lady Vanishes*. One of the stars in the film was Linden Travers, the daughter of the cinema manager. Linden's brother was Bill Travers, also a film actor and husband of the actress Virginia McKenna. My mother had been Linden's schoolmate at La Sagesse Independent Catholic School in Jesmond, Newcastle. This is an example of the connections to famous people that many residents have mentioned.

Another famous name mentioned was 'Bud Flanagan,' who, it appears, met the woman who was to become his wife whilst they were both appearing at Hetton, he as a comedian, she as a dancer.[38] Kevin Hope posted.

> At Hetton-le-Hole, Robert (Bud Flanagan) serenaded Annie with a ukulele in one hand and a duck in the other! (Hope 2023).

In 2018, Kevin posted a photograph of the football manager Bob Paisley.

> Hetton's most famous son (along with other local heroes) (Hope 2018).

Hetton has a reputation for producing top-class footballers. In 2014, Norman Hall posted photographs of seven footballers with the question -

> Seven local lads who played professional football, who knows who they are and who they played for? (Hall 2014).

Trevor Swinburne and sixty-four others offered answers. This is an indication of the interest and knowledge of local football heroes.

> Bob Paisley (Liverpool) and Ralph Coates (Burnley & Tottenham) top row middle. Keith Robson (Newcastle, West Ham, Norwich, Carlisle) and

[38] At the time Flanagan was calling himself Robert Winthrop, his birth name was Chaim Reuben Weintrop.

> Harry Potts Manager of Burnley, perhaps played for them too) bottom row on the ends. (Swinburne 2014).

In 2016, Billy Mollon posted a photograph of the musician and producer Trevor Horn as a young boy.

> Video Killed the Radio39 Star, but it did not do this young lad any harm; I believe he came from Hetton. (Mollon 2016).

The connection with The Princess of Wales is often mentioned. For example, Sharon Rebollar posted a family photograph with the following caption.

> This is a photo that I have of John and Jane Harrison. John and Jane are my great-grandparents and great-great-grandparents of Kate Middleton. My grandmother Gladys Harrison (later Young) is the little girl on the right, and her brother Thomas is Kate's great-grandad. I now live near Chicago, but I'd love to hear from anybody who knew my mam and dad (John and Audrey Jobson), my grandparents (Gladys and Jack Young), or any other relatives. (Rebollar 2018).

The discussion on local cinemas and theatres on Facebook began in January 2018 when local resident Christine Scott posted a newspaper clipping announcing the closure of the *Imperial Cinema* in May 1959. I remembered *The Imp* as it was known. I lived only 250 meters from it and regularly went there; two of my aunts worked as cleaners. The post prompted many residents to post their stories. More than one thousand comments were posted on the Hetton le Hole in Pictures page; this is a further example of the interest in local history facilitated by social media. Examples of comments were -

> My mam used to take me there occasionally I would only be about five or six years old. I remember there was a small, sweet shop opposite, and I was allowed two ounces of whatever; I never did see the film as I always

[39] A 1979 hit record by *The Buggles.*

went to sleep (after the sweeties were eaten, of course). Thank you for bringing such a lovely memory back. (Sandra Wigham).

Thanks for the photo, Christine -I was thinking about the Cosy (cinema) the other day! I spent my Saturday mornings watching Westerns. (Sandra Surtees).

Remember, at all the picture houses, as we called them double back seats for courting couples, I Bet there's a few memories of those. (Christine Scott).

I Remember taking three empty pop bottles back to the Social Club; they had a three-penny stamp glued on the side of each bottle. Used the nine pence to get into the 'dog end'[i] of the Imperial to see thirteen ghosts. (Brian Watchman Anderson).

5.5 The Good Templars

An organisation that was the antithesis of the drinking establishments mentioned above was the Good Templars. My paternal grandmother was a member. However, I knew little about it. I include this in a chapter on leisure because its primary purpose was to encourage people away from the establishments that served alcohol. They did this by offering alternatives. The Good Templars are an international temperance organisation that promotes total abstinence from alcohol. The organisation was founded in 1851 in Utica, New York, and spread rapidly. Thousands of lodges were created by the 1870s (Turnbull 1901). Members took a pledge to abstain from all alcoholic drinks and discouraged their use by others. The Good Templars aim to provide a supportive community and social activities as an alternative to drinking in pubs. They are organised into local lodges with rituals and structures similar to Freemasonry. Membership is open to both men and women. The lodges offer education on the dangers of alcohol, as well as provide mutual support. The organisation promotes legislative measures against alcohol and partners with other

temperance groups worldwide. Overall, the Good Templars seek to reduce the social acceptability and availability of alcohol through grassroots mobilisation and public education (Malins 1874; Fahey and Cherrington 2003).

In November 2017, I posted on Facebook, asking people to share their memories of the organisation.

Margaret Willis was able to provide detailed information about *The Templars.*

> I went there as a 'juvenile' and my Mam and dad, and many members of my extended family went there for years. The members were known as brothers or sisters and wore a regalia which was a sort of shoulder collar much embroidered and with a badge. My dad, George Carr, was secretary and treasurer for years. For me, it was great fun with social evenings, day trips to the seaside, quizzes and everyone did a turn, like singing and reciting poems. My dad was famous for his poem 'Nannies Washing Day,' which was said in broad pitmatic dialect. The ladies baked, and it was lovely except for my great aunt Florrie's potted meat sandwiches, which were awful!
>
> Happy days. Another interesting fact is that most pit villages had an IOGT, and they would visit each other, which widened interest and friendships.

Anne Gray posted, *'*Grandma Coxon used to go to the Templars - I think it was near the shops on Market Street but can't be sure - I can picture the hall but not too sure of location.' I then realised that Anne was my cousin whom I had always known as Annabelle, thus restoring a long-neglected familial connection. Another cousin, Margaret, realised who Anne was and joined the conversation.

The Good Templars played an essential role for many residents of Hetton-le-Hole who wished to avoid drinking establishments and promote temperance values by providing an alternative supportive community organised around educating people on the harms of alcohol, hosting cultural activities and entertainment events. The Templars were not religious but shared the values of such orders, particularly the

Primitive Methodists. The churches also offered alternative entertainment opportunities that did not involve alcohol consumption.

5.6 Churches as Recreational Venues

The Union Street Methodist Church and Hall and St Nicholas's Church were venues for secular and religious activities. For example, a local operatic society would perform Gilbert and Sullivan operettas. As lifelong Hetton resident Margaret described, they were also used for professional performances.

> I was married in Union St Chapel in 1959 by the Rev. Beddard Smith. As a child, I was taken with my parents to the Good Friday Messiah and other concerts by Joan Sutherland, Gwen Catley, Isobel Bailey, and Kathleen Ferrier. The concerts were held in the church because the organ was used, and the chapel choir sometimes took part. Also, I believe the acoustics were good. I don't remember any Gilbert and Sullivan operettas, but the soloists I mentioned may have sung some of their music.
> Apart from the Good Friday concerts, which were very solemn, the other events were more of a musical evening and lighter in tone.
> I remember Gwen Catley singing The Bell Song and Kathleen Ferrier singing Blow the Wind Southerly. Another was a chap called Heddel Nash. The Chapel was packed for every performance, and lessons were learned for people who sang locally: My Mam, who was a fine soprano and my great aunt Florrie, who was a formidable contralto. These concerts were significant in the days before TV and the technology of today (Margaret W).

I was surprised to hear that such international stars as Joan Sutherland and Kathleen Ferrier had appeared at a Hetton church. However, from her diaries, I found that she had indeed appeared in Hetton on July 29 and 30, 1944. She stayed at the County Hotel in Durham for the following seven days, having previously been engaged in broadcasting from Manchester. This was a singer who had performed at

venues such as Covent Garden and Carnegie Hall, as well as for royalty at private parties.

I found the programmes for the annual concerts of Hetton Lyons Male Voice Choir. Their 1949 and 1951 concerts featured Gwen Cately in the Methodist Church; in 1950, 1953 and 1959, the Polish bass Marian Nowkowski was the headliner, and the 1952 event featured Joan Butler and Andrew Macpherson. In 1967, the venue changed to St Nichols's Church, where the concerts featuring internationally famous artists continued. The last programme I found was for 1985, when Thomas Allen, now Sir Thomas Allen, Chancellor of Durham University from 2012 to 2022, was the starring performer.

In the days before widespread access to television and modern technology, these church-based concerts and performances served as critical cultural outlets for the people of Hetton. They brought world-class talent to the local community, provided a platform for homegrown artists, and fostered a sense of shared cultural experience and pride. The significance of these venues lies in their ability to transcend their primary religious function and serve as vibrant spaces for cultural enrichment and community engagement.

5.7 Brass Bands

Most of the colliery towns and villages had a brass band. The Hetton Silver Band[40] was established on April 1st, 1887, by three band members who played in a local public house and invited musicians to a meeting in the Methodist Church School. The band paid the Hetton Coal Company for a small piece of ground near South Market Street, where they erected a tin shed as a place to practise. At the national brass band tournament in London in 1912, the band took home first place (also known as the 'One Thousand Guinea Trophy'). The brick structure known as Hetton

[40] Silver bands were the same as brass bands, the only difference being their instruments were silver plated, the instruments were more expensive, and the bands were perceived as being somehow superior.

Silver Band Hall eventually replaced the tin hut about that time with the help of the winnings. My father was the bass trombonist in the band for many years. He features in many of the photographs on the Hetton Facebook pages; being a trombonist, he is always at the front, but the music sheet usually obscures his face. I joined the band as a young boy but suffered a medium-term illness and never returned. The band won many prizes during its lifetime; I recall being with them in London in 1960, where they won fourth prize in a national competition. One of the other bands was missing their bass trombonist on that occasion, and my father substituted for him. The band joined forces with another brass band in the area in 2009 to become Durham Miners' Association Brass Band. The Hall was disassembled and rebuilt at Beamish Museum. I have conducted visits to Durham and the university on tours of the Beamish pit village on several occasions.

5.8 The Miners Hall

The Miners Hall was a large building used mainly for social events, as described below, but also for union and other meetings and as a headquarters of the Labour Party during election campaigns. There were dances in the Miners Hall on Saturday nights. Fights were frequent and seemed to be pre-planned. The dances were an arena where the young males could establish their position in the peer group's hierarchy and attract the local females' attention. Several of my participants told stories of these fights.

During interviews with longtime residents, specific themes around leisure activities and social hierarchies emerged repeatedly. Informants often recounted vivid stories from their youth about the regular Saturday night dances held at the local Miners Hall. Several men described rituals of masculine competition and courtship displays that frequently erupted into planned fights between rivals. Ian H. recalled,

> I was on the [dance] floor when Tommy Hedley burst into the dance; he lifted one end, and we all slid off. He picked it up and threw it across the hall, great fun.

Other former attendees explained how these dances served as theatres where young men could establish and negotiate their status within the peer group through public acts of strength and bravado. As Robert G. shared,

> I can remember the entrance to the Hall. The seating area branched out on the right and left sides, and I was behind [Tommy] in the queue; Tommy chased the people into the left side entrance, ran back, winked at me, and confronted them.

Informants also mentioned Tommy Hedley's exploits specifically, painting a picture of a locally renowned, larger-than-life figure who would gain entry by smashing doors and could 'not be crossed.' As Derrick R. summarised succinctly, '*A great lad but not one to be crossed. Real good un.*' Tales abounded about his superhuman strength and audacious pranks, solidifying his legendary status over generations.

These stories highlight underlying social structures, value systems, and coming-of-age rituals within mining communities that warrant further investigation through participant observation and symbolic analysis. By elucidating these cultural patterns, my research aims to contribute to a more textured, emic understanding of post-industrial northern English towns.

> There used to be quite a few concerts held there in the fifties, and groups played in the sixties. There were also mid-week dances as well. (Robert G).

> I Sang and danced on the stage many times with Margaret Jackson's dancing group. We always had a big audience, and you felt as if you had made the big time!! Very special memories. (Glenys S).

Ken A remembers the Saturday afternoon dances.,

> I remember all the beautiful dresses the young ladies wore, all the dancing and the extracurricular activities.

Bands at the Hall inspired Stuart B:

> I remember seeing some really good bands at this venue and inspired me to join a band, and I ended up playing in a band in London in sixty-seven ‘I had a great time and stopped there for 35 years.

Fist Fighting and Boxing

As Alan Metcalfe (2006, pp. 111-112) points out, fighting was an integral part of life in the mining villages of the 1840s. As evidenced by Salisbury (1916, p. 154), it was still common in Durham in the early 20th century. Section 5.8 of this chapter illustrates that fights were common in Hetton during the 1960s. This was all part of the concept of masculinity, as discussed in Chapter 3.4 of this thesis.

In February 2016, Stephen Emmet posted a newspaper report of a boxing match in which his grandfather Robert Emmet, who won two of five professional contests between 1926 and 1934. John Cook then posted the picture below of Robert participating in a fight in an unknown location. The photograph was from the collection of Jessie Emmet, Hetton’s female blacksmith. Robert also ran a boxing club in Hetton and returned to mining after the end of his boxing career.

Figure 5-1 Boxing Match. Photo Hetton Local History

Stephen also posted the newspaper cuttings below of boxing matches in the Miners Hall. Stephen lives in New Zealand but regularly contributes to the *Hetton-le-Hole in Pictures Page.* The photos enable him to remain symbolically connected to a cherished place with personal significance, reflecting his roots, identity, community, and formative experiences growing up. Sharing the images online is a way to maintain psychological proximity and nostalgic ties. The photos can aid in storytelling about their upbringing in the villages, sparking interest and comments from others.

IN HETTON RING

Rival boxing camps, from the twin towns of Hetton and Houghton were prominent at the Hetton-le-Hole Miners' Hall last night.

Edgar Snow, of Houghton-le-Spring, deputized for his brother Jim, in the principal boxing contest. He met Con Evans, of Sunderland, who was forced to retire at the end of the fourth round with an injured arm.

Young Straughan, of Hetton, met Young Donald, of Houghton, in a six-round return match. Straughan was early in trouble, being down for three counts, and was knocked-out in the first round.

In supporting contests, George Richardson, of Houghton, and Mick Corbett, of Burnmoor, boxed a draw. Bobby Emmett (Hetton) beat Ralph Oliver (Houghton) on points; and Ginger Allen, of Houghton, gained a points decision over Young Kitson, of Hetton.

HETTON-LE-HOLE BOUTS

At the Hetton-le-Hole Miners' Hall, last night, Mattie Hinds (Belmont) beat Billy Johnson (North Shields), who retired in the sixth round.

In supporting four round contests, Bobby Emmett (Hetton) lost to Charley Harker (Ludworth); Young Donald (Houghton) and Young Straughan (Hetton) boxed a draw; Mickie Hulme (Ludworth) knocked out Kid Gibson (Hetton) in first round; and Charlie Dick (Chester) beat Tommy Maddon (Houghton) on points.

The Follies

John H remembered events known as The Follies

> As far as I remember, the Follies was put on by the Eppleton miners a couple of times. It consisted of 'turns' by the lads, including a very good comedian' I think, called Clem and a girl from the office who was a superb whistler. There were also good singers. The highlight was the 'chorus girls' - a troupe of bandy-legged fellows of all shapes and sizes and ages wearing a mixture of pit clothes and dresses. I remember my father appearing in one of these revues. He was dressed as a woman but retained his ginger handlebar moustache. These events were held to raise

Concert Party Raises Funds

"EPPLETON FOLLIES"

Durham Chronicle Photograph

SINCE it was formed in 1950 **Eppleton** follies concert party has raised hundreds of pounds for local charities. Most of the money raised this year (£100) will help to provide three trophies for ambulance contests.

The trophies, named after Ronald Foster, Norman Holmes and 'The Seven Comrades' will commemorate the men who lost their lives in the Eppleton disaster of 1951.

All the members of the concert party work at Eppleton. Chorus girls are from the pit canteen.

Figure 5-2 The Follies. Photo Hetton Local History

funds for trophies for ‘ambulance contests’ and competitions in first aid held by the St John’s Ambulance Brigade.

Other Events

The Hall was also used for many other purposes, such as meetings of various organisations, children’s talent competitions, elections, and the collection of union subscriptions. It was a central hub of the mining community. There were also miners’ halls at Easington Lane and Moorsley.

The government and the union treated miners' well-being as an essential issue. The Miners' Welfare Fund was established in 1920 based on the Sankey Commission's recommendation to improve mining communities' housing, amenities, and general well-being. It was financed through a levy of one penny per ton of coal output. The Fund was administered nationally by the Miners' Welfare Committee (later the Commission) and locally by District Welfare Committees, which comprised representatives from both industry and unions. The objects of the Fund evolved through various Acts of Parliament, focusing on recreation, healthcare, education, pithead baths, and mine safety research for miners and their dependents. Housing and social insurance were explicitly excluded from the Fund's scope (Morgan 1990).

In 1952, the Fund was abolished and replaced by the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organization (CISWO), marking a shift towards company-provided pithead welfare and union-managed community programs. CISWO was a joint body of the unions and the NCB, and it aimed to promote the welfare of coal miners and their communities. It provided educational funds to miners and their families, enabling them to pursue higher education at colleges and universities, and was committed to preserving the industry's heritage. CISWO, perhaps more than anything else, symbolised the consensual aims of the nationalised industry. However, this relationship ended with the privatisation of the industry when CISWO became a charitable trust. It continues to support former miners and their dependents by

offering guidance and practical assistance.[41] Eppleton and Elemore collieries had miners' institutes sometimes called 'The Welfare.' Eppleton's was referred to as 'The Tute.'

According to Bulmer (1978, p.32), these organisations 'lie at the centre of the community's interlocking social networks.' Most of these institutes, which included smoking rooms, gaming rooms, billiard rooms, bars, and offices, were constructed near the mines and the miners' homes. According to Dennis et al. (1969), the general neglect of these mining villages was what made these services necessary, as well as the accompanying caregiving, volunteerism, and nonprofit organisations (see Bulmer 1975). Elermore's building still serves a similar purpose, now known as the Easington Lane Community Action Project. In addition to providing various services to the local community, it also features a small mining museum and a photographic exhibition. It is also home to the Elemore Banner Group[42].

5.9 Reading Rooms

In the 19th Century, reading rooms were established as places for educational and social purposes. The upper classes initially imposed them on the lower classes. Their establishment reflected contemporary views on philanthropy, leisure, and self-help, while reaffirming the stark socioeconomic divide. They were seen as an alternative to the alehouse, a means of discouraging drunkenness (King 2009, p. 164).

Brendan Duffy (2018) has argued that before 1870, there was a growing enthusiasm for self-education in the Northern Coalfield, as evidenced by the spread of mechanics' institutes, reading rooms, and mutual improvement societies. Although quality was often lacking and population growth resulting from migration created challenges, the author contends that educational gains were real, if modest, and built

[41] Welfare - NUM Info
[42] The group which curates the Elemore Colliery banner which is paraded at the annual Durham Miners' Gala (see Chapter 8) and displayed at heritage event throughout the area.

on grassroots efforts by workers themselves. Quantifiable literacy improvements occurred from the 1840s onward, coinciding with the rise of Methodism's cultural influence. By the 1860s, schooling assumed greater priority across coalfield communities.

Iona Craig (2023) explored the complex history of reading rooms in 19th-century British mining communities. She shows how some reformers envisioned them as tools to improve and pacify workers morally but also served as grassroots hubs of self-education, leisure, and union organising. A case study of Ryhope Colliery illustrates these tensions, as a company-built reading room later catalysed strike actions before the union erected its own hall. While fantasies of the rooms quelling class conflict proved misguided, they nonetheless mediated fraught power dynamics in mining regions. The article argues that reading rooms were vital sites that provided miners with essential access to information and fellowship, although their oversight was contested. Tracing their extensive usage, evidence suggests both working-class agency and the ideological strains surrounding efforts to shape labourers' lives.

Kirstie Blair (2022) researched the literary culture of North East Miners. She found that trade unionists served on committees for their local libraries. For instance, the miner and poet Henderson Fawcett avidly backed the Colliery Literary and Reading Society at Castle Eden in Durham (initially established in 1848 with sixty-six members, an unusual number that included eleven women). In the late 1840s, Fawcett was a well-known trades unionist who spoke about mining safety at large gatherings of thousands. He recounted in an 1862 speech that his commitment to development began at Castle Eden and led to his transition from hewer to 'inspector' rather than staying in that job. He claims that the Castle Eden Colliery Literary and Reading Society played a significant role. In 1862, he also informed his audience that, despite colliery management's backing for the association, 'We would wish to proclaim to all the world that you left us uncontrolled in the government of the society, and never once assumed the right to control our actions' (Durham Chronicle, 10 October 1862) indicating that there was no contradiction in a passionate agitator

for miners' rights holding office on a workplace library committee. The colliery libraries and reading rooms served as a stepping stone to both effective activism, in terms of writing speeches and journalism, as well as to higher-level and better-paid jobs in the industry, for aspirational young miners born in Northumberland and Durham in the early to mid-nineteenth century. However, they declined with the rise of public libraries and general educational advances; yet, as shown below, they were still remembered by residents born in the 1940s and 1950s.

Reading materials were scarce in early mining communities, limiting opportunities for self-education. As miner Edward Rymer described of Northern pits in the 1840s, books were rare and periodicals unavailable (Rymer 1898, p. 5). When I asked them, many Hetton residents remembered the reading rooms. They told me that the first in Hetton was opened in 1849 in the town centre, another in the Miners Hall, built in 1883, and two in local pubs. The Colliery Institute was built by the Hetton Coal Company in 1892, and the Church Institute was constructed in 1900; it also housed a reading room. Some reading rooms also included leisure facilities such as billiard tables. A reading room opened in 1849 next to the Barrington School, which contained three hundred volumes and was well supplied with the leading papers and periodicals. There was also a reading room and lecture hall in the Miners Hall, built in 1883, and another next to the Brewers Arms on Front Street. There was a reading room in the Colliery Inn. Thus, reading rooms and allied facilities were vital in early mining settlements, providing essential access to information, education, and community fellowship. Despite tensions surrounding oversight and quality, they nonetheless highlighted fault lines between authorities and labour, while enabling real, if modest, literacy gains built on grassroots efforts. Their contested history illuminates the ideological strains surrounding improvement initiatives and working-class experiences in 19th-century coalfield villages.

5.10 Football and Cricket

Football was popular in all mining settlements. The principal teams in the Hetton Area were the Colliery Welfare teams. Both Eppleton and Elemore had such a team. Sunderland AFC's ladies and reserves currently use the Hetton pitch. Some local people recollected a game at Easington Lane where the trumpet player Eddie Calvert kicked off the match. Eddie was born in Preston, and no one seems sure about any connection to Hetton. Hetton Methodist Church also had a football team.

The Colliery Welfare had a cricket team. Two clubs connected with the Lyons and Eppleton collieries, both of which still exist, never played against each other as they were in different leagues. My father played for Eppleton, and I recall an occasion when he came out of retirement to keep wicket in a team of veterans.

Hetton produced several famous footballers, including Bob Paisley, who has a memorial to him in the town centre and Harry Potts, who was a player and manager at Burnley; Alan Ball, who played mainly in Scotland; and Ralph Coates, a one-time apprentice colliery fitter who played for several 1st Division clubs and England.

5.11 Hetton Park Tennis and Bowls

Hetton Park was popular for tennis, bowling, walking, picnics, and children's play.

Figure 5-3 Hetton Park Photo Hetton Local History

Tennis was one of the few sports women participated in after leaving school; Patricia used to play tennis in the park. 'I loved those tennis courts in my teens,' Lynn recalled. 'I remember Evelyn and myself sneaking through the locked gates via the fence just to play.'

Figure 5-4 Hetton Tennis Club Photo Hetton Local History

Many photographs on the Hetton Facebook pages feature the park, the bowling teams, and people's recollections of them. There are also pictures of the tennis club building, formerly a cricket pavilion. It can be seen from the photograph that there are at least as many women as men participating in the sport. Judging by the clothing, I would suggest that these people are predominantly from the middle classes. Metcalfe's research in East Northumberland found that the social elements of lawn tennis were at the centre of the club's *raison d'etre.* This was reflected in including women who played the game and became part of its administration. Metcalfe also noted that members were drawn mainly from the professions such as doctors, clergymen, colliery officials and teachers.

Bowls was also played in the park and on the grounds of the Big Club. The photograph below was posted on Facebook and elicited many comments. Reuben Atkinson commented, 'It was when the park was a park.' The picture also brought back memories; two women recognised their father. Others said they enjoyed watching the games whilst they ate a picnic.

Figure 5-5 Hetton Park Bowls Photo Hetton Local History

The personal recollections and photographs shared on social media reveal that tennis and bowls were popular pastimes at Hetton Park in the mid-20th century. Notably, the tennis club has attracted middle-class participants, including many women. This reflects broader trends in lawn tennis becoming an acceptable recreational activity for middle-class women during this period. The Bowls Club also had dedicated members participating in league games and friendly matches. Overall, the tennis courts and bowling greens provided many residents of Hetton-le-Hole with opportunities for sport, exercise, and socialising. Their demise, as noted in the nostalgic Facebook comments, is lamented as a loss to the community. The facilities and green spaces that once existed at Hetton Park formed an essential part of the town's heritage.

5.12 Cycling

Hetton did have a cycling club, but it was disbanded, and its members formed a club with cyclists in nearby Houghton-le-Spring in 1932. As evidenced by the photograph below, there was a bicycle club in Easington Lane in the 1890s. It appears that all

the members were male.

Figure 5-6 Easington Lane Cycling Club 1890s Photo Hetton Local History

Figure 5-7 Hetton Cycling Club 1950s. Photo Hetton Local History

The photograph to the left is of the Hetton Cycling Club; possibly taken in the 1950s, it shows several women present, unlike in the earlier picture.

Cycling was very much associated with the Labour Movement. The club formed between former members of Hetton and Houghton clubs became the Houghton Clarion Cycling Club. The Clarion was a socialist newspaper founded in 1891. Cycling clubs were ideal for spreading the socialist message because their members could travel considerable distances. There were approximately 200 of these clubs throughout Britain.

I learned about an intriguing sport called fixed-wheel cycling from Steve Bonsell. Because road racing had been banned for safety reasons, cyclists organised secret time trials instead. In these events, an official would time individual riders along predetermined routes. Steve told me he participated in trials as far north as Carlisle and Berwick. When I asked how he travelled to these races, he looked at me as if the answer should have been obvious: ‘Why, on me bike’. What made this especially remarkable was that after working full weeks in the mines, he would cycle over seventy miles to compete, stay overnight in a bed and breakfast, race the next morning, and then cycle all the way home—all on a bicycle that had no gears and couldn't coast because it lacked a freewheel mechanism.

5.13 Pigeon Racing

Pigeon racing was a popular sport amongst miners. Most of the miner’s cottages had extensive gardens, which afforded space to build the brightly painted lofts with their distinctive fence along the top, which was to discourage the birds from landing on the roof and entering the loft instead. In addition to the thrills and excitement of racing, pigeon racing also provided the more contemplative and educational pleasures of breeding and raising the birds. For some, the pigeon loft served as a haven for males, where they could escape the stresses of home life, while for others, it provided an opportunity to spend time with their families. Pigeon racing illustrates the nuanced aspects of working-class masculinity in this way. (Johnes 2007).

As they were known locally, the ’pigeon men’ were very proud of their lofts or ‘crees’ as they were called. In 1997, a massive controversy erupted in the mining village of

Ryhope when a developer sought to evict pigeon fanciers from their allotments. One local, Jack Surtees, told the BBC: ‘I'm prepared to ride over the bulldozers. They'll have to kill us; it's as simple as that.’ John Reid, an ex-miner, said the pigeons are as important to him as children, and he could not live without them. The men won a ten-year reprieve from redevelopment. One of them achieved listed status for his loft. A representative from English Heritage said: ‘These may not be stately homes or castles, but in terms of the culture in the north-east they're very much an important part of that, and I want to see that retained for future generations. ‘These allotments are a second home for me and the other lads. We are all pensioners who have worked hard all our lives, and we love growing vegetables and rearing birds to race.’ One man commented,

> It’s a way of life for us, something very traditional in this part of the world, and now they want to take it away. I'm not against anybody building new houses, but I don't see why we should give up a piece of land that means so much to us. All our wives are pigeon widows. We are here every day in whatever weather to tend to the birds. But at least our women know where we are.

. This comment reflects Johnes's point about masculinity (Johnes 2007). For example, Johnes argues that to avoid losing face amongst other men, it is easier for a man to express affection for a bird than to show emotion towards a child (Johnes 2007, p. 371).

Pigeon racing has long been popular in Hetton. The racers took their birds to the Big Club to have their times registered. Margaret T commented,

> My dad used to race pigeons; we had to stay away from the cree till the birds were back, then off he went to the big club with a clocking device; this brings back memories.’ Tommy Napper said, ‘I think all pigeon men in Hetton and Easington Lane were great pals and loved their sport. We had good nights at the annual pigeon suppers when club members received payouts and treated their families.

In 1902, a strike was sparked by the Hetton Coal Company's insistence that pigeon fanciers keep their birds confined at all times. This did not suit the men because they needed to exercise their birds. The dispute resulted in three or four thousand men being laid idle.

5.14 Summary and Conclusions

Leisure activities and spaces were deeply intertwined with the local identity and sense of belonging in mining towns. As nostalgic stories about pubs, band halls, and other meaningful venues poured forth, it became evident that these places held cherished significance as landmarks embedding community heritage.

Several vital factors tied leisure practices to the cultivation of place-based identity. Shared experiences of regular events, from flower and leek shows to football matches, fostered collective affiliations and connections amongst residents over time. Distinct local traditions, such as pigeon racing and darts leagues, have ingrained particular rituals and pursuits within the culture of mining towns. Meanwhile, the social atmospheres permeated venues such as working men's clubs and nourished social bonds through everyday interactions and conversations that knit the populace together.

Ultimately, demolished or fading establishments, such as cinemas, still sparked a sentimental attachment, underscoring their resonance as repositories of memory and identity. Recreational events, such as brass band performances, enacted solidarity, channelling broader working-class culture. However, although unifying in certain respects, leisure spaces also reflected societal hierarchies – subtly privileging some groups over others depending on factors such as gender, ethnicity, or age. Yet complexity is also adhered to here – the bridging capacity of pubs is one example that complicates straightforward divisions.

Ultimately, the anthropological data reveal how recreation areas serve as vital repositories for collective identity, meaning-making practices, and the lived

experiences of communities in formerly single-industry towns. Common interests encode the unique local environment, and memorialised establishments ignite strong linkages to place. The past and present converge as collective memory is tied to areas that are no longer accessible in temporal reality.

Chapter 6 Artistic Portrayals of the Mining Community

6.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to demonstrate how cultural representations serve as both narrative constructs and reflections of embodied realities while also acknowledging the complex interplay between past and present in shaping these representations.

Coal mining has long been a vibrant source of artistic inspiration across different eras and genres. Poets, playwrights, painters, and photographers have all used their art to portray miners and their communities. This chapter provides an overview of how mining communities and the mining industry have been represented across various cultural forms, including literature, visual arts, music, and film. By discussing and analysing diverse portrayals, the chapter sheds light on how mining heritage and culture have been preserved, interpreted, and reimagined over time.

I approach these cultural representations from an anthropological lens, considering how they reflect, and shape social meanings, collective identities, values, and power dynamics related to mining communities. As argued by scholars such as Astrid Erll (2022), cultural forms play an active role in constituting social realities and collective memories - 'novels and feature films are characterised by their power to shape the collective imagination of the past in a way that is truly fascinating for the literary scholar (and somewhat alarming for the historian)' (Erll, 2022, p. 189). Ivy Roy Sarkar and Rashmi Gaur (2022, p. 939) contend that 'memory novels' constitute lieux de mémoire, or 'sites of memory' (Nora 1989). Therefore, they can serve the same function as memorials and other historical sites.

I analyse how miners and their allies have used creative works to assert their voices and perspectives and how cultural representations have sometimes perpetuated

problematic assumptions about mining communities. In particular, I emphasise the value of works created ‘from below’ by miners themselves or people intimately connected with their experiences. Such insider perspectives counter dominant narratives and bring subjugated knowledge into the historical record. I align with theorists such as Portelli, who contend that even factual errors or embellishments in working-class narratives can reveal deeper symbolic meanings (Portelli 2009).

By tracing this cultural history, the chapter documents diverse expressions of mining heritage. It highlights continuities and changes in how mining culture has been represented and performed. Ultimately, these creative works constitute a vital form of industrial heritage.

6.2 Miners Autobiography

Working-class autobiographies offer invaluable insights into the lived experiences, perspectives, and cultural meanings of marginalised groups throughout history. These texts capture elements often excluded from canonical historical accounts and academic studies by voicing the struggles, solidarities, and sense of self in workers' own words. This section situates miners’ autobiographies as part of working-class cultural heritage, contributing alternative narratives to dominant historical records. It summarises critical studies on the value of marginalised voices.

Sociologist Tim Strangleman (2011, pp. 147-159) views working-class autobiography as part of the cultural heritage. He has pointed out that an autobiography, formerly seen as a controversial source for social scientists, has become more acceptable since the beginning of the twenty-first century. He attributes this change to a shift in academic fashion associated with post-structuralism and the cultural turn, as well as having roots in feminism and the ‘history from below’ movement. Oral histories are also critical; as Portelli argues, oral sources are not always reliable and factual. However, he sees this as a strength rather than a weakness because ‘errors, inventions and myths can lead us beyond facts to their meanings’ (Portelli 2009, p. 2).

In his research, Keith Gildart (2009) analysed eighteen unpublished Welsh miners' autobiographies, complementing this analysis with a decade-long ethnographic study and archival work. Gildart notes that miners have consistently viewed their experiences as historically significant. He points to miner-author Bert Coombes (1939, 2013) as an example. According to Coombes' biographers Jones and Williams (1999, p. 19), his writing was fundamentally driven by the desire to convey the authentic reality of miners' and their families' lives and to challenge public misconceptions. This mission to document the truth became the hallmark of Coombes' literary work. Stuart Howard identified over seventy miners ' autobiographies and forty-five other non-technical books about mining and mining communities in the UK. He argues that miners and their communities have been of literary interest for over two hundred years.

> This deep-seated fascination with collieries and with colliers is linked to the place of coal in the history of industrial economies and, in particular, to the miners themselves and the forms of cohesion, separateness and otherness they have historically exhibited in their social and industrial relations ((Howard 1995, p. 89).

Regarding the value of working-class autobiography, Regina Gagnier (1987) analysed 804 British working-class autobiographies published between 1790 and 1900. These texts are often dismissed as lacking introspection and literary merit compared to upper-class autobiographies. However, Gagnier argues they should be evaluated on their own terms, as working-class authors faced different conditions and purposes for writing.

The texts reveal working-class writers grappling with their sense of self and lack of social distinction. Many emphasise the author's ordinariness at the outset. Autobiographies take various forms and serve different functions, depending on the author's occupation, region, and political views. Gagnier (1987) argues that these autobiographies offer alternative models of subjectivity and self-representation that transcend bourgeois individualism. They demonstrate historical working-class uses of literacy and strategies to craft their life stories.

Specifically, regarding contemporary working-class autobiography, Simon Dentith (2005) suggests that there is a debate about whether working-class autobiographies need to be more explicitly political and theoretical to move beyond autobiography. He suggests that some argue that working people speaking for themselves is inherently political.

I agree with Keith Gildart (2009), who argues that miners were free to narrate their own stories without direction or organisation, so their first-hand testimonies undermine accepted historical narratives. The writers see the inclusion of voices often left out of traditional histories as democratising the historical record. The miners present themselves as a unique cultural and professional group that plays a part in forging a feeling of a shared past.

6.3 Working-Class Fiction

This section examines portrayals of working-class life in British novels, with a particular focus on fiction set in mining communities. It reviews studies of proletarian novels published between 1929 and 1939 by ex-miners Harold Heslop and Lewis Jones. Their politically radical depictions of class conflict aimed to critique economic exploitation and promote reform. The chapter then analyses regional mining novels, contrasting sympathetic insider perspectives, such as Sid Chaplin's, with the sensationalised account in John Grant's The Back-to-Backs. Contrasts emerge between positive and negative stereotyping of working-class experience. The section explores how fiction can bring marginalised voices into cultural discourse, as exemplified by the career of miner-turned-journalist Len Doherty. The section shows how different working-class genres, particularly mining and fiction, served social and political agendas during the early to mid-20th century. Close reading of such novels in context provides insights into class identities and labour relations.

John Mcilroy (2004) argues that although novels do not have to meet the evidential standards of academic works, they can provide researchers with information and insights not available from scholarly sources (2004, p. 136). Mcilroy also points out

that in comparison to other groups of workers, ‘miners have been well served by their novelists’ (2004 p.135). He also warns that allowance needs to be made for the values and interests of the novelist, but the same also applies to academic writers.

Roy Johnson (1975, p. 84) defines the proletarian novel as writing that consciously aims to capture working-class life and experiences. He argues that these novels must be distinctive, setting themselves apart from conventional middle-class literature through either their style or subject matter while expressing working-class values. However, Johnson notes the irony that working-class writers have often had to master middle-class literary techniques and forms to tell their stories effectively.

David Bell (1995) studied four novels from 1929-1939 by former miners Harold Heslop (1929, 1935) and Lewis Jones (1937, 1939). He examines these works as 'thesis novels' (roman à thèse) - a form of realist fiction intended to convey specific ideological messages about social reality. Written during a time of intense political division in Britain, these novels present mining life and class struggle from an authentic working-class perspective. Bell argues that such proletarian literature deserves to be evaluated by its own standards rather than being judged solely through middle-class literary conventions. Two types of thesis novels are distinguished—the ‘apprenticeship’ novel, which shows a character's political awakening, and the ‘confrontational’ novel, which depicts direct class conflict. A detailed analysis reveals how the narrative structures influence interpretations of the authors' ideological assumptions. The novels are interpreted in light of 1930s discourses around class and literature, as well as a more extensive history of miners' writing. This grounds the texts in their cultural context and demonstrates how mining fiction adapts literary forms for political critique.

The novels offer insiders' perspectives on miner grievances and promote socialist views. However, differences emerge between positive and negative archetypes and reformist versus revolutionary workers' ideologies. Through close reading informed by cultural and ideological context, the study elucidates the communicative strategies and social purposes underlying these working-class novels. Their study

contributes uniquely miner-focused perspectives to the debates on 1930s class conflict and consciousness.

Harold Heslop, originally a miner, went on to become an author of both fiction and nonfiction. In 1923, he attended Central Labour College with a DMA scholarship, which afforded him the financial independence to write his first novel, Goaf. Heslop was unable to find a publisher in the UK for his novel, but it was eventually published in Russia, where it sold 500,000 copies.

An analysis of Heslop's mining-related novels (1929; 1934; 1935; 1947; 1984; 1994) reveals detailed portrayals of mining life and communities (for literary reviews, see Fordham 2009b). I verified Heslop’s accounts through multiple sources: oral histories from miners born in the 1870s, extensive interviews with miners born as early as 1918, and conversations with miners at Eppleton Colliery who were born in the early 1900s. This empirical evidence enables a comparative analysis between Heslop's work and that of other North East miner novelists and auto biographers, notably George Parkinson (1911) and Jack Lawson (1932).

Textual analysis indicates that Heslop's and Lawson's accounts serve dual functions as both literary works and accurate ethnographic documentation of mining life and communities. Heslop's representations of the local mining world were informed by his direct experience in northern mining communities. However, his narratives were additionally shaped by broader influences, including his trade union activism, academic studies in London, diplomatic engagements with the Soviet Union, and professional experience with Soviet tourism operations.

Similarly, Lawson's perspective was enhanced by his formal study of politics and economics, culminating in his roles as Member of Parliament and Baron. This distinguishes both Heslop's and Lawson's writings from other mining narratives that derive solely from occupational experience, as will be examined in subsequent sections. As a mechanical engineer, I had the opportunity to work with individuals like Michael Morton, who has written a series of novels based on his career in mining management, beginning with "The Undermanager" (Morton, 2020). While I do not

regard these works as possessing great literary merit, they provide an accurate portrayal of life in the coal industry from the mid-1970s to the early 1990s. These books are aimed at individuals who have worked in the industry but will also provide helpful information to those in the future who wish to know what those times were like.

Sid Chaplin is probably one of the best-known of the North East's miner novelists; born in Shildon in 1916, he worked as a miner. His first collection of short stories of mining life, The Leaping Lad (Chaplin, 1970), was published in 1946. In an interview, Chaplin tells of how the story was told to him down the pit. A miner told him, 'This'll make a good story'. Chaplin was apprenticed to a Scottish Blacksmith who knew all the works of Burns and Scott. He was a student of the Workers Education Association (WEA), and he persuaded Chaplin to study with them as well. (Pickering and Robins 1984). In July 2017, Sid's son, Michael, spoke about his father at Redhills, where I managed to speak with him briefly while purchasing a copy of Hame, an account of Sid's life (Chaplin, Chaplin, and Atkinson, 2016). In 2006, Michael returned to the North East and wrote plays about life in the region.

John Fordham (2009a, p. 63) views the word "goaf" as acting as a "spatial metaphor" on dialectically related levels, serving as a symbol of the mine's dangers and as a site of struggle between the rules of the organisation and the actual practices of the lived experience of working underground.

In Goaf*,* one of the characters is buried under a fall on the coalface. He escapes by crawling into the goaf. He is rescued by a political rival who goes after him expressly 'against the wishes of the colliery management' (Heslop, 1934, p. 215). Heslop makes two points here: Firstly, a miner will always risk his own life to save a fellow miner, even if he is his worst enemy. Secondly, sometimes rules need to be broken for practical reasons[43]. In *Last Cage Down*, Heslop makes the first point again when Cameron, the popular lodge secretary who led the men into a disastrous strike,

[43] I know from my own experience that rules are broken all the time to expedite the work in hand. Miners take calculated risks.

descends to the mine to rescue his enemy, the Communist Joe Frost (1935, p. 337). Frost ultimately effectively replaces Cameron.

The Northern Echo, in a 1935 review, suggested the Last Cage Down was a ‘vehicle for communist views’ and that Durham was ‘a hotbed of revolutionary intent’. Although Heslop was a communist for a time (Heslop, 1994), the second point in this statement has no evidence, as the DMA was a conservative organisation until after the 1984/85 miners’ strike.

Goaf was published in England shortly after the mining disaster at Gresford in Wales, in which 264 miners were killed, and as a result, the book immediately caught the attention of the public. The *Manchester Guardian* declared that ‘no one could read it without a fuller appreciation of the men who risk their lives to warm the earth’. The *Daily Herald* commented that it ‘should be illegal for mine-owners not to read Goaf’ (Croft A. intro to the 1994 edition of Out of the Old Earth Heslop 1994, p.23). Thus, as its author intended, the novel became an instrument for political and social reform. People compared Heslop with authors such as Émile Zola, D.H. Lawrence, A.J. Cronin, and Tressell. Ethel Mannin in *The New Leader* declared that it ‘should be read by all those not yet aware of the (urgent) necessity to overthrow the economic system (Croft 1990. p.27).

The controversy surrounding John Charles Grant's *The Back-to-Backs* (1970) highlights the contested nature of mining representations by authors who are considered outsiders. Despite the publisher's claims of a "brutal and ruthlessly honest" depiction, Grant's middle-class background and lack of direct mining experience undermined his credibility. Born to a newspaper editor in Alnwick in 1898 and educated at Armstrong College Newcastle, Grant's distance from mining life became evident when the Northumberland Miners' Association challenged his portrayal, stating, "Bad as conditions. are, miners have never lived under the conditions he depicts." His subsequent admission of deliberate exaggeration ("Of course I exaggerated") reveals the tension between literary dramatisation and authentic representation of mining communities. This case demonstrates how claims of authenticity in mining literature were closely scrutinised by the mining community

itself, which rejected what they saw as sensationalised portrayals of their lives by outside observers.[44]

Liam O'Flaherty, in the introduction to *The Back-to-Backs,* admits to knowing nothing of the author of what he describes as a 'terrifying novel and a terrible warning to every thinking man' O'Flaherty (in Grant, 1970, pp v – viii).

> For if this abject slavery exists among us, if we allow vast hordes of our people to live in such a manner, more corrupt, more filthy, more bestial than cave dwellers… then the crash of our civilisation can only be avoided by immediate revolution.

When I first read the novel, I knew nothing about the author. I intimated that he or she was not a miner because there is little reference to underground work, and miner writers consistently demonstrate their expertise, at least in their early works. I also calculated that no one from a mining community wrote it because I could not imagine anyone writing about their home village in the terms used by Grant.

> Hagger had one main street. It began at the pithead and ended at the graveyard. Tonight, it resembled a moorland torrent, deserted, desolated, terrifying black. Not that it ran with water, of course, not much, but with miscellaneous things such as mud, clarts, whinstone slag, ashes, vegetables, eggshells, tins, dead dogs and liquid from overflowing sewers.

The local people receive a similar treatment.

> Now and again, an object staggered along it (the street), something slithering at an angle nearly horizontal… nobody peered at this weird apparition… Well, that was because it was a pitman on his way home from the pit.

Grant paints a picture of a place that no one from a North East mining community would recognise. Labour Leaders furiously denounced the novel. They objected to

[44] The Guardian 27.7.2012 Thanks to Michael Grant, Bailiffgate Museum and Gallery, Alnwick for the additional information posted on http://www.durhamatwar.org.uk/story/11574/

his portrayal of mining villages that were unremitting in their horror.[45] Grant refers to the village as ‘Hagger-le-Hell’- as he spent time in Durham.

Helen Cannam’s novel ‘A Stranger in the Land’ is set in Hetton-le-Hole during the 1832 miners ’strike. It is the story of a young lead miner from Weardale who takes a job at the Hetton-le-Hole Colliery. He expects to be welcomed by the Primitive Methodists there but instead faces anger and hatred because he is a strike-breaker, taking the jobs of dispossessed union leaders. The only person who is kind to Tommy is a collier's daughter, who brightens his lonely life in Hetton. However, Matty is fiercely loyal to the union, so if she finds out the truth about Tommy's strike-breaking job, she will likely abandon him. Tommy is trapped in a vicious cycle of distrust, deception and disease and is anguished by the gap between himself and Matty. The book succeeds in vividly evoking the complex dynamics of solidarity, betrayal, and brutality shaping the miners' prolonged strike against exploitative conditions. By immersing readers into the interconnected lives of Hetton-le-Hole residents, Cannam recovers a vanished historical moment marked by ruthlessly difficult choices, steadfast conviction, and the eternal struggle for fundamental rights and dignity. Crucially, while honouring their tenacity and sacrifice, the author avoids romanticising the miners as one-dimensional heroic figures. Instead, these complex, fearful, yet courageous characters ring fundamentally true as they navigate and question their participation in the ongoing strike.

Mark Hudson, whose family originated from Horden, spends a year there searching for his roots and immersing himself in the community. He listens to stories of what life was like, and he even pays a visit to the pit. Mark Hudson immersed himself in the once-thriving mining community of Horden, a village on the eastern coast of Durham. Horden had previously been the site of Britain's largest colliery, where Hudson's great-grandfather and grandfather had been employed. Despite the pit's closure, the memories of its former workers keep its legacy alive. Seeking to uncover his ancestral roots, Hudson engaged with the elderly residents, listening to their

[45] For a review of The Back to Backs see CROFT, A. 1990. *Red Letter Days: British Fiction in the 1930s*, Lawrence & Wishart.

narratives of the miner's life, which were characterised by hardship and deeply rooted traditions, as well as the victories and challenges of trade unionism. While Hudson also heard stories of his ancestors, these accounts were often inconsistent and uncertain, with the only constant being the centrality of the pit itself. Through his work, Hudson captures a world that has been lost to time, offering a scathing critique of the present reality that has emerged in its wake (Hudson 1994).

Raphael Samuel provides a detailed review of Hudson's book (1999, p. 156-160). He sees the North, as portrayed by Hudson, as the 'negative other' to the South. In the introduction to his anthology of mining literature). He claims that mining and the experience of its communities have inspired some of Britain's most memorable writings. The earliest author he mentions is George Owen of Henllys on the Isle of Anglesey, who gives a detailed account of the uses and mining of coal in that area. Curtis lists famous British authors who have written about mining, including D.H. Lawrence, Dennis Potter and Philip Larkin. Curtis did not mention many other authors.

Anthropologist Ronald Frankenberg (1960) reviewed Sigal's novel and considered it a potentially insightful portrayal of life in the mining industry. However, Frankenberg critiqued Sigal's development of the central character 'Davie' as lacking verisimilitude. In Frankenberg's assessment, other authors, such as Len Doherty, offered superior representations of Yorkshire mining communities.

Intriguingly, Frankenberg seemed unaware that the protagonist, Davie, was based on the real-life writer Len Doherty. I contacted Clancy Sigal to inquire about the inspiration for the novel. Sigal revealed that Doherty became an acclaimed journalist and novelist before his untimely death. This background provided an enlightening case study contrasting an anthropologist's reading of a literary work with the complex histories underlying the narrative. It serves as a reminder of the inevitable partiality of academic and creative perspectives, as well as the value of directly engaging with writers about their inspirations and intentions. Scholars gain a far more profound understanding of the diverse influences and interpretations in cultural production and consumption by probing beyond initial critical assessments.

This story illustrates how the arts can allow marginalised groups to share their stories and assert their humanity. The opportunity for a talented miner like Doherty to share perspectives on his community through journalism and later fiction allowed him to shape public narratives about a demographic often ignored or stereotyped by mass media. It is doubtful that Len Doherty would have become a novelist had it not been for Sigal's choice of the mining village of Thurcroft for his research site.

6.4 Mining Communities in the Performing Arts.

Plays, films, and other cultural forms about mining life are vital in transmitting memories and shaping understanding across generations. Dramatic nostalgia evokes collective longing, teaching audiences about the resonance of the past within present realities. Theatrical productions and cinematic depictions serve as reflective prisms that shape cultural meanings and social identities surrounding industrial transitions. The first play about mining I recall seeing was Alan Plater's *Close the Coalhouse Door*, based on stories by Sid Chaplin, with music by Alex Glasgow, all three of whom were from Durham's mining area. When it was first performed in 1968, many miners went to Newcastle Playhouse to see it; I was one of them. The play was revived in 2012. The revived play featured some minor revisions by Lee Hall, writer of Billy Elliot and The Pitmen Painters*,* which will be discussed below. Hall, a friend and mentee of Alan Plater, had to deal with the fact that there was no longer a mining industry. The play opens with a scene depicting a billboard of Meryl Streep playing Margaret Thatcher. The play reflects on the impact of pit closures but predominantly focuses on the preservation of the cultural heritage that it portrays.

The historical and political significance of the strike has been well-documented[46]. The dispute also had a massive impact on cultural life. Katy Shaw, Professor of Contemporary Writing at Northumbria University, has studied cultural representations of the strike, arguing that the writings of strikers should be included alongside those of academics and other professional writers. Shaw suggests that

writing gave strikers a voice in a ‘cultural climate that demanded their silence’ (Shaw 2012, p. 116).

Carol Stephenson and Jean Spence concentrate on women's writing during the strike. They are the stories of Northumbrian miners ’wives (Newton, 1986) and the Barnsley Wives women’s action group (2007). Triona Holden, a BBC correspondent covering the strike, recounts how the miners' wives, mothers, and daughters, who had no prior experience in such matters, found the strength to support the men and become political activists in their own right (Holden, 2005).

No Redemption is a powerful and evocative mixed-media performance by Ribbon Road with songs by Brenda Heslop and a film by Keith Pattison. The show marks the 30th anniversary of the 1984/5 Miners' Strike. Pattison's photos document events at Easington Colliery, Co Durham, following the striking miners and their families through the optimism of August, the deepening pessimism of winter and the final vote to return to work. Brenda Heslop's song cycle was inspired by Pattison's photographs (Pattinson 2010) and recent visits to Easington and reflected on the continuing aftermath of that strike in the 21st century.

Beth Steel’s Wonderland was initially a book, published by Steel (2014), which was later adapted as a stage play set in the Midlands in 1984. I saw it performed at Newcastle Playhouse in 2019. Their coming-of-age story becomes entangled with broader political tensions as the narrative contrasts the miners' local, community-centred perspective, focused on securing livelihoods for their families, with the Conservative government's vision for liberalising Britain's economy through a confrontational stance toward organised mining labour.

Specifically, the adolescent protagonists' bildungsroman unfolds against the backdrop of their North England mining town, where they absorb longstanding workplace traditions and solidarities alongside the ever-present dangers intrinsically tied to mining. Meanwhile, the play crosscuts scenes set within Parliament, the executive boardroom, and domestic spaces in London, wherein Conservative

politicians, American business elites, and other ideological influences debate the fate of Britain's nationalised mining industry.

This clash of competing class identities, economic philosophies, and political agendas ultimately transforms the nation's social fabric and labour relations through the year-long miners' strike. There are conflicts between miners desperately trying to preserve their occupational heritage and livelihoods throughout the play and Conservative advocates of an unrestrained free market. The play illuminates how local, industrial cultural meanings and practices become inextricably entwined with national partisan agendas and economic visions.

By juxtaposing these disparate milieus, the play explores the destructive social consequences of large-scale deindustrialisation policies on community stability, intergenerational relations, gender norms, and workers' rights within specific locales. Ultimately, the transformational impacts of this industrial transition extended far beyond the mining sector, fundamentally reshaping 20th-century British society, politics, and culture.

The Last Seam *is* a play by writer Garry Lyons. It was staged at The Peacock in Sunderland in October 2018. The play tells the true story of the closure of Hatfield Colliery and its impact on the local mining communities. The play used the authentic voices of local miners and residents, and their words were used verbatim to create the script. Several of Garry's interviews, which were part of the process of creating the play, have been added to Heritage Doncaster's oral history collection. The play covers the period from the 1984/5 strike through to the mine's closure and the Brexit referendum.[47] The characters and dilemmas would be recognisable to those who lived through the 1984-85 strike and felt the repercussions of the pit closures. A couple is struggling financially to bring up their baby as the striking dad's pay was stopped and benefits were denied. A mum politicised by what she sees as the

[47] https://ahc.leeds.ac.uk/performance/news/article/1040/new-play-marks-the-end-of-british-coal-mining

viciousness of the Government and the violence of the police. A dad whose son's suicide attempt he traces directly back to the strike.

Amy Leach, the play's director, argues that it is vital for younger generations to learn this history. She contends that many youths today are unaware of what prior generations endured during the strikes. By theatrically portraying these events, the emotional impacts would resonate more deeply. The production could educate a wider audience nationwide about the long-term repercussions that still affect these towns. Leach said this production could spur greater empathy and potentially encourage political action to address lingering injustices related to the miners' defeats. More broadly, repeatedly spotlighting and transmitting these cultural memories helps counter the risk that this significant historical episode will fade from public consciousness if left untold (Leach 2018).

In summary, Leach advocates using drama to catalyse intergenerational understanding and national recognition of the strike's legacies. Impactful cultural portrayals combat historical amnesia, convey emotional depth through artistic formats, and reconnect past and present by transmitting communal memories. Resonant retellings can strengthen solidarity and inspire change. Thus, *The Last Seam* carries the story forward, so the strike's significance does not disappear into the ether.

The following account demonstrates the continuing international academic interest in the legacy of the UK mining industry. In December 2023, I was contacted by Marie-Lou Hamel, a student from the Sorbonne, who asked me for help with a research project she was conducting on three films that addressed the 1984 strike and the subsequent pit closures. The films were *Brassed Off, Billy Elliot* and *Pride*. All three films refer to the destruction of the coal industry presided over by the Conservative Government of Margaret Thatcher. As Ryan Wilkinson (2013) argues, all three films, especially the soundtracks and the character dialogue, evoke a subliminal yearning for the past and are frequently nostalgic. The films also demonstrate how the numerous challenges faced by the working-class protagonists become a f*ait accompli*, their endeavours and occasionally the conflicts they engage in are

ultimately fruitless. This is achieved by establishing a nostalgic discourse beneath the main narratives. Marie-Lou's request prompted me to watch the films again from a more critical perspective than I did when they were first released.

Nick Redfern (2007) argues that in the film *Brassed Off*, the cultural utopianism represented by the Grimley Colliery Brass Band overcomes the alienation and economic decline of the Yorkshire mining community depicted in the film. *Brassed Off* is typically analysed as a narrative about class and gender, portraying working-class life and Old Labour collectivism in the face of post-industrialism in the UK. The film draws on the iconography of working-class realism to present a crisis of masculinity and nostalgia for fading masculinity. However, the film suggests a utopian possibility of collective action overcoming this crisis. The drama unfolds a struggle in which male social and emotional bonds associated with the workplace and working men's clubs are threatened by economic decline, mourned, fought for, and ultimately restored through the collective solidarity embodied in the brass band. *Brassed Off* takes a straightforward approach to addressing several themes related to class, gender, economic policy, and even suicide (Wilkinson 2013).

David Alderson (2011) has analysed *Billy Elliot*, a film about the 1984-85 UK miners' strike and the transition to neoliberalism in Britain. He argues that the film critiques working-class masculinity in problematic ways by portraying the miners' struggle as doomed to fail. Alderson provides historical context about the miners' strike, describing it as a watershed moment in the shift to neoliberal policies under Margaret Thatcher's government. The miners' defeat paved the way for privatisation, deregulation, and attacks on organised labour.

Billy Elliot portrays a transition from traditional working-class masculinity to a more individualistic identity through Billy's journey from mining community to ballet. While celebrating personal transformation, the film sidesteps the broader political significance of the miners' strike and overlooks the diverse coalitions that formed during this period. Unlike *Pride*, which highlights explicitly how mining communities united with LGBT activists and other social movements, *Billy Elliot* frames its narrative around individual escape rather than collective resistance. This approach

aligns with neoliberal values of personal achievement but diminishes the importance of the class solidarity and political activism that characterised the strike era.

The 2014 film Pride probably has the least believable plot of the three films Marie-Lou is researching. However, it is based on the true story of the support of the lesbian and gay community in London's support for the miners during the 1984/85 strike. It was shown at the Durham Miners' Association headquarters in June 2018. Two of the people involved were there. One of them told me that one inaccuracy in the film concerned the initial reception they received from the Welsh miners. In the film, there is some apprehension from the miners when the LGBT people arrive. The gay activist said there was no hesitation from the mining community. They were greeted with a round of applause upon their arrival.

The stage at Redhills is not big enough for a big theatrical production; however, it was suitable for a performance of Danny Mellor's Undermined, a one-man play about the 1984/85 strike. Danny was inspired to write the play after hearing accounts from miners who had lived through the strike. The strike was portrayed through the eyes of a young miner, Dale. Danny's only props were a chair and a pint of beer. The piece had an emotional climax when Dale confronts a former friend who had 'scabbed' when he learned that the man had gone back to pay for the funeral of his infant son. The play also had hilarious moments. I remember the story of the miners who had built a snowman with a policeman's helmet on its head. The police superintendent ordered the men to dismantle the effigy. The men refused. The officer decided to knock it down with his Range Rover. The men implored him not to do so. Ignoring their pleas, he drove at the offending structure. There was a sickening crush. The snowman had been built around a concrete bollard. This story is typical of many tricks the miners played on the police during the strike and of the tactics they employed against each other underground, as described in Chapter Three of this thesis.

After the 1984/85 strike, a concert was held in The Royal Albert Hall, London, to launch *Heroes*, a compilation album of tracks donated by local and nationally known

musicians. The album was aimed to raise funds for the miners sacked in the strike. *A Concert for Heroes* took place at the Albert Hall on 2 March 1986 and featured performances from a host of guest artists, including Lindisfarne, Paul Weller, the Flying Pickets and Tom Robinson, as well as speeches from Labour MPs, including Tony Banks and Dennis Skinner Tony Benn, a prominent supporter of the strikes and close friend of union leader Arthur Scargill, also spoke at the fundraising event. The concert was an amazing achievement by the Durham Women's Support Group.

The concert was filmed, but the cost of editing back then was prohibitively expensive, so it was sadly never finished. However, the film has now been transferred to a digital format and includes interviews with some surviving participants. Neil Griffin, one of the Education for Action (E4A) team, was responsible for producing the film, which students at New College Durham digitised. I attended the premiere at New College, and the film was subsequently screened at Redhills. The concert featured acts such as Paul Weller, Lindisfarne, the Flying Pickets and Tom Robinson. The students' project combines footage from the Concert for Heroes with clips of people from Easington Colliery talking about their experiences of the Miners' Strike. The project was made possible by north east musician Neil Griffin who performed at the Concert for Heroes with his band The Fabulous Wildon Brothers. Neil discovered that director Ian Krause still had the original footage. When Neil told us about the find at one of our E4A meetings, he said that he was amazed to find that Ian still had the original tapes from all those years ago, and it is fascinating that people will now be able to see it after 30 years.'

The Miners Hymns was first performed in Durham Cathedral in 2010. I saw it at The Sage Theatre, Gateshead, In 2014. The event was in commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the Miners' Strike. I was accompanied by two international anthropology postgraduates from Durham University, who found the performance moving and a valuable insight into the local mining culture. Bill Morrison, the New York-based creator of Miners' Hymns, believed his performance does not need words. 'The footage does that job,' he said. (BBC 2019). The film is a collaboration between Icelandic composer Jóhann Jóhannsson and American filmmaker Bill

Morrison. It combines archive footage of the strike with a live score performed by a brass band and string quartet. The film mourns the loss of Britain's industrial past while celebrating the miners and their communities.

The Miners' Hymns has been widely acclaimed. Screenings have taken place across former mining towns in the UK, as well as internationally. Three performances took place for the 30th anniversary of the strike's beginning, at the Sage Gateshead, Easington's welfare centre, where some footage was filmed, and the Barbican in London. The screenings elicited strong emotional responses from the audience - many of whom connected to the strike-through family or their own participation. At Easington in County Durham, people wept and laughed in recognition, with older audience members explaining events to younger attendees. The London premiere was more subdued but still intensely powerful (BBC 2014; Maddocks 2014). The music by Jóhannsson consists of wordless hymns that praise and mourn the lost industry and way of life. When combined with the archive footage, the slow, repetitive electronic tones gain grandeur and depth. The performance highlighted the emotive power of film scoring.

The Miners' Hymns *was* the subject of a book chapter by Simon Popple (2018). Popple concluded that it serves as an act of remembering and contemplating the rich heritage and displaced way of life of the Durham coal mining communities. Rather than a nostalgic depiction, he viewed the film as a "living and fluid testimony and an emotional and performative document" (2018, p. 238). He saw it as functioning like a non-religious requiem piece, respecting the lost mining traditions while mourning their passing.

This film is a prime example of a novel technique for utilizing archival material, reviving and reinterpreting the sources in ways that both honour and subvert their sacredness and conventional use. Heretical rebellion is exemplified by how archival materials are woven into a shifting historical narrative. The film's legacy ultimately lies in how the archival footage is reinterpreted and integrated into the narrative. It ensures that the memories and hardships of these people endure into the present by bringing the often-forgotten aspects of mining life into the open.

Though often overlooked on the national arts scene[48] brass bands retain cultural significance, as shown by regional competitions. The miners' strike anniversary and collaborations like The Miners' Hymns have brought renewed appreciation. However, brass bands provide more than just a reminder of an industrial past—their music continues to inspire in the present.

Lee Hall's play The *Pitmen Painters* dramatises the real-life story of the Ashington Group, a collective of miner-painters active in the 1930s. Hall aims to celebrate grassroots working-class creativity and envision an alternative to the perceived shortcomings of the contemporary culture industry. However, according to Ewa Kębłowska-Ławniczak (2012, pp. 377-384), his narrative risks romanticising the Ashington Group and overlooking the broader context of cultural participation in mining communities at the time. Miners participated in various other cultural activities at the time.

Hall traces the Group's origins to a Workers' Educational Association art appreciation course that sparked the miners' interest in art. Rejecting detached analysis, the pitmen locate meaning in personal resonance with artworks. Their paintings shift from academic subjects to depict aspects of mining life, achieving a sense of communal purpose and metaphysical inspiration beyond political messaging. However, patron Helen Sutherland's collection of their art for exhibition introduces market pressures at odds with this communitarian ethos.

Susannah Thompson (2013) situates the play’s ambitions and limitations within ongoing debates, referencing the co-optation critique in Alex Niven’s (2011) study on middle-class appropriations of folk culture. While some audiences appreciate the emotionality rather than the socio-political import, many productions do spur critical conversations through post-show talks and staged debates. As evidenced by artistic and documentary responses across media since its 2007 premiere (Thornton 2007;

[48] In March 2014, the MP for Shipley, Philip Davies, pointed out that opera received £347m from the Arts Council over the past five years compared with £1.8m for brass bands. Maddocks, F. (2014) 'The miners' hymns review – a rich seam of music and mine', *The Observer*.

Dawson 2009; Paul 2016), the play has more broadly renewed interest in these historical figures, northern identity, and working-class cultural participation.

6.5 Mining and Mining Communities in Fine Art

This section provides an overview of the representation of mining and mining communities within the fine arts. Additionally, it highlights the potential interconnections between the fine arts, literary arts, and performing arts in portraying these topics.

The story of the Pitmen Painters illustrates how the Workers' Educational Association's cultural education programs sparked an artistic movement within a community of coal miners in northern England in the 1930s. As documented in William Feaver's (1993) account, the group of miner-painters from Ashington developed considerable artistic talents after initially studying art appreciation. Feaver's book later inspired playwright Lee Hall to dramatise their experience in his acclaimed play The Pitmen Painters (2011), portraying their artistic pursuits as remarkable given the miners' working-class backgrounds.

As this case study shows, organised cultural education and recreational art programs catalysed the preservation of industrial heritage and identities. The Pitmen Painters left a legacy celebrating coal mining life through art, and Feaver’s and Hall’s works have renewed interest in the group. The interplay between these artistic forms demonstrates how collective cultural memories are selectively reconstructed across genres. A comparable miners’ art group emerged locally through the Spennymoor Settlement, where figures like painter Norman Cornish developed their craft. While some miners embraced the Settlement's cultural programs, others remained suspicious of them. Ultimately, the Settlement provided leisure activities and cultivated talents that persisted as part of the region's working-class cultural history. There is a permanent exhibition of the work of the Ashington Group at Woodhorn Mining Museum, Ashington Northumberland.

On March 4, 2017, I disembarked at Wakefield train station, where I encountered two other attendees en route to the event venue, Unity Works. The two attendees were Robert McManners and Gillian Wales. We were all contributing authors to an anthology entitled *The Flame Still Burns: The Creative Power of Coal* (Williams 2017, which was to be launched at an annual fundraising event titled 'With Banners Held High' in support of the *Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign*.[49]

On the way to the venue, Gillian and Robert told me that they had amassed an extensive collection of mining art during the preceding twenty years; they had donated their collection to the Gemini Arts Project in Bishop Auckland. Their collection and other artworks are now on display at the Mining Art Gallery adjacent to Bishop Auckland Castle. Their motivation for acquiring and donating their collection was that when they began researching and recording mining art for their book, Tom McGuinness: The Art of an Underground Miner (McGuinness, Wales, and McManners, 1997), they realised that preserving the actual works of art was essential. Later, in their presentation, Gillian pointed out that the artworks painted by men who had worked underground showed how it looked and *felt.*

I have visited the gallery on several occasions and have accompanied groups of Durham University students on visits, explaining what the paintings are about and, I hope, enriching their experience by telling them about the heritage of the area in which they are studying. I intended to help students gain a more profound appreciation for and understanding of the place where they are studying. Beyond exposing students to new artistic styles and perspectives, locally focused art exhibitions also present opportunities to learn about local history, values, and industries engagingly. For international students, absorbing these culturally specific expressions can contribute to adjusting to and immersing themselves in their current environment. Connections between the artwork themes and students' backgrounds can further heighten the impact and stimulate more complex perspectives.

[49] The Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign includes ex-miners, Trades Unionists, activists and others who are determined to get justice for miners who were victims of police lies and cover-ups at Orgreave in June 1984. For more details, see https://otjc.org.uk/about/

Therefore, the heritage of the area can impact not only the people but also the students and other visitors.

In addition to the *Gemini* collection, there are also collections of mining art at Spennymoor Town Hall and Woodhorn Museum Northumberland. The miner-painters of the North East have been well documented. In addition to the Tom McGuinness book referred to above, McManners and Wales produced *Shafts of Light (2002).* There are many more mining artists from the North East. These include Robert Olley, William Hindmarsh, Ray Bradshaw, Alfie Joey, and Alfred Tibbs.

6.6 Mining in Music and Poetry

Mineworkers have made notable and varied contributions to the tradition of labouring-class poetry over the centuries, as exemplified in works spanning from Edward Chicken's early 18th-century *The Collier's Wedding* (Chicken 1778) to 20th-century representations in anthologies such as William Maurice's *A Pitman's Anthology* (2004). An analysis of approximately 1,700 labouring-class poets active in the British Isles between 1700-1900 Keegan and Goodridge (2013) identified a significant subgroup of forty-five poets directly involved in mining labour. Preliminary findings reveal that for mineworker poets in particular, labour constitutes more than merely contextual background; the activities and culture of mining actively shape the poetic form and content. While the sample precludes claims of representation, examining selected writers can identify salient thematic and stylistic tendencies within this school of verse. This article conducts an exploratory literary analysis of three mineworker-poets, analysing representative samples about broader trends regarding how mining labour manifests intertwined with creative expression for this community of worker-writers. The study elucidates connections between occupational setting and identity and the realisation of aesthetic works catalysed by experiences of industrial labour and culture.

Joseph Skipsey (1832-1903) emerged from an obscure Victorian mining community to become one of the most prominent working-class poets of the late nineteenth

century without access to formal education. Through self-directed learning, he cultivated relationships with eminent cultural figures who facilitated his literary ascent. Skipsey leveraged these connections to secure appointments, leading to financial stability. Additionally, in his later career, he used his influence to mentor aspiring writers from similar socioeconomic backgrounds. Skipsey had few advantages; he was still a baby when his father, Cuthbert, an overman at Percy Main Colliery, was shot dead by a policeman on July 8, 1832, while intervening to break up a fight during a bitter miners' dispute.

Skipsey's biography problematises assumptions about labouring-class writers lacking agency or remaining confined to lower social strata. His self-creation as an autodidact and navigation of elite literary networks complicates notions of unilateral philanthropic uplift by an altruistic aristocracy. Instead, Skipsey's experience shows working-class individuals forging reciprocal creative relationships across class boundaries. His civic-minded advocacy of broad cultural participation further extended these egalitarian ideals. Ultimately, Skipsey's legacy reveals possibilities for mobility cantered on merit and coalition-building within existing social hierarchies.

Skipsey's poetry was praised by authors such as prominent Dante Rossetti, William Rossetti, Bram Stoker, William Bell Scott, William Morris, Oscar Wilde, Edward Burne-Jones, Edmund Gosse, Ernest Radford), William Butler Yeats and Basil Bunting (Tait 2016).

In his study of English occupational songs, Gerald Porter (1992) found that mining and seafaring were the industries that generated the most output. He attributes this to the fact that 'the mining community is united not only by occupation but by environment, by speech patterns (known in northeast England as 'Pitmatic') and even by geology (Porter, 1992, p. 116). We have seen how their song tradition expressed an early sense of identity and craft pride' Ian Watson arrives at a similar conclusion; he points to the fact that miners were 'among the first to form an industrial union in Britain, a factor which has ironed out hierarchical thinking among miners, they are a classic example of the labour process, political organisation and leisure activity forming an organic unit.' (Watson, 2015, p. 14).

In 1951, the National Coal Board (NCB) asked folklorist Bert Lloyd to organise a competition for miners to submit songs about life in the pits. The North East has a long tradition of mining songs and poems; most of the material submitted came from there. The result was a book, Come All Ye Bold Miners, which contained songs from as early as 1784 (Lloyd 1953). The book regenerated interest in the old mining songs, which became popular in NE folk clubs. However, it also encouraged new writers to produce and perform new material in an enlarged book version (Arthur 1979).

The work of Tommy Armstrong, the "Pitman Poet," is well-documented (Armstrong, 1971, 1978, 2015). Ross Forbes of the DMA produced a complete anthology of his work (Armstrong, 1987). There is a band called The Pitmen Poets, which I have seen perform at several venues in Co. Durham. The group consists of Jez Lowe, Bob Fox, Benny Graham and Billy Mitchell, all of whom are solo performers. As its name suggests, the band performs songs about North East mining, some traditional and others written by the band members themselves.

6.7 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has explored diverse cultural forms that portray and preserve mining heritage, from autobiographies to plays, novels to paintings, and songs to films. While not comprehensive, the works discussed reveal some overarching themes and continuities in how mining culture has been represented across time and genre.

A prominent thread is miners and their allies using creative mediums to assert the value of working-class perspectives and experiences. Whether through memoirs, fiction, or the visual arts, cultural production has provided channels for subaltern voices to shape historical narratives and collective memory. The motifs of solidarity and activism in many works also suggest that culture functions as a form of political critique and consciousness-raising.

At the same time, problematic assumptions and power dynamics embedded in cultural forms have sometimes perpetuated damaging stereotypes about mining communities. Tensions persist between celebratory, nostalgic depictions and more critical stances confronting the harsh realities miners faced. Ultimately, the diverse creative engagements with mining heritage form a complex, multilayered industrial archive deserving ongoing interpretation.

Looking across the creative responses to mining life surveyed here, several key roles cultural representations play stand out. First, they document the subjective, emotional dimensions of work and community belonging otherwise absent from official accounts. Second, they preserve occupational traditions and regional identities in the face of a disappearing industry. Moreover, creative works facilitate remembrance and reconnect generations through embodied expressions of culture.

As memorial forms, these artistic engagements with mining heritage provide vital links to the past even as the material basis of mining life fades. Some of the miners' stories and struggles live on through dynamic cultural products. Whether immortalising individual characters or epitomising broader social change, such mediated memories continue to inspire and inform. This evolving cultural legacy suggests that despite colliery closures, if creative work engages seriously with miners' experiences, the flame still burns in some sense.

Chapter 7 Redhills Heritage and Education

7.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the interplay between public architecture, cultural heritage, and community education in the context of the historic Redhills Miners Hall in Durham, England. Redhills is the headquarters of the Durham Miners Association (DMA) in Durham City. Historic England has designated it as one of England's most significant historical sites due to its role in labour organisation. Redhills is currently being considered for UNESCO World Heritage status. The building is currently undergoing refurbishment and extension, and, upon completion, will be repurposed as a cultural centre. When the building reopens, the story of the Durham miners will be relayed to many future generations.

Drawing on anthropological and related perspectives, I examine how the tangible and intangible attributes of this iconic building embody and transmit the history, values, and struggles of the Durham miners.

I provide an ethnographic account of the educational activities and memory work undertaken by the volunteer group Education for Action (E4A) to sustain the legacy of the mining community. Through interactive learning, exhibitions, and public outreach, E4A utilises Redhills as a symbolic space to engage younger generations and diverse audiences with the region's mining heritage. The group's efforts embody a grassroots approach to collective memory, utilizing experiential storytelling to promote social awareness and solidarity. By championing miners' history, E4A seeks to empower the community through knowledge of its past and to find contemporary relevance in traditions of activism and mutual aid. The chapter contributes to understanding the role of community-based heritage practice in constructing shared identities and mobilising history for social change.

Education for Action (E4A) was founded by academics David Wray and John Stirling in 2015 to educate people about the history and heritage of mining in Durham. The idea emerged from their desire to make their academic work more publicly accessible. They partnered with the Durham Miners Association (DMA), the North East Labour History Society (NELHS), and the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) to base their activities at the historic Redhills Miners' Hall. I joined E4A in 2015 after being invited by Dave Wray.

E4A members include academics, former miners, union activists, teachers, artists, and others connected to labour history and mining. In addition to myself, Dave and John, there was Cath, a retired schoolteacher, North East Labour History Society (NELHS) committee member and WEA tutor, Joy a retired head-teacher from Yorkshire who was part of a miners' support group there, Heather a miners wife, activist and founder-member of the Durham Women's Banner Group (DWMG), Mary a miner's wife who following the 1984/85 strike became a welfare benefits advisor and then a probation officer, Paul an ex-miner from Easington, David a retired Cooperative Society manager and Secretary of the NELHS, Judith a professional singer and lecturer whose PhD thesis was about the North East folk revival (Murphy, 2007), David, an ex-miner who is the author of several popular books on the mining industry (Temple, 1994, Temple, 2001, Temple, 2011), Lewis Mates, an academic from Durham University who has also published on miners and their involvement in trade unionism and politics (Mates, 2006, Mates, 2007, Mates, 2013, Mates, 2016), Carol Stephenson from Northumbria University who is particularly interested in the role of women in the Miners' Strike as well as the banners and the Gala (Spence and Stephenson, 2007b, Spence and Stephenson, 2007a, Spence and Stephenson, 2009, Stephenson and Wray, 2005, Stephenson and Wray, 2009, Wray and Stephenson, 2012), Bill Elliott, a former teacher and folk singer who was working for Beamish Museum at the time, and Lynn Gibson, a university administrator, miner's daughter, and founder member of DWMG.

E4A's activities occur the week before the annual Durham Miners Gala in July and at other times and venues throughout the year. Programming includes educational

events for schoolchildren, sixth-formers, A-level students, and the general public, focusing on mining history, technology, working conditions, and culture.

Their mission is to educate the community and sustain public knowledge and connections to regional mining heritage. They take an interactive approach, facilitating experiential learning. Activities utilise artefacts, role-plays, songs, discussions, and engagement with Redhill's symbolic spaces. Partnerships with schools and public outreach events represent effective strategies for building collective memory and empowering people through knowledge of local history, particularly in relation to labour rights and solidarity.

E4A's activities have three aspects. First, they hold educational events for schoolchildren and sixth-form students. Second, they conduct tours of the building for members of the public and groups such as local history societies. Thirdly, E4A also organises, in conjunction with the DMA, a series of lectures and seminars during the week preceding the Durham Miners Gala and on other occasions throughout the year.

7.2 Anthropology and Public Architecture

In this section, I provide a theoretical grounding for understanding the cultural and political work that public architecture can perform. Subsequent sections explore this work through the case study of E4A's activities at Redhills. The anthropological perspectives introduced here provide a framework for understanding how E4A leverages the symbolic power of the building to construct and transmit collective memory, values, and a sense of belonging within the Durham mining community.

I examine how buildings and public architecture embody and convey cultural meanings and configurations of power. Scholars have analysed the interrelationship between the tangible physicality of structures and their accrual of intangible values, identities, and politics over time. As visible manifestations of cultural ideas and social

order, buildings take on additional layers of symbolism and meaning beyond their intended l function.

Anthropologists and other social scientists have analysed how public architecture shapes behaviour and enables the performance of power. Philosopher and Sociologist Henri Lefebvre (1991) theorised how spatial arrangements encode power relationships; some spaces promote hierarchy while others foster egalitarian relations. Architectural historian Spiro Kostof (1992) examined how rulers have used the built environment to convey ideology and power throughout history. Architect Kimberly Dovey (2014) analysed how public architecture and spaces mediate politics and power. In Setha Low's theoretical paradigm, buildings and structures operate as material sites intertwined with broader political and economic forces. She sees them as loci of cultural representations and social identity formation (Low 2009, 2011).

Public buildings act as material symbols that represent a society's shared identities, values, and ideals. Marc Augé argues that specific sites, such as city halls, can be anthropological places that are meaningful to a community's history and worldview. In its heyday, Redhills would have conformed to Augé's criteria of simultaneously referring to a monumental place, a human individual, and a power structure. Redhills was personified in a manner similar to Augé's examples of the White House and the Kremlin (Augé 1996). For example, at lodge (local) union meetings, the secretary would say something like ‘Redhills says that our demands are unreasonable.’

Mairéad Nic Craith and Ulrich Kockel (2015) examined heritage discourses related to the built environment. They argue that the perspective on built heritage has broadened to see buildings as physical structures that embody complex social and cultural meanings and values.

The tours of Redhills and the educational activities of E4A utilise both tangible and intangible heritage to complement each other. They utilise the building and artefacts to tell the story of the DMA and what its message means for the present and the future.

7.3 Tours of Redhills The Durham Miners Hall

In this section, I present a detailed description of a tour of the building and grounds that contributes to the overall aims of the research by demonstrating how the historic building and the activities of Education for Action (E4A) invoke collective memories and emotional attachments to the shared industrial past of the Durham mining community.

E4A member Mary conducts the first part of the tour. Mary uses the tangible and intangible aspects of the building to convey the history, values, and struggles of the Durham miners. By engaging visitors with the architectural symbolism, artefacts, and stories associated with the building, the tours help keep the mining community's collective memory alive and relevant.

Figure 7-1 Gatepost Statue. Photo Liz Coxon

Mary begins at the main gates, where two identical statues of twentieth-century miners surmount the gateposts. Dressed for work with a battery cap lamp, water bottle and safety lamps, the figures sit crouching, resting their hands on their picks as though at rest. The sculptor, Robert (Bob) Olley, worked as a miner from 1957 before becoming a full-time artist in 1974. Bob is a prime example of someone who uses his knowledge of mining and North East social life to make a living while preserving his culture for future generations.

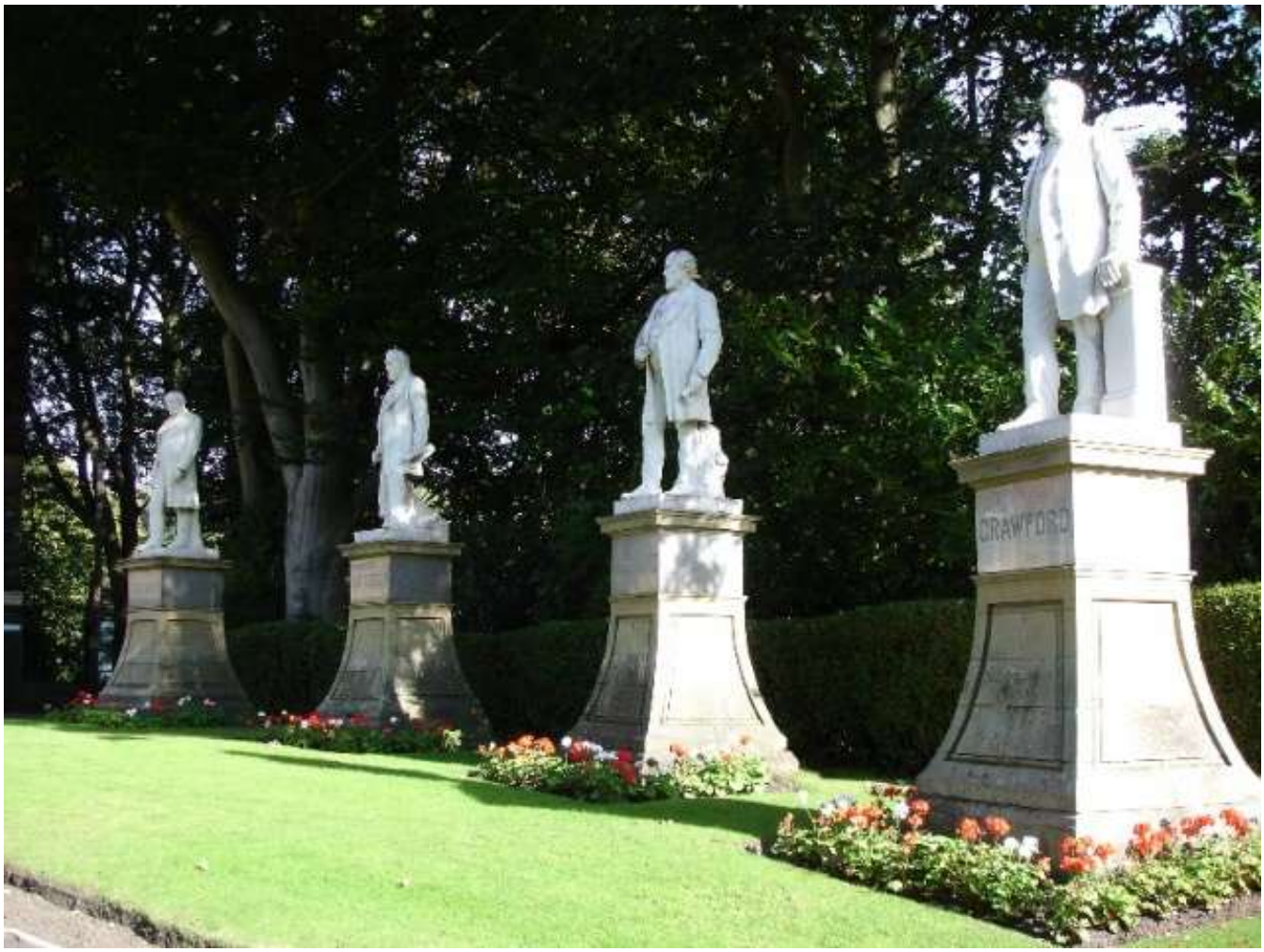

Figure 7-2 The four early leaders. Photo Liz Coxon

Once inside the gates, Mary points to four marble statues of well-dressed gentlemen, each holding a scroll or a book. She asks the visitors what impression they gain from the figures. The usual answer is that they typically appear learned and important. The statues give precisely the impression that the people portrayed wanted to give; they wanted to be perceived by the coal owners with whom they had to deal as their equals, and clothing was one method of achieving this[50].

[50] "Costume," wrote Max Beerbohm in 1896, "enables us to classify any 'professional man' at a glance, be he lawyer, leech or what not" in Shannon, B. (2006) *The cut of his coat: Men, dress, and consumer culture in Britain, 1860–1914*. Ohio University Press.

The statues depict early miners' leaders William Crawford, Alexander Macdonald, W.H. Patterson, and John Forman. Standing before each statue, Mary briefly analyses the men portrayed.

William Crawford was the General Secretary of the Northumberland Miners' Association and later the first agent, president, and general secretary of the Durham Miner's Association. He then became M.P. for Durham. Crawford was born in 1833 and was 'set on' with his father at age eight at Cowpen Pit near Blyth in Northumberland. Shortly after his accident prevented him from working, he returned to school (Bruce 2011, p 338). Eventually, he became an active Primitive Methodist lay preacher; he attributed his success to Primitive Methodism (Emery 1992,p 61).

Alexander Macdonald formed the Coal and Iron Miners' Association in Scotland and became M.P. for Stafford. His biography does not mention Methodism but states that he educated himself at evening classes. Judging by the turnout at his funeral, he appears to have been a popular man amongst Scottish miners[51]. The statue, which was in one of four niches in the façade of the original Miners Hall in North Road Durham City, was unveiled in November 1883 by Thomas Burt.

W.H. Patterson was Crawford's successor in the Durham Miners Association; he was a preacher in the Methodist New Connexion at the age of sixteen when he also worked as a hewer at Heworth Colliery, where he was the founding secretary of the union lodge. Patterson died at the age of only forty-nine; John Wilson succeeded him. According to Edward Welbourne, Patterson was an ineffectual leader possessing none of the qualities of Crawford, who never considered him his successor (Welbourne, 1923:p. 256). However, although John Wilson admits that Patterson was not a Crawford (few were) (Wilson, 1908, p. 40), he has a much higher opinion of him.

[51] http://www.scottishmining.co.uk/386.html

John Forman, the fourth statue's subject, was a Grahamsley Colliery miner near Crook in Co Durham, where he was elected checkweighman[52]He joined the DMA at its inception, became an official, and was elected president in March 1872 at the same meeting at which Crawford was elected Secretary (Wilson 1908, p. 37). He remained in that post until he died in 1900. Notices written by his contemporaries indicate that John Forman was a respected and much-loved leader (Wilson 1908, pp. 302-304). Forman was also a Primitive Methodist.

The statues relate the stories of people from humble backgrounds who achieved high status through their own efforts. Mary attempts to convey to visitors that the early miners' leaders depicted in the statues were respectable, intelligent, and honest individuals. She points out that they are well-dressed, giving the impression that they wanted to be perceived as equals to the wealthy coal owners they had to deal with.

[52] The checkweighman was elected by the miners to protect them from being cheated by the weighman, who was employed by the mine owner.

Figure 7-3 The Putter. Photo Liz Coxon

The next stage of the tour is the memorial garden. This contains two memorial benches dedicated to miners who were sacked during the 1984/1985 strike and never re-employed despite never being convicted of any crime. The principal feature is Brian Brown's The Putter. This sculpture depicts a 'putter' whose job was to manoeuvre a coal tub from the coalface to a landing where it would be added to a set (train) to be hauled out by pony or rope haulage. Often, the tub would become derailed or 'off the way' in the local vernacular; it took a great deal of effort to get it back onto the rails, especially if it were full. The figure shows the strain the man is under through the tension in his muscles and the expression on his face. The sculpture was created by Brown, himself a miner, from scrap metal at Easington Colliery following its closure. Overall, the memorial garden complements the more formal, information-heavy parts of the tour inside Redhills. It offers opportunities for sensory and affective engagement and personal reflection. The emphasis on memorialisation and the representation of physical labour invites empathy and appreciation for the struggles and resilience of the Durham miners. The garden also serves as a space for forging intergenerational connections and fostering a sense of shared ownership over the mining heritage.

Figure 7-4 Redhills Façade. Photo Liz Coxon

Mary now asks the visitors to contemplate the facade of the building and asks them what it reminds them of. They usually reply that it resembles a stately home. She agrees and explains why it looks as it does. The miners wanted their headquarters to be of equal status to the homes of the wealthy coal owners; they, therefore, spared no expense in making it as lavish as possible.

The tour continues through the main entrance of Redhills, where visitors are faced with a large sculpture of a miner's head and arm. This, in fact, is the original sculpture used to manufacture a bronze statue currently situated on a roundabout in St Helens, Lancashire.

Figure 7-5 Anderton Statue Photo Liz Coxon

To the left of the statue, Mary points to a plaque mounted on the wall and explains that it commemorates Durham miners who fought for the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War of 1936 -1939; according to Lewis Mates (2006), only sixteen men from Durham joined the International Brigade compared to ninety-nine from the South Wales coalfield. Mates attributes this to greater militancy in Wales compared to Durham.

Figure 7-6 No Passeran. Photo Liz Coxon

Figure 7-7. Staircase Photo Liz Coxon

As the tour ascends the marble staircase to the first floor, she points out a mural depicting the Miners Gala during the 1980s and two paintings showing scenes of the Gala in earlier periods; she tells us that the son of Jack Jones painted the mural, the trade union leader, she also points out that Jones fought in the Spanish Civil War and was seriously injured at the battle of Ebro in 1938. There are several other paintings of Gala scenes on the landing,

Figure 7-8. Gala Mural. Photo Liz Coxon

We now enter the Muniments Room on the first floor, where we will find images of more influential figures in the DMA's history. The room initially used for storing important documents belonging to the DMA is now a meeting room. However, it also contains many items of interest related to the history of the Durham Miners and the people who made that history.

Figure 7-10 Tommy Ramsey. Photo Liz Coxon

Firstly, to the left of the door is a life-size full-length portrait of a prominent early trade unionist, Tommy Ramsey. In a glass case beside it is the crake[53] he used to gather crowds in the

Figure 7-9. Ramsey's Crake. Photo Liz Coxon

mining villages he regularly visited to preach the Lord's and trade unions' gospel. Ramsey is pictured with the crake in his hand and bills under his arm. He is reputed to have had only one speech, which went along the lines of Lads unite and better your condition. When eggs is scarce, eggs is dear; when men are scarce, men are dear (Wilson 1908, pp. 40-41). Ramseys was not a safe occupation; Wilson goes on to describe how Tommy was assaulted by a boss's man who also burned his crake – which was replaced and turned with more emphasis.

[53] A crake is a ratchet device that is used in to make a noise like a corncrake. In the 18th and 19th centuries, a similar device called a policeman's rattle was used by British policemen to summon assistance.

Figure 7-11. Jude & Hepburn. Photo Liz Coxon

On shelves on the left side of the window are two busts depicting two of Ramsey's contemporaries, Martin Jude and Tommy Hepburn. At Wakefield in 1841, Jude formed the Miners Association of Great Britain. Jude had been a miner but, like Hepburn, was blacklisted; he subsequently earned his living as a publican. Jude died in abject poverty, and despite his many achievements for the miners, only a few close friends attended his funeral at Elswick on September 2nd, 1860 (Fynes 1873, p. 186)

Tommy Hepburn is credited with forming the first miners' union in Co Durham (Fynes 1873, p. 17; Welbourne 1923, p. 25). He worked at Hetton Colliery, became a Primitive Methodist lay preacher and was one of very few educated miners. Fynes describes him as an intelligent, tactful, perseverant, and honest man (1873,p. 25).

Hepburn devoted his time away from the coal face, educating himself and preaching to his fellow miners. He railed against the evils of drink and encouraged the miners to trust God and save themselves through education and unionism. As Hepburn preached in the villages surrounding Hetton, he contacted men of a similar nature. These men became respected and trusted by the miners, and as Hobsbawm puts it, Primitive Methodism became a labour religion (Hobsbawm 1957, p. 118).

Hepburn was blacklisted by the coal owners and was reduced to selling tea for a living, but many men dared not speak to him, and as a result, he almost starved to death. Driven by desperation, he sought work at Felling Colliery, where the Viewer gave him employment on the condition that he did not participate in any union activity (Fynes 1873, p.36; Webb 1921, p. 37; Welbourne 1923, p. 43). Tommy died in December 1864 at 69; he is buried in St Mary’s Cemetery Heworth, where his headstone bears testimony to his trade union activities; a memorial service to him is held there yearly.

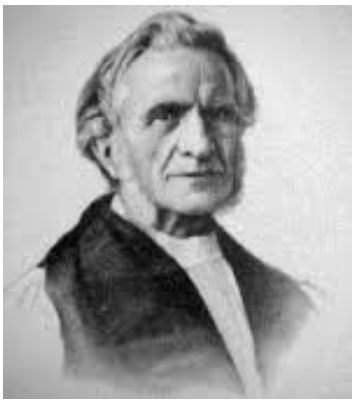

Figure 7-12 Wescott Photo Liz Coxon

In the centre of the wall to the left of the door is a portrait of a clergyman - Brookes Fosse Westcott, Bishop of Durham 1890-1901. Westcott was a social reformer and a champion of the miners. An obituary by Thomas Burt MP, himself a former miner and miners' leader, sums up the views of the Durham pitmen. Dr Westcott was called The Pitmen's Bishop. Beyond doubt, he greatly loved the pitmen. He strove to lessen their burdens, improve their material condition, ennoble their minds, and enlighten their character. This was one of many references to miners in Westcott's biography by his son Arthur (Westcott 1905).

An academic gown hangs in a frame mounted on the room's left wall. The robe belonged to John Wilson MP and was worn when Durham University awarded him an Honorary Doctorate of Civil Law. John Wilson was born near Hartlepool in 1876.

Figure 7-13 Wilson's Gown. Photo Liz Coxon

His early life was beset with tragedy; his mother died when he was only four, and his father died when he was eleven. At age eleven, he worked in ironstone quarries in Weardale, and at twelve, he moved into coal mining at Ludworth, five miles outside of Durham City. After spending time at sea and in the USA, he returned in 1867 to work at Haswell Colliery. In 1869, he actively formed the DMA and was dismissed from his employment. In 1878, he was appointed secretary of The Durham Miners Political Reform Association and, in 1882, became treasurer of the DMA. On the death of Crawford in 1890, he was made financial secretary. Like most contemporaries, he became a Primitive Methodist and a local preacher. At the General Election of 1885, he was elected MP for the Houghton-le-Spring Division of Durham but lost his seat in 1886—the death of Crawford in Mid-Durham. Wilson won the seat and held it for twenty-five years.

Other items of interest that are pointed out are a photograph of X-ray equipment sent by the DMA to Russia and a letter of thanks from the Russian Ambassador with a photograph of Josef Stalin, a photograph of David Guy, a former DMA leader with Nelson Mandela, a photograph of an American Ambassador at Redhills, a banner bearing an inscription that translates as *To labour brothers of Durham mines from the miners of Donbas.* There is a copy of *The Bond* that was signed by miners who bound themselves to an employer for a defined period and a composite photograph of the miners killed in the explosion at Easington Colliery in 1951.

At this point, Mary asks the group what images are missing from this building. On every occasion I have accompanied a tour, a woman from the group has answered ‘women’. Mary then produces a photograph of a group of women who went to Russia during the 1926 Lockout to represent Durham mining families and raise awareness of the plight of the miner's wives and children. The group was led by Annie Errington, a passionate advocate for working-class women and elected a Durham County Councillor in 1948. The point is that although women did not work in the mines of Durham, they had long played a key role in class struggle and workers' rights. However, their role is very much underrepresented. For example, Wilson's (1908) history of the DMA mentions women only four times, whereas men are mentioned on 233 occasions.

Figure 7-14. Women delegates to USSR 1926. Photo Kath Connolly

On leaving the Muniments Room, the group is directed back downstairs and into the Committee Room. This is where the DMA Executive held and continues to hold their meetings. The guides always point out the high-backed chair at the far end of the table and relate the following anecdote.

Figure 7-15. Committee Room. Photo Liz Coxon

In Durham, the 1984/85 Miners' Strike began in this chair. A miner from Wearmouth Colliery, Dave Hopper, brought a resolution to the Executive Committee for the DMA to strike in solidarity with Yorkshire miners. At that point, the committee was finely balanced between the older, more moderate officers and the younger, more left-wing miners, who were growing in number across the coalfield. A vote was taken, and the numbers were tied. DMA President Harold Mitchell was in the chair. Mitchell was one of the more moderate voices in the union's history. The DMA's articles of association state that the President must vote in favour of a resolution or resign in the event of a tie. Those in the room recall that Mitchell remained silent for a full three minutes, facing the choice of voting down the resolution and resigning, as required by the DMA rules or voting in favour of strike action. In this chair, Mitchell made his decision. The resolution was passed. Durham was on strike. The rest of the country soon followed.

In the far-left corner of the room is a banner, that of Bewicke Main Colliery. Mary points out that this must be a replica because it is made from cotton rather than the traditionally used silk. However, the main point is that at the centre of the banner is a portrait of James Ramsey Macdonald, the first Labour Prime Minister. The visitors are told that all the banners depicting Macdonald had his face obliterated from them after he was denounced as a traitor for deciding to join the Conservative-led coalition government in 1931. The mutilation of the banners is partially corroborated by Hester

Barron, who reports that several of the miners' banners had Macdonald's name erased, and one had been returned to the manufacturer with his eyes cut out (Barron 2012). On the wall, the left of the banner is a picture of the first Labour Government.

Figure 7-16. The Pitmen's Parliament. Photo DMA

The walls of the room are decorated with paintings of Durham Collieries, photographs of miners working underground and posters of past Galas.

The last room to be visited is the main chamber, known as the Pitmen's Parliament. This room contains 298 seats, one for a representative from every DMA Lodge[54]. The visitors are always asked what the room reminds them of; someone invariably answers a Methodist chapel. This is the answer being sought. This allows Mary to

[54] A lodge was a branch of the union, usually representing a single colliery but where several small collieries were in proximity one lodge might represent two or more collieries.

re-emphasise the links between the early days of unionism and Methodism, which were first mentioned regarding the statues in the grounds.

The building is a discursive object that the E4A members use to relate genealogical myths of origin for the DMA. They employ what Bourdieu described as 'officialising strategies' (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 40) to maximise the prestige and propriety of the characters represented in and around the building. The aim is to send the tourists and others away with the impression that the founders of the DMA were respectable, honest, intelligent people. The stature of the founders is transmitted, by implication, to the organisation.

7.4 The Events for Primary Schoolchildren

The day begins with a building tour, during which children learn about the early miners' leaders and the importance of the Miners' Hall. The memorial garden features tangible representations of mining life, including the *Putter* statue and a replica winch.

The children then participate in the Checkweighman exercise, a hands-on activity designed to teach them about the historical context that led to the formation of trade unions in the mining industry. I created and participated in this exercise along with members of E4A. Through role-playing, the children experience the challenges faced by miners and learn about the importance of collective action. In the exercise, the children play the roles of miners with their corves (baskets) of coal, which are weighed by the weighman, an employee of Lord Londonderry, the mine owner. The weighman attempts to cheat the miners by surreptitiously placing stones in the corves. For this, he receives a bonus. The miners see him cheating and protest. Lord Londonderry then appears, delivers a lecture to the miners, and threatens to evict them from their homes if they continue to protest. The miners ignore his threats. Then, a checkweighman will be employed to ensure the coal is weighed fairly and the miners receive the full payment. The scenario is based on historical events, and the children are made aware of them.

Gender roles are explored through separate activities, with girls learning about domestic life and boys participating in the Checkweighman exercise. The groups switch roles, fostering empathy and understanding.

The day concludes with a creative writing activity, where children compose verses for a song about the Checkweighman, reinforcing the day's learning through music and performance.

Throughout the event, I observed how the children engaged with the various activities and interacted with the E4A team members. The immersive nature of the

program allows for a deeper understanding of the mining heritage and its significance in shaping the local community.

7.5 Events for A-Level Students

Education for Action organises events tailored to A-level students, mainly those studying politics, to engage them with the history and significance of trade unionism, collective action, and political struggle in the context of the Durham mining community.

The participants are typically students majoring in politics. The format for them is to take them outside in the morning, tell them about the four statues, and show them the Putter memorial and the other objects in the garden. I then draw their attention to the building and explain why it is here. Why is it such an important building, and why does it take the form it does? I explain how the coalfield expanded in the 19th Century and how the industry began declining after Redhills opened. I also highlight the importance of coal to Durham until the late 20th Century and the effects of its eventual decline.

The students are then directed back into the building, where they receive a lecture on the development of trade unionism and collectivism, the influence of religion and ideology, internationalism, solidarity, health and safety, working conditions, and the importance of education and welfare. They are also shown around the building as part of the public tours and other group visits. Following the tour, Dave Wray gives a presentation on the banners, their iconography, and the significance of their parading at the Miners Gala.

During the afternoon, the students are shown a film on the background of the 1984/85 strike, after which members of E4A who were active give their accounts of the strike. The day ends with a debate amongst the students about the strike, trade unionism, collectivism, and industrial action in general.

The events for A-level students, mainly those studying politics, aim to engage young people with the history and significance of trade unionism, collective action, and political struggle in the context of the Durham mining community. Feedback from the class teacher highlighted the event's positive impact on the A-Level students.

She said the day provided them with valuable historical, political, and economic context relevant to their studies and personal lives as young adults in the North East. The morning sessions effectively covered key themes, including trade unionism, collectivism, religion, ideology, internationalism, solidarity, working conditions, and the importance of education and welfare. The afternoon session, which included firsthand accounts from the miners' strike, was particularly well-received by the students. It addressed misconceptions about industrial action and conveyed the sense of pride in work, identity, and the social impact of such actions. The event also raised broader issues of power, politics, and the media's role in framing political debates, encouraging students to think critically and connect to contemporary issues.

7.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, the educational activities and memory work carried out by Education for Action (E4A) at Redhills Miners Hall demonstrate the potential of historic spaces to serve as dynamic sites of cultural transmission, public pedagogy, and the construction of collective identity. By harnessing the symbolic power of the building's architecture and artefacts, E4A facilitates embodied, affective encounters with mining heritage that resonate with diverse audiences, particularly younger generations.

The tours, events, and activities organised by E4A aim to keep the Durham miners' history and struggles alive in the public's minds. The building, with its symbolic architecture and artefacts, serves as a repository of the community's history and values. The memorial garden serves as a tangible reminder of the sacrifices made

by individuals in the fight for workers' rights, prompting visitors to reflect on the resilience of the mining community.

E4A's activities foster a sense of belonging by connecting participants to their local history and the shared experiences of the Durham mining community. The immersive Checkweighman exercise for primary school children and the events for A-level students encourage engagement with the political and social struggles of the miners, positioning this history as relevant to their own lives. The importance of intergenerational transmission is highlighted, demonstrating E4A's commitment to ensuring the mining community's memory and values are passed on.

As Redhills is transformed into a cultural centre, sustaining its public role as a repository of communal memory will remain vital. The case of E4A at Redhills underscores the importance of critical heritage work that mobilises history to foster collective resilience and inspire innovative forms of social engagement. It invites further reflection on how post-industrial communities can strategically invoke collective memories and emotional attachments to a shared industrial past to foster contemporary communal identities and a sense of belonging. By reclaiming historic spaces and interpretive authority, these communities ensure that the past remains a living resource for shaping just and equitable futures.

Chapter 8 Memorials, Memorabilia and Festivals in Post-Industrial Mining Communities

8.1 Introduction

This chapter examines how coal mining heritage continues to shape cultural identity in County Durham, England, mainly through material and social practices that maintain collective memory in post-industrial communities. Despite the closure of the last coal mine in 1993, mining culture remains central to local identity and social cohesion.

The annual Durham Miners' Gala exemplifies how communities preserve their heritage through both tangible artefacts and intangible traditions. The Gala serves as a hub connecting various commemorative activities, including banner curation, monument building, exhibitions, and cultural events. Local groups actively participate in these activities, organising banner displays, selling memorabilia, and promoting cultural performances.

Drawing on anthropological theories of material culture, social memory, and ritual, this analysis explores how communities actively negotiate the loss of their economic foundations by reimagining their cultural identity. These commemorative practices are not merely exercises in nostalgia but active processes of community regeneration. By examining the interaction between public and private remembrance, collective ritual, and individual meaning-making, this chapter demonstrates how post-industrial communities maintain continuity with their past while adapting to present circumstances.

The research reveals how communities effectively use cultural resources to sustain social bonds, affirm collective identities, and imagine alternative futures, even after the economic basis of their identity has disappeared. This demonstrates the power of cultural heritage in providing a foundation for ongoing community resilience and renewal in post-industrial contexts.

8.2 Theoretical Framework

Drawing on anthropological theories of material culture (Miller 1998), social memory (Climo and Cattell 2002), and ritual (Olaveson 2001; Derrett 2003; Duffy 2016; Frost 2016; Turner, Abrahams and Harris 2017; Mair 2019), this analysis investigates how communities actively negotiate the loss of their economic foundations through cultural reimagining. The chapter argues that commemorative practices serve not merely as exercises in nostalgia but as active processes of community regeneration and identity formation.

Social memory, material culture, memorials, memorabilia, and festivals form an interconnected framework for understanding how societies commemorate their past and shape their future. Social memory encompasses the collective understanding of historical events and shared experiences, while material culture represents the physical manifestations of a society's values and beliefs. Memorials at this intersection serve as purposefully designed physical manifestations of collective remembrance.

Memorabilia as Sites of Memory

Anthropologist Catherine Degnen regards memorabilia as sites of memory, functioning similarly to monuments and other memorials (Degnen 2006). The process of collecting involves assigning subjective meaning to objects beyond their original purposes, transforming them into symbolic representations of shared history and values (Baudrillard, Elsner and Cardinal 1994).

For mining memorabilia collectors, these objects embody values such as solidarity, bravery, and community spirit. On a personal level, these collections evoke nostalgic memories and maintain continuity with the past. Within the broader community, trading and displaying collections facilitates social bonding and collective identity formation. The intergenerational transmission of these objects as family heirlooms helps younger generations connect with their heritage, even without direct experience of mining life.

Festivals play a crucial role in preserving social memory within communities through collective rituals that reinforce shared narratives and traditions. The Durham Miners' Gala exemplifies how such events create continuity between past and present, facilitating the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and customs. Through participation in festival activities, individuals internalise these shared experiences, strengthening their connection to the community's collective identity.

The Gala holds different meanings for various groups within the community. For mining communities, it serves as a celebration of heritage and history. The socialist and trade union movements use it as a platform for political engagement. For the broader community, it functions as a cultural festival featuring music and entertainment. Children and families experience it as a recreational event, with its meaning evolving across generations as participants grow from enjoying the funfair to engaging with more complex cultural and political aspects.

Campbell's (2015) analysis of cultural displays in post-industrial societies identifies how events like the Gala serve both internal and external purposes. They enable community members to celebrate their heritage while also sharing their culture with a wider audience. This dual function helps maintain cultural identity while fostering broader understanding and appreciation.

Olavsen's (2001) comparison of Turner's 'communitas' and Durkheim's 'collective effervescence' provides insight into the ritual aspects of the Gala. These concepts describe intense collective emotions that arise during rituals, temporarily dissolving social hierarchies and generating new ideas and symbols. The Gala exemplifies how

these theoretical concepts are applied in practice, as participants experience heightened states of collective emotion and social bonding during the festivities.

Beeman (1993) and Addo (2009) emphasise the importance of analysing performance aspects in festivals, notably the fluid relationship between performers and audience members. This is clearly demonstrated in the Gala's banner processions, where participants shift between roles as performers and spectators throughout the day.

Recent scholarship by Arcodia and Whitford (2007) and Derrett (2003) highlights how festivals contribute to building social capital within communities while creating stable community identities. They provide direction for community development and contribute to economic sustainability. Although the Gala's primary aim isn't financial profit, its economic impact on local businesses helps ensure its continued support. Meanwhile, its year-round activities, including fundraising and banner-making, maintain community cohesion in former mining areas, demonstrating how cultural events can serve both social and economic functions in post-industrial communities.

8.3 Public Monuments as Landscapes of Memory

This section discusses the history and significance of monuments commemorating the coal mining industry in the North East of England. It explores how mining communities developed a strong tradition of memorialising mining disasters, which was later applied to war memorials for fallen soldiers. The section analyses the different forms and functions of early disaster memorials versus more recent memorials that commemorate the death of the mining industry itself.

The connection between memory and monuments can be explained using Pierre Nora's idea of ‘places or sites of memory’ or ‘lieux de mémoire’ (Nora 1989). These sites encompass various symbolic locations or cultural expressions of shared memory, including geographic areas, monuments, remembrance events, famous individuals, political movements, professional organisations, and social customs.

Nora distinguishes these from what he terms ‘environments of memory’ milieux de memoire). Memory is integral to daily life in these settings, such as within families, religious communities, or small towns.

Mining Disaster Memorials

Memorials serve essential commemorative functions in all cultures, but mining communities have a distinct relationship to memorialisation. The hazardous nature of mining work and the ever-present risk of disasters created a culture of memorialising loss in mining villages. When wartime deaths deprived families of graves to visit, communities applied this memorial tradition to honour fallen soldiers as well.

Figure 8-1 Felling Disaster Memoria Picture England's North East

The early mining memorials commemorated miners who had been killed in the all-too-common mining disasters. In Durham, the Durham Mining Museum lists around thirty of these, the earliest being the 1812 Felling Colliery explosion, where ninety-two lives were lost, and the biggest at New Hartley, where 204 miners were trapped underground. Understandably, such tragedies were commemorated in this way.

Figure 8-2 New Hartley Disaster Memorial Photo Historic England

To the reader today, it may seem perfectly natural to erect a memorial when a large-scale disaster has occurred. Hannah E Martin (2015) wrote her history dissertation on the subject of these disaster memorials; she makes an important observation that mining disasters quickly became public events; many people were attracted to the pitheads following a disaster, and families would be first along with miners from other pits offering their help, but subsequently, members of the public would arrive along with reporters from the newspapers that were gaining in popularity during the 18th and 19th Centuries. Especially after the more significant disasters, the newspapers often published lists of the dead and their dependents, including comments on their character. These reports became a means of memorialisation, and families usually

kept them. These reports became a tool for social reformers, as they brought to the attention of the middle classes the conditions in which miners worked and the plight their families faced following a disaster, which often claimed the lives of several family members.

The last major mining disaster in Durham was at Easington Colliery in 1951, in which eighty-nine miners were killed in an explosion. Most of the victims were buried together in graves, which were laid out in a pattern similar to Lutyens's war graves, as depicted below. The memorial on the right overlooks the graves.

Figure 8-3 Easington Graves. Photo Northern Echo

The New Generation of Memorials

The decline of coal mining has prompted many former mining communities to erect memorials commemorating the industry and honouring those working there. The following section focuses on memorials in the Durham coalfield, describing how they have increased in recent decades as ex-miners and their families seek to preserve the memory of their occupational heritage. This phenomenon is contextualised as part of the broader effort by these communities to maintain their distinct identities in the face of economic and social change. The memorials attest to the enduring cultural significance of coal mining despite the erosion of much of its physical presence from the landscape. I suggest the mining industry may be more widely memorialised than other declining industries because of its heroic mystique and the bitter struggle around its closure.

When the mines began closing following the miners 'defeat in the 1984/1985 strike, a new phase began to create permanent mining memorials (Morrell 2017, p. 95). The

memorials commemorate the collieries and the miners who worked in them. Some memorials are being built in communities where the colliery closed fifty or more years ago. The following are some reasons why people build memorials to long-closed mines.

Figure 8-4 Langley Park Memorial. Picture Fabulous North

In 2019, a statue of a miner was unveiled in the former mining village of Langley Park. The colliery closed in 1975. Five women raised the £22,000 needed to build the memorial, all of whom had relatives who worked at the pit. One woman's father had been the last man to be killed at the pit when he was twenty-nine, and she was just two years old. Christine Pringle, the lady, expressed her reasons for building the memorial.

> It helps to understand the present if you are familiar with the past. Other nearby villages have mining memorials to highlight their heritage. We thought Langley Park ought to have one, too. I grew up hearing stories about my father, so it is as if I did know him. This memorial honours his memory and that of all the other miners who worked there, many of whom died while working underground (BBC, 2019).

It is apparent from the above that there is a 'domino effect' regarding the surge in memorial building. People notice that neighbouring villages have a memorial, so they feel they should have one, too. However, this does not deny the underlying feeling that the miners and their industry should be remembered. The memorials would not have been built if the community had not shared this feeling.

These memorials are not about mourning. The people of the former mining communities want visitors to know what the village was about. The Langley Park Miners Memorial Group expressed these sentiments in the July 2015 Esh Parish Council Newsletter regarding the proposed memorial project.

> We all have personal reasons for embarking upon this project, fully appreciating the central place of mining to our background and to the heritage of the village as a whole. It means a lot to us all to ensure that this lives on for future generations in Langley Park. We are proud of our village and its mining heritage and want to celebrate it in a tangible, enduring form, enabling the memories of so many members of the local community (past and present) to live on (Dixon 2015).

The two statements above observe a link between the memorials and the banners and that the resurgence in interest in The Gala relates to the enthusiasm for building memorials. Many of the banners serve as permanent memorials as they are on public display when they are not being paraded or displayed elsewhere, such as at one of the annual exhibitions of banners around the county.

Artefactual Memorials

The earlier memorials were artefacts from the collieries, such as the iconic pulley wheels that once would have dominated the village landscape.

Figure 8-5 Murton Colliery Wheel, Photo J. Coxon

The example shown above was originally on the site of the colliery. When I originally photographed it, it was in poor condition. Subsequently, it was moved to its current location in the village centre. This memorial is significant to me as I worked at the

colliery in 1976/1977. The wheel is in front of a community centre I visited in 2014. At that time, an exhibition of photographs from the pit was held. I met and talked with several former colleagues who were acting as guides to the exhibition. The men told me they wanted their village remembered for its mining history. The Murton Colliery Banner Group which organises events throughout the year to raise funds for the curation of the banner and to pay for a band to lead it into the annual Miners 'Gala, organised the exhibition. The events are an integral part of the village's social life, providing further evidence of how the community's mining past continues to influence present-day life.

A tub[55] is another popular form of memorial. Tubs were an easy way to create a monument; it was simply a matter of putting one on a length of rails, perhaps filling it with flowers or rubble topped by some coal cemented into place. The example shown is in Hetton Bus Station.

Figure 8-6 Tub Hetton Interchange Photo J. Coxon

[55] A tub is a small railway truck used underground.

Figure 8-7 Easington Cage. Photo Easington WMC

At Easington Colliery, set up as a monument is a cage[56] from the colliery. It weighs almost twelve tonnes and has been re-instated at the restored site of the former pit by the *Turning the Tide* project as part of the clean-up of Durham's coastline. The cage incorporates a time capsule provided by the people of Easington to store their memories of the local coal industry[57].

Figure 8-8 The Roundy. Photo Ushaw Moor Community Walk.

Another unusual memorial is a sculpture installed in 2002 at Ushaw Moor to commemorate local miners. The sculpture, *The Roundy*, which represents a large lump of coal, was created with input from local miners.

[56] The cage is the vehicle in which men and materials were transported through the mineshaft.
[57] Pit Cage Monument, Easington Colliery | Co-Curate (ncl.ac.uk)

Figure 8-9 Stadium of Light Lamp. Photo Wikipedia

Most memorials are built by the local communities, but there are exceptions. The three-metre-high miner's lamp provides a counterexample outside the Sunderland Football Stadium, which the club financed. The stadium occupies the site of the former Wearmouth Colliery and is called The Stadium of Light. The motto of the National Coal Board was 'E Tenebris Lux' which means 'out of darkness (comes) light'.

Figurative Memorials

Figurative memorials are much less common than the artefactual ones. This is possibly because they are much more expensive to build, the commissioning process is complicated, and there is the possibility of disagreement over what form the figures should take. Vanessa Morrell (2012) examined Durham mining and other memorials in the context of decline. She found 122 recent and old mining memorials in the former Durham Coalfield (2012); of these, only thirty-two were figures of people; of those, only nine depicted miners at work and all were erected after the closure of the Durham collieries.

Figure 8-10 Brandon Miner, photo Paul Levitt

A statue at Brandon Colliery was created by Ray Lonsdale, who has sculpted many mining and other memorials. Councillor Paul Taylor of Brandon, who felt sentimental about the pitman statue, convened a meeting in 2019 for residents of Brandon and Meadowfield. Numerous individuals with connections to the Brandon Colliery region, the locus of the village's mining heritage, attended.

At Esh Winning, in 2012, a memorial representing a mining family was installed in the village where the colliery closed in 1968. The statue was financed by the local Miners Memorial Group, which took six years to raise the £65,000 needed to create the sculpture, which was sourced from China. The memorial was designed by local resident Norman Emery, who served as Durham Cathedral's archaeologist in residence.

Figure 8-11 Esh Winning Family. Photo Northern Echo

Group treasurer Richard Thompson Minnis said: “We were very pleased at how the day went. A lot of hard work has gone into making it become a reality. We were so glad to see so many villagers turn out because there did not seem to be much interest in the project at first. We also received numerous positive comments from the various banner groups, who came from all over the region to attend the unveiling. (Echo 2015).

8.4 Collecting Mining Memorabilia

In the wake of deindustrialisation, former mining communities across the United Kingdom have witnessed the emergence of collecting mining memorabilia. This phenomenon serves as a crucial means of preserving and commemorating industrial heritage. As coal mines close and the physical landscape transforms, maintaining connections to this vanishing way of life has grown increasingly urgent. This essay explores the motivations, meanings, and social functions of collecting mining memorabilia, drawing on ethnographic research and interviews with collectors.

Drawing on Jean Baudrillard's work (Baudrillard et al., 1994), we can understand collecting as creating a system of meaning in which objects are valued for their emotional and cultural resonance beyond their original functional purposes. For mining memorabilia collectors, objects embody cherished values and serve as tangible links to a shared past. Displaying these collections in homes becomes a way of asserting the ongoing significance of this heritage.

Beyond personal meaning-making, collecting serves essential social functions in post-industrial communities. It facilitates social bonding among those with shared mining heritage, as collectors trade items and share knowledge. Collector groups provide opportunities to exchange stories and information, reinforcing collective memory. The intergenerational transmission of objects and associated knowledge helps maintain tangible connections to mining culture, educating younger generations about their industrial heritage.

As mining communities have experienced the loss of their economic foundations and the erosion of their physical landscapes, these collections have taken on heightened significance as tangible anchors of memory and cultural continuity. Collectors assert the enduring value and relevance of mining heritage in their individual and collective lives by actively acquiring, curating, and displaying these objects.

Collecting mining memorabilia can be understood as a form of resistance against cultural erasure and forgetting. In a period of rapid transition and upheaval, these collections provide a means for mining communities to celebrate their unique cultural heritage on their own terms, outside of official heritage frameworks or institutional settings.

Collecting mining memorabilia is a complex and multifaceted practice that serves essential personal, social, and cultural functions in post-industrial regions. Far from being a mere hobby or nostalgic indulgence, this practice represents a meaningful act of cultural preservation and identity construction in the face of profound social and economic change. Through their collections, mining memorabilia enthusiasts

maintain a connection to their own personal and family histories and contribute to their communities' collective memory and resilience.

While public memorials inscribe mining heritage into shared spaces, the practice of collecting mining memorabilia represents a more personal form of remembrance. It allows individuals in former mining communities to curate private collections of mining-related objects, often beginning serendipitously and evolving into purposeful collecting practices. As collections grow, so does the collector's engagement with and knowledge of mining heritage, transforming collecting into a form of active remembering and knowledge production about mining culture. Collecting mining memorabilia emerges as a powerful form of vernacular cultural resilience and continuity in post-industrial regions. It preserves and commemorates industrial heritage in the face of significant social and economic transformations.

Examples of Memorabilia

A wide range of objects are collected as mining memorabilia, highlighting the insights they provide into different facets of mining history and culture. Safety lamps, for example, are among the most iconic and sought-after items, prized for their historical significance and aesthetic appeal. The miners' safety lamp serves as a tangible link to the past. Its collection and display exemplify how material culture operates in the construction of social memory:

Figure 8-12 Safety Lamp. Photo Paul Jeffries

The lamp has symbolic significance: It is not just a tool; it also represents the dangers miners face and their resilience. It can act as a narrative anchor: Each lamp can spark stories, helping to transmit memories across generations.

The shared recognition of the lamp's importance reinforces a sense of collective mining heritage. The lamp's physical presence in homes or museums provides a concrete focal point for remembrance.

The plate on the left shows four explosions at Seham Colliery, known as 'The Nack'. At the centre of the plate are pictures of two memorials to the explosions. The colliery headgear is in the background. At the circumference of the plate, the names of all the men and boys who were killed in the explosions are included.

Figure 8-13 Seham Plate. Photo eBay

Shown here are commemorative glass jugs for the Seaham Harbour Colliery Disaster, the West Stanley Disaster, the Washington Colliery Disaster (left), and the Seaham disaster of 1909, in which 168 miners died (right) These jugs are part of the collection of commemorative glass curated by the Beamish Museum. Dr William Cowan catalogued the collection. I found his book on the glasses in a second-hand bookshop, and this drew my attention to the existence of the memorial glasses. (Brooks and Cowan, 2008).

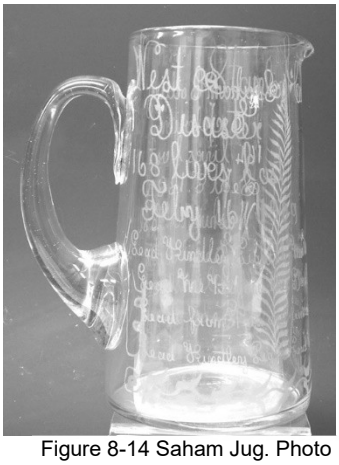

Figure 8-14 Saham Jug. Photo Beamish Museum

Figure 8-15 Washington Jug, Photo Beamish Museum

Union badges are another critical category of collected objects, reflecting trade unionism's and political activism's central role in mining culture. These items embody the values of solidarity, loyalty, and collective struggle underpinning the mining way of life. Paraphernalia related to mining disasters, such as memorial badges or rescue team insignia, are also highly prized by collectors, serving as sobering reminders of the ever-present dangers of the occupation.

Figure 8-16 Union Badges. Photo M. Wilson

Figure 8-17. Durham Tokens. Photo M. Wilson

Para-numismatic items are popular with collectors. The tokens pictured here are from Michael Wilson's collection. Michael was in his mid-thirties and had never been a miner but was from a mining family in South Hetton. All the tokens are from Durham collieries. The miner collected two tokens with his lamp; he handed the alloy one to the banksman[58] as he entered the cage[59] to go underground. He kept the brass token with him; it could be used as an identity tag in case of an accident. When he left the mine at

[58] The man who was in charge at the top of the mineshaft.
[59] Lift/elevator

the end of his shift, he handed it to the banksman. This was a record of his leaving the mine.

Coal statuettes and folk art represent the creative self-expression of mining communities and the continued symbolic power of coal as a material substance. Together, these diverse collections create a rich and multifaceted record of mining heritage, encompassing both the public and private, the extraordinary and the mundane. These figurines are made from a mixture of coal and resin. They are sold at the Miners' Gala and other cultural events, such as banner displays.

Figure 8-18 Miner Statuette. Photo. eBay

8.5 The Durham Miners' Gala: A Living Monument to Mining Heritage

The Durham Miners' Gala is an annual festival celebrating the culture and history of the Durham mining communities. The Gala is held on the second Saturday in July and was first held in Wharton Park Durham City in 1871 (Temple 2011). It was organised by the Durham Miners Association (DMA), formed in 1869 to represent miners' interests (Wilson 1908). The DMA still exists today and represents the interests of former miners in such matters as compensation claims for industrial

disease and injury[60]. The Gala has become a general gathering of trade unions and others with left-wing political interests.

The day begins with banners being paraded through the streets of the former mining settlements. Former miners and families from the pit villages then go to Durham City, where they convene at gathering points behind their Lodge[61] banners. Accompanying brass or other bands strike up rousing tunes as the contingents march down Old Elvet to the Racecourse, where the banners are tied to the perimeter fences.

Prominent figures from the Labour Party and the trade union movement have addressed the crowds from the Gala platform over the years. Bands pause to play in front of the County Hotel balcony, where the dignitaries are assembled. Some play the haunting Gresford miners' anthem before the speeches in solemn tribute to those lost underground. Stalls, activities, and a funfair surround the ceremony. In the afternoon, the reverse procession retraces the route back to the villages. Bystanders clap along as bands pause to continue playing music on Elvet Bridge, reluctant to let the festivities end.

The banners themselves hold deep meaning for their lodges and communities. Vibrant insignia and iconography reflect the ideals of trade unionism, community identity, and bonds of brotherhood forged through collective struggle. A black crepe draped across a banner signified that a miner had been killed in the year since the previous Gala.

The Durham Miners' Gala proudly celebrates cultural heritage and living history. Its enduring traditions centre around these symbolic Lodge banners, which are still paraded by their descendants today. The banners' symbolism, pageantry, and communal participation sustain the memory, spirit, and identity of Durham's mining villages despite the industry's demise. Their continued display testifies that though the pits are gone, the people and solidaristic principles endure.

[60] https://www.durhamminers.org/about_us
[61] A Lodge was the local union organisation.

The Gala almost died out in the late 1990s. The interest waned because its banner was no longer paraded once a pit closed. Therefore, the people of the community stopped going. The Gala survived because the DMA changed its attitude towards other unions and organisations parading at the event. Traditionally, they restricted the event to miners' banners only, but in 1986, they allowed the parading of other banners. Following the closure of the last Durham pit at Wearmouth in 2003, they realised that the Gala and the DMA could only survive by securing funding from other sources.

As a DMA official recalls, the union resolved that the Gala must not be allowed to die; 'it must not, we need this political platform' (Mellor and Stephenson 2005, p. 344). A call went out for financial support, and other unions and councils responded positively. An article in The Times came to the attention of Michael Watts, a New Zealand millionaire who had generously supported the Gala for seven years. From its low point, the Gala recovered its momentum, and in 2002, when the research, which was discussed here, was undertaken, there were estimates of 40–50,000 people, thirty bands, and scores of banners in attendance, the biggest since 1960. In 2023, that estimate was raised to 200,000[62].

The Miners' Banners

Carrying banners in processions has a long history in North East England, with evidence dating back to the 1830s, when banners were specifically carried by miners. Hetton-le-Hole figures in the early history of banner usage, notably during the 1831 miners' strike led by Thomas Hepburn. At a meeting in Jarrow in April 1831, miners from forty-nine collieries were accompanied by banners inscribed with the name of the colliery and various mottos (Emery 1998, pp. 57-59).

Studies demonstrate that banners play a pivotal role in former mining towns, operating both as emblems of their industrial legacy of labour disputes and as unifying artefacts between older residents and new arrivals. Specifically, within northern England, banners are experiencing a restoration among villages that once

[62] Sunderland Echo July 9th, 2023

centred on coal mining. Archival banners are preserved, while contemporary duplicates are commissioned for events such as the Durham Miners' Gala. These efforts renew a shared identity and pride taken in the mining past.

Fiona Raeside-Elliott (2020) examines the symbolic power of banners to represent identity and foster community, with a focus on the ceremonial miners' banners in North East England and the contemporary St. Cuthbert's banner. She traces the history of banners used in battle and labour struggles, which take on emotional resonance as emblems of solidarity and shared heritage. The research examines how mining communities preserve or recreate banners through fundraising efforts to reconnect with their industrial past and engage in civic participation. New banner projects also aim to educate youth and unite old and new generations in the villages. The research suggests banners are vital for marginalised groups seeking continuity amidst social rupture. Although conveying nostalgia, they also look to the future, renewing their purpose and identity through display and creation.

Schatz and Lavine (2007) argue that ritualistic and ceremonial activities serve similar psychological functions to national symbols in fostering group identification. Unlike static symbols, these activities allow for active expression of identity through participation or observation. Such involvement, often alongside other group members, reinforces one's sense of belonging and strengthens the commitment to the group. While their research focused on national identity, the authors suggest that this concept can be applied to other group identities, such as local communities or occupational groups like miners. Ceremonial activities provide a tangible, behavioural means of expressing and reinforcing group identity, thereby strengthening in-group bonds and loyalty.

Sociologist Lynn Dodds (2004) argues that banner traditions continue at the Durham Miners' Gala, despite the absence of active mines, and play a central role in mining culture. The banners publicly conveyed calls for justice when the number of deaths from disasters was high. Miners became less insular as education levels increased, but mining areas continued to maintain a robust communal spirit. The Big Meeting outwardly displayed the growing confidence and solidarity among former miners. While focused on Durham and Northumberland, the mining banner tradition extends to other communities that frequently attend the Gala. The banners remain pivotal to mining identity, despite the industry's decline.

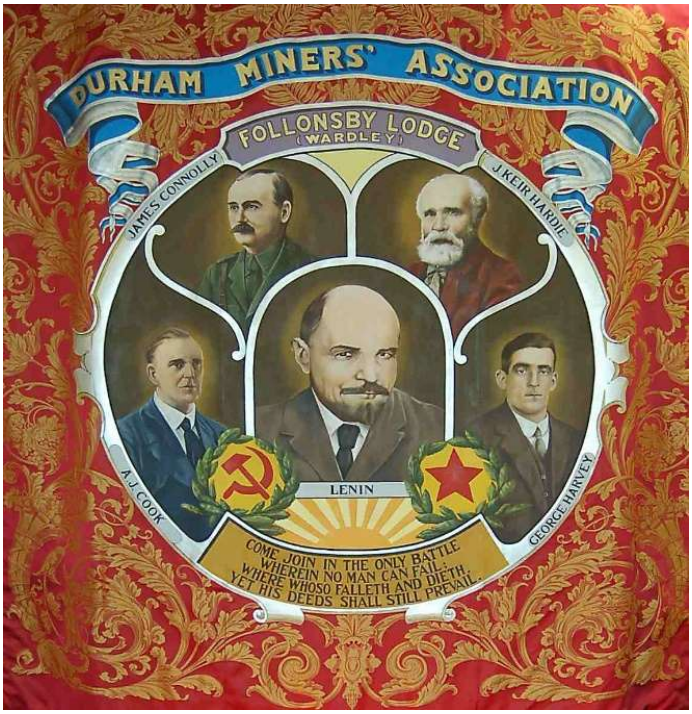

Figure 8-19 Follonsby Banner. Photo Alarmy

The miners first used banners at the mass outdoor meetings in the 1830s, marking the beginning of the movement towards collectivism. If they were separated from their group, the men would follow the banner to the meeting site and use it to locate them.

Sociologist and former miner David Wray explains that the scrollwork across the top can help date the banners. Those made before the DMA was formed will have only the lodge identified; if made between 1869 and 1944, they will bear an additional scroll identifying the lodge's affiliation to the DMA. Banners made after the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) was created will have a scroll identifying affiliation to that organisation. Additionally, the scroll bearing the affiliation with the DMA was replaced with a Durham area NUM (Wray 2009).

Figure 8-20 The previous New Herrington Banner. Photo Alarmy

The early banners usually had a religious theme, and two possible reasons for this are not mutually exclusive. Firstly, the early union leaders were almost all religious men, usually Primitive Methodists. Secondly, the banners were made by Tuthills of London, with a pattern book of religious motifs. Using a book pattern was cheaper than creating a new design. The miners' leaders were not portrayed on the early banners, a reflection of the movement's rank-and-file nature. Images of union and Labour leaders began appearing in the 20th Century (Wray 2009, pp. 152,153). There is now a wide variety of themes on the banners. Several themes run consistently throughout the banners. Unity among the workers, universal brotherhood, all men are brethren, and an injury to one is an injury to all are the most dominant themes. Others include miners' rights, welfare provision, and social justice (Dodds 2004, p.2). Other themes include buildings such as Redhills or Durham Cathedral and depictions of the colliery.

The New Herrington Colliery Banner

The story of the replacement New Herrington[63] banner is relevant because it was the first replacement banner to be made following the closure of the Durham pits (McBride and Greenwood 2009, p. 35; Smith, Shackel and Campbell 2011, p. 114). The story behind the banner's renewal helps to explain the resurgence of interest in the Gala and mining heritage. The account also emphasises how the people of the mining communities feel about the banners. Dave Wray related the account to me,

[63] New Herrington is the name of the village.

but I also discussed it with the people involved, as I knew them from my time working at Herrington.

Pat, a miner's wife, takes up the story -

> When we took the banner out to go to the (1996) Gala, it was a very windy day, and as soon as we unfurled it, it was torn to shreds. We knew then that the banner would never return to Durham, and we realised that the village had died (Pat, treasurer of the Partnership)[64].

Pat is not talking about the death of the village's physical infrastructure; she is talking about the banner as the symbolic and representational heart of the village. For Pat and other community members who still cherish a shared and collective history, what had died was the physical representation of all they were. The banner represented their emotional attachment to 'place'.

Dave Wray and Carol Stephenson conducted research with the New Herrington Banner Partnership, which was formed to replace the banner featured in the account below. He had published the research; below is an extract from the article.

> For many in New Herrington, the Gala was the last remaining link to the complex matrix of influences that had defined their lives: occupation, class, community and trade union and in 1986, even this link was broken.' (Stephenson and Wray 2005, p. 180).

> What is essential for people to understand is that the Banner represents a way of life that goes back centuries rather than a battle standard from a 20-year-old industrial dispute. Part of what we do is about letting Thatcher and her cronies know we are still here. They closed the pits and took the jobs, but every time we take that Banner out, we tell them we are still here and fighting for our communities. (Bob, Treasurer of New Herrington Banner Partnership (NHBP) in) (Wray 2011, p. 112).

[64] In Dave's verbal account this was to be the last outing for the banner because the people involved thought that 1986 might be the last Gala.

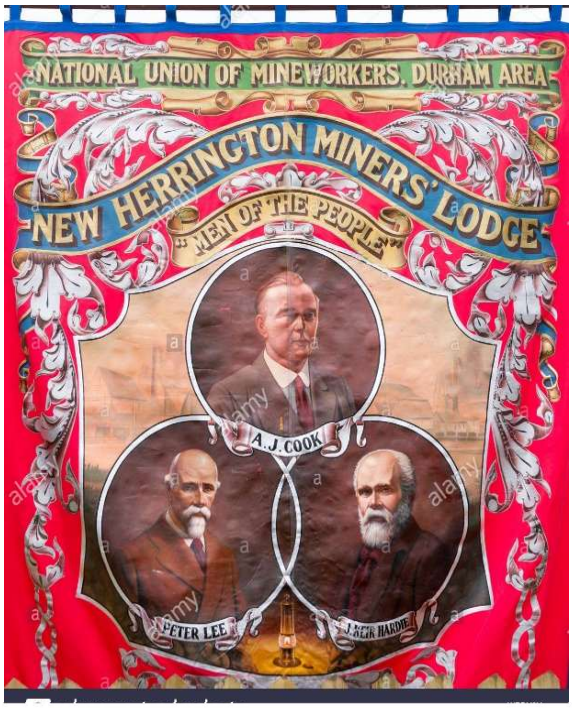

Figure -8-21 The New Herrington Banner. Photo Alarmy

The banner partnership referred to above was formed in 1999 to have a replacement banner made. The partnership was successful in raising the funds. They also created a memorial garden on the colliery site and commissioned a photographic exhibition depicting the changes in the local community in the twenty years since the 1984/85 strike.

The Elemore Banner

Elemore was one of the three collieries in Hetton-le-Hole. The Elemore banner was the second one to be replaced after Herrington. Replacing the two banners appeared

Figure 8-22 Elemore Banner, photo Pinterest.

to have triggered a 'domino effect,' as many more were subsequently created. The following account was related to me by members of the Banner Group. This account describes the efforts of a local group to create a new Elemore banner for the Durham Miners' Gala. Two old banners existed but were unusable due to poor condition. A local ex-miner initiated a project to create a new banner. The group faced challenges, including strict conditions from Beamish Museum for photographing the original banner and delays in production. Despite not finishing the new banner in time for the 2011 Gala, the group created a

temporary banner, which they paraded in 2000. This temporary banner was kept as a symbol of their determination to participate in the Gala again. The story illustrates the community's commitment to preserving their mining heritage and participating in the Gala, even in the face of obstacles.

Recollections of the Gala

This section contains interview excerpts and firsthand accounts of the event's rich history and enduring traditions. From the early morning marches and processions to the banners representing each village, the recollections illustrate how the Gala fostered camaraderie among mining communities and expressed labour solidarity. The accounts capture the significance of this event for generations of Durham miners and their families.

The following are extracts from the project we worked on as part of Education for Action, in cooperation with Curiosity Creative, a non-profit, socially conscious social enterprise dedicated to creating and archiving digital stories made by people in the North East. The resulting video, which I edited, is available on YouTube[65].

> My first memory of the big meeting is when I was about five or six my dad and I got on the bus at Broomside, got off at Gilesgate Bank and walked over the Baths Bridge and the passageway to Old Elvet. Being only small, my dad put me on his shoulders so I could see what was going on. My dad was a big band fan and was given a trombone for Christmas when I was about nine. He asked if I would like to try it, and I got a note straight away. That started me off playing in brass bands. In the mid-seventies, I played the Big Meeting with the Blackhall Youth Brass Band (David 1).
>
> I must have been attending the Gala since I was a toddler. Both sides of the family were miners. In the 1960s, my sister and I and a family friend would stay with my gran in Sherburn Village on the Friday night before the Gala we would get up very early on the Saturday to get the first bus into

[65] Mining the Memories - YouTube

Durham at about seven o'clock. We would take our sandwiches with us. In those days before the pit closures kicked in, you could sit on the bank for three hours and watch a continuous stream of banners, bands, miners, and their families go past; an amazing site that you will never forget. We looked out for the Sherburn Hill banner. I ate vast quantities of tongue sandwiches (David 2).

My memory of the Gala would have to be the banners and the crowds on the day; banners have always been special for me, each telling their history and story from the village they come from. I love how banners have continued lovely stories now of children in schools making their own banners. It is great that the children not only learn about culture and history but are now part of it continuing.

Also, I love to see the banners coming into the field and all the crowds on that day who cheered them all in such a lovely atmosphere on the streets and when the bands got to the field, it got even better. It was always part of the day to wander around and look at all the banners laid out on the field. I always looked for two special banners for me, Chopwell and Crookhall. Sadly, the Eden banner from my village doesn't attend the Gala. It is in the church in Leadgate.

After the strike of 84/85, I was disheartened a bit that the Gala might not survive, but thankfully, that is not the case. There seems to be a new interest and pride in banners, which is evident by the fact that new banners are being made all the time. Banners will always be special for me and hopefully for many generations to come (Dorothy Wray).

My earliest memory of the big meeting was when I would be five or six being taken into Durham by my dad and walking behind Sacriston banner. My legs must have been tired because I was carried most of the way, eventually being sat on a wall with a bottle of pop and a packet of crisps. Later, as a young girl still at secondary school, I remember going into

> Durham on a big meeting Saturday with friends and dancing behind the band and banner all the way to the racecourse.
>
> Of course, then I didn't listen to the speeches we were all more interested in getting to the show field. Years later, after meeting and marrying my husband Billy, the Gala took on a different meaning. After having children and Bill being on strike twice in the seventies made it more important to go to the Gala (Elspeth).

My Account of the 2018 and 2019 Galas

This account of the 2018 and 2019 Galas provides insight into the event's atmosphere and traditions. I have attended the Gala since my early childhood, as my father was a member of the local colliery band. The format of the Gala did not change when I attended in 2018.

On the morning of the 2018 Gala, I joined the procession of banners and bands making their way to the Racecourse. At Elvet Bridge, I encountered the Eppleton Banner group. Upon reaching the Racecourse, I observed the ritual of attaching the banner to the perimeter fence and the band playing *Gresford,* the miners' hymn.

The field was bustling with activity. Stalls sold books on mining history, union memorabilia, and various artefacts. I encountered academics studying the Gala, including Professor Helaine Silverman from the University of Illinois, researching for a book chapter. Our conversation touched on the naming conventions of mine shafts, demonstrating how the Gala serves as a living archive of mining culture.

The event's inclusive nature was evident in the presence of diverse groups, such as a Palestine support stall. However, this inclusivity was tested when a far-right group was ejected for unauthorised participation, leading to some controversy.

In 2018, the traditional speaking platform was replaced with a modern stage setup, complete with big screens. The music ranged from traditional mining songs to contemporary ‘pit prop folk rock’ performed by Hetton band Dennis*,* who had recently played at Glastonbury Festival.

In 2019, I attended the banner blessing ceremony in Durham Cathedral for the first time. The 150th anniversary of the Durham Miners' Association made this year particularly significant. The ceremony was a solemn affair, with brass bands playing mournful tunes as they entered the cathedral. The blessing of new banners by the Bishop of Durham, followed by a reading from film director Ken Loach, underscored the event's cultural importance.

The Gala serves multiple functions beyond commemorating mining history. It's a platform for political discourse, a celebration of working-class culture, and a testament to community resilience. The presence of international guests and support for global causes demonstrates its evolving role in promoting broader solidarity.

Participating in the Gala offered profound insights into the region's history and character. Despite the decline of the mining industry, the event continues to connect Durham's communities to their origins. It preserves traditions while adapting to contemporary issues, ensuring that the spirit of the mining era continues to inspire Durham's future.

The Durham Miners' Gala stands as a powerful example of how communities can maintain their identity and values in the face of industrial decline. It's not merely a nostalgic recreation of the past but a living, evolving tradition that bridges generations and ideologies, keeping the heartbeat of Durham's mining heritage strong and relevant.

The Future of the Durham Miners' Gala

Despite the decline of the mining industry, the Durham Miners' Gala continues to thrive and evolve. This persistence has sparked debate about its relevance and function in contemporary society.

Some critics, such as journalist James Bloodworth, have described the Gala as a ‘carnival of nostalgia’ or a ‘historical re-enactment society’. However, Bloodworth also acknowledges the value in preserving the memory of workers' struggles and achievements through trade unionism (Bloodworth 2016).

The Gala has always had a dual identity as both a cultural festival and a political rally. Jack Lawson, a former miner, and Labour MP described it as "the spontaneous expression of their communal life." As the mining industry has declined, the community and cultural aspects of the Gala have become more prominent, though its political dimension remains integral.

Sociologists Mary Mellor and Carol Stephenson (2005) argue that the Gala's persistence and growth stem from its representation of ‘community solidarity based on a shared industrial past’. It allows former mining communities to reclaim pride and identity, serving as a catalyst for community regeneration and network rebuilding.

Archaeologist Andreas Pantazatos and anthropologist Helaine Silverman attribute the Gala's survival and growth to three main factors: The expansion of its political messaging beyond mining issues to broader socialist and labour causes. Creative funding solutions that enabled continued participation after the miners' union's near bankruptcy. The ‘heritagization’ of mining culture, promotes community well-being and a sense of belonging.

Communities coming together to repair or replace worn banners is seen as a form of social reproduction and healing. These banners serve as symbols connecting tangible craft to intangible collective memory and ideals.

The Durham Miners' Gala has transformed from a specific industry event into a broader celebration of working-class culture and heritage, while maintaining its political roots. Its ability to adapt and evolve ensures its continued relevance in post-industrial Durham (Pantazatos and Silverman 2019).

8.6 Conclusion

The preservation and celebration of mining heritage in County Durham illustrates the resilience and adaptability of community identity in the face of profound economic and social change. Through the creation of memorials, the collection of memorabilia, and the annual performance of the Durham Miners' Gala, former mining communities

have transformed the material and cultural remnants of their industrial past into resources for present-day solidarity and future-oriented action.

This chapter has demonstrated that these remembrance practices are far more than exercises in nostalgia. Instead, they represent active processes of cultural regeneration and identity formation that allow communities to maintain a sense of continuity and purpose in a post-industrial landscape. The interplay between tangible artefacts and intangible traditions creates a rich ecosystem of memory work that bridges generations and connects individual experiences to collective narratives.

Moreover, the evolution of the Durham Miners' Gala from a narrowly focused labour demonstration to a broader celebration of working-class culture and progressive politics exemplifies how heritage practices can adapt to changing circumstances while retaining their core functions. As the Gala has opened to wider participation and new forms of expression, it has strengthened its role as a catalyst for community cohesion and political engagement.

Examining mining heritage in County Durham provides insights into how marginalised communities can harness cultural resources to sustain social bonds, affirm collective identities, and envision alternative futures. It suggests that even as traditional industries disappear, the cultural foundations they inspired can provide a basis for ongoing community resilience and renewal. In an era of rapid global change and increasing social fragmentation, these lessons from Durham's mining communities may prove valuable for other regions grappling with the challenges of post-industrial transition.

Chapter 9 Mining Heritage in Cyberspace

9.1 Introduction

The preceding five chapters have demonstrated how social memory and leisure activities contribute to a sense of place attachment and belonging. Engaging with local history can cultivate community pride through various learning sources, including local history societies, organisations like Education for Action, and studying artistic representations of mining and mining communities. This chapter extends that theme while also examining how contemporary internet usage preserves the memories of the wounds, hurts, and ruptures caused by the 1984/85 miners' strike.

This chapter examines how social media facilitates the grassroots preservation and sharing of mining heritage. Specifically, it examines Facebook groups centred around coal mining history and culture. These online communities function as participatory archives where users collectively curate stories, images, drawings and other insights into the now-vanished world of mining.

I introduce critical concepts related to participatory heritage and cyber museology to frame this decentralised, user-driven approach to documenting and sustaining the intangible aspects of the mining legacy. Participatory heritage refers to spaces where ordinary people engage in cultural activities and knowledge production outside formal institutions. Cyber museology refers to user-generated virtual collections and archives, as opposed to officially sanctioned museums or collections. (Shehade and Stlianou Lambert 2023).

Through an in-depth analysis of mining-related Facebook groups and web pages, I reveal how these digital communities allow miners and mining communities to preserve cultural knowledge and sustain connections. I highlight numerous examples of stories, artwork, photographs, and more that transmit insider perspectives rarely represented in dominant historical accounts.

By showcasing these virtual interactions, I argue that social media has expanded possibilities for cultural participation and democratised processes of heritage-making. As living links to mining diminish, online community archiving ensures this cultural legacy and identity endure despite the post-industrial decline. I advocate for future collaboration with these vibrant digital groups to formally archive the abundant user-generated content for educational purposes.

Examining this phenomenon reveals how marginalised communities utilize technology to preserve their heritage across generations. It offers a model of grassroots digital curation centred on experiential exchange versus institutional narratives. The analysis explores key themes related to identity, community, and cultural renewal in the digital age.

9.2 Participatory Heritage and Cyber Museology

This section analyses how social technologies have reshaped heritage as an evolving, collaborative process centred on identity formation and social connections versus fixed institutional narratives. It highlights the increasing prominence of participatory cultures democratising tangible and intangible cultural curation. Participatory heritage and cyber museology are distinct concepts. However, in the context of the social media pages that are the subject of this chapter, it is impossible to separate them. The people who contribute to the pages share memories but inadvertently create an online collection.

Roued-Cunliffe and Copeland (2017) define participatory heritage as a space where individuals engage in cultural activities outside formal institutions to share and create knowledge with others who are interested in a particular subject. Participatory heritage activities often exist outside formal cultural heritage institutions, which are often hindered by policies, procedures, and legal and budget constraints that limit innovation. These institutions typically employ information experts rather than community or subject matter experts. In contrast, participatory heritage draws individuals together to engage with heritage content, gain and share knowledge, and create new knowledge. This grassroots, peer-to-peer focus creates a mismatch with

institutional missions and approaches. There is a concern that if institutions do not find ways to engage with participatory heritage spheres, they will lose connections with their audiences. Therefore, it could be said that a virtual museum remains a curated space, deliberately designed and populated. In contrast, a digital collection on social media is a much more fluid ‘bottom-up’ collection.

Elisa Giacardi (2012) discussed how social media and participatory culture transform our understanding and experience of heritage. She argues that heritage is no longer just about museum artefacts and historic buildings but about how people make meaning and develop identity through interactions with the tangible and intangible traces of the past. The Faro Convention of 2005 proposes a more holistic view of cultural heritage that emphasises public participation and the role of heritage in expressing evolving values and traditions. Mobile and digital technologies enable broader involvement in collecting, preserving, and interpreting heritage; however, there is a lack of focus on how these technologies connect heritage to people's everyday lives. Participatory culture enabled by social media lowers barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, provides strong support for sharing creations, and promotes mentorship and social connection. The participatory culture fostered by social media is blurring the boundaries between professional and amateur, as well as mainstream and grassroots, in heritage practice.

Siberman and Purser (2012, p. 14) attest that the character of cultural heritage administration has undergone a fundamental change. The United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO 2003) held a conference that was concerned with safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, which is 'constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity’ (Blake 2008, p. 68).

Heritage encompasses more than just museum collections and historic structures; it also includes private mementoes, family histories, communal narratives of the past, and ongoing cultural ties to the locality or, in the present case, an occupation.

Heritage is fundamentally about ascribing meaning to memories and moulding identities. It is an interactive process of engaging with tangible artefacts and intangible remnants that connect the present to the past. Individuals and groups develop a sense of self and belonging through repeated shared experiences of objects, places, stories and rituals that link to a collective legacy. In essence, heritage should be understood as the continuous creation of identity and knowledge through the active rediscovery of an inherited cultural patrimony.

Jenkins et al. (2009, p. xi) define a participatory culture as one in which all members believe they can freely contribute when ready and that their contributions will be valued. This culture has low barriers to artistic expression and civic participation. It strongly encourages the creation and sharing of creative works, with mentorship available to newcomers. In such a culture, people develop an ongoing sense of social connection through continuously exchanging and evaluating user-created content. However, not every member needs to contribute actively - the shared belief in open participation and appreciation of grassroots contributions characterises participatory culture. The key traits are embracing amateur creativity, peer learning/mentoring, and feeling connected via creation and sharing.

Regarding cyber-museology, an early recorded definition of a virtual museum is -

> A collection of electronic artefacts and information resources – virtually anything which can be digitalised. The collection may include paintings, drawings, photographs, diagrams, recordings, video segments, newspaper articles, transcripts of interviews, numerical databases and a host of other items which may be saved on the virtual museum's file server. It may also offer pointers to great resources around the world relevant to the museum's main focus (Negri, 2012).

What was being defined above were digital representations of actual artefacts that are contained in a physical museum. However, the description would now apply to collections of materials housed on internet sites, where no actual museum is involved. The participatory heritage discussed in the following section comprises what could be described as cyber-museology and other non-tangible cultural activity.

However, the distinction between tangibility and un-tangibility can become somewhat blurred. For example, take the case of an old photograph of the Miners' Gala that someone has scanned; there is a link to a tangible object. Contrast this with a recent picture taken with a digital camera; there is no tangible object involved, but what appears on the screen is essentially the same.

Negri was referring to digital representations of actual artefacts in a physical museum. However, the description would now apply to collections of materials housed on internet sites where no actual museum is involved. The participatory heritage discussed here comprises what is described as cyber-museology (Mairesse 2015).

Information scientist Werner (Schweibenz 2004) defines a virtual museum as a logically related digital collection composed of diverse media objects, which can provide connectedness and various access points, transcends traditional methods of communicating with visitors, has no real physical place or space and can disseminate objects and information globally. In terms of how this enhances or alters the work of physical museums, he argues that the virtual museum does not necessarily spell the death of physical museums but instead expands museums' reach and provides complementary experiences. The strengths of virtual collections for access and interactivity augment physical museums but are unlikely to fully replace the cultural role, artefact preservation, and experiential qualities.

Writing on virtual museums more recently (Schweibenz 2019) concluded that the concept of a virtual museum is still evolving, as indicated by the variety of terms used to describe digital collections and online archives. A clear, agreed-upon definition has yet to emerge. The core distinctions between digital collections, online archives, and virtual museums require further clarification.

Sophia B. Liu has examined the emergence of "grassroots heritage" (Liu 2010, p. 2795) practices, driven by digital technologies, primarily social media. These practices are characterised by individuals engaging with cultural heritage content to gain, share, and create new knowledge, promoting community dialogue with the past. This engagement is influenced by personal perceptions, attitudes,

decentralisation of resources and narratives, and unification of interests that shape the community and give meaning to its existence. This accurately describes the types of practice that I have examined in this chapter.

Liu highlights that cultural heritage has become a resource for public usage, which can be used and modified more drastically and creatively than ever before. She argues that this shift is distancing cultural heritage from traditional views and interpretations offered by cultural heritage organisations. Pro-amateur communities are perceived as more effective at engaging with online audiences than memory institutions, complementing existing museum and archive collections by providing an alternative, free discussion space for enthusiasts.

The field of cultural heritage communication on social media is still developing its theoretical foundations (Kelpšienė 2021, p. 17), with many claims lacking empirical substantiation. Nonetheless, there is a growing movement among researchers and practitioners to increase and deepen existing knowledge on public participation and engagement with cultural heritage, drawing lessons from participatory cultures on the web and insights from social psychology and experience to apply in institutional settings. For example, Roszczyńska-Kurasińska et al. (2021) suggest that data from Facebook and other social media platforms can provide valuable insights and contribute to the tools used for socio-cultural assessment. This information could benefit local authorities and decision-makers planning initiatives and investments related to cultural heritage sites. Furthermore, the authors propose that analysing this data can help in understanding the preferences and values of local communities, which in turn can aid in transferring benefits and best practices between locations.

9.3 Durham Mining Museum

The Durham Mining Museum (DMM) does come under the definition of participatory heritage. However, it does not fit only into the cyber-museology category because it also has a physical presence. The museum has a physical site in Spennymoor Town Hall, but this cannot be described as a ‘heritage from above’; it is curated entirely by volunteers. To complicate matters further, the museum does not restrict its remit to

coal mining or County Durham, as it covers the history of all known forms of mining in Cumberland, Westmorland, Northumberland, Durham, plus the metal mines of North Yorkshire, North Lancashire, and the Isle of Man.

The online museum contains around 115,000 pages. It specialises in information about mining deaths and has an alphabetical list of over 23,000 miners, showing how and when they were killed; some have photographs of gravestones. Additionally, it has information about every aspect of mining, including technical descriptions of mining operations, shaft boring records, mining history, photographs of collieries, and much more. The museum is an excellent resource for anyone researching the history of mining. I have made much use of it.

The physical museum in Spennymoor houses an extensive collection of mostly small mining artefacts. It also sells copies of pamphlets and has a considerable reference library. The basement features a mock-up of a coalface, originally used as a film set. Children can crawl through the face to give them an idea of what it's like to work in such a place.

9.4 Facebook Mining Groups as Participatory Archives

Many Facebook pages are dedicated to mining; in Great Britain alone, in 2020, I identified sixty-one with a combined following of over 110,000 people; these will not all be individuals, as many are members or followers of multiple sites. This is an indicator of interest in mining history and heritage. These pages have titles such as ‘Mining Memories’, ‘Mining Photographs’, Mining Communities, ‘Mining in the North East and Beyond’, and ‘Mining and Industrial Archaeology’. Some of the pages are dedicated to a particular colliery. For example, Herrington, the last pit I worked at, has its own page. The page was set up by a former electrician from the colliery. To join the page, one must answer questions to establish one's connection to the colliery or the nearby central workshops. This page contains images and stories related to the location as well as mining in general.

9.5 Hetton Local History

Hetton Local and Natural History Society (HLNS) maintains a website containing photographs, archives, old maps, and the 600-page Village Atlas, which charts the history of the settlement from prehistoric times until 2015, when it was completed. The society has its own Facebook page[66] and maintains a page entitled Hetton-le-Hole in Pictures, which was initiated by an individual but was subsequently taken over by the society when the original administrator was unable to continue.

The HLNS Facebook page is used to advertise the society's monthly public meetings, during which guest speakers are invited to present on topics of interest. Also, they promote visits to historic and nature walks organised by the society.

The page also refers to significant events in local history. For example, In March 2023, a post was entitled ‘A Hetton Lass Read All About Her’. The ‘lass’ in question was Mary Ann Cotton, who was hanged in Durham on March 24th 1873, for the murders of eight of her children, seven stepchildren, her mother, three husbands, a lover – and an ‘inconvenient friend’ One might have thought that society would have preferred to keep quiet about this 150th anniversary, but this was not the case. The story of Mary Ann has been passed down through generations in Hetton. As children, we sang a song about her; it began, ‘Mary Ann Cotton, She’s dead and she’s rotten’. It seems people are fascinated by serial killers and that having some association with them somehow perversely boosts local pride. For a discussion on this, see (Bonn 2014). Mary Ann Cotton was the subject of a book by criminologist Davis (Wilson 2013) and a 2016 film, “Dark Angel.” In 2019, the Hetton Local and Natural History Society demonstrated how grassroots community groups can play a vital role in preserving and sharing local heritage. Through its website, Facebook presence, public talks, and nature walks, the society keeps Hetton's rich history alive and promotes appreciation of its landscape. Showcasing even infamous figures like Mary Ann Cotton represents a courageous engagement with the locality's complex past. By digitising private photos in their community archive, the society ensures

[66] https://www.facebook.com/groups/1910585492499358

everyday historical materials endure for future generations. This dedication to celebrating, contextualising, and transmitting tales, images, and knowledge of place exemplifies why local history groups remain essential to sustaining cultural identity and memory.

9.6 The Pits Facebook Page

In 2015, Paul Sams, an MA archaeology student at Durham University, set up a Facebook page entitled 'The Pits', the original aim of which was to share the images he collected during his research on mining memorials (Sams 2005) and to elicit the opinions of former miners and other interested parties as to what form mining memorials should take. The page, however, took on a life of its own and soon developed into a forum where former miners discussed their former careers, shared photographs, and posted pictures they had drawn themselves. The principal rules of the page are to keep posts friendly and 'no scab hunting'[67]. Paul subsequently defined the group as 'A friendly community to share memories of coal mining in the North East of England'. In November 2019, the group had over 5,200 members. In December 2023, the site had over 6,300 members and continued to receive regular contributions. In March 2024, many of the posts reflect on the 40th anniversary of the beginning of the 1984/85 strike. For example, at the mining memorial in Barnsley, wreaths were laid to commemorate the two miners killed on the picket lines, David Jones and Joe Green.

Social media has given former miners a platform to share their knowledge and experiences with non-miners who follow their postings; they know they are the last generation to have firsthand knowledge of coal mining. For example, in 2015, Ralf Ord posted on The Pits Facebook page – ‘We all want to write our memories before it’s too late as our young uns won’t even know what a pit was. I'm talking about our memories of proper pit work.’ Brian Humeniuk replied, ‘Long as I can write, the pits will never fade from memory.’

[67] Miners who broke the 1984/85 strike are specifically barred from some of the mining pages; if any are recognised, they are often abused by other members before being barred by the administrators,

Paul Sams, the page's creator, responded.

> I've said it a few times and believe it wholeheartedly. You guys are the last generation of a tradition of coal mining that goes back hundreds of years, it is important your knowledge, memories, language and even skills are recorded in the right way. I say this because the physical evidence of many generations putting their life on the line to allow this country to power itself is almost completely gone, in 50 years you will be a myth, hopefully the recording that is happening here and in other places like this is going some way to recording what miners know.

One of their expressed aims is to preserve their knowledge for future generations. Their primary aim is to maintain or reinvent their identity by preserving the miner's identity as a 'labour aristocrat' or 'heroic proletarian' (Harrison 1978).

Figure 9-1 Pit Mouse. Photo The Pits

A regular feature on the page is a series of animations by Gary Spicer-Stephenson. The central character is 'Pit Mouse', who gets up to adventures underground and above. The animations are of excellent quality; they are educational and entertaining.

Many of the postings are photographs of colliery headgear or the underground workings. These are not actively contributing to a curated archive but are available to anyone looking back through the postings. Also, there is a search facility, so if anyone wants images of a particular place, it is usually possible to find something. Also, if nothing is available, people post asking if anyone has a specific image, and many receive responses.

Figure 9-2. Mansell Gravestone. Photo The Pits

A recent posting was a photograph of a gravestone of a miner who was killed in 1913 and his widow, who died in 1964. The picture prompted a story by Trevor Mansell, whose father was killed in a roof fall in 1957. The family could not afford a headstone and could only afford a wooden cross. The authorities decided that this would not fit their criteria. The council and church do not know Trevor's father's last resting place.

Regarding social justice, the pages regularly promote The National Mineworkers Pension Campaign. This group argues that the miners' pension has been robbed of £4 billion by both Conservative and Labour governments since the 1990s. The issue is complicated and would not add to the present discussion, which is intended to show how a devoted page already has an audience that will be receptive to its campaign. Details of the issue are available on Facebook[68].

Figure 9-3 Moore Sketching Miners Photo The Pits

[68] https://www.facebook.com/groups/555692238354477/

Along with the many photographs posted on the site, there are occasions when fine art

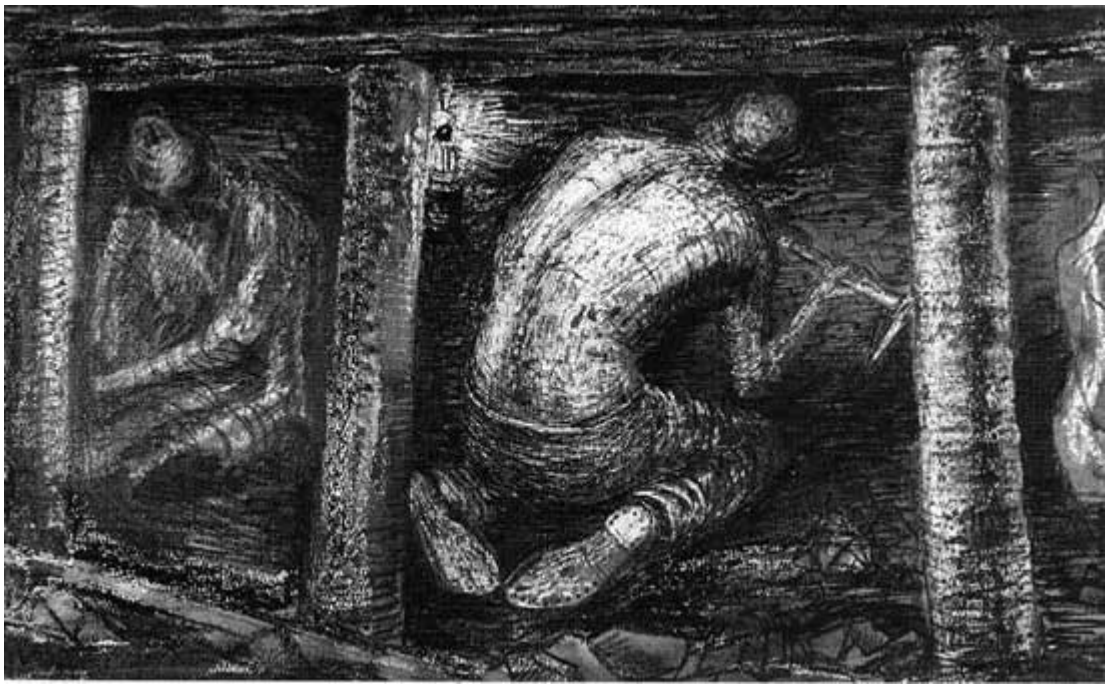

Figure 9-4 Coal Hewers Henry Moore. Photo (Owen 2022)

images are reproduced. In October 2023, contributor Mick Frain posted a drawing by the sculptor Henry Moore of miners working underground at Wheldale Colliery, where his father had worked as a miner.

Mick follows his reference to Moore by reproducing the following extract from the Museum of Mining and describes the men's work portrayed.

> The hewer is the actual coal-digger. He is the responsible workman who loosens the coal from the bed, whether the seam is so thin that he can hardly creep into it on hands and knees or thick enough to stand upright. The hewers are divided into ‘fore-shift’ and ‘back-shift’ men. The former usually work from four to ten, and the latter from ten till four. Each man works alternately one week in the fore shift and one week in the back shift. Every man in the foreshift marks ‘3’ on his door. This is the sign for the ‘caller’ to wake him at that hour.

Fred, an ex-miner, initiates a discussion by writing about something that may have happened in the past as though it was happening in the present, e.g.,

> Fred - This Deputy is doing my head cos I haven't drilled out; he's panicking in case he can't get it fired. Well tuff, he should of gettin' behind this drill and pushed! He's sitting on his arse watching me drill these holes, wait till he asks me to help him to stem these holes, no way bonny lad.
>
> Walter, another former miner, replies, 'Mak him wait, Fred, we are nowhere near ready for him at this end. Tell him to get some timber in instead of clock watchin' he's bloody murder.

In this scene, Fred is drilling holes that the deputy is waiting to 'stem,' i.e., fill with explosives. Fred is behind with his work, and if the deputy had assisted by pushing the drill, he would have completed the task more quickly. The miners often assisted the deputy in stemming the holes, but Fred said he would refuse to do so. Walter is doing the same job at the other end of the face; he is not ready for the deputy either, so he suggests he bring some supplies from the roadway into the coalface. Fred does not state which stall he is working in here, but I can deduce this from Walter's request for timber supplies stored in the tailgate and sent down the conveyor. A non-mining reader would probably not be able to tell what was going on here unless they had previously read a considerable amount of mining literature. However, the stories have value because they are a product of the collective memories of two or more people who would never have written the stories down had it not been for the platform of social media.

Fred does not think he is still working down the mine; his stories are based on incidents that he remembers and the people who respond reply as they would have done if they had been present. The result is a collection of vignettes which reflect life in the Durham coal mines from the 1960s to the 1980s.

These sites can elucidate the current problems experienced in the former mining communities. In July 2017, Fred posted that he was ‘a clapped-out old miner ’ bringing up his stepchildren because their parents were‘ pissed up druggies’. After telling his story, he wrote, ‘Sorry lads, I just had to get it off me chest’. There were fifty-one responses to the post offering sympathy, advice and real help. Five people replied, saying that they were in a similar situation. This is evidence of the problems

caused by the closure of the mines and the community spirit that still exists amongst former miners.

Brian Morley is a contributor who regularly shares vivid illustrations of life working in the Durham coal mines in the 20th century. He pairs the drawings with detailed captions that recount specific incidents and observations, capturing the culture and social realities underground.[69].

Through this snippet, Brian situates a particular memory within a broader narrative of arduous manual labour, occupational hazards and the miners' tight-knit community. His meticulous illustrations serve as valuable records of working life and cultural identity for the Durham mines in the 20th century. By sharing over social media, Brian enables wider audiences to glimpse experiences often obscured in formal histories.

Stable Hole

In this posting, Brian describes one of the jobs he did early in his face working career. Also, he provides vivid descriptions of the older miners with whom he worked. Some of these men were born in the early 1900s.

Fired tops and bottoms, set Link bars, cleaning out for Dowty props, my first regular job early sixties. 'Did my face training 1960, a lot of the older miners were right characters, with their war stories tall tales, not many had four fingers and a thumb on each hand, they all chewed bacca, and not many bothered wearing teeth, can remember one Jack Roland, could chew nuts with his

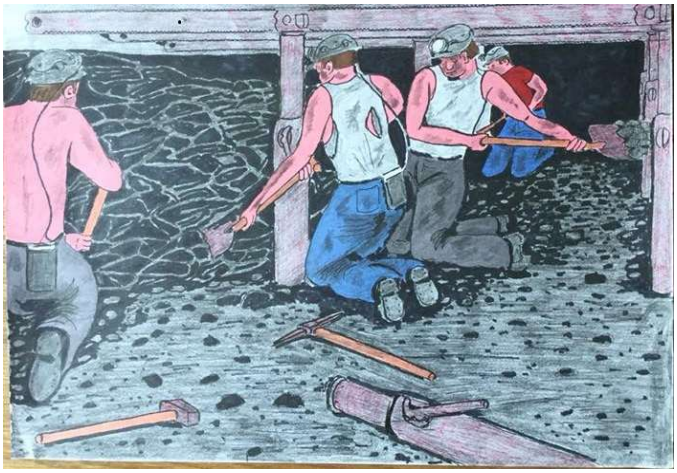

Figure 9-5 Stable Hole Drawing Brian Morley

[69] (20+) Brian Morley - search results | Facebook

gums, then you would go out Saturday night go in a pub or working men's, club and whose this bloke all dressed up, with a set of gleaming gnashers hair slicked down with Brylcreem, nearly unrecognisable from the bloke you've bin working with all week the country now not the same one they knew.

Brian pays great attention to detail. The helmets are made from sheets of compressed cardboard riveted together. These pre-dated the moulded helmets introduced in the 1960s, although many miners continued to use the old ones. Additionally, the men are wearing a variety of old clothes; in the 1970s, orange uniforms were introduced.[70].
The posting received 26 'likes' and the following comments.

> LJA, no respirators, no orange (overalls); I started sixty-six with respirators, Oldham (the manufacturer's name) on the batteries, lol.

> MB caught my elbows on the dowties (the hydraulic supports) a few times.

The two men quoted above are establishing themselves as genuine miners by making informed comments on Brian's drawings.

On a subsequent occasion, Brian posted a photograph of himself in the lamp cabin after the 1984/85 strike. Here, he commented that all his pit gear had been vandalised by 'scabs' and had to replace it. Another miner, W.B., reported that his gear had also been vandalised.

In comments on the same posting, Brian, for no reason that is clear to me, accused LJA of 'scabbing' in the 84/85 strike. LJA replied that he had been working in Algeria at that time. Any mention of the 84/85 strike tends to attract controversial comments and re-open old wounds.

[70] https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10215164741924732&set=gm.2105896072818134&type=3&theater&ifg=1

Dispute

Figure 9-6 Dispute Drawing Brian Morley

> Cutting team left the face; they are in the gate[71] arguing with Deputy and Overman, threatening to go home; happened from time to time, especially afore 84/5; I remember one in particular cos it humbled an Undermanager, we were cutting; with trepanner[72], undermanager was moving along with the Driver Alan Purdey talking, when he took over the machine and started lowering and raising the turret, Alan said fuck this and went through the face into the gate followed by us, the team, The undermanager never touched the machine again, NUM ruled.

Here, Brian points out that the miners would not accept managers interfering in their work and that in the pre-1984/85 days, the men had the confidence to take on management in these local disputes. Overall, this section illustrates how Facebook can serve as a space for former miners to share and collectively construct a rich, nuanced narrative of their lived experiences, challenges, and solidarity, thereby preserving an important part of labour history and cultural identity.

[71] Gate is the term for the roadways leading to the face.
[72]. A type of coal-cutting machine

9.7 The Last Pit

The Last Pit is a Facebook page maintained by a miner from Ayle Colliery, a small drift mine near Alston in Cumbria[73]. The Ayle Colliery Facebook page, curated by working miner ‘Jez Pitman’, provides a unique glimpse into modern small-scale mining operations. By documenting and sharing videos and photos of daily activities at this Cumbrian drift mine, Pitman enables followers from the UK and abroad to witness a living industrial heritage. The hundreds of international site visitors attest to the universal appeal of coal mining traditions that persist despite industrial decline elsewhere. My direct participation at Ayle Colliery only confirms the authenticity and educational value of Pitman's digital curation. As an accessible record of modern mining existence, The Last Pit page merits formal archiving to preserve this rare cluster of contemporary practices and narratives for posterity when conditions inevitably shift. Currently, Pitman’s participatory platform maintains connections to an endangered culture that significantly informs labour histories and local identities. The page attracts responses from former miners, such as Jamie Seaton, who said it ‘brings back memories.’ This is a great page.’ Michael Swann commented ‘I worked in that height for years. Savage amusement, but it earned you a crust of bread.’ There were many similar comments from men who reminisced about their mining days.

I first became aware of the existence of Ayle Colliery in 2014 when I arranged a visit through my connections with the North East Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineers. In February 2020, Jez created his Facebook page. In March, Jez announced that tours of the mine would soon be offered to the public. However, due to the global pandemic, this did not occur. The tours were mentioned again in May 2021; I revisited the mine and offered to help with the tours. I was interested in learning more about how the mine worked; the owner said I could visit whenever I

[73] (20+) Facebook

wished. I began visiting the mine, but rather than simply observing, because of my mining experience, I was able to help with the work.

Figure 9-7 Miner Ayle Colliery. Photo Jez Cooper

The picture above shows a miner hewing coal in a seam about 500mm high. I worked at the mine, usually one or sometimes two days per week during most of the years 2021 and 2022. Mostly, I was shovelling coal from the coalface into tubs, which, when full, I pushed from the face to the main haulage road, where they were assembled into a train that was hauled to the surface by a small electric locomotive. The mine employed traditional methods, such as pneumatic picks and shovels, which have been in use for over a hundred years. Therefore, I can give talks on these old methods from a first-hand perspective. Social media has made this possible. The page was created to advertise the tours, but these have still not happened. However, the page has evolved into a space where the Ayle miners can demonstrate their trade.

Jez films himself and his colleagues at work and posts videos and photographs on the page. Also on Jez’s page is a link to a video by Clive Seal, a local historian and former miner at many collieries, including Ayle. The video is of Clive's presentation at

Alston in April 2023. I attended the event, made notes and asked Clive if I could use his information in my presentation. He agreed that I could use his notes. I used Clive's notes to relate the history of coal mining on Alston Moor. Jez's videos and my experience in a presentation I gave to the Hetton Local History Society later that year. I hope to provide the presentation to other organisations. Having a presenter who has done the job adds an extra dimension to the experience.
The page attracts international attention. The primary audience of 1,500 is from the UK, followed by India with 645, Pakistan with 446, and Turkey with 190. There is also considerable interest from the Philippines, the US, Myanmar, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, and Poland. As online heritage content is shared globally, post-industrial communities can discover everyday struggles and build international solidarity. This can yield valuable exchanges of knowledge and support.

9.8 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the emergence of online communities centred around mining heritage and history. Specifically, it has shown how Facebook groups enable former miners and others interested in mining to preserve cultural knowledge and sustain connections collaboratively.
The analysis revealed that these Facebook groups function as participatory archives where users share stories, photos, drawings, and other insights documenting the now-vanished world of coal mining. This form of 'cyber-museology' relies on user-generated content rather than formal institutions to record intangible aspects of mining life and labour.

The examples discussed, whether verbal accounts or vivid visualisations, underscore the vital role of online platforms in sustaining mining heritage. As the remaining generations with direct mining experience continue to dwindle, these virtual spaces enable the culture and identity of mining communities to endure despite ongoing economic upheaval.

Overall, examining social media usage for heritage purposes highlights the expanding significance of decentralised, user-driven archives. Online participatory platforms empower ordinary people to curate their histories and traditions, which are

often excluded from official narratives. The mining community's embrace of Facebook groups to preserve cultural knowledge represents grassroots, vernacular approach to documenting and transmitting heritage.

Further exploring and formally archiving the trove of stories and images emerging from these digital spaces is desirable in the future, as this can enhance community resilience. The loss of major industries can devastate local economies and community bonds. Through collaborative online heritage projects, communities can reclaim and celebrate their collective identity, transforming feelings of loss into a renewed sense of self-worth. This digital preservation and sharing of cultural memory enables people to demonstrate that their community's value extends beyond its industrial past, affirming the continuing significance of their shared traditions and experiences. Collaborating with the online mining community offers exciting possibilities for ensuring that working-class history endures for future learners and researchers. By bridging virtual and physical spaces, the mining legacy can remain integral to local, regional, and national identities.

Chapter 10 Contested Heritage and Changing Political Landscapes

10.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the intersection of heritage contestation and political realignment in post-industrial mining communities, with a focus on a disputed memorial project in Hetton-le-Hole, North East England. The study argues that conflicts over historical representation reflect broader struggles for identity and belonging, rooted in the aftermath of the 1984/85 miners' strike and exacerbated by deindustrialisation. It posits that the erosion of traditional working-class solidarity contributed to political shifts, including support for Brexit and Conservative gains in former Labour strongholds.

The analysis centres on a 2015 proposal for a coal mining memorial in Hetton-le-Hole, which devolved into a contentious dispute between two local groups: Culture for Hetton (CfH) and the Eppleton Banner Group (EBG). This conflict serves as a microcosm of broader community fractures precipitated by economic decline and political reorientation.

Employing an interdisciplinary framework drawing from anthropology and cultural theory, this chapter examines the power dynamics, recognition struggles, and evolving notions of belonging within weakened communal structures. It argues that as traditional social supports diminished with mine closures, heritage became increasingly politicised, serving as a proxy for contests over status and representation.

This study illuminates the complex interplay between historical memory, community identity, and political allegiance in post-industrial landscapes by situating local heritage disputes within broader socio-political contexts.

10.2 Background

The first mention of memorials during my fieldwork was at the annual miners' banner exhibition in Hetton. The exhibitions are organised by the Eppleton Banner Group (EBG), which curates the Eppleton Banner and parades it at the annual Miners Gala. These exhibitions serve as ritualised spaces for memory-making and identity reinforcement. These events enable former miners to engage in collective remembrance while also shaping mining heritage through the sale of memorabilia.

At the 2012 exhibition, Derek Hockridge, the chair of the (EBG), expressed dissatisfaction with existing memorials, viewing them as inadequate representations of Hetton's mining legacy. His desire for a more prominent memorial reflects a broader concern about the erosion of community identity in the face of deindustrialisation and demographic changes. Derek, a former miner and official of the miners' union, lamented, 'There is nothing here to show that we were a mining town'. Derek wanted a memorial that would be visible to anyone visiting or driving through the town, to tell them what the town had been about. There were memorials in Hetton. There was a coal tub in the bus station; this sort of memorial he disparagingly referred to as a 'tub full of weeds.' Another popular form of memorial is the more iconic pulley wheel, which crowned the headgear that dominated the skyline of every mining settlement. This tower signified the town or village as a mining community. Hetton does have, as a memorial, one of the pulley wheels from Eppleton, the last local colliery to close. The wheel bears a plaque commemorating the 50th anniversary of an explosion in 1951 in which nine miners died. This memorial, however, is located in an obscure corner of Hetton Country Park, which now occupies the former Hetton Colliery site. 'You would have to come in by helicopter to see it', Derek commented.

Overall, this case study demonstrates how heritage practices in post-industrial communities can serve as arenas for negotiating belonging, status, and the right to represent the past. It highlights the complex interplay between collective memory,

identity politics, and the material culture of memorialisation in contexts of social and economic change.

10.3 Contested Cultural Heritage in Anthropology

The concept of contested cultural heritage in anthropology traces back to seminal works in the 1980s. Edward Bruner and Phyllis Gorfain's (1984) analysis of Masada narratives demonstrated how heritage sites can be multivocal and contested. Michael Herzfeld's (1985) study of Greek national identity showed how cultural heritage constructs continuity with an idealised past to support national identity. Richard Handler (1985) examined how French-origin cultural patrimony in Quebec became a matter of local concern, challenging mainstream Canadian national discourse. David Lowenthal's ‘The Past is a Foreign Country’ (Lowenthal 1985) revealed how the past is fashioned into usable heritage through selective erosion, invention, and forgetting.

While these works focused on national and regional situations, similar issues manifest locally. This local manifestation of broader issues is particularly relevant to the research, as it provides a unique perspective on how people living in a particular place perceive their relationship to the local historical past. Silverman (2011, p. v) refers to local problems in ‘ethnographic appraisals of a particular heritage situation, such as how people living in a particular place perceive their relationship to the local historical past.’

This chapter employs an in-depth participant observation case study of the abovementioned project. I joined the memorial committee as a native insider to gather observational data on memorial design, public consultation, and fundraising. This emic approach builds rapport, yields rich observational data, and aligns with a 'bottom-up' view of heritage (Robertson, 2016). However, it also raises questions about reflexivity and potential biases due to a closer affiliation with one side of the dispute.

In their work in Castleford, Smith and Campbell (2011) argue that the hardships of industrial labour are not romanticised or glossed over when constructing a heritage narrative for Castleford. Instead, the focus is on retaining the values of community camaraderie associated with the town's mining history. The goal is to craft a new yet continuous cohesive community identity in the present, seen as vital for Castleford's future success. Rather than romanticising the difficulties of industrial work, the heritage process aims to preserve the communal spirit and solidarity of the past. The aim is to reinvent an identity, invoking those historical bonds to unite people facing current challenges. So, the industrial past is used selectively to emphasise communal values rather than the harsh realities of mining labour.

As Silverman and Ruggles (2007, p. 3) argue, heritage is generally viewed positively, encompassing the preservation of both material and intangible cultures that shape personal and community identities. However, heritage is also intrinsically linked to identity and territory, often leading to conflicts between groups. These conflicts can arise from disputes over indigenous rights, disagreements between minorities and dominant groups about heritage definition and management, or questions about who should control and benefit from cultural heritage. While heritage has the potential to unite communities, it can also divide them. Unresolved contestations over heritage can escalate to resistance, violence, and even war. This reveals a fundamental tension between world/national heritage and individual/local rights. The authors argue that heritage is not a neutral or inherently positive concept. While it can promote self-knowledge, communication, learning, and stewardship of culture and history, it can also be used as a tool for oppression. This duality makes heritage a complex issue in the context of universal human rights, warranting careful examination as a pressing contemporary problem.

Ultimately, Hetton's complex realities of change and conflict would shape the attempts to build a memorial. Contrasting visions of the past and future were embedded in the very idea of creating a monument. The project was destined to surface unresolved tensions over belonging, identity, and the meaning of heritage. As subsequent events would demonstrate, these fractures ran too deep to be

bridged by any single representation of history. A memorial alone could not restore a fragmented sense of communal identity and purpose. The true challenge went far beyond the statue itself. In the following section, I relate the story of how the Hetton Memorial came into being.

10.4 The Hetton Memorial Project

The project originated when local artist Ray Lonsdale, responding to proposals for a statue of Margaret Thatcher, created a sculpture depicting a 1980s miner with his heart torn out. Ray came from a mining family but had previously worked as a shipyard welder, utilizing his skills to become a sculptor. Thatcher was the UK Prime Minister in 1984; she was the driving force behind the defeat of the miners in the strike that began in March 1984 and ended in March 1985. Hetton resident Lee Branney saw Lonsdale's work for sale online and initiated efforts to acquire it for the town. When another community, Horden, secured that sculpture, Hetton residents commissioned their own. A public meeting was held to discuss the proposed project.

Figure 10-1 The Marra. photo Horden Parish Council

At the meeting, a conflict emerged between people who eventually formed Culture for Hetton (CfH) and the Eppleton Banner Group (EBG). EBG members demanded an image representing 1980s miners, while CfH envisioned a broader historical representation. The EBG members wanted an image that represented themselves at the time of the 1984/85 strike. Several audience members rejected that idea, and the

EBG members left the meeting in protest. At the end of the meeting, audience members were invited to leave their contact details so that an organising committee could be formed. As the EBG had left, none of them could be selected.

Initially, the town council had offered to pay the total price of the statue, which was £25,000. There were strong political contacts between the Banner Group and the Council. When it became clear that the statue was not to the Banner Group's liking, political divisions surfaced, with the Labour-controlled Town Council reducing its funding offer to £5000 and imposing conditions after CfH rejected the EBG's preferred design.

From an anthropological perspective, the monument creation process can be viewed as a complex cultural phenomenon that reflects a community's values, social organisation, and collective memory. The elaborate steps involved in establishing a monument - from forming an organisational structure to navigating bureaucratic processes - represent a modern ritual of commemoration that requires significant social cooperation and resource mobilisation.

Forming a dedicated group to spearhead such a project can be seen as creating a temporary social institution that embodies the community's desire to materialise its shared history. This institution interfaces with existing power structures (local government, financial systems) while engaging in creative processes (artistic design) that will shape the community's visual landscape and collective identity.

The necessity for broad community support in these endeavours suggests that monuments are physical manifestations of social cohesion and shared cultural narratives. In the case of mining communities like Hetton, the interest in preserving and commemorating their industrial heritage through monuments indicates a robust collective identity rooted in their historical relationship with the mining industry.

This process of monumentalisation can be interpreted as a form of cultural performance, where communities actively construct and reinforce their identity through tangible symbols in the landscape. The financial and logistical challenges involved in creating a monument serve as a measure of the community's

commitment to preserving certain aspects of their shared past, reflecting the perceived importance of mining heritage in their collective memory and contemporary self-understanding.

The process did not go smoothly. There was significant internal conflict within the group, and several people left, including Chairman Lee, who had initiated the project. I was unhappy with Lee leaving and tried to persuade him to return but to no avail. This left me somewhat uncomfortable, but I decided to stay for the sake of the project, and admittedly, so that I could complete my research.

Over the next three years, CfH organised various fundraising events with mining themes. They worked to involve local children, including having them create replica miners' lamps for a Christmas parade. The group also sold commemorative tiles to be installed on the base of the statue. However, this provoked controversy when some former miners demanded that no "scabs" (strike-breakers) be commemorated.

The theme and design of the statue were thoroughly discussed. Eventually, the committee decided on a scene from the mid-nineteenth century, reflecting a time when Hetton was at the forefront of advances in mining and rail transport. This choice was also seen as less divisive than an image from the 1980s, which might reopen wounds from the 1984-85 strike.

The final design depicted an adult miner looking down at a younger figure of a father sending his son to work in the mine for the first time. This image was shared on social media and displayed around town, inviting public feedback. The responses were largely positive, with only minor suggestions for historical accuracy.

EBG did not comment at this stage and showed no signs of conflict. In fact, EBG allowed CfH to collect money at their annual banner exhibitions. They seemed to have accepted the situation. This makes the events described in the following section very confusing.

The unveiling of the miners' memorial statue in Hetton-le-Hole in April 2019 presents a compelling case study in the anthropology of heritage and memory. On the

surface, the event embodied the ideals of communal commemoration: colliery banners were paraded, a brass band played, the religious blessing was given, and hundreds of community members gathered to witness the unveiling. Local schoolchildren participated in singing, and they buried time capsules, symbolising the intergenerational transmission of cultural memory. However, this performative unity belied deep-seated tensions that had characterised the memorial project from its inception.

The conflict centred around Culture for Hetton and the Eppleton Banner Group. Their dispute over the memorial project reveals the complex dynamics of power, recognition, and belonging that often underlie heritage practices in post-industrial communities. The anthropological lens allows us to examine how the material culture of memorialisation becomes a battleground for competing claims to authenticity, representation, and cultural authority.

The statue's location became a focal point of contention, with accusations of conflicts of interest surrounding its placement near a café owned by a member of CfH. The café had one of its windows broken, and the other was scrawled with the word ‘paedophile.’ The location was chosen before the CfH member had bought the café premises. This spatial dispute reflects broader anthropological themes of place-making and the politics of public space in the formation of community identity. The EBG's delayed objection to the location, only raised after four years of project development, suggests that the siting issue may have been a proxy for deeper, unarticulated grievances.

The planning of the unveiling ceremony further exposed fissures in the community's social fabric. CfH's vision of a grand communal event, complete with a parade of mining banners, met with resistance from the EBG. The latter attempted to prevent other groups from participating in the ceremony, revealing the high stakes of symbolic representation in heritage practices. As a material embodiment of collective memory and identity, the banner became a contested object, with both groups claiming the right to control its display and, by extension, the narrative it represents.

Figure 10-2 The Unveiling of the Hetton Memorial

This conflict over the banners' presence at the ceremony illuminates the anthropological concept of ‘symbolic capital’ as theorised by Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Wacquant 2013). The banners, as revered artefacts of mining culture, carry significant symbolic weight. Control over their display becomes a means of asserting cultural authority and legitimacy within the community. The EBG's efforts to withhold the Eppleton banner and discourage other groups from participating can be interpreted as an attempt to maintain its position as the custodian of local mining heritage.

The Durham Miners Association's (DMA) involvement adds another layer of complexity to the dispute. As a regional body with historical authority in mining matters, the DMA's intervention highlights the multi-scalar nature of heritage politics. A DMA press release favoured the EBG's position and demonstrated how institutional power can shape local heritage narratives. The subsequent retraction

and compromise brokered by the DMA illustrate the delicate balancing act required in mediating community conflicts over shared heritage. I was deeply involved in the discussions. In a private meeting, a senior DMA official obliquely admitted that the EBG had acted maliciously and that CfH had acted in good faith. However, he pointed out that EBG was a DMA member and CfH was not, meaning that the DMA would always act in favour of its members.

The conflict escalated when Sunderland City Council imposed additional requirements for the statue's installation. Engineers were observed inspecting the foundations on which the statue was to be placed. An EBG member was seen watching from around a corner. Subsequently, the Council demanded that the foundations be reinforced. This was after the Council engineers had found the foundations to be adequate. The Council also initially refused a road closure application for the duration of the ceremony. This reveals the intricate and interconnected nature of heritage disputes, which can ripple outward, engaging broader bureaucratic structures. This expansion of the conflict arena underscores the complexity of heritage disputes and the interconnectedness of local heritage practices with broader governance systems and regulatory frameworks.

I observed the fluid nature of group boundaries and allegiances throughout this process. My position, straddling roles as a DMA member and CfH participant exemplifies the individuals' complex identities in close-knit communities. An accusation of being ‘in league’ with the DMA, which led to my resignation, highlights how heritage conflicts can strain personal and professional relationships, forcing individuals to navigate competing loyalties.

The day of the unveiling ceremony itself became a microcosm of the broader conflict. The presence of the Eppleton banner, secured through last-minute negotiations, seemed to herald a resolution. However, at the pre-Gala memorial service later that year, EBG members prevented CfH members from being photographed with the banner, demonstrating the persistence of underlying tensions. This incident exemplifies how the politics of representation in heritage practices can unfold in fleeting yet symbolically charged interactions.

Anthropologically, we can interpret this conflict through various theoretical lenses. Clifford Geertz's concept of ‘thick description.’ (Geertz 2008) is particularly relevant, as it allows us to unpack the layers of meaning embedded in these heritage practices. The memorial statue, the banners, and the ceremony are not merely objects and events but dense signifiers of community identity, historical narrative, and power relations.

Victor Turner's concept of "social drama" (Turner 1980) offers another helpful framework. The conflict over the memorial can be viewed as a form of social drama, characterized by distinct phases of breach, crisis, redressive action, and reintegration (or schism). The initial disagreements represent the breach, while the escalating tensions and public confrontations form the crisis. Attempts at mediation by the DMA and others constitute redressive action, and the eventual ceremony – despite lingering tensions – represents a form of reintegration, albeit an uneasy one.

Moreover, the dispute illuminates questions of authenticity and authority in heritage representation. Both CfH and EBG claimed the right to speak for the community's mining heritage, each asserting a form of what anthropologist Richard Handler calls ‘cultural fundamentalism’ – the belief in an essential, authentic cultural identity that must be preserved and protected.

Local school pupils buried a time capsule adjacent to the statue. The involvement of local children in the ceremony adds an intergenerational dimension to this heritage conflict. It raises questions about how collective memory is transmitted and transformed across generations, especially in communities experiencing rapid socio-economic change. The children's participation can be seen as an attempt to ensure cultural continuity, but it also inevitably involves selective remembering and forgetting, as theorised by anthropologist Paul Connerton (1989).

In conclusion, the Hetton-le-Hole miners' memorial dispute offers a rich case study in the anthropology of heritage. It demonstrates how memorialisation practices can become arenas for negotiating community identity, power relations, and the right to represent the past. The conflict reveals the deeply emotional and political nature of

heritage work, especially in post-industrial communities grappling with economic decline and social change.

This case highlights the importance of anthropologists approaching heritage disputes with sensitivity to local power dynamics, historical contexts, and the multiple, often conflicting narratives that coexist within communities. It also highlights the potential role of anthropologists in facilitating dialogue and understanding in such conflicts, helping communities navigate the complex terrain of shared memory and contested heritage.

10.5 Heritage, Brexit and Populism

Since the 1980s, national governments of all persuasions have been subjected to destabilising changes in Europe (Bendixsen 2018). Immigration is a significant issue, particularly for people crossing the English Channel in small boats. However, these people represent only a tiny proportion of immigrants; they are, however, the most visible and, therefore, an easy target for the far-right -fuelled by the Conservative's campaign to ‘stop the boats’ (Oppenheim 2024).

Following immigration, the ethnocultural composition of societies is being changed, with Islam being seen by those on the right of politics as a significant issue. The mainstream political parties have failed to address this issue, leading to a shift towards populist parties. The supporters of such parties strongly emphasise preserving history, whether material or immaterial. This ’heritage populism’ (Reynié 2016, p. 47) mixes hostility to the European Union, immigration, and elites with antagonism towards Islam. Trumpism is the American version of heritage populism, complete with its unrestrained demagoguery, xenophobia, denunciation of the establishment, and stigmatising speeches (De Matas 2017; Gorski 2021). It has been claimed (Kaya 2019) that right-wing populist parties persuade people to believe that historical losses and encroachments have undermined a fundamental way of life. They employ historical symbols that the disenchanted may rally behind. In a non-conventional sense, these are heritage practices; they draw on the past and

valorise it in the present to create a future based on types of selective historical consciousness. Such views are no longer exclusive to far-right parties; mainstream parties are now taking note of this. For example, in 2016, a few months after the Brexit vote, UK Prime Minister Theresa May, speaking at the Conservative Party Conference, said, 'Just listen to how many politicians and commentators talk about the public. They find their patriotism distasteful, their concerns about immigration parochial, their views about crime illiberal, and their attachment to their job security inconvenient' (Norris and Inglehart 2019).

Bonacchi, Altaweel, and Krzyzanska (2018) argue that Brexit may significantly impact how heritage is understood and utilized in the future. Politicians who favour Brexit have tried to publicly appeal to history in their campaigns, drawing on historical references to inspire new forms of nationalism. By invoking an imaginary history, right-wing commentators attempt to add a respectable gloss to this exclusive and perhaps xenophobic creation of national identity. As part of creating an island nation identity, references to the Empire, the Commonwealth, as well as war-related tropes like the Blitz, Nazis, and so forth, are made (Pendlebury and Veldpaus 2018). Conservative government ministers have also actively promoted this in the school curriculum (Bhambra 2013).

Preceding the 2016 Brexit vote, populist and far-right discourse in Europe was accompanied by the politics of austerity by scapegoating immigrants and minorities (Guma and Dafydd Jones 2019). Questions of belonging became increasingly relevant to political discussions following the 2008 financial meltdown and economic slump (Cassidy, Innocenti, and Bürkner, 2020). One of the recurring themes in this discussion is the portrayal of the past of European states—and of Europe as a whole—as racially and culturally pure or homogeneous, only to be upended by the later influx of a variety of peoples from other places (Cassidy et al., 2020).

Guriminder Bhambra (2023) uses the example of the United Kingdom to examine attempts to purify national history. He questioned the idea of autonomous national histories existing separately and separated from their locations within broader

complexes of empire and colonialism. He examined contemporary political debates on belonging, citizenship, and rights to argue that basing citizenship and rights arguments on exclusionary histories of belonging and citizenship is, at best, politically foolish and, at worst, a precursor to authoritarian populism. Bhambra had previously argued that the politics of the present are heavily influenced by how we portray the past (Bhambra 2013). He referred to national issues, but his argument also applies to local situations, as evidenced by the dispute over the memorial discussed above.

Whilst it may be understandable why some local areas are susceptible to xenophobic attitudes amongst specific socio-demographic-ethnic groupings, in particular young, white, working-class skilled or semi-skilled males in localities where immigrant workers were perceived as a visible threat to an indigenous white workforce (Goodwin 2005, pp. 51-68), it is more difficult to explain such attitudes where there is a tiny minority of BEM residents as was the case in Hetton-le-Hole. As will be shown later in this chapter, a clear element of xenophobia exists in former mining towns such as Hetton. So, where do such attitudes originate?

The pervasive imperialist and colonialist mindset that shaped the education of older residents likely contributed to their attitudes. My experiences in Hetton schools during the 1950s and 1960s exemplify this environment: an all-white teaching staff presided over classrooms adorned with world maps highlighting the vast British Empire in red, proudly proclaiming it as the realm "on which the sun never sets." As young boys, we were exposed to literature and comics that openly espoused racist and white supremacist ideologies (Klein 2002).

Youth organisations such as The Salvation Army and the Church Army actively recruited young people, promoting a narrative centred on the Christian military hero. This archetype was portrayed as a valiant figure combating the perceived ills of savagery and barbarism among ‘heathens’ who purportedly needed both salvation and subjugation in the name of Christ (Sherwood 2004). Given this pervasive societal context, it is hardly surprising that individuals raised in such an environment would develop a sense of racial superiority.

Sally Tomlinson (2019) has highlighted the connections between education, race, empire, and Brexit. She covers the period from the height of the British Empire in 1870 to 2018, when she argues that it became clear that the vote to leave the EU had increased hostility towards ethnic minorities and immigrant workers. I recall that the day following the leave vote, the newspapers were full of stories of people being verbally abused in the streets by people who seemed to think that all foreigners should have left the country by then.

The aftermath of the Brexit referendum exposed underlying tensions, as evidenced by two troubling incidents in Durham. In one case, a Mexican academic at Durham University, accompanied by his family, was verbally accosted by a group of young men who demanded they go home. This xenophobic outburst occurred just a day after the referendum results were announced.

Durham anthropologist Felix Ringel recounts a similarly disturbing episode involving a German friend. While travelling in a taxi within County Durham, she received a call from her mother and began conversing in German. Upon hearing this, the taxi driver abruptly halted the vehicle and ordered her to exit, stating he refused to transport any Polish individuals. This misidentification further underscores the indiscriminate nature of such prejudice.

Reflecting on these events, Ringel questions the apparent erosion of the North East's renowned solidarity. He points to the region's celebrated history of passionate resistance against Margaret Thatcher's neoliberal welfare state reforms during the 1980s miners' strike, wondering how this spirit of unity has seemingly given way to such divisive attitudes. (Ringel 2018).[74]

In answer to the question in the preceding paragraph, the lack of solidarity in Hetton-le-Hole is reflected in the makeup of its Town Council. The Council comprises eleven independents' (although they act as a group), five Labour and five UK Independence Party (UKIP). Historically, it has always been under Labour control. The UKIP

[74] This is an extract from an article which advocates viewing Brexit as reflecting uncertainty about the post-industrial future more than the industrial past. It calls for anthropological study of the phenomenon's complexity alongside public debate about shared goals for life after industrial decline.

councillors maintain a Facebook page; the pages support royalism and nationalism and are anti-devolutionary, anti-immigration, and anti-transgender. UKIP nationally supports' British culture and values'; locally in Hetton-le-Hole, they successfully opposed the demolition of an old colliery engine shed; they also condemned the graffitiing of a statue of Sir Henry Havelock in Sunderland with the words 'racist' and 'parasite'.

In October 2019, historian and journalist Dean Kirby embarked on a road trip to bellwether and marginal constituencies, interviewing long-term Labour voters who were considering voting Conservative (Kirby 2019). Brexit emerged as a pivotal issue, driving some long-time Labour supporters to consider voting Conservative. Ex-miners like Wayne from Warsop Main Colliery planned to vote Conservative to 'get Brexit done' despite their historical Labour allegiance. Working former miner Alex had voted to remain in the Brexit referendum, but he thought the whole thing would start again if Labour won. Therefore, he planned to vote Conservative. Disillusionment with Labour's handling of mine closures and concerns about immigration also factored into this shift. An ex-miner who had worked at Warsop Main Colliery for nearly three decades said he would be voting for the Tories in December because we need to get Brexit done. He said, 'It will be a tough thing for me to do. I've been a member of the Labour Party for donkeys years, and it goes against my principles. It will go against the grain.' The ex-miner's refusal to give his name before he walks away is a sign that the men and women of this former mining town in the Labour heartland constituency of Bolsover have long memories.

A similar attitude was reported by a Guardian reporter in Bishop Auckland, Co. Durham (Coman, 2019). Michael O'Neil, who was involved in local heritage projects, had been a lifelong Labour voter but was preparing to vote Conservative in the forthcoming election. He voted to leave in the Brexit referendum but feels that remaining Labour MPs, like his local MP Helen Goodman, have failed to respect the democratic decision to quit the EU. Many in Bishop Auckland have traditionally voted Labour due to memories of the Thatcher era and the decline of the local mines and steelworks under Conservative rule. However, some lifelong Labour voters then felt

the party had turned ‘nasty’ in its treatment of leave voters, calling them racist and far right. As a result, some turned against Labour and considered voting Conservative, despite it being unthinkable.

The shift indicates a potential Conservative revolution in traditional Labour areas over Brexit and a perceived disconnect between the Labour Party and its traditional voter base. The attitudes of the former Labour Voters discussed above were reflected in other former mining areas throughout Britain. My wife Liz and I transcribed interviews by Professor Robert Gildea of Oxford University for a book on the 1984/85 strike (Gildea 2023). Gildea asked questions about Brexit and the 2019 election. Many of the interviewees expressed similar attitudes to those outlined above.

For example, Alison and Kenny McKitten were involved in the support group during the strike, and Kenny was a miner at Murton Colliery. When asked whether they thought things would be better after the UK left the EU, Alison thought it would be better to be governed by ‘ourselves, instead of being ruled by the rest of Europe.’ Alison was a Boris Johnson fan. Kenny had been, but he changed his mind due to how Johnson had (mis)handled the COVID pandemic (interview with Gildea, Sept. 2020).

Cliff Jeffery was one of the ‘Dirty Thirty’, the small group of Leicestershire miners who went on strike in 84/85. He also voted for Brexit to ‘stop the immigrants’ (interview Gildea July 2021). Darren Moore was also one of the Dirty Thirty; he voted for Brexit but found it challenging. He was still on the left of politics and not a supporter of Johnson or the Tories (interview Gildea April 2021).

Dave Scott was a Yorkshire miner who had remained loyal to the union. He thought Brexit voters were all ‘thick’ because they felt that the day after the vote, all the foreigners would disappear, and there would be plenty of jobs for English workers.

Elspeth Frostwick, a Durham miner’s wife, had been active in the Miners’ Support group during the strike. She had also canvassed for the Labour Party before the 2019 election and explained that.

> Brexit had a lot to do with how people in the North East changed their affiliation. They thought they wanted Brexit done, as Boris kept saying. 'Vote for me, and we'll get Brexit done.' And that was the crux of the matter for lots of people; they wanted Brexit. But another thing was lots of people that we spoke to said, 'I won't vote for Jeremy Corbyn.' And when you try to say 'well, why not,' it was personality rather than politics, rather than the agenda that the Labour Party put out; it was purely the person, who they didn't want to vote for (interview Gildea March 2020).

In summary, traditional Labour strongholds are seeing a shift towards Conservative support, primarily due to Brexit and concerns about immigration. Many former miners and lifelong Labour supporters are voting Conservative for the first time, often struggling with this decision due to their long-standing loyalty to Labour. The 1984-85 miners' strike is still a source of tension and division in these communities. Economic changes, such as the closure of mines and the influx of foreign workers (e.g., at Sports Direct in Shirebrook), have influenced political views. Brexit is a significant factor driving the political shift, with many voters prioritising 'getting Brexit done' over traditional party loyalties. Some voters express dissatisfaction with Labour, feeling that the party has taken them for granted or has failed to improve their communities. There are mixed opinions about whether the Conservative Party will benefit these areas, with some voters hopeful for change and others sceptical. Kirby's and Gildea's research highlights the internal conflicts many voters face, torn between their working-class roots and desire for political change.

10.6 The Breakdown of Community Solidarity

In this section, I argue that the closure of the mining industry led to a breakdown of the solidarity and communal identity built up over the previous 150 years. The miners' defeat was blamed on the 'scabs', who had returned during the strike. This amounted to half of the miners nationally (Atkin 2001, p. 247). These people were 'othered' by the miners who had remained on strike for the entire year, and this

caused a split in the community that still has not been healed. In extreme cases, families were split; ex-Derbyshire miner Ian Whyles, speaking in 2004, said that he had not spoken to one of his sons, Stephen, in twenty years because he had scabbed' during the strike, and when another son did speak to Stephen he was also disowned (Roper 2004).

It has been noted that the coal dispute of 1984–1985 heavily relied on enduring solidarity by taking advantage of the miners' customary loyalty to their union and their communities (Callinicos and Simons 1984). In this section, I aim to explore some of the enduringly anti-establishment, class-oriented ideas that have been passed down orally over many generations in the mining communities. Additionally, it has been argued that miners from all industrial groups possess the greatest sense of their history, culture, and community, largely due to their role in the forefront of fighting for legal protection for their unions and legislation to enhance safety in the mines (Francis 1985).

The notion of a received collective memory in upholding solidarity is crucial to understanding the sense of belonging in mining communities. This memory persisted mainly due to the pit and its surrounding villages, in contrast to other coalfields where 'super-pits' and the dispersal of miners away from pit villages into larger urban centres tended to fragment and erode solidarity. However, with the industry's demise, the issues that had bound the miners together were no longer relevant.

A great many books, papers and articles have been written about the miners' strike and its aftermath. Atkin (2001) provided an account of the situation in East Durham. Atkin makes the point that the communities for which the miners were being mobilised to fight in 1984 were not the fixed communities of the past. Miners from the west of the county were travelling to work in the mines that remained in the east, especially those on the coast. So, which communities were they fighting for? To represent a community dominated by the pit, the concept of community was utilised for political purposes, although it no longer reflected sociological realities. This explains some of the contradictions in how miners supported the strike; it was much

easier for someone not living near the pit to return to work without the threat of violence or damage to their home.

Mining communities are not unique in witnessing the breakdown of solidarity accompanying the loss of a major industry. For example, in her study of the potteries, Elizabeth Hart (1986) shows how a firmly held sense of localised place was the foundation for the concept of being a person among Britain's industrial and manufacturing working classes. A strong sense of belonging was conveyed through social relationships that were hierarchically structured, characterised by close-knit, female-centred kinship and habitation patterns. The web of political, economic, social, and cultural relationships that made up the concept of personhood in Stoke-on-Trent was dissolving with the loss of meaningful employment in the potteries (Evans 2017).

Work into mono-industrial locations, commonly referred to as ‘occupational communities’ where most of the population was employed by one industry were places where the value of social relationships and solidarity was even more apparent. In the context of mining communities, Bulmer (1970, 1975, 1978) focused on the significance of "community spirit" or "community solidarity" as part of the mining community's imaginary, which was frequently expressed by members of such communities. Mining communities are commonly associated with a particularly intense form of collectivism. This is, to some extent, founded on the economic precarity of the industry. However, solidarity amongst the miners is also based on the high risk to life and limb imposed by the working conditions. One may not like one’s workmates, but they must be trusted to act in a manner that is not prejudicial to safety, or if a risk is to be taken, it must be with the group's agreement.[75]

Martin Bulmer (1975) argued the traditional mining community is marked by the predominance of multiplex communal social interactions between miners and their families. Work, play, family, neighbourhood, and friendship social relationships combine to create interconnected, tightly interwoven local actor collectivities. These

[75] I am speaking from experience here; calculated risks were often taken to maintain production or to save time and effort.

characteristics alone do not suffice to increase community cohesion; a shared history of long-term habitation and employment in the same location also makes a significant contribution. Due to occupational homogeneity and social and physical isolation from the rest of society, this pattern gives rise to the trait of mutual assistance in times of need. It reinforces the localised emphasis on the immediate area. I agree with Bulmer; however, physical isolation was reduced in Durham as production moved from the west to the east, and more miners became commuters. Often, though, the transferred miners were given their own coalfaces to work[76], thereby maintaining something of their local identity.

10.7 The 'Red Wall' and Political Realignment

The term 'Red Wall' was coined by pollster James Kanagasooriam in 2019 to describe Labour strongholds in Northern England that had remained loyal for generations (Kanagasooriam and Simon 2021). It became a media buzzword after many of those seats fell to the Conservatives in the December 2019 election. While County Durham was not initially included in this categorisation, the region saw similar political shifts.

The fieldwork in Hetton-le-Hole revealed how profoundly the town had changed in recent decades. The solidarity and community cohesion built up over years of mining culture had eroded significantly. The controversial memorial project brought long-simmering divisions in class, culture, education, and political affiliation to the fore.

Rather than a sudden 'earthquake', the collapse of Labour's dominance in such areas resulted from years of gradual erosion. Brexit and Jeremy Corbyn's unpopularity provided the final push, but underlying these were changes in public narratives that had sustained Labour support for generations. The 'cracks in the wall'

[76] For example, I recall in 1970, when Thornley Colliery Closed, many of the miners transferred to Eppleton, where I was working with them. They had their own coalface and were always referred to a 'the Thornley men' by the local Hetton miners.

began appearing during the 1984-85 strike and widened in subsequent years of industrial decline, unemployment, and loss of skilled industrial labour.

In mining villages like Hetton, the mine itself was the mortar holding the community together. However, it was impossible to separate the workplace from the cultural institutions and practices miners and their families engaged in. As these declined, so did the shared experiences and values that underpin political loyalties.

Recent academic studies have examined how long-term local economic decline shapes residents' worldviews in former industrial areas. These places often retain narratives that emphasise shared economic, political, and cultural heritages fundamental to their existence. However, decades of deindustrialisation have left many feeling 'left behind', creating a sense of disconnection from both their past and their potential future.

The Brexit vote and Conservative gains in mining areas thus represent the culmination of long-term processes that have eroded these communities' social and cultural foundations. The bitter defeat of the 1984-85 strike, subsequent pit closures, and the rise of neoliberal policies fractured once-strong bonds of solidarity. As traditional institutions disappeared, many residents felt disillusioned with the political establishment. This made them receptive to anti-immigrant and anti-EU rhetoric that exploited their sense of nostalgia and loss.

10.8 Conclusion

The case study of Hetton-le-Hole's mining memorial project reveals the complex interplay between heritage, identity, and political change in post-industrial communities. This examination demonstrates how attempts to commemorate a shared past can become battlegrounds for competing visions of community identity and belonging.

The bitter disputes surrounding the memorial's creation reflect deeper fractures within the community, stemming from the traumatic legacy of the 1984-85 miners'

strike and subsequent deindustrialisation. These conflicts illuminate the challenges of maintaining solidarity and shared narratives in the face of profound economic and social transformation.

The chapter's exploration of Brexit support and political realignment in former mining communities further underscores the erosion of traditional class-based loyalties. The shift from Labour to Conservative support in many of these areas represents a change in voting patterns and a fundamental reconfiguration of political identity. This transformation is rooted in complex factors, including disillusionment with established political parties, concerns about immigration, and a desire for change encapsulated in the Brexit vote.

The anthropological perspective employed throughout this chapter reveals how heritage practices and political allegiances are deeply intertwined with notions of authenticity, representation, and cultural authority. The struggles over who has the right to represent the community's past and shape its future are emblematic of broader contestations over identity in post-industrial Britain.

Moreover, the chapter highlights the persistent influence of historical narratives and education in shaping contemporary attitudes. The legacy of imperial and colonialist worldviews, ingrained through education and popular culture, continues to inform responses to demographic change and perceptions of national identity.

In conclusion, this study of Hetton-le-Hole offers valuable insights into the challenges facing post-industrial communities as they navigate the complexities of heritage, identity, and political change. It underscores the need for nuanced approaches to community regeneration that acknowledge the deep-seated tensions and diverse narratives within these communities. Future research and policy initiatives should consider how to foster inclusive forms of heritage and political engagement that can bridge divides and build new forms of solidarity in the wake of industrial decline.

This case study serves as a microcosm of broader national trends, illustrating how local disputes over heritage and representation are inextricably linked to larger questions of national identity and political belonging in contemporary Britain. As

such, it provides a crucial perspective for understanding the ongoing realignments in British politics and society in the post-Brexit era.

Chapter 11 Conclusions

This research has revealed how former mining communities inhabit their past in two distinct yet intertwined ways. First, they actively shape it into narratives that foster present-day social bonds while acknowledging historical struggles and tensions. Second, they live it as an embodied reality that continues to influence their daily lives. The communities' dedication to remembering and memorialising their industrial heritage, even in the face of loss and changing circumstances, demonstrates remarkable resilience. In this way, the past transcends being merely a tool for present interests; instead, it exists in deep reciprocity with the present moment.

This concluding chapter synthesises how County Durham's mining legacies, despite the physical disappearance of the coalfields, continue to influence belonging, identity, and cultural politics across the post-industrial landscape. The enduring impact of the coalfields' industrial heritage, now rich in sociocultural meaning and affect, serves as a powerful reminder of the roots that shape how belonging endures through the animation of mining history.

The critical conceptual contribution, as outlined in Chapter One, illuminates how post-industrial towns remain dynamically connected to their formative industries through space, memory, and commemorative activities. The qualitative methodology offers insights into how mining heritage becomes ingrained in social memory and is perpetuated through generations and culture, long after the mines close. Through an analysis of social media curations, walkabouts, and reinterpretations of tradition, the ethnography demonstrates how belonging endures despite the erosion of landmarks and ‘lifeworlds’ (Jackson 2012), referring to the everyday world as experienced by a person in a particular place and time. This concept is crucial in understanding how the past continues to shape the present in these communities.

Drawing on Walkerdine's (2015, 2016) assertion that people are products of their histories and Nayak's (2006) concept of the city as a palimpsest, this research has

shown how successive generations continue to inscribe their cultures onto these spaces while earlier impressions persist. Though the physical traces of mining may fade, they remain subtly yet powerfully influential in shaping contemporary community life and identity. As these settlements reform, their industrial ancestors remain deeply imbricated in ongoing quests for meaning and orientation, suggesting that the future will continue to bear the traces of their mining pasts.

Chapters Two and Three establish crucial historical context by showing how Hetton-le-Hole's transformation from a rural village to an industrial mining town fundamentally reshaped its social fabric and power relations. This historical foundation is not just a backdrop but a key to understanding why mining's influence persists so powerfully in these communities today. It helps us see that what might appear as simple nostalgia for a lost industry reflects deep historical processes that shaped every aspect of community life, from social relationships to political consciousness.

Chapters Four and Five demonstrate how the persistence of mining culture in post-industrial communities represents an active process of meaning-making through which residents maintain their collective identity and sense of belonging, even as physical landmarks disappear. This is evidenced in Hetton-le-Hole through residents' simultaneous engagement with both present reality and remembered spaces. The detailed descriptions of vanished buildings, shared stories of leisure activities, and collective celebration of famous locals all serve to maintain community identity despite profound physical and economic changes. This process operates through the active preservation and transmission of collective memory via local history groups, social media discussions, and informal gatherings.

Chapter Six examined how artistic portrayals and creative works serve as vital mediators between the past and present in mining communities. Through diverse forms, including literature, theatre, visual art, and music, these cultural expressions do more than simply document life; they shape how communities understand and transmit their heritage. The chapter revealed how creative works operate on multiple levels: they preserve historical experiences, provide platforms for marginalised

voices, and help communities process profound social changes. Particularly significant was the distinction between ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ perspectives, with works created by miners themselves or by those intimately connected to mining communities often providing more nuanced and authentic representations than those imposed from outside.

This analysis of cultural representation supports the thesis's broader argument about how mining heritage persists through active processes of meaning-making. Creative works demonstrate that communities not only preserve their past but also continuously reinterpret it through new forms of expression, from traditional mining songs to contemporary digital media. The evolution of these artistic portrayals over time, from early celebrations of heroic labour to more complex explorations of loss and transformation, reflects how each generation engages with mining heritage through the lens of their own experiences and concerns.

The preservation and transmission of mining heritage requires active engagement across generations. Through organisations like Education for Action and venues such as Redhills, communities develop innovative approaches to sharing their industrial history. These efforts go beyond simply preserving artefacts or sharing historical facts; they focus on communicating the values, experiences, and social practices that define mining communities. Traditional commemorative events like the Durham Miners' Gala continue to evolve, finding new relevance while maintaining their core function of fostering community identity and solidarity. Digital platforms complement these traditional approaches, creating accessible archives of personal stories and photographs that help younger generations connect with their heritage.

Chapter Seven focused on heritage and education using the activities of Education for Action and the Redhills building. The chapter and the thesis are based on the precepts that the preservation of cultural heritage is essential and that educating people, particularly children, about their cultural heritage is a necessary element in preserving that heritage. If people are unaware of and do not understand their heritage, why would they wish to preserve it?

Cultural heritage curation serves multiple vital societal functions, extending beyond the preservation of historical artefacts. It provides essential educational opportunities through tangible and intangible traces of the past, enabling multi-sensory learning experiences that develop critical thinking and historical reasoning skills.

Heritage plays a crucial role in identity formation (Uzzell, 1996). It helps communities understand their roots while creating meaningful connections between past, present, and future. It is a platform for social engagement and cross-cultural dialogue, particularly valuable in addressing sensitive historical topics and promoting mutual understanding.

Importantly, heritage curation has future-oriented benefits, helping societies prepare for cultural evolution and providing frameworks for addressing current challenges based on historical understanding. The process also supports democratic participation by encouraging active community involvement in shaping historical narratives, moving beyond expert-only interpretations to include multiple voices and perspectives. When thoughtfully and inclusively managed, heritage curation becomes a dynamic tool for preserving the past and actively shaping how communities understand themselves and plan for their futures (Jagielska-Burduk et al., 2021). Redhills and E4A will play a crucial role in achieving these aims, as I elaborate on in the section on future heritage work below. This future heritage work will identify and evaluate specific cultural practices that communities want to carry forward into their futures. By documenting these practices in collaboration with community members, we at E4A aim to help them articulate their desired futures and strengthen their capacity to shape those futures. Through these activities, we hope to empower communities to actively participate in heritage-making processes that connect their past experiences with their future aspirations.

This approach aligns with anthropological scholarship on community-based heritage and history-making, particularly building on Boersma and Tietmeyer's (2024) concept of ‘participatory memory work’ and Waterton and Smith's (2010) critical analysis of community engagement in heritage practices. Anthropologists have long recognised that heritage-making is not merely a top-down process of preservation

but rather a dynamic, collaborative endeavour where communities actively participate in constructing and interpreting their own historical narratives (Silverman, 2011). This research contributes to this scholarly discourse by documenting how E4A and Redhills exemplify what Clifford (2013) terms ‘contact zones’ - spaces where different historical perspectives and community voices converge to create new understandings of the past. Furthermore, this work extends Kreps' (2008) framework of ‘Indigenous curation’ by demonstrating how former mining communities adapt and apply similar principles of community-led heritage preservation in a post-industrial context. The future heritage work described here advances anthropological understanding of how communities negotiate between tradition and transformation, adding empirical evidence to theoretical discussions of heritage as a forward-looking process rather than simply preservation of the past.

Chapters Eight and Nine examined how mining communities maintain their cultural heritage and identity through physical and digital means in the post-industrial era. Chapter Eight focuses on traditional forms of commemoration and community bonding, including memorials, memorabilia collection, and the Durham Miners' Gala. These physical manifestations of heritage serve multiple functions: they preserve collective memory, maintain social bonds, and provide a foundation for ongoing community resilience. The Gala emerges as a powerful example of how traditional celebrations can evolve to remain relevant while maintaining their core function of fostering community and solidarity. This demonstrates how the outwards-facing characteristics of these festive activities connect with anthropologists’ attention to the global scene in which cultural practices are now understood in post-industrial social worlds, putting culture ‘on display.’

Chapter Nine extends this analysis into the digital realm, examining how social media and online platforms have created new spaces for preserving and sharing mining heritage. Through Facebook groups and online archives, former mining communities have developed participatory forms of heritage preservation that democratise the process of cultural memory-making. These digital spaces preserve personal narratives, photographs, and experiences that might otherwise be lost while

facilitating connections between mining communities across geographical boundaries. Together, the chapters demonstrate how mining communities have adapted their methods of heritage preservation to ensure their cultural legacy endures, combining traditional physical commemorations with new digital tools to maintain their distinct identity and sense of community in a post-industrial world.

Chapter Ten on contested heritage could be seen in a negative light. The events described there certainly caused me personal distress at the time. However, in retrospect, such events can have beneficial outcomes. Conflicts over heritage representation could lead to more realistic and inclusive conversations about how communities remember and commemorate their past. These disputes, while complex, can create opportunities for diverse groups to articulate their perspectives and potentially reach new understandings about shared history.

The experience of contestation could encourage heritage practitioners and community groups to develop more sophisticated approaches to commemoration that acknowledge multiple perspectives and complex histories. Rather than seeking a single authoritative narrative, future heritage projects might better incorporate diverse viewpoints and experiences.

Working through these conflicts can help communities confront unresolved tensions and potentially forge new forms of solidarity. By acknowledging and addressing historical divisions, communities might develop more resilient and inclusive ways of preserving their heritage. From a personal perspective, were I ever to be involved in a local heritage project, and this is a possibility in Hetton[77], I would be much more aware of the potential pitfalls and be better equipped to avoid them.

Regarding the future of heritage work in Durham, the Durham Miners' Association motto ‘The Past We Inherit: The Future We Build’ captures a crucial insight: that the past serves as a resource for building a better future. Building on this idea, I propose that anthropological approaches can help communities use their heritage to envision

[77] The local history society are looking at the possibility of restoring the tomb of Sir Nicholas Wood, the prominent mining engineer who is buried in Hetton churchyard.

possible futures. This proposal draws on three interconnected concepts: anticipatory anthropology, futures research, and heritage as community research.

Anticipatory anthropology is a term introduced by Dobbert in 1984 (cited in Strzelecka 2013). This approach proposes that anthropologists can and should study potential future cultural developments using their traditional research tools and methodologies. Strzelecka argues that the discipline can analyse and anticipate future social and cultural developments by carefully observing current trends, fears, and hopes. Strzelecka suggests that this approach can uniquely contribute to both academic understanding and practical planning, as anthropologists can offer valuable insights into how societies might navigate future challenges while maintaining their focus on cultural dynamics and social relationships. The article concludes by emphasising that while anticipatory anthropology cannot precisely predict the future, it can help societies better prepare for and potentially influence their cultural evolution through informed analysis and understanding of current trends and patterns.

In Heritage as Community Research, Jo Vergunst and Helen Graham (2019) argue that heritage evolves from traditional expert-led approaches dominated by historians and archaeologists to more collaborative processes involving communities, amateurs, and professionals working together. Rather than viewing heritage as simply about preservation or professional expertise, they frame it as an active process of research and inquiry that creates meaningful relationships between past, present, and future. The chapter introduces several key concepts that shape this new understanding of heritage work: ‘ways of knowing’ that emerge through shared skills and collective understanding; ‘heritage as action’ that focuses on practical outcomes and changes; and ‘participatory ontology’ that recognises how heritage involves complex interactions between people, places, and things. The authors emphasise the importance of dialogue and multiple perspectives, arguing that heritage research benefits from being co-produced between academics and communities rather than driven solely by professional expertise. They also highlight how unexpected developments and local contexts shape heritage work, suggesting

that being responsive to these elements leads to more meaningful outcomes than rigidly following predetermined plans. Throughout the chapter, the authors make a case for moving beyond traditional ‘community engagement’ models toward more democratic and collaborative approaches that recognise multiple ways of knowing and creating meaning from the past.

Recognising the comparability of Graham and Vergunst’s (2019) approach, my argument is that heritage work should not simply preserve the past or engage communities in predetermined projects but rather serve as an active process of co-produced research that helps communities use their inherited past to build their desired futures. This approach recognises that communities' relationships with their past are dynamic and that heritage can be a powerful tool for imagining and working toward alternative futures.

In practice, I await the reopening of Redhills. I hope to use the ideas that I have outlined above to influence the work that Education for Action and the Redhills staff engage in. They could do this by implementing these future-oriented heritage ideas through several interconnected approaches that build on their existing work while creating new opportunities for community engagement. Community visioning workshops (Ding P.A. 2005) should be at the heart of this work, creating spaces for local people to explore their connections to mining heritage while imagining possible futures for their communities. These sessions would explicitly document both hopes and concerns, linking them to aspects of mining heritage that could inform or inspire future developments. This could be enhanced by bringing together ex-miners with young people to explore how past experiences of community organising and solidarity might inform current challenges and using the historic space of Redhills itself as a powerful setting for these exchanges. We (E4A) did this in a school in November 2024. The session went well, but the historic Redhills space would have enhanced the experience.

To support this work, staff could develop heritage skills programmes that train community members in research methods, helping them to conduct their own heritage projects that connect directly to current community needs and aspirations.

This could be complemented by creating exhibitions that explicitly link mining heritage to contemporary challenges, with interactive elements that allow community members to contribute their own visions and perspectives. Staff could also regularly update content based on community input and emerging themes.

The impact of this work could be amplified by fostering community research networks that connect different groups doing heritage work, creating platforms for shared learning and collaborative projects. Throughout all these activities, it would be vital to document how communities use heritage to think about their futures, share successful approaches and learn from experience. This documentation would help refine the approach and create valuable resources for other heritage organisations looking to implement similar future-oriented practices. By implementing these approaches, Redhills staff could help communities actively use their mining heritage as a resource for imagining and working toward their desired futures, truly embodying the spirit of The Past We Inherit: The Future We Build.

I began this thesis with a picture of a memorial event in Hetton-le-Hole; I will end it with another, an event that took place long after my research in Hetton had concluded. This is evidence of the continuing interest in local history and culture. In November 2022, I attended an event to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the opening of the Hetton Collery railway. The day was opened by James, the fifth Lord Joicey, who spoke about the roles of his ancestors in the development of the Durham coal industry. A talk by local historian and railway enthusiast John Cook followed this. John has built a working railway model complete with collieries and the staithes at Sunderland. After the coffee break, John Banham, who had recently published a book on the Hetton Coal Company (Banham, 2022), delivered a presentation based on his book. After lunch, the historian Bill Lancaster, who has written about regional identity in the North East region (Colls and Lancaster 2005), gave a talk on the internationally known Nicholas Wood, who is buried in Hetton Cemetery and was once the engineer there. The remainder of the afternoon comprised of discussions on the railway, including one on its significance in the history of railways by author and lecturer Les Turnbull, who has also written

extensively on the region's engineering history (Turnbull, 2009, 2015, 2018, 2019, 2023). The day was well attended, and the various presenters sold their books. This was the last of several events that had taken place throughout the year, demonstrating that local history and heritage are important to local people and academics. Those people were not engaging in a mawkish longing for the past; they were using the past positively to build a future. The event was organised by an organisation entitled ‘Hetton Colliery Railway 200. The organisation is to keep going, and there is talk about merging with the local history society and other organisations concerned with local history and culture. Therefore, there is hope for the continuation of heritage activities in the town.

The 2022 celebration of the Hetton Colliery Railway's bicentenary offers a fitting illustration of how mining heritage continues to evolve and remain relevant. This well-attended event, which brought together academics, local historians, and community members, demonstrated that interest in mining heritage extends far beyond mere nostalgia. Through presentations that connected engineering achievements of the past to contemporary regional identity, participants actively engaged in using historical understanding to inform present-day community development.

This research has shown that mining heritage persists not simply as a remembered past but as a living force that shapes how communities understand themselves and envision their futures. Whether through formal commemorations, artistic expressions, digital platforms, or educational initiatives, communities actively maintain their connections to their mining heritage while adapting it to meet contemporary needs. As these former mining communities face ongoing challenges of post-industrial transformation, their sophisticated engagement with heritage offers valuable insights into how communities can maintain identity and belonging through periods of profound change.

As the Durham Miners' Association motto suggests, the past we inherit provides not just memories to preserve but resources for building the future. Through thoughtful engagement with this heritage, communities can forge new paths forward while maintaining meaningful connections to the cultures and values that shaped them.

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